

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 5th November, 2020

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Alderman Copeland (Chairperson)
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire,
Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Brooks, de Faoite, Flynn,
Howard, Hussey, M. Kelly, Kyle, Long,
McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland
Newton and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 8th October were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Sandford declared an interest in Item 3b, Education Authority re: the Lisnasharragh Schools project, in so far as he was on the Board of Governors of Cregagh Primary School. He left the meeting during Members' discussion on that item and did not participate in the vote.

Presentations - Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)

Strand Arts Centre

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. Turtle, Chief Executive, Mr. J. Hegan, Chair of Strand Arts Centre, and Mr. R. Gaston, Marketing & Fundraising Manager of Strand Arts Centre to the meeting.

Ms. Turtle provided the Working Group with an overview of the community, heritage and tourism project which sought to improve the arts infrastructure of the historic Strand Cinema in the east of the City.

The Members were provided with a detailed timeline of the progress which had been made to date in terms of project delivery, including that the RIBA Stage 1 report had been completed in February 2020.

The Working Group was advised of the confirmed funding to date and a number of sources of anticipated income for the project. Mr. Gaston advised the Working Group that, once the £1.8million funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) was

confirmed, and the designs were finalised, other funding sources would come on board. The Members were advised that the Arts Council had spoken with DfC last week regarding a bid. Mr. Hegan added that the Council's Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) was essential to the project.

A Member asked the representatives where the remaining £1.1million of funding would come from. In response, Mr. Gaston advised that there were a variety of Trusts and Foundations which would be approached, and that naming rights and projects such as a "name a seat" would also be utilised to raise the remaining funds.

In response to a further Member's question, regarding the predicted timescale for getting the required planning permission, the representatives stated that they had been in touch with planning officers in relation to the process and that it would take an estimated 6-9 months.

In relation to a further question in respect of whether they had undertaken any fundraising for the project themselves yet, they advised that they were waiting for confirmation of the £1.8million of funding from DfC which would open up more opportunities for the project. Mr. Gaston also advised that they would be grateful if the Council would consider releasing £150,000 out of its agreed £1.8million of funding, to allow the RIBA Stage to progress.

The Chairperson advised the representatives that no decision would be taken at the meeting, thanked them for their attendance and they left the meeting.

After further discussion, the Working Group agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the issues which had been raised in respect of the project, including an update from DfC in relation to when they would make a funding decision.

Bloomfield Community Association

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. K. Purdy, Manager of Bloomfield Community Association, and Ms. C. Martin, a Committee member of BCA, to the meeting.

Ms. Purdy provided the Working Group with an overview of the projects that the Association carried out each year, including a holiday hunger programme, intergenerational projects and environmental projects.

The Working Group was advised that the current facilities were not fit for purpose and that they wanted to increase the number of children and young people that they could help.

Ms. Martin explained how the Bloomfield Community Association had helped her as a young person and how it had also been crucial in helping her child to become much more confident.

In respect of potential funding from the Department for Communities (DfC), Ms. Purdy advised the Members that DfC had advised that it was considering it within their 2021 budget but that everything had come to a halt due to the coronavirus. She added that she was seeking a meeting with the new Minister for Communities.

In response to a Member's question regarding how BCA were going to fundraise £180,000, Ms. Purdy explained that the coronavirus pandemic had impacted their plans to raise money in 2020.

The Chairperson advised the representatives that no decision would be taken at the meeting, thanked them for their attendance and they left the meeting.

After further discussion, the Working Group agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the issues which had been raised, including an update from DfC in relation to when they would make a funding decision, and in respect of other possible funding streams for the project.

Presentations - Outer BIF

Castlereagh Presbyterian Church

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. T. Busby, Church Secretary, to the meeting.

Mr. Busby provided the Working Group with the details of the proposed works to the Church Hall at Castlereagh Presbyterian.

He explained that the Church had approached five other funders in respect of grants which might be available to the church, in terms of covering the funding deficit, and that the response had been positive.

In response to a Member's question, Mr. Busby explained that the congregation would like to contribute to the project, and that the Church had paid for the architect's fees.

The Chairperson advised Mr. Busby that no decision would be taken at the meeting, thanked him for his attendance and he left the meeting.

After further discussion, the Working Group agreed that the Director of Physical Programmes would submit a report to a future meeting in relation to whether the other funding streams that Mr. Busby had referenced were viable options, the project outcomes and community benefits and whether the congregation would be fundraising further amounts towards the project.

Education Authority re: Lisnasharragh Schools project

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. Bell, Senior Quantity Surveyor at the Education Authority, to the meeting.

Mr. Bell advised the Working Group that work had been ongoing in respect of the joint scheme, for Lisnasharragh Primary School and Cregagh Primary School, and that all approvals were now in place to progress both schemes. He explained that both schemes were similar in nature, both in size and value and that design development was due to commence next week.

He explained that the applications for planning permission would be submitted in the third week of September and that, in the mean-time, the technical design would be progressed to get it up to tender stage.

The Members were advised that the anticipated date for receiving planning for both schemes was mid-February 2021. Mr. Bell outlined that that would give them the ability to get the tender report in place by the end of March 2021, with a view to getting works on site by mid-April, 2021. The Working Group was advised that both schemes had a 16 week contract period, where both schemes were due to be completed by the end of August 2021, in time for the new school year.

It was highlighted that the most likely hold up in the progress of the project would be a delay in attaining the planning permission.

A number of Members welcomed the progress which had been made on the project.

(Alderman Sandford, as a Member of the Board of Governors of Cregagh Primary School, declared an interest in the item and left the meeting at this point and did not participate in the vote)

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Brooks and

Resolved - That the Working Group notes the progress to date from the Education Authority and that it is content to progress the project.

Date of Next Meeting

The Director of Physical Programmes advised the Members that the next quarterly meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for 4th February, 2021.

She explained that the Director of Neighbourhood Services wanted to provide each Area Working Group with an update in relation to the future area programme in the next few weeks. The Working Group therefore agreed to hold a Special meeting, for the purpose of receiving an update from the Director of Neighbourhood Services, on Thursday, 3rd December at 3pm.

Chairperson