

# West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 29th October, 2020

WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP  
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Corr (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner);  
Alderman Kingston; and  
Councillors Black, Carson, Matt Collins,  
Donnelly, Hutchinson,  
McLaughlin and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Mr. S. Lavery, Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager  
West;  
Mrs. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration  
Manager; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

## **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Michael Collins, Garrett, Groves, Heading and Magennis.

## **Declarations of Interest**

The following Members declared an interest in relation to item 3 on the agenda, Whiterock Locality Planning, in so far as they either worked for or were associated with Groups which had been referred to in the update, as follows:

- Councillor Corr as an employee of the Falls Community Council (St. Comgall's); and
- Councillor McLaughlin as an employee of the Upper Springfield Development Trust.

## **Presentation – Greater Shankill Community Council – Royal British Legion Proposal**

Mr. John MacVicar and Mr. John Grace, representing the Greater Shankill Community Council, attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. MacVicar provided the Working Group with an overview of the history in respect of the Greater Shankill Community Council (GSCC) which was established in 1972. He advised that the role of the Community Council was to support groups, organisations and individuals in their efforts to advance community development and to improve the quality of life of residents, through the provision of support services, advice, and information and by encouraging networking and mutual support within groups and

organisations and to facilitate co-operation and collaborative action. He referred to the recent success of the organisation in bringing together a wide-ranging group of organisations and individuals to help and support the Greater Shankill community against the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. MacVicar advised that the Community Council had close ties with the local Royal British Legion branch Oldpark/Cavehill, the branch and its members had used the Community Council's premises as a base for the last fifteen years. Over the past few years the GSCC had assisted in the branch in the process of buying the derelict site at Langley Street, putting outline sketch plans together and liaising with the local community in an attempt to seek community buy in for what would have been first and foremost a community hub. Unfortunately, despite the GSCC's best efforts and the efforts of members of the Royal British Legion there had been little buy-in from the local community.

He continued that, as discussions had evolved, a second approach had been discussed and considered at length and explained that this would entail utilising the premises of GSCC and the purchase by the Royal British Legion of 177/179 Shankill Road. It would include a complete refurbishment of the premises and include a front of house mini museum.

He then proceeded to outline the proposal in more detail and drew the Members' attention to the three design plans that had been circulated with the agenda. The Members noted that:

- the building would be DDA compliant, with accessible door and passageways and a lift to all three floors;
- the refurbishment would provide access to a suite of computers for residents to explore genealogy opportunities. This has been a growing development in the area and he explained that the GSCC had worked with local groups including SASH (Shankill Area Social History) and Row on Row - The Shankill Remembers; and
- this refurbishment would allow for an expansion of Advice Services to full time.

Mr MacVicar concluded by advising that should this project proceed, it would provide an opportunity for Belfast City Council to affirm its ongoing commitment to the Greater Shankill. He stated that they were seeking in the region of £300k of funding and they were confident that they could bring forward the proposed refurbishment within budget.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

### **Whiterock Locality Planning**

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**To provide members with an update on potential projects to be funded as part of Whiterock Locality Planning pilot project.**

## 2.0 Recommendations

- To seek approval that the following projects receive funding from the remaining budgets within the Whiterock Locality Planning Pilot Project;

PROJECT	GROUP	AMOUNT
Access to Hills Scoping Exercise	Upper Springfield Development Trust	£15,000
Housing Social Innovation Scoping	Falls Community Council	£15,000

## 3.0 Main report

### 3.1 Key Issues

In November 2016, Belfast City Council agreed to undertake Locality Planning pilots to test how Community Planning might be applied at the local area level and to help inform future neighbourhood working. One of the areas chosen was within the Whiterock locality of West Belfast;

- 3.2 To support this work, Council also agreed to commission the Young Foundation to work with officers to test ideas on how to develop a 'social innovation model that could be considered as part of our emerging area planning model.
- 3.3 As part of this model, a Challenge Programme was developed with funding available in each locality planning area for up to four projects that can be delivered within the area with a maximum £15,000 per project.
- 3.4 Previously, to access this funding local groups involved in the locality planning process worked with the Young Foundation and Council officers to develop potential ideas which received a recommendation for funding.
- 3.5 This work was developed as part of our approach to neighbourhood working, which has now been superseded by what we are now calling Neighbourhood Regeneration, a presentation on this approach was delivered at the Area Working Groups in January. Further discussion on this process will follow at November's AWG, which will work towards further developing how we align programmes and services and work in specific geographical locations to improve outcomes for residents.
- 3.6 In January 2020 members also agreed that the Neighbourhood Services Manager would work with local residents, members and community groups to develop suitable ideas to for the area working group to consider

funding to be allocated as part of this process, subject to SP&R approval and Council ratification.

- 3.7 For the purposes of this report we want to provide a summary of the proposed projects that will be receive funding subject to members agreement and further oversight by officers.
- 3.8 It should be noted that this funding was not awarded through an open call; it was restricted to those projects that involved local residents and were developed by those who have been involved in the locality planning process. While, we do not have the Young Foundation to support this work, officers have continued to ensure any funding awarded is within the priorities of the original programme of work.

### **Proposed Projects**

#### **1. Access into the Hills from Mount Loney**

- 3.9 This project will work with residents, local community and statutory partners including the Belfast Hills Partnership to build on previous work, to explore a potential project that will develop a concept which will look at access point into the Black Mountain from the Old Whiterock Road.
- 3.10 As part of this work, consideration will be given to wider work being undertaken with regards to similar ideas within the wider geographical area, including work that is emerging internally as part of an overall strategy for Belfast Urban Greenways and the Forth Meadow Community Greenway. Some of the potential ideas that could be looked at through this scoping exercise includes a walkway that brings you up and across the Hatchet Field and then to the Divis summit and beyond.
- 3.11 This project and associated funding would be managed by Upper Springfield Development Trust, within Council financial procedures, with oversight being provided through council officers.

#### **2. Whiterock – Ballymurphy Housing Social Innovation Scoping**

- 3.12 In Whiterock and Ballymurphy communities there is a perception that the supply of social rented and affordable (for example, low cost home ownership) housing options are limited and that there is a need for two and three bed, small family units. There are also perceived issues that the process by which social housing is allocated can contribute to the community safety concerns being concentrated in certain locations within neighbourhoods.

- 3.13 Through this project we would like to skill up the local residents and community structures to ensure their views and ideas are included as part of the spatial planning on any local housing development and use the learning from this in terms of any good practice being used in other parts of the City. Any work developed and associated learning undertaken as part of this will be developed within the parameters of what is being developed as part of wider Citywide strategies agreed within the Belfast Agenda**
- 3.14 This project and associated funding would be managed by Falls Community Council, within Council financial procedures, with oversight being provided through council officers.**

**Next Steps**

- 3.15 Subject to approval, officers will work with members, residents and the local community and relevant partnerships to further develop the proposed projects and oversee the development of this work.**

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 Resourcing for this project is already included in budget estimates.**

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications**

- 5.1 Equality and good relations implications were considered as part of the Locality Planning process.”**

A Member welcomed the fact that the access to the Belfast Hills project was being revisited with the proposed scoping exercise and reiterated the need for linked up access to the hills to make them more accessible. He referred to the ongoing pandemic and how it had highlighted the need for access to green space for people’s physical and mental health.

A further Member suggested that he would like to see a feasibility study in regard to proposal being progressed.

The Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that successful progression of the initiative would involve both extensive statutory and community ‘buy in’, therefore, initial engagement was required before progressing to an actual feasibility study.

The Working Group adopted the recommendations.

### **Area Working - verbal update**

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

The Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager then drew the Members' attention to the presentation in respect of the Neighbourhood Regeneration and Area Working Plan which had been presented to the Working Group at its January 2020 meeting and which again had been recirculated with the agenda as a recap of what the programme of work actually entailed.

He reminded the Working Group that this was a development plan for the city as a whole and captured in essence where the city needed to be in complimenting the themes within the Belfast Agenda.

He specifically reiterated the work involved in regard to the implementation of the Neighbourhood Regeneration and Area Working Plan, which would incorporate the following key strands:

- Belfast Agenda and Governance
- Integrated Service Delivery
- Capital Investment
- Evidence based decision making
- Local Development Plan
- City Regeneration
- Economic Development

The Working Group noted the need to integrate services and develop external partnerships in the pursuit of community engagement and Neighbourhood Regeneration. He specifically referred to the City and Neighbourhood Services approach to integrated service which included:

- Open Spaces and Streetscene
- City Protection
- Community Provision and
- Resources and Fleet.

During discussion, the Working Group referred to a range of issues which were relevant to West Belfast, including amongst other things - mental health, drug dependency, anti-social behaviour and unemployment. The Members reiterated that they were keen to discuss and progress these issues at a local level.

The Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager agreed with the Members and noted the strong political/corporate commitment and assured the Members that the work would be progressed hand in hand with communities as co-design and genuine partnership were at the core of progressing the area working initiative. He stated that the ultimate goal for all concerned was to ensure that Council's services and investments connected more at a local neighbourhood level, ultimately improving the quality of life for citizens in Belfast.

The Director referred to the links between Citywide Regeneration and the Council's local development plans and advised that this would be an evolving piece of work which would now also have to take into consideration both the Council's and communities emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that more information would be submitted in respect of Area Recovery Planning to the November/December round of Area Working Groups.

The Working Group thanked both the Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager and Director for the update and also thanked the staff within the Council who had assisted with the initial emergency response to COVID-19.

Noted.

### **Requests for Capital Funding**

The Working Group referred to the undernoted table which detailed those community groups and organisations who had previously presented to the West Area Working Group seeking financial assistance:

<b>Project/ groups</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notes/ comments</b>
<i>Requested for funding support</i>		
Conway Education Centre	To support on its plans to refurbish the building	Community led proposal. Noted Oct 2017
Good Shepherd Primary School	Adult learning centre and outdoor space project	Community led proposal. Noted April 2018
New Life City Church	Financial support towards the capital costs of its building	Community led proposal
St Galls GAC	Community space integrating sport	Community led proposal. Noted April 2018
St John's GAC	Redevelopment of the pitch	Community led proposal. Noted April 2018
St Joseph's Centre for the Deaf	Building refurbishment	Community led proposal
Townsend St Social Outreach Centre	Plans to refurbish and renovate its building	Community led proposal. Noted Jan 2018
An Culturlann	Financial support for the initial £800k required to purchase the building	Noted in Aug 2017
Brassneck Theatre Company	Possible match funding the Arts Council's contribution to help the organisation	Noted in Jan 2019
Sports and Leisure Swifts Football Club	Funding for the redevelopment of playing surfaces and facilities at Glen Road	Noted in Jan 2019

<i>Other support</i>		
Belfast Hills Partnership	Accessing and promoting the area further via path networks and walking routes at Belfast Hills Greenway - links with National Trust	Noted. Aug 2017
Ardmonagh Family Centre	Land acquisition	Community led proposal. Noted April 2018
Faillte Feirste Thiar	Support to group's Action Plan	Community led proposal. Noted Feb 2018
Forbairt Feirste	Proposal to erect a glazed archive/ observatory above the existing Coláiste Feirste handball building	Community led proposal
St Oliver Plunkett - Lenadoon Park	Upgrade- link to St. Oliver Plunkett FC	Community led proposal. Noted Feb 2018
Cherry Wildlife Garden Dunmurry	Possible additional works in the form of additional lighting and fencing at Twinbrook Wildlife Garden	Noted in Sept 2018. Recently discussed in Sept 20 meeting
Mount Eagles/ Lagmore Youth and Community Association	Presentation - request of possibility of adopting a land	Noted in Nov 2018. Recently discussed in Sept 20 meeting

The Members noted that this was a detailed and comprehensive list and further noted that some of the groups/organisations were no longer in existence or indeed their proposals now might have changed.

Detailed discussion ensued in respect of how the list could be updated. Several Members were cautious about approaching the groups as they felt any contact might give false hope that funding existed or was going to become available.

The Director reiterated that no new funding streams had been identified and urged caution in permitting organisations/groups to present at future meetings without making the Council's position in regard to funding clear.

Following discussion it was agreed that officers would revisit the list to try and establish what requests remained valid and agreed that an updated list would be submitted to a future meeting which could be considered further at this stage.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group was advised that the next quarterly meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for Thursday, 26th November.

Chairperson