

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 29th November, 2018

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Alderman Haire (Chairperson);
Aldermen Copeland, McGimpsey, Rodgers
and Sandford; and
Councillors Dorrian, Johnston, Kyle, Long,
McReynolds, Newton and O'Donnell.

In attendance: Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the High Sheriff (Councillor Howard), Councillors Graham and Mullan.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 4th October were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Sandford declared an interest in Item 3, Belfast Investment Fund, in so far as he was on the Board of Governors of Cregagh Primary School and he left the room for the duration of the discussion.

Alderman Rodgers declared an interest in Item 3, Belfast Investment Fund, in so far as he was an honorary member of Belmont Bowling Club.

Councillor Long declared an interest in Item 3, Belfast Investment Fund, in so far as he was a member of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church.

Presentations

The Education Authority (EA) – Verbal Update

The Chairperson reminded the Working Group that it had previously agreed to invite a representative from the Education Authority to discuss primary school provision in the east of the City, particularly in relation to the announcement that Forge Integrated Primary School (IPS) would relocate to the site of the former Knockbreda High School.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. McConkey, Head of Area Planning in the Education Authority (EA), to the meeting.

Mr. McConkey outlined to the Working Group that the Permanent Secretary for the Department of Education had, on 16th April 2018, approved one of three development proposals for Forge IPS, namely, its relocation to the former Knockbreda High School site.

He added that two other linked proposals for the school were still under consideration, namely, to establish a 52 place part-time nursery unit and an Autistic Spectrum Disorder Centre (ASDC) and a General Learning Support Centre.

He confirmed to the Members that all of the surrounding primary schools had been consulted by the EA about the potential relocation of Forge IPS.

He outlined to the Working Group that Forge IPS already had a number of pupils from the BT5 and BT6 postcodes, and that its relocation to 0.8 miles from its current location was not considered to be detrimental to the sustainability of the surrounding controlled primary schools.

The Working Group thanked Mr. McConkey for his attendance and he retired from the meeting.

Department for Infrastructure – Living with Water Programme

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs. L. MacHugh, Director of Water and Drainage Policy, and Mr. S. Wightman, Programme Manager, to the meeting.

Mrs. MacHugh informed the Members that the Living With Water Programme was an Executive-led initiative which sought to develop a strategic drainage infrastructure plan for Belfast, in order to protect against flood risk, enhance the environment and support economic growth. She provided information around five key risks/challenges which underpinned the programme, namely, increased flooding risk, compliance with environmental legislation, constraints upon economic development arising from a lack of drainage and wastewater treatment capacity, asset maintenance and climate change.

Mr. Wightman provided details of fifteen ‘work packages’ which were being progressed in Belfast by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Northern Ireland Water and the Department for Infrastructure, many of which involved the Council. He confirmed that this was in effect a ten-year programme and that it involved surveying, modelling, planning and appraisal, as well as capital delivery. The overall cost would be in the region of £900 million. He concluded by pointing out that a resilient and sustainable wastewater and drainage infrastructure was necessary to ensure that the Council met its objectives through, for example, the Belfast Agenda.

After discussion, Mrs. MacHugh and Mr. Wightman were thanked by the Chairperson, following which the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Physical Programme Update

(Alderman Sandford declared in interest in this item and left the room for the duration of the discussion)

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

“1. Introduction

Members will recall that on the recent Physical Programme Update on 4th October 2018, AWG have asked a detailed update on BIF projects. This report outlines the status of BIF projects in East Belfast.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to

- **note the contents of this report**
- **note the update on Strand Arts Centre, Bloomfield Community Association and H&W Welders FC**
- **note the update on the BIF Outer East projects**

3. Belfast Investment Fund

To date 9 projects have received an in-principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 4 projects on the longer BIF list. The respective project status is outlined below.

East	Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k (completed); H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.8m; Bloomfield—£440k Stage 2— <i>Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</i> Stage 1— <i>East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church—no commitment</i>
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Outer East	Stage 3 —TAGIT- £434k; Braniel—£390k; Hanwood—£396k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k
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Project	BIF Allocation	Status and update
STAGE 3 – COMMITTED PROJECTS		
Strand Arts Centre	£1,800,000	RIBA Stage 1 Design development work is complete, supported by DfC. Economic Appraisal has been completed and submitted to DfC to enable consideration of match funding for capital development. Support has also been secured from Ulster Garden Villages for the next stage of development. Agreed as a BIF project – 24th April 2015 (Stage 1- Emerging); 19th June 2015 (Stage 2- Uncommitted); 21st October 2016 (Stage 3- Committed) East AWG in 6th October 2016 agreed that £1.8m of BIF would be ring- fenced for a period of two years, with an option to extend by a

		further a year on the basis that it received additional funding from other sources which would enable the project to proceed.
Bloomfield Community Association	£440,000	The preferred option leaves a shortfall of £178,000. Agreed as a BIF project – 19th June 2014 (Stage 1- Emerging); 19th June 2015 (Stage 2- Uncommitted); 23rd September 2016 (Stage 3- Committed) AWG in 3rd August 2017 agreed to give the organisation six months to attract partnership funding for the current shortfall which has been identified in the Economic Appraisal. This condition has already lapsed. Discussions have been with DfC but to date no additional funding has been secured.
H&W Welders Club- Blanchflower Playing Fields	£2,370,000	Project on-site. Contractor has just been appointed. Works now includes the Council owned 3G pith.
Willowfield		COMPLETED
STAGE 2 – UNCOMMITTED PROJECTS		
Lagan Village Youth & Community Centre	n/a	Economic appraisal underway. Due for completion by end of January 2019

As Members are aware both the Strand Arts Centre project and the Bloomfield Community Association project are under pressure in terms of their budgets. It also must be noted that the figures which have been worked up for both projects are still high-level estimates.

In addition the SP&R decision on both projects is an ‘in-principle’ funding decision based on securing match funding within set timescales. The timescale for Bloomfield has now lapsed while the 24 months for Strand Arts Centre expired at the end of October – as noted above the East AWG did reserve the right to extend this by an additional 12 months.

Members are asked to note that both the Strand Arts Centre and Bloomfield Community Association have worked hard to secure additional funding from external sources. Both the Groups and officers have held several discussions with Department for Communities (DfC) which have shown initial support however until now no additional funding have been secured for these projects. The Strand is also actively seeking additional support for their project.

Next Steps

The East AWG is asked to note that the Council, through the Director of Property & Projects, has now formally written to DfC to requesting for clarification/ confirmation on whether these projects are included in their priority list in order to ascertain if there is any realistic chance of either project securing match funding. This will aid any future considerations for the East AWG. It is recommended that the East AWG await the responses from DfC and an update on the outcome of the discussions with DfC on both projects will be reported back in due course to the AWG.

The East AWG are also reminded on their agreement on 5th January 2017 that Lagan Village Youth & Community Group (currently at Stage 2) should be considered first, if any BIF funding became available.

BIF Outer East

Members will recall that Committee have agreed in August 2017 to ringfenced BIF allocation of £2million for Outer East. The projects are; TAGIT Boxing Club; Braniel Church; Hanwood; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church and Lisnasharragh Community Schools project. The respective project status is detailed below.

Project	BIF Allocation	Status and update
STAGE 3 – COMMITTED PROJECTS		
TAGIT Boxing Club	£434,000	EA completed and presented to AWG in March 2018 – at this stage it was highlighted to Members that the cost for the preferred option (£484k) was over the in principle BIF allocation costs. Group have initial discussion with DfC for other sources of funding. Council is acting as delivery agent of the project. Project to proceed with the appointment of design team to work up the detailed designs.
Braniel Church	£390,000	Officer have meet Group representatives on 23 rd October 2018 to discuss a number of concerns raised at the Church's Property Board. It was agreed that representatives of Braniel Church would consider the options presented to include re-scoping the project works to meet the BIF budget. Council is acting as delivery agent of the project.
Hanwood Project	£396,000	Discussed at Due Diligence on 24 th October. Procurement for Design Team has commenced. Members are asked to note that the legal risk regarding outstanding charges have now been mitigated. There are a number of minor project issues which are being resolved. Council is acting as delivery agent of the project.

Lisnasharragh Community Schools Project	£398,000	Meeting with Education Authority NI as proprietor and potential delivery agent has been sought. Discussed at Due Diligence on 24 th October 2018. Project issues include; 1) Funding shortfall - per economic appraisal preferred option- estimated project cost of £528k ex. VAT - £130k over budget 2) Delivery - arrangement being explored with EANI 3) Governance- given there are 2 schools involved and EANI, need to determine the lead organisation. Group have discussion with political representatives and EANI in the hope of securing the funding shortfall.
Castlereagh Presbyterian Church	£382,000	Discussed at Due Diligence on 24 th October 2018. There are some outstanding legal matters that have been referred to the group for follow up i.e. title deeds, deed of trustees, etc. Funding shortfall remains – EA preferred option is £559k ex VAT - £177k over budget. Group have explored other funding options and a potential funder has been identified however the project needs to have Planning Application in place.

Members are reminded of the following note that was provided in March 2018 – ‘Members are asked to note that the figures in each of the EA’s are indicative only at this stage and are based on estimates. The final figures will only be known once tenders are returned. Members are asked to note that if these projects are moved to Stage 3 – Committed that a maximum BIF allocation is recommended and that projects will be subject to a satisfactory tender being returned within budgetary limits. All projects are also being moved subject to a number of caveats and all projects will be subject to the going through the Council’s due-diligence process.’

Next Steps

Members are asked to note that each BIF project in Outer East will now move to appoint the design teams to further work up the project details, when appropriate to do so. Members are already aware that many of the projects have funding shortfalls based on current estimates and that the Groups and officers are actively looking at ways to address these shortfalls. The outcome of the more detailed project designs and costs will be presented to the AWG in their future meeting for further consideration.”

After discussion, the Working Group:

- noted the contents of the report;
- agreed that the Director of Property and Projects would update the Working Group on the outcome of his meeting with the Strand Arts Centre at the next meeting; and

- agreed that a copy of the letter from the Director of Property and Projects to the Lisnasharragh Schools project would be circulated to the Members of the Area Working Group.

Date of Future Meetings

The Working Group agreed that it would meet at 5p.m. on the following dates in 2019:

- Thursday, 3rd January;
- Thursday, 7th February;
- Thursday, 7th March; and
- Thursday, 4th April.

Chairperson