

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Tuesday, 24th November, 2020

REMOTE SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);
Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Donnelly, Ferguson, Gormley,
Hanvey, Heading, T. Kelly, Lyons, Maskey,
McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, O'Hara,
and Spratt

Also attended: Councillors Baker, Black, Bunting, Canavan, De Faoite,
Flynn, Kyle and McDonough-Brown.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for the inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie, Howard and McAllister.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item were restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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**DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Fund - Dfl Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund
and Dfl Autumn Special Update**

Dfl Roads Report – Autumn 2020

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an overview of the infrastructure related items which had been previously raised by Council in advance of the Dfl Autumn Report including:

- Partnership working;
- City Maintenance;
- Belfast Bike Network Update;
- Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan; and
- Residents Parking Zones.

DFC Revitalisation Programme – Blue and Green Infrastructure Projects

The Committee was reminded that the Tranche 2 Letter of Offer had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) for the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme on 28th October.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development explained that the Dfl contribution had been allocated from its Blue and Green infrastructure fund. Accordingly, the Department has identified that the funding should be directed to projects that would sustain and improve the availability of sustainable green and blue infrastructure in the city. She advised that the funding was for capital works only, and was predicated with a requirement to be delivered before the 31st March, 2021.

She informed the Committee that officers from Place and Economy and Physical Programmes have reviewed existing work-streams to ensure maximum benefit of the allocated funding aligned with the requirement to meet the in-year funding requirement and outlined the proposed project delivery aligned to the Dfl Blue and Green Infrastructure fund, as set out in the report.

During discussion, the Committee welcomed the additional funding for the Blue and Green Infrastructure Projects

DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Fund – DfC Capital Allocation

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October, it had approved the allocation of £140k to the Destination CQ BID for the delivery of interventions to support pedestrianisation and environmental improvements in Union St and Exchange Place / Warehouse Entry.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, subsequently, an engineering assessment had introduced the requirement for additional structural support and a request for additional funding allocation in the amount of £20k to Destination CQ to support the additional works at Union Street had been received to be allocated to the Letter of Offer for Destination CQ Bid.

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In response to questions from Members, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that feasibility and future proofing of the projects would be taken into consideration and preparation for the potential of further funding would also be undertaken. She advised that further information would be provided to the Committee on the upgrade of the Belfast Bikes.

In response to a question from a Member, she also advised that DfI had indicated that the Experimental Road Order for the temporary pedestrianisation of Union Street should be progressed in early December..

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Approved the proposed budget lines for the Department for Infrastructure contribution of £749k to the Department for Communities Covid-19 City Revitalisation programme, as outlined in the report;
2. Approved additional funding allocation in the amount of £20k to Destination CQ to support additional works at Union Street;
3. Agreed the funding allocation of £99k to BIDONE to deliver the Green and Blue Infrastructure elements for Church Lane; and
4. Noted the updates on infrastructure related items in advance of the DfI Autumn Presentation.

Presentations

Translink

The Chairperson welcomed representatives of Translink to the meeting: Mr. D. Bannon, Belfast Area Manager, Mr. B. Gallagher, Communication and Stakeholder Manager. Mr. D. McAllister, Senior Programme Manager, and Mr. L. McComb, Director of Regeneration.

Mr. Bannon advised that Translink was the accessible, inclusive and green public transport provider that would help Northern Ireland reconnect people and places, helping get more people back to work and school, and ensure Northern Ireland's recovery from the Covid-19 crisis was sustainable.

He stated that the pandemic had resulted in a dramatic decline in passenger numbers and sustaining the public transport network, and rebuilding passenger confidence, required both increased and ongoing investment. He highlighted that Translink was obliged to provide a comprehensive public transport, including school buses and rural and socially necessary networks. He explained that these services were essential to sustaining vital jobs in dependent sectors across the entire economy and must be maintained even when passenger numbers were low.

He explained that the economic impact of the reduction in passenger numbers and revenue had left public transport globally in a very challenging funding situation.

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He highlighted that Translink welcomed the emergency Covid-19 funding response from the NI Executive and DfI. However it was important to recognise the impact that Covid-19 would have on revenues for some time to come, together with the considerable uncertainties over the increased use of public transport networks over the next 12- 18 months.

He advised that, in response to the crisis, Translink would continue to encourage active travel and where possible stagger start and finish times to help facilitate social distancing for their employees using public transport. He stated that, to assist with the operation of the 'new normal', Translink:

- Encouraged contactless payments and introduced a no change policy;
- Delivered new innovative **indimustey** leading cleaning and sanitisation techniques - with regular enhanced deep cleaning of vehicles and facilities using protective long-lasting anti-viral disinfectant using electro static sprayers, keeping surfaces virus free;
- Monitored and enhanced capacity as and when required to meet passenger needs;
- Introduced protective screens in stations and on buses and hand sanitiser is available in all main bus and train stations;
- Supported requirements to wear a face covering on public transport; and
- Conveyed clear and transparent communications with customers and staff.

He provided an overview of how public transport promoted active travel, healthier lifestyles and reduced inequality. He explained that, due to the current crisis, Belfast had the opportunity now to prioritise accessible, safe, breathable, and walkable streets.

In relation to building a cleaner, greener Public Transport system, he explained Translink's Fleet Procurement Strategy, which included hydrogen fuel cell buses and zero emission buses. He also advised that the move to a fully carbon neutral fleet by 2040, with this being achieved in Belfast by 2030, and the first hydrogen vehicles would enter service with Metro in the coming weeks.

Mr. McAllister and Mr. McComb introduced the presentation on the Belfast Transport Hub and provided an overview of the construction and delivery strategy. They explained that the Hub would future proof the growth of public transport and provide a range of key benefits, connecting people through infrastructure, such as:

- 8 additional bus stands increasing capacity to 26;
- 4 additional rail platforms increasing capacity to 8;
- Relocation of the Enterprise service;
- Provision for up to 300+ cycle storage units;
- Dedicated pick up and drop off points; and
- Enhanced connectivity, comfort and capacity, encouraging greener, active travel.

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Mr. McComb advised that the benefits of Weavers Cross included: Job creation over a 15 year construction cycle; Social clauses and a construction academy; Up to 8,000 FTE jobs; Up to 200 residential units for City living; Tourism appeal; and Environmental benefits. He highlighted the regeneration opportunities for the area and the importance of the Saltwater Square – Weavers Cross Public Realm Community Connections and how it would create flow between South and West Belfast.

Mr. Gallagher provided an overview of how the Transport Hub would leverage Social Value and Inclusive Growth such as the investment in public realm and shared space, targeted social clauses, and Skills Academies.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked all the staff of Translink, especially those working on the frontline, who had helped keep the transport services running throughout the pandemic.

During Members questions, Mr. Bannon explained further the plans to extend Park and Ride facilities and Glider services, the cleaning of vehicles, and the fluidity of changing timetables. He provided further details on Translink's sources and plans for sustainable transport, and their continued review of the dogs on buses policy. He pointed out that, in the New Year, they hoped to regularise the timetables. He also highlighted that a video was available online which illustrated the electrostatic cleaning that was being undertaken by Translink on its vehicles to keep public transport safe (copy available [here](#)).

He advised that a further update would be provided in relation to Members' questions regarding an update on the Pilot for attaching customer bikes to its Buses for onward travel and increasing space for bikes across its transport network.

During further discussion, the representative's answered a range of questions in relation to cycle storage units, future proofing the design of the rail line, development and lighting of the extended Grosvenor Road. They suggested that they would provide a further update in relation to a cycle lane in Durham St.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, Translink would provide further information on the issues raised.

Department for Infrastructure Roads - Autumn Report

The Chairperson introduced Mr. K. Monaghan, Eastern Divisional Manager, Mr. G. Miskimmin, Belfast North Section Engineer, Mr. P. McParland, Belfast South Section Engineer, and Ms. L. Loughran, Director of Transport Policy in the Department for Infrastructure, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Monaghan advised that 2020 had been an unprecedented year, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their contractors had been working hard

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again since May to complete the schemes that were stopped as a result of the restrictions and DfI was now implementing its 2020 /21 works programme.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city.

In relation to the York Street Interchange, he advised that, in July 2020, the Minister had announced that an external review into the scheme would be undertaken to provide assurance on how and to what extent the scheme reflected key Ministerial, Executive and Council objectives and priorities, and this was to take place in Autumn 2020. He highlighted that the construction of the York Street Interchange would depend on the outcome of these reviews, satisfactory completion of an economic assessment, completion of the statutory process and would be subject to funding being made available in future budget settlements.

He provided Members with an update on the extension of the bus lanes along the M1 motorway by adding 1.7 km of new bus lanes from the approach to Junction 8 at Blaris to Junction 7 at Sprucefield. He informed the Committee that this added to the bus lanes that were introduced on the M1 and M2 motorways in March 2019 and completed the provision of M1 hard shoulder bus lanes between Sprucefield Park and Ride and Belfast and the extended bus lanes had opened on 10th August.

He reminded the Committee that, in relation to Phase II of the Belfast Rapid Transit, the proposal to extend the current BRT Glider network to serve North and South Belfast, together with an extension of the G2 Glider route to serve Queen's University and the City Hospital, was one of the infrastructure projects included in the recently announced Belfast Region City Deal and preparatory work on this project was currently underway.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the DfI Roads Programme of Works for 2020/21 for those projects and schemes that had been completed and were in progress, which included updates on minor works, maintenance of structures and inspections. He also summarised the updates to network traffic and street lighting, collision remedial schemes, traffic schemes and pedestrian measures and resident's parking schemes.

Mr. Monaghan highlighted the introduction of the Safer Routes to School Scheme, which implemented 20mph part time speed limits, and advised that 17 had been programmed for the Eastern Area this year, and that he would welcome any suggestions Members had in this regard.

Ms. Loughran provided an update on sustainable walking and cycling measures, together with social distancing measures that had been implemented. She advised of the infrastructure developments; and policy development and partnership working that had taken place. She highlighted that her team had developed a good working relationship with Council officers to take forward sustainable transport projects, greenways, and the Bolder Vision for Belfast. She pointed out that resources of her Department were being reviewed for the coming year, with the expectation to be able to deliver more.

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During discussion, Mr. Monaghan answered a range of questions in relation to the progress and feasibility of a junction at Cregagh Road and Knock Road, concerns over the Shankill Gateway redesign, safety and traffic calming measures, E-scooter legislation, Belfast Rapid Transit phase 2 locations, and parking restrictions update at Adelaide Park and Malone Road. Members identified the priority need to address the infrastructure imbalance within the city centre, and in particular the need to address the connectivity issues and severance to local communities that are created by the Inner Ring and the connections into the city centre. A number of Members stressed the need to reprioritise these junctions to promote sustainable and active travel, and to minimise the severance to local communities, although some concerns were raised about the potential impact of road reprioritisation on local side streets. The Shankill Gateway scheme, within the current delivery timeframe, was highlighted as a key opportunity to identifying how the city infrastructure can bring forward modal shift, demand management and better place-making design.

In relation to the DfI Roads assessment of car parking requirements in regards to planning applications, the representatives explained the process further and stated that car club legislation and best practice would also be considered in their future work programme.

In response to a Member's question about flooding in Clonduff Drive, since the completion of the Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Mr. McParland advised that they were working with the Council Project Team to investigate the problem.

During further discussion, regarding the Cycling Strategy for the City and its targets, Members expressed their concern at the lack of progress on the Bicycle Network and other active travel measures. The representative's explained the resource allocation and consultation requirements, and advised they would report back to the Committee on the extent of primary cycling network that was currently in place, and future proposals and timelines for delivery.

Regarding Resident's Car Parking Scheme's, Mr. Monaghan explained the current process and advised they would respond further in regard to the timeline for the review and the assessment and consultation process issues which had been raised. A number of members raised the issue of excessive parking within local communities that will be further amplified by developments such as the University of Ulster opening in 2021. Members identified Resident Parking Schemes as a critical element of delivering modal shift while minimising the impact on local communities and asked the representatives from the DfI to bring forward a city wide approach to managing this as a matter of priority.

The Members drew the attention of the officers from DfI Roads to a number of other matters, a number of suggestions which are set out hereunder:

- Street Lighting requirement on Grosvenor Road;
- The addition of Edenbrooke Primary School and Springfield Primary School to the Safer Routes to School Scheme;
- Consider dropped kerbs at Hemsworth Court, Lower Shankill Road.
- Resurfacing at Ambleside Street and Tennents Street;

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- Further safety measures required at junctions at Bilston Road/Crumlin Road and the bottom of Ballysillan Park; and
- An update on the request for a controlled crossing requirement at Springfield Road.

Mr. Monaghan advised that, where relevant, action would be taken on these issues if it was deemed necessary after inspection.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI Roads would provide further information on the issues raised.

Chairperson