

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 6th March, 2025

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Alderman Copeland (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;
Aldermen Lawlor and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,
de Faoite, S. Douglas, P. Donnelly, Ferguson,
Flynn, Harvey, Long, Maghie and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Murtagh, Physical Programmes Portfolio Manager;
Ms. K. Watters, Neighbourhood Services Integration Manager;
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor D. Douglas.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5h September, 2024 were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Rodgers declared an interest in item 6, 'Physical Programmes Update', in that he was a Member of the Belmont Bowling Club.

Councillor Abernethy declared an interest in the same item, in that he was a member of the Belmont Bowling Club and the East Belfast Mission Congregation.

Alderman Rodgers and Councillor Abernethy did not partake in any discussion nor decision-making in respect of item 6.

Presentation - Sustainable Food Partnership

(Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. Turley, Growing Resilience Project Officer at Social Farms and Gardens, to the meeting.

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor provided the Working Group with an overview of the Sustainable Food Partnership and the work which was ongoing in respect of the development of a Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy.

She outlined that the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership had been established in August 2023 and was a city-wide cross-sectoral partnership that acted as a collective voice for the city on key challenges for the food system around climate change, biodiversity, food justice, a circular economy, urban farming, community growing, food waste and more.

Ms. Turley advised the Working Group that the Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy was being developed by a range of city partners and stakeholders across the food system and outlined the extensive work that had been undertaken to date.

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor highlighted the need for a strategy to implement a whole system approach and to create a shared vision across the city. She further highlighted that the strategy would align with, and support, work at a regional and local level such as the Executive's Food Strategy Framework, the Council's Resilience Strategy and Net Zero Carbon Roadmap and motions passed by the Council including Right to Grow, Right to Food and the Plant Based Treaty.

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor and Ms. Turley answered a range of questions in relation to the engagement with local communities and schools, access to green spaces and allotments, community growing projects and sustainable farming.

The Chairperson thanked the Adaptation and Resilience Advisor and Ms. Turley for their presentation, and they left the meeting.

Noted.

Physical Programmes Update

The Physical Programmes Portfolio Manager presented the undernoted report to the Working Group:

1. Introduction

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- **Note the physical programme update for East Belfast including recently completed project at Appendix 1 - Covered cycle stands;**
- **Note that Eastside Container Hotel (NRF) and Eastside Visitor Centre (SOF) are being taken forward as a combined project; and**

- Note the status and next steps around the additional local capital schemes/ proposals as a consequence of the UKSPF funding.

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the East being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £1.2m under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 22 projects received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 19 have been completed and 1 project is at delivery stage and 1 project is at due diligence stage.

LIF breakdown – East	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	8 (80%)	£931,902	12 (100%)	£1,161,589
Number of Projects in Delivery	1(10%)	£30,000		
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (10%)	£70,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	10	£1,031,902	12	£1,161,589

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
ELIF31	Bloomfield FC, Clonduff FC, East Belfast FC and Dundela FC, Tullycarnet, Cregagh Wanderers, Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Bredagh GAC – storage facilities	£65,000 (£30k plus £35k reallocation)	On Ground <i>Phase 1- complete</i> <i>Phase 2- ongoing</i>	Phase 1 – Complete - Bloomfield FC, East Belfast FC, Tullycarnet FC and Cregagh Wanderers projects completed. Phase 2 - Bredagh GAC - the container has been delivered. Clonduff FC - signed off at Due Diligence and a funding agreement has been issued. Nettlefield Multi-Sports container – the club is required to become constituted and obtain EA approval to place the container on EA land. Dundela FC – signed off at Due Diligence in December 2024 and funding agreement being prepared.	Continue engagement with the groups.

ELIF29	Cycling Ireland	£70,000	Due Diligence	Due Diligence stage ongoing. Proposed licence arrangements have been discussed (subject to group confirming proposed usage requirements). Group is currently reviewing the suitability of the site and Council awaits an update from the group on this matter.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.
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4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250,000 investment from Council. In East Belfast, 9 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 5 projects on the longer BIF list. Each of the In-Principle projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and the funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects:

East	Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k; H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.5m; Bloomfield—£440k Stage 2— <i>Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</i> Stage 1— <i>East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John's Orangefield, Church of Ireland, Tullycarnet Community Support Services—no commitment / on long list</i>
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Outer East	Stage 3 —TAGIT- £434k; Hanwood—£396k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k; Branial—£390k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k
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The table below provides an overview of the remaining projects. Members are asked to note the actions and recommendations.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF12	Strand Arts Centre	£6,940,069 <i>LUF - £4m BIF - £1,550,000 HF- £255,000 (Development Grant), £768,069 (Delivery Grant)</i>	On Ground	On Ground. Contractor has been appointed and mobilisation works are commencing. Discussion with DfC regarding potential funding is continuing.	Continue engagement with the group and funders.
BIF13	Bloomfield Community Association	£715,009 <i>BIF - £655,000 LIF - £60,009</i>	Stage 3 - Committed – In Principle	The group is continuing to explore additional funding opportunities to meet the shortfall. An updated application to DfC has been prepared on the basis of updated costs.	Continue engagement with the group.

Outer East BIF Projects

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF38	Castlereagh Presbyterian Church	£382,000	Stage 3 - Committed – In Principle	On Ground. Initial contractor meeting on 28th February with a view to starting works in March 2025.	Continued engagement with the group.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. There is one project under SOF for East Belfast - Eastside Visitor Centre – with an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

Eastside Visitor Centre <i>(links to NRF project)</i>	£1,650,000 <i>SOF- £700,000 NRF- £950,000</i>	The group has agreed to deliver a combined project to include hotel and extension to the visitor centre. Procurement exercise for Design Team was issued in January. Design team appointment expected in April 2025.	Continued engagement with the group. Members are asked to note that Eastside Container Hotel (NRF) and Eastside Visitor Centre (SOF) is being taken forward as a combined project.
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6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. The overall NRF allocation for East was £2,351,551 and 4 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Projects remaining at Stage 2 continue to have the support of a Client Manager for their proposals.

East Belfast – NRF overview

East	Stage 3 - Eastside Container Hotel, Portview Exchange, Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park, Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road Stage 2 - Impact Belfast, Nevin Spence Centre Visitor Experience
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East Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project name	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
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Eastside Container Hotel <i>(links to SOF project)</i>	£1,650,000 <i>Comprising: SOF- £700,000 NRF- £950,000</i>	Stage 3- Committed	EastSide Partnership approved a land swap. The group has agreed to deliver a combined project to include hotel and extension to the visitor centre. Procurement exercise for Design Team was issued in January. Design team appointment expected in April 2025.	Continued engagement with the group. Members are asked to note that Eastside Container Hotel (NRF) and Eastside Visitor Centre (SOF) is being taken forward as a combined project.
Portview Exchange	£600,000	Stage 3- Committed	Link to UV project. A decision on the business case is expected from The Executive Office by April 2025.	Continue engagement with the group.
Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park	£500,000	Stage 3- Committed	A new planning application was submitted in December 2024. The group intend to submit a funding application in March to provide the remaining budget required.	Continue engagement with the group and integrated design team.
Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road	£300,000	Stage 3- Committed	The group is continuing to explore funding opportunities. Design team procurement is planned in spring 2025.	Continue engagement with the group and consultant.

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new assets. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in East Belfast. Members are asked to note the status and update.

East Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
New Crematorium	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Technical Design is complete. Procurement exercise for the main contractor is complete and a review of the business case is being undertaken. Alternative use for existing building continues to be explored.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. To be completed by end of March 2025.
Playground Improvement Programme 2024/25	<i>Stage 3 - Committed.</i> The Programme for 2024/25 includes improvement works at Grampian Avenue playground. Work is nearing completion with handover expected in March 2025.
Cremated Remains Burial Plots	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case is being developed with City & Neighbourhood Services Department and surveys are continuing.

Sydenham Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case to be worked up with DfI who are at design development stage for the greenway. Ongoing discussion with DfI regarding a partnership approach.
Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan. Education Authority (EA) is continuing to develop a business case for capital funding for youth provision at the council owned Ballymacarrett site. Officers are continuing to liaise with EA on the way forward.
Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to the Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East project.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	The tender for a new provider/ operator has been concluded and contract is due to be signed in February.
Parklands, Knocknagoney Dale - Knocknagoney Park Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. Illuminated pedestrian path connection to apartment development, car park & lower entrance enhancements completed in summer 2024. Tree planting and installation of additional park seating is programmed for spring 2025.
Lands at Castlehill Manor - Belmont Park Improvements	This work is under S76 Developer Contributions for Open Space. Woodland trail and accessible picnic area completed in summer 2023. Additional sensory play equipment to be installed at Belmont Park playground in spring/summer 2025.

Additional small scale local capital schemes

Due to securing UKSPF monies for a range of existing capital schemes, this has allowed the Council to free up resources for other activity. Council capital funds are therefore being redirected towards a range of additional small scale local capital schemes that still align with the prioritised objectives of the UKSPF as expected by the funder. In January, Members at SP&R Committee noted this update and that a further update will be brought to the AWGs for consideration. This activity can begin in this financial year and extend into 2025/26 to allow for development and completion of the projects. The proposal for these recouped capital monies is to target a range of small scale capital schemes focusing on sporting provision and access and inclusion. Projects within East area are shown below along with the projects that have a citywide focus:

<i>Additional local capital schemes - East</i>	
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	This facility can be used across the city. Specification developed and initial quotation received - next step is procurement.
Inclusive Makaton communications boards in playgrounds	Installation of communication boards in council playgrounds. Makaton Communication Board programmed for installation at Tommy Patton playground in March 2025.
Victoria Park – Basketball court upgrade	Next step is to appoint the design team to take the scheme forward.

Members will also be aware that party briefings were held late last year on the Capital Programme and that a number of further Capital Thematic workshops/briefings are to be arranged with Members to inform the longer term Capital Programme. As part of this exercise, a series of further improvement projects will come

forward in conjunction with City & Neighbourhoods Services Department. Further, the Property & Projects Department continues to actively scan for potential additional sources of external funding that can be secured for capital proposals.

8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for a number of government departments on significant capital investment programmes, namely the Urban Villages Initiative (UV) funded by the Executive Office, and number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to East Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

Project	Status and update
Hosford Community Homes Inclusion Hub	<i>Project underway.</i> Council is acting as Delivery Partner. Project completion is anticipated in March. It is proposed to hold the official launch in May.
Titanic People Exhibition	<i>Project underway.</i> Council is acting as Delivery Partner. Works progressing on site. Project completion is anticipated by early summer.
Portview Exchange <i>Link to NRF 'Portview Exchange'</i>	<i>Business case stage.</i> A decision on the business case is expected from The Executive Office in April.

PEACEPLUS – Capital Project

Members are asked to note updates on the capital project under the PEACEPLUS Programme.

East Belfast – PEACEPLUS LAP Capital Project overview

Project	Status and update
Sanctuary Theatre	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Refurbishment of the Sanctuary Theatre at Castlereagh Street. PEACEPLUS Letter of Offer has been received. Meeting with Group held in February to discuss next steps.

DfC and Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities in East Belfast.

Dfl and DfC – East Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Covered cycle stands Phase 3	<i>Via Dfl Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i> The third phase of this programme included the delivery of covered cycle stands in Victoria Park, Orangefield Park, Branial Community Centre and Tullycarnet Centre (Comber Greenway). Project

	completed.
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Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – that a letter be sent to the Minister for Communities seeking an update, including timescales, in respect of potential funding for the Strand Arts Centre.

Accordingly, the Working Group:

- i. noted the Physical Programmes update; and
- ii. agreed that a letter be sent to the Minister for Communities seeking an update, including timescales, in respect of potential funding for the Strand Arts Centre.

Requests to Present

The Working Group agreed to receive, at future meetings, presentations from the following:

- EastSide Early Learning Community (ELC)
- East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA)
- EastSide Partnership

Ballyhackamore Parklet (Councillor Flynn to raise)

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the Working Group agreed that a report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Working Group, that would outline a draft proposal, including draft plans, to install a parklet on vacant land in Ballyhackamore.

Chairperson