

# East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 6th February, 2020

## MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Smyth (Chairperson);  
Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McReynolds;  
Aldermen Copeland, Haire, Rodgers  
and Sandford; and  
Councillors Brooks, Dorrian, Flynn, Hanvey,  
Howard, Hussey, M. Kelly, Kyle, Long,  
McMullan and Newton.

In attendance: Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and  
Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Election of Chairperson**

The Area Working Group was advised that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Moved by Councillor Long,  
Seconded by Councillor Howard and

Resolved – that Councillor Smyth, representing the Green Party, be elected to serve as Chairperson to the East Belfast Area Working Group until June, 2020; and

that the Democratic Unionist Party, the Alliance Party and the Ulster Unionist Party, as the three largest parties on the Working Group, would each nominate a Member to take the role of Chairperson for the following three years.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Mulholland.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Aldermen Haire and Rodgers, and Councillors Brooks, Dorrian, Flynn, Howard, M. Kelly and McMullan declared an interest in Item 5, Physical Programme Update, in that they were Board Members of the Eastside Partnership.

Councillors Newton and Kyle declared an interest in Item 5, Physical Programme Update, in that they were Board Members of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre.

Alderman Sandford declared an interest in Item 5, Physical Programme Update, in so far as he was on the Board of Governors of Cregagh Primary School.

### **Terms of Reference**

The Working Group noted the Terms of Reference for the Area Working Groups, which had been agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20th September, 2019.

### **Neighbourhood Regeneration**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Working Group with an overview of how the Area Working Groups would integrate with existing programmes of work and how it related to the overall aims contained within the Belfast Agenda, the Capital Investment Programme, the Local Development Plan and Economic Development.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services explained that the newly integrated Open Spaces and Streetscene was a new model of neighbourhood working which sought to maximise resources, avoid duplication and to make it easier for customers to understand the services that the Council provided.

The Area Working Group was provided with data and research statistics in respect of key issues which affected East Belfast. These included extreme inequality, mental health, dereliction and vandalism, health, Anti-Social Behaviour, educational underachievement and unemployment.

The Members were advised that a facilitated Workshop would take place for each area in April, in order to begin the process of identifying key issues at a wider area level. The Strategic Director advised the Working Group that the Workshop was to help determine the key elements of neighbourhood regeneration and to choose the 2 or 3 key priorities for the east of the City.

A Member stated that sustainability and resilience should be key considerations in determining the future of the City as a whole.

In response to requests from Members, the Working Group agreed that Mr M. Kinkead and Mr. M. Briggs, EastSide Partnership, and Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience, be invited to attend the East Belfast Workshop in April.

The Working Group noted the update which had been provided.

### **Update on the Physical Programme**

The Director of Physical Programmes provided the Working Group with an overview of the Council's Physical Programme, including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast

Investment Fund (BIF), the Social Outcome Fund (SOF) and other projects which the Council was delivering on behalf of other agencies.

### **Local Investment Fund (LIF)**

She explained to the Members that LIF was a £9million fixed programme of capital investment in non-Council neighbourhood assets over two tranches. LIF1, from 2012-2015, comprised a total of £5million, with East having been allocated £1.127million. LIF2 comprised a total of £4million, with East having been allocated £1.2million. The Members were advised that each LIF project was taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

<b>Table 1. LIF breakdown - East</b>	<b>LIF 1</b>		<b>LIF 2</b>	
<b>Stage/ Description</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Amount/ Value (£)</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Amount/ Value (£)</b>
Number of Projects Completed	7 (87%)	£877,500	11 (92%)	£1,146,589
Number of Projects in On-going Delivery				
Number of Projects in Pre-construction			1 (8%)	£15,000
Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (13%)	£250,000		
<b>Total Number of Approved Projects</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>£1,127,500</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>£1,161,589</b>

She provided the Working Group with an update on the two LIF projects which were yet to be completed.

In relation to the Westbourne Presbyterian Church – Titanic People project, the Working Group agreed that officers would meet with the group given the recent withdrawal of SIF funding for the project by the Executive Office. In respect of the Dock Titanic Quarter project, the Working group agreed that officers would write to the group advising them that they would be given three months in which to provide the Council with its decision regarding the location of the café. The Members noted that updates in respect of both remaining committed LIF projects would be submitted for consideration at the next meeting.

### **Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)**

The Director explained that BIF was a £28.2million fund for regeneration, partnership projects with a minimum £250,000 investment from the Council. She advised the Working Group that East Belfast had been allocated £5.5million under BIF, with an additional £2million allocated for use in Outer East, which took account of the areas which had been subsumed into the Belfast area under Local Government Reform.

<b>East</b>	<p><b>Stage 3:</b> Willowfield—£560k (completed); H&amp;W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.8m; Bloomfield—£440k</p> <p><b>Stage 2:</b> Lagan Village Youth &amp; Community— <i>(no commitment)</i></p>
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	<b>Stage 1:</b> East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John's Orangefield, Church of Ireland— <i>(no commitment / on long list)</i>
<b>Outer East *</b>	<b>Stage 3:</b> TAGIT- £434k; Braniel—£390k; Hanwood—£396k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k

The Working Group considered the updates and agreed the following actions for the projects which were at Stage 3:

PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	ACTION
<b>H&amp;W Welders Club</b>	£2,370,000	Revised completion date for project is now Apr 2021.	The AWG agreed that officers would continue engagement with the group and partners.
<b>Strand Arts Centre</b>	£1,800,000	Committed in principle in October 2016 (with 2 years to secure match funding; with the option to be extended by a further year – October 2019)  Development of a revised Stage 1 Design Report indicates £4.6m preferred option – the current fit-out and condition of the building significantly restricts the extent and quality of the entertainment services, significant investment is required.  <b>DfC currently considering business case. Have indicated that funding will only match the funding offer from the Council.</b>	The AWG agreed: 1. to undertake a site visit to the Strand; 2. that Council officers would seek a meeting with DfC and with the group in terms of timelines and next steps; and 3. that an update be submitted to a future meeting of the AWG (with a Special meeting to be called if necessary)
<b>Bloomfield Community Association</b>	£440,000	Committed in principle in September 2016 with Group given 6/9 months to secure match funding (would have been June 2017).  No significant progress for more than 3 years. The preferred option leaves a shortfall of £178,000 (as of 2016). Discussions have been had with DfC but, to date, no additional funding has been secured. Discussions with the group ongoing.	The AWG agreed: 1. to undertake a site visit to the BCA; 2. that Council officers would seek a meeting with the group and DfC in terms of timelines and next steps; and 3. that an update be submitted to the next meeting.

The Members were provided with updates on the Outer East BIF projects which were at Stage 3, as follows:

PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	ACTION
<b>Hanwood Project</b>	£396,000	Pitch and lighting element has been completed. Roller shutter installs to be completed by February 2020.	The AWG noted that officers would continue to engage with the group.
<b>TAGIT Boxing Club</b>	£434,000	Planning permission approved in November 2019. Contractor procurement had been completed (early January) – project currently £150k over allocated BIF amount (Contractor procurement can be held for 6months). DfC Sports Division have been formally approached to make up the shortfall.	The AWG agreed that: 1. officers would continue to engage with the group; and 2. DfC Sports Division and other funding solutions be explored.
<b>Braniel Church</b>	£390,000	Design work and costings had been completed with a view to submission of a planning application in March 2020, subject to project approval at Due Diligence.	The AWG noted that officers would continue to engage with the group.
<b>Lisnasharragh Community Schools Project</b>	£398,000	The Education Authority had confirmed it would be responsible for project delivery and would procure a contractor. EA had appointed a technical lead to prepare a feasibility study and officers to produce a business plan.	The AWG noted that officers would continue to engage with the group.
<b>Castlereagh Presbyterian Church</b>	£382,000	At final Due Diligence stage, however a funding shortfall remains – the Economic Appraisal preferred option was £559k, which was £177k over BIF allocated amount. The Group was considering reducing the scale of works.	The AWG agreed: 1. that officers would seek a meeting with the group in terms of the timeline around a reduced scale of works; and 2. that an update be submitted to next meeting.

The Director reminded the AWG that, at its meeting on 5th January, 2017, it had agreed that the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre (LVYCC) was a Stage 2 (uncommitted) project, and that it should be considered first, if any funding became available through the Outer East BIF fund.

During discussion on the Physical Programme, a Member stated that the Working Group should be mindful of the increase in construction costs.

### **Capital Programme**

The Working Group was provided with updates on projects in the Capital Programme in East Belfast, including the newly opened Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Alleygating Phase 4, Blanchflower Playing Fields, the New Crematorium, Avoniel and Templemore.

### **Social Outcome Fund**

The Director advised the Working Group that the Social Outcome Fund was a £4million ring-fenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. She advised that there was one project in East Belfast, near the Eastside Visitor Centre/C.S. Lewis Square, with an in-principle funding commitment of £700,000. The Working Group was advised that the Council would be working with Urban Villages on the joint project and that meeting were ongoing with Eastside Partnership to progress, parallel to the Urban Villages' approval process.

The Chairperson thanked the Director of Physical Programmes for the updates which had been provided.

### **Area Specific Issues**

#### **Hollywood Arches Greenway's projects (including Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan)**

(Ms. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager – East, attended in connection with the following two items)

The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that, over the past two years, the Council had been leading an integrated programme of work with partner organisations including Eastside Partnership, Urban Villages, DfI, Education Authority, DfC and Eastside Partnership, to regenerate a number of key stretches of open space along the Comber Greenway, linking to the Hollywood Arches and C. S Lewis Square. These included:

- the Bloomfield Walkway Environmental Improvements Project;
- the Ballymacarrett Walkway Environmental and Cycling Infrastructure Project; and
- BCC lands (Options Site) at Connswater Community Centre /Ballymacarrett Masterplan

### **Bloomfield Walkway**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the details of the planned installation of replacement lighting columns along the Bloomfield Walkway in March 2020, which would see the completion of a total capital investment of £220,000, £190,000 of which had been funded by the DfI, into the stretch of the Greenway between the Ravenscoft Carpark at the Hollywood Arches and the Beersbridge Road.

As agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in February 2019, she explained that the Council had delivered the project which focused on turning the Walkway into a welcoming and accessible community asset through the introduction of soft landscaping, planting, upgraded link paths into residential streets and a community event/bbq area.

She outlined to the Members that concept drawings for a second phase, focusing on the reconfiguration of Ravenscroft carpark to provide a segregated pathway, had also been developed through engagement with key partners but that funding to progress that phase had not yet been secured.

In order to encourage community ownership funding for the project, an animation programme to the value of £40,000 had been jointly committed to by The Executive Office and the Council. At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June 2019, it was agreed that officers would engage with the Inner East Forum to identify and arrange for a suitable community lead to take forward this work. An update would be submitted to a future meeting of the AWG in due course.

### **Ballymacarrett Walkway**

The Members were apprised of the projects which were currently being progressed in relation to the Council-owned Ballymacarrett Walkway, including the Environmental and Cycling Infrastructure Improvements Project, the Island Street Cycling Infrastructure Improvements Project and the Temporary car park at Connswater Community Centre.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager outlined that a £700,000 investment, comprising £590,000 of Urban Villages funding and a £110,000 contribution from DfI Roads under the Belfast Cycling Strategy, would see the introduction of a new 4 metre wide path and improved lighting along the stretch between Connswater Street and Dee Street, as well as improved access paths and soft landscaping to this Council-owned asset. She explained that Urban Villages had committed roughly £25,000 in revenue funding for Eastside Greenway's delivery of a programme of activities to animate the space.

She advised the Working Group that, following on from initial development work with partners and the development of a design concept which would reconfigure Island Street to provide a safe, segregated cycle path linking Ballymacarrett Walkway at Dee Street through to the Titanic Halt station, a commitment of capital investment from DfI Roads and from The Executive Office (via the Urban Villages Programme) had been confirmed in principle. The Members were advised that, as the road schemes fell under DfI Roads remit and were classified as permitted development, it would take forward the works separately and engage with the Council to ensure consistency of design with the Ballymacarrett and Bloomfield Walkway projects.

### **Temporary Car Park at Connswater Community Centre**

The Members were advised that the planned realignment and widening of the Comber Greenway path would see the removal of an area informally used as a car park, adjacent to the Connswater Community Centre. The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that Council funding for alternative temporary car parking provision had been secured within the fenced off area of waste land adjacent to the centre and was currently the subject of a planning application.

A Member expressed concern regarding the removal of car parking spaces close to the nearby Health Centre, particularly for older people who drove to medical appointments.

In response to Members' requests, the Working Group agreed to undertake a site visit to the area to examine the proposals at first hand. In response to a further Member's query, it was suggested that officers should discuss with the nearby Health Centre that the car park could be limited to a 2 hour maximum as a way of preventing all-day commuter parking in the area.

The Working Group was advised that, at its meeting on 7th March, 2019, it had agreed a preferred option of a high level masterplan for the Council owned lands at Ballymacarrett, which indicated three land use zones. The Neighbourhood Services Manager outlined the details of the three zones, which consisted of a community/children and young people's services zone, a private development zone and a play-park/recreational space.

The Working Group agreed to carry out a site visit to the area in order to examine the parking issues which had been raised.

### **King George V Playing Fields**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised the Working Group that the developer of the former Maple Leaf Club site, for 12 social and affordable apartments, had agreed to a Section 76 Agreement. She explained that the financial agreement was to offset the under provision of open space in the development by offering a contribution of £52,000 towards improvements to a local park, namely, King George V Playing Fields.

The Members were provided with the details of the proposed improvement works, which included a new trim trail, Parkgate boundary enhancements and significant tree and shrub planting to the western boundary.

During discussion, a Member queried why the King George V Playing Fields had been chosen. He added that he had previously asked officers in the Planning department if a Section 76 Agreement might be utilised to support improvements to the steps between Strandburn Park and Sydenham Park, but that they had advised that the steps had no relationship with the development, despite being beside it, and could therefore not be considered for improvement under the Section 76 Agreement.

The officers advised the Members that the King George V Playing Fields were the nearest accessible public open space and were approximately 400metres from the Maple Leaf Club site.

A Member added that there had been recent issues with scramblers on the site. A number of Members queried why there would be no fencing or floodlighting as part of the development of the pitch and that it was an important community facility.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager explained that fencing would not be permitted by the owners of the site, Fields in Trust. The Strategic Director added that floodlights were never included in the plans for the site.

In response to a further Member's question regarding upcoming NI Water works at the site, the Director of Physical Programmes advised the Working Group that NI Water would be obligated to leave the site as they found it.



After discussion, during which a number of Members agreed that the steps at Strandburn Park were especially unsafe, the Strategic Director agreed to investigate the ownership and to submit a report to the next meeting of the Working Group in respect of potential remedial action.

In response to a Member's suggestion, the Working Group agreed to add the King George V Playing Fields to the list of site visits to be undertaken.

The Working Group noted:

- the £52,000 developer contribution for the King George V Playing Fields;
- that information sharing with the local community was planned in the coming weeks; and
- that works would be delivered by the City and Neighbourhood Services Landscape Team by way of the Council's existing measured terms contracts.

### **Doctor Pitt Memorial Park**

(Mr. A. Charles, Project Sponsor, attended in connection with this item)

The Working Group was provided with an update on the plans for the proposed redevelopment of the Doctor Pitt Memorial Park under the Urban Villages Programme.

The Project Sponsor explained that the Pitt Park redevelopment EastSide had been classified as a transformational project for the area as part of wider strategic developments at Fraser Pass, Titanic Halt and Ballymacarrett walkway. He explained that the Pitt Park project had been brought forward through an application for funding by the local community partner, the Ballymac Friendship Trust.

The Members were advised that the Programme was a key part of the Executive's Together Building a United Community Strategy, designed to help improve good relations and to help develop thriving places where there had previously been a history of deprivation and community tension.

In response to a Member's question, the Project Sponsor explained that the designs would be going out for public consultation in March and that Members would be advised of the dates in due course.

The Working Group noted the update which had been provided.

### **Correspondence**

#### **Orchardville**

The Working Group noted that a letter had been received from Orchardville, a charity and social enterprise for people with learning disabilities and autism. The Members noted that it had been sent to the former Chair of the Working Group in May, 2019, when the Working Group for the new Council term had not yet been established.

The Members were advised that Orchardville was requesting financial support through the Local Investment Fund (LIF).

In accordance with previous discussions, the Working Group agreed that a letter be sent to Orchardville advising it that the Working Group had just held its inaugural meeting in the new Council term and to advise it of the current situation with LIF and to advise them that the Council had recently agreed to establish a new Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, the criteria for which was still to be determined.

Chairperson