



Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Council Panel
Date:	12:30 pm, 30 September 2020
Councillors in attendance:	<p>Councillor Uel Mackin – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (Chair) Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Phillip Brett – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Glenn Finlay – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Robert Adair – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Richard Smart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Stephen Dunlop – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin – Belfast City Council Councillor Eric Hanvey - Belfast City Council Councillor Sorcha Eastwood – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Allan Ewart MBE – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Audrey Wales MBE -Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robin Stewart – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Robert Burgess – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Pete Byrne – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Willie Clarke – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p>
Officers:	<p>David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Anne Donaghy – Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Suzanne Wylie – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCD Programme Director, Belfast City Council Jayne Brady – Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner, Belfast City Council Donal Rogan – Director of Service Transformation, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Sinead Lavery – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Shelley Baldrick – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Nicola Rowles – Interim Director of Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Conor Mallon – Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Theresa Slevin – BRCD Programme Office</p>

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	Cllr Mackin welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting and Suzanne Wylie outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.
2.0	Apologies
2.1	Apologies were received from: Alderman Michael Henderson (Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council)
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Cllr Mackin asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Cllr Adair raised concern regarding the level of detail within the minutes and also queried the accuracy in relation to the last sentence in Section 8 regarding a decision to host an engagement session with MLAs. Damien Martin (DM) confirmed that the vote related to whether all MLAs or the Belfast Region MLAs should be invited to the session and it was agreed that Belfast Region MLAs should be invited.</p> <p>Cllr Gaston raised concern that the last meeting of the panel was over 8 months ago and repeated his concern in relation to the representation of councillors on the Executive Board. The Chair proposed to come back to the issue of councillor representation on the Executive Board later in the meeting.</p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed. Seconded – Ald Brian Kingston.</p> <p>Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Programme Report
5.1	<p>Damien Martin (BRCD Programme Director) provided an update on the progress to date across the BRCD programme namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The delays to the timeline for deal development due to Covid-19 crisis, however the ambition remains for funding to flow from April 2021, with Deal Document completed in advance of this date. • The progress that has been made in Outline Business Case (OBC) development, with OBCs due to be completed for most projects in the next two months. • Due to the direct impact of the Covid crisis and the delays in the completion of OBCs, planned work on strategic engagement, including both business and political engagement has been delayed. • The key role that the BRCD could play in supporting the economic recovery across Northern Ireland.

David Burns, (Chief Executive, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council) outlined the key issues and challenges facing the programme namely:

- Financial Climate – whilst BRCD represents a big opportunity to boost the economy, the challenges for Councils in relation to the financial commitment required is acknowledged.
- Covid-19 – has presented challenges specifically in relation to the Tourism and Regeneration projects and the phasing and delivery of these needs consideration.
- Investment Climate – leveraging of private sector investment is a key priority of BRCD but this is more challenging in the current climate.
- Timing and Momentum – concerns about the potential for further delays in considering business cases, due to the pressures for example on the UK and NI Government departments, and the associated impact on partner and private sector confidence.
- Collaboration – the need to improve collaboration across City and Growth Deals whilst recognising that the BRCD is significantly more advanced than other Deals;
- Engagement – the need to progress political and business engagement, whilst recognising the challenges facing the business community at the moment and that the BRCD is a medium to long term programme.

Cllr Casey noted the amount of work that has been completed to date and the amount of work that remains but highlighted the need for the projects to be delivered as soon as possible to deliver a much needed boost for local areas, particularly in light of the current economic climate. A query was raised in relation to the ability of some projects to advance at an earlier stage. DM noted that all BRCD Partners are working hard to get OBCs completed, but it was acknowledged that some projects may be ready sooner than others. However, Partners are confident that a process can be managed that delivers for all Partners- accepting the long-term nature of the programme and that all projects will not happen at the same time. DM highlighted the potential for a Digital Transformation proposal to the complementary fund as a potential early win for all Partners.

Alderman Wales queried how the money will flow and if there will be an agreed budget for projects.

DM reported that the NI Governance and Funding arrangements have been agreed and funding will flow through an accountable body, with the exception of the Dfl funding. By the end of the OBC process it is expected that each project will have an allocated budget.

Alderman Ewart noted the increased Dfl project budgets, concerns regarding the continued increase in project costs during project development and queried whether all OBCs were required before money could flow for any project. DM noted the very early stage of development of the Dfl projects and the large amounts of Optimism Bias included due to this and reported that it seemed unlikely that the programme would be able to fund all of the Dfl projects at their current scale. DM acknowledged that longer timescales could result in increased costs but noted the multiple processes for the OBCs to progress through to get approval for expenditure. DM noted that there needs to be an understanding of the individual project budget requirements

	<p>within the OBCs before collective decisions can be made, for example on the allocation of funding between the Infrastructure and Tourism and Regeneration pillars. However, it should nevertheless be possible to develop a phased approach that would allow the most advanced projects to progress whilst further development work continues on the other projects.</p> <p>Cllr Whyte reported the current feelings of negativity within the business sector and that greater communication of BRCD and the economic boost it will provide should be communicated to improve awareness. DM noted that the OBCs are the key to unlocking the Deal and that completing the OBCs had been the priority over the last few months. However, DM agreed that it is now time to start focusing on the communication and engagement.</p> <p>Suzanne Wylie highlighted the complexity of the funding arrangements for the programme, which includes funding from UK Government, NI Executive, 6 Councils and 2 universities and the need for each funding body to be content on the robustness of the OBCs, which results in multiple approval processes for the OBCs. It was also noted that the funding will be spread over at least 10 years, with the UK Government funding being provided in a flat profile.</p> <p>Cllr Stewart queried what would happen if a project fails to progress. David Burns reported that BRCD partners are working hard with the Departments to ensure that the OBCs are robust and scalability of projects is being explored to assist affordability.</p> <p>Members were content to note the content of the report and the answers provided.</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Covid-19 and the role of BRCD in recovery</p>
<p>6.1</p>	<p>Suzanne Wylie (Chief Executive, Belfast City Council) and Jayne Brady (Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner) presented on the role of the BRCD in our economic recovery. The key points highlighted included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI and its economy have been significantly and extensively affected by Covid-19 • There is a risk of compounding inequality and the BRCD commitment to inclusive growth is more important than ever to maximise job creation and retention • BRCD has commitment of funding and will play a key role in our economic recovery • OBCs have been revised to ensure Covid has been considered in their development • There is a recognition that investments in tourism are long-term in nature and align with the expected return of international visitors to pre-pandemic levels in 2-3 years • UK Government has recognised the need to double investment in R&D and to redress the imbalance in funding for regions like Northern Ireland • The BRCD investments build on the strongest and most resilient sectors, delivering digital Innovation & skills capability that is now so critical to businesses

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Task and Finish Group have agreed a number of interventions that can be delivered to support those most impacted by Covid and includes delivery of a reskilling programme funded by the Department of the Economy, which will be delivered in advance of BRCD funding, but was developed through the partnership created by BRCD. <p>The Chairperson thanked Suzanne Wylie and Jayne Brady for their presentation.</p>
7.0	NI City & Growth Deals: Governance and Funding Arrangement
7.1	<p>David Burns, (Chief Executive, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council) highlighted the key points from the NI City and Growth Deals: Governance and Funding paper which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NI Executive agreed the NI Governance and Funding arrangements and confirmed match funding for the NI City and Growth Deals in May. In May, the NI Executive also agreed to the establishment of a complementary fund of £100million for the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), Mid & South-West Growth Deal and Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal. The terms for this fund have not been agreed but Partners will be working collaboratively on potential ideas that will bring collective benefit to the three regions. One potential small scale proposal for the complementary fund, involves establishing a flexible support fund, providing small scale capital grants for small businesses seeking to invest in digital technology as part of an overall digital transformation plan. SOLACE have created a Working Group which will consider emerging cross-deal proposals for the complementary fund. <p>Alderman Wales queried how quickly the complementary fund could be accessed to provide support to local businesses struggling due to Covid-19. David Burns noted that Partners were working with Departments to determine the process for access to the funding but understood that subject to business case approval there is potential for some funding to flow at an early stage.</p>
8.0	Schedule of Meetings
8.1	The schedule of meetings was agreed.
9.0	Press Release
9.1	The BRCD Council Panel agreed the press release in relation to the meeting.
10.0	AOB

10.1	<p>Cllr Gaston raised a concern in relation to the representation of councillors on the Executive Board and proposed that one member from each Council should attend the Executive Board with the Chief Executive. Seconded - Cllr Adair</p> <p>Cllr McLaughlin stated that he was of the view that the Executive Board was not the appropriate place for political representatives, given that each Council has their own accountability and reporting processes and that Councils are contributing only 10% of funding to the overall BRCD.</p> <p>Cllr Brett queried whether the Panel had the authority to change the representation on the Executive Board as the governance arrangements had been agreed by the NI Executive and UK Government and indicated that he did not believe the proposed councillor representation on the Executive Board would be appropriate.</p> <p>Cllr Casey stated that he did not support councillor representation on the Executive Board as councillors are kept updated through the Chief Executives and Council reporting processes.</p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove indicated that he did not believe that political representation as proposed was appropriate, particularly given the level of Council contribution to the BRCD funding.</p> <p>The Chair moved to a vote on the proposal and the proposal fell.</p> <p>Cllr Gaston requested increased engagement of councillors on the work of the BRCD moving forward.</p>
10.2	<p>Cllr Adair proposed that a meeting with the BRCD MLAs is organised. Seconded – Alderman Wales</p> <p>The Chair moved to a vote on the proposal, and the proposal was approved.</p>
11.0	<p>Date, time and location of next meeting Wednesday 25 November at 12:30 pm Mid and East Antrim Borough Council</p>