



## Belfast District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	BIF
<b>Date:</b>	13 February 2015
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects, Ext: 6217
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>																				
<b>1.1</b>	<p><b>Current objectives and criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BIF support was designed to support partnership projects across the city which will have a substantial regenerative impact and will bring major benefit to the city</li> <li>The objectives of the Belfast Investment Fund are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>create a focal point for the Council to play a leading role in the development of the city</li> <li>create a 'can do' attitude amongst its citizens and create a sense of place and pride in Belfast</li> <li>encourage investment from and engagement of public, private and voluntary sectors, in the achievement of that aim</li> <li>to contribute to the Council's priorities and vision for the city</li> </ul> </li> <li>to be eligible to receive funding under the Belfast Investment Fund projects must -</li> <li>be a single project or a programme/cluster of capital investment</li> <li>demonstrate that they have a cumulative iconic or transformational impact</li> <li>have a partnership element and be <u>receiving at least match 50% funding from another source/sources</u></li> <li>be seeking a Council investment of above £250,000</li> </ul> <p>Designed as a rolling programme of investment and given the level of investment in projects was meant to be over 3 terms of the Council up to 2019/2020</p>																				
<b>1.2</b>	<p><b>Current status of fund</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As outlined in the table below current expectations are that there will be £34m in the BIF stream by 16/17</li> </ul> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>14/15</th> <th>15/16</th> <th>16/17</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>BIF Opening Balance</b></td> <td>19287638</td> <td>26272138</td> <td>30442138</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Capital Receipts</b></td> <td>4214500</td> <td>1400000</td> <td>800000</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Rates</b></td> <td>2770000</td> <td>2770000</td> <td>2770000</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><b>26272138</b></td> <td><b>30442138</b></td> <td><b>34012138</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		14/15	15/16	16/17	<b>BIF Opening Balance</b>	19287638	26272138	30442138	<b>Capital Receipts</b>	4214500	1400000	800000	<b>Rates</b>	2770000	2770000	2770000		<b>26272138</b>	<b>30442138</b>	<b>34012138</b>
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<b>1.3</b>	<p><b>Current status of projects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No funding for any BIF project has been agreed to date by Committee</b></li> <li>20 emerging projects agreed in principle by Committee – (appendix 1)</li> <li>3 of these have been progressed to Stage 2 (i.e. development of an OBC) – Lagan Gateway at Stranmillis; redevelopment of St. Comgall's and new pitches at St. Mary's – these projects were</li> </ul>																				

	prioritised due to their state of readiness and/or match funding sources in place
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Issues</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the key issues in relation to BIF projects has been the 50% match funding requirement – this has been difficult for projects to secure given the lack of other sources of funding – this will be further impacted by the loss of DSD funding under LGR. The South AWG formally requested in October 14 that the <i>“SP&amp;R Committee review the match funding requirement for BIF projects which could allow projects that have a certain amount of match funding in place, but not the 50% requirement, to proceed”</i>. This was considered but no recommendations were agreed at this stage.</li> <li>• There are no proposed projects in the enhanced boundaries of the Council and no city centre proposals. Many of the proposed projects are limited in scope and their potential outcomes for the city is accordingly reduced.</li> </ul>
2.1	<p><b><u>Options for Members to consider</u></b></p> <p><b>To actually begin to use BIF Members need to focus on three key issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>How can BIF be best linked to the emerging ‘Belfast Agenda’ and the outcomes and accountability frameworks?</b></li> <li>• <b>Given the changing roles and responsibilities of the Council and the enhanced boundaries should BIF be repackaged as a city regeneration fund?</b></li> <li>• <b>Should the match funding criteria be reduced to allow a number of projects to progress now? If so to what level?</b></li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Lagan Gateway</b>
	<p>While awaiting decision on the above there is increasing frustration with regard to the South AWG who have worked hard to develop the Lagan Gateway and an increasing risk matched funding may be lost due to BCC decision delay.</p> <p>The South AWG strategic view to investment in their part of the city identified the Lagan corridor as providing serious potential to moving things forward and produced a Back to the River plan as a context for project spend. This approach has been further endorsed by the Berridge report which also identified the importance of the river and the fact that a number of organisations are developing river associated projects e.g. BHC is now seriously looking at the leisure potential for the river banks from the Harbour Office to the weir; DRD have an economic appraisal on a new footbridge from the Gasworks to Ormeau Park; the private sector with the Council are developing two sites at Maysfield; the council has already completed investments at Mary Peters track, the Mountain Bike trails and the John Luke bridge as well as providing land for the Kayak boathouse. Furthermore the council is about to inherit responsibilities from DSD in respect to river management and further development sites such as Queens Quay as well as sites from Castlereagh B.C such as the Lockkeepers cottage. The discussions around the River Corridor have also inspired local communities to take an interest in river activity and begin exploring ways as to how they might evolve and create facilities to take advantage of new opportunities which is of course in the spirit of BIF to create ‘can do’ citizens and lift aspirations.</p> <p>The Lagan Gateway project involves reopening the lock at Stranmillis and replacing the weir thus making the river navigable upstream from the city. This approach ties in with the Lagan Trust proposals to open the Lagan all the way to Lough Neagh and is an important first step in this bigger tourism regeneration scheme. The Lagan towpath is one of the most visited attractions in the Province with over 1m visitors recorded in 2014 and the Gateway scheme provides the potential of further opening up the East Bank of the river from Belvoir Forest to Stranmillis.</p>

	<p>Ulster Gardens Villages have pledged £1m to support the gateway scheme but are under pressure to reallocate the money should the council further delay decision making. Currently the scheme has a complete economic appraisal which sets out the benefits and the costs. The current estimate is £4.9m broken down into four phases i.e. the Lock &amp; Bridge at £2.9m; the Footway link to Belvoir Forest via council property at Lagan Lands East at £250k; a visitor centre and car park at £800k and a new weir at £1m.</p> <p>In October 2014 SP&amp;R was asked to consider a change in the BIF rules regarding the 50% matched funding which was also imply a more robust prioritisation of projects than the current list. Members agreed to discuss this further.</p> <p>Given the fact that the UGV £1m funding offer will not remain open indefinitely and that it represents approximately 20% of the cost of the scheme Members are asked to reconsider the BIF funding mechanism and to prioritise along a sliding scale of external commitment allowing the Gateway project to move ahead now while other schemes are reprioritised.</p>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Proposed acquisition of land at Blackmountain</b>
	<p>The SP&amp;R Committee at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014 authorised officers to enter into negotiations to acquire the land at the junction of the Upper Ballygomartin Road and Springmartin Road for the Black Mountain Shared Space Project (BMSS) (See Appendix A). The BMSS project is an inter community partnership that brings together groups representative of the communities across the Upper Springfield/Moyard/New Barnsley and Springmartin/Highfield. The BMSS project aims to develop a shared space and create a community asset by regenerating the vacant and derelict Black Mountain site which includes the 8.429 acre ex-Finlay factory site and unmanaged open areas which have become contested spaces and the focal point for anti-community behaviour.</p>
	<p>A draft economic appraisal for a shared space at the ex-Finlay site was produced in Nov 2013 which recommended the option to create Belfast's first eco village. The master plan will house 40,000 sq ft of community enterprise space that will be used to stimulate employment. The site will be completely shared and that will be exemplified by creating a large shared space community building that will be run and managed by the BMSSP. There will be allotment schemes throughout the development to continue with the promotion of the sustainable facility development. There is a possibility of up to 18 new houses built (based on need) toward the rear of the site and to ensure that the entire space is used and doesn't present opportunities for anti-social behaviour. The scheme will be further embellished with a shared space day care facility and a shared space outdoor education and activity resource centre. The master plan will be developed further in consultation with the key government departments and the local community prior to the submission of any planning application.</p>
	<p>The site needs to be purchased to allow the development of the initiatives proposed by BMSS. This has been proposed as a potential BIF project by the West AWG however this is subject to final agreement. Officers have negotiated with Colliers who act for the site owners, the First Trust Bank, and agreed subject to Council approval to acquire the freehold interest in the site for £250,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that funds are available for the acquisition of this site from the Belfast Investment Fund.</p>
	<p>In the event that the BMSS fails to go forward the council will retain control of a potentially valuable site with development potential into the future.</p>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
<p>Financial: As outlined above.</p> <p>Human: Officer time in working with groups on developing their project proposals</p> <p>Assets: none at present</p>	

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Equality Implications</b>
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As part of the Stage approval process, a screening will be carried out on each project to indicate potential equality and good relations impacts and any mitigating actions needed.

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
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Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and

- Seek Shadow SP&R approval to advance the Lagan Gateway project at less than 50% match funding subject to new criteria being developed for BIF overall. Also to approve the acquisition of the Finlay Site.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendix</b>
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Appendix 1 - Emerging Projects Agreed in Principle by Committee