

North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 25th November, 2020

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Maskey (Chairperson);
Councillors Bradley, Cobain, Ferguson, Magee,
McAllister, McCullough, Murphy,
O'Hara, Pankhurst and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. M. Higgins, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager,
Mr. D. Salters, Area Cleansing Manager,
Mr. M. Collins, Project Sponsor; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 30th September were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declaration of Interest

In relation to item 5(a) Area Based Update on Strategic and Micro Funding, Councillors Cobain, Maskey and Murphy declared an interest in that they worked for or were associated with organisations, which had applied for funding.

Request to present - Clifton House Heritage Centre

The Members agreed to invite Belfast Charitable Association to a future meeting of the Working Group to update Members on the work that it was undertaking in north Belfast, its plans for the graveyard and also the Great Place project, as part of the North Belfast Heritage Cluster.

Presentation - Midland Boxing Club

Mr. S. Cochrane, Mr. C. McClure, Mr. J. Howcroft and Mr. C. Frampton attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. McClure gave an overview of the history of the Midland Boxing Club, he stated that it was founded in 1974 and was located between the Tigers Bay and New Lodge interface. He informed the Members that it had become an important part of the local community and had attracted young people from the area where there had been high unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse and had been a means for parents to keep their children off the streets.

Mr Howcroft stated that funding will help the club promote boxing, enhance the facilities, particularly in relation to the uptake of females interested in the sport, as the club currently had no female changing facilities resulting in young people from the area travelling to other clubs which had been able to provide such facilities.

Mr. McClure described the weekly activities of the club which included:

- Boxing training;
- Keep fit classes;
- Mental health keep fit;
- Nutritional awareness sessions;
- Youth development programme;
- Seniors' art club; and
- Senior coffee mornings.

Mr. Frampton explained that the club's priority was being able to attract local young people for boxing and introducing them to other organisations such as the PSNI, PIPS, Suicide Awareness and various drug and alcohol abuse groups.

Mr. McClure added that enhancing the facility would also benefit the local senior population, in that they used the premises for various social events.

Several Members praised the club for its intentions to promote female boxing and agreed to undertake site visits to the facilities, once completed, in order to promote and encourage young females in north Belfast to join the club.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Physical Programmes confirmed that the building was in the ownership of the Council, however, it had been leased, long-term, to the Midland Boxing Club.

The Chair, on behalf of the Working Group, thanked the Midland Boxing Club for their presentation and Mr. McClure thanked the Council for its support to the club over the past 47 years.

Alignment with Community Planning –VCSE Panel Conference

Ms I. Sherry and Mr. J. Girvan attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services introduced Ms. Sherry and Mr. Girvan to the Working Group.

Ms. Sherry stated that they had been asked to meet with all the Area Working Groups as a means to introduce the panel and provide the Members of those Working Groups with an update on their work. She explained that that the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sectoral Advisory Panel was through the Community Planning Partnership and that the panel was a voluntary contribution of 15 members and had been meeting fortnightly, since June.

She outlined the aims of the panel, which included understanding partnership working and public policy development learning from Scotland and Wales and exploring a number of themes, including accountability, partnership and impact of the panel in playing its full role in community planning in Belfast.

Mr. Girvan added that the panel intended to influence, support and advocate on behalf of the communities that it works across in partnership with the Council.

Ms. Sherry added that the panel was also hoping to engage with regard to the Resilience Strategy on a community level and was hoping that there would be a strong engagement from project boards with the panel.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Sherry and Mr Girvan for their presentation and wished them success with their upcoming conference on behalf of the Working Group, and they retired from the meeting.

Social and Community Recovery (Presentation)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Working Group of discussions at its meeting in January, regarding the Council's area working plan and explained how those early discussions had helped shape the community response to the pandemic and how the Council engaged with community and voluntary partners to ensure that vulnerable individuals living in the community were supported. He added that the response had built a strong foundation in terms of area recovery plans and engagement with local communities.

He explained that area working would take city wide ambitions and make them relevant and bespoke to the needs and priorities of local communities. He emphasised that genuine engagement would be a priority, in order to obtain a holistic perspective of the needs and requirements of each area.

He stated that service delivery would continue but will be tailored to the requirements of north Belfast based on the information received through the development of the area working plans and that a further update would be provided to the Working Group early in the new year.

He concluded by stating that, going forward, it was hoped that the area support teams would be effective in joining up issues and services and make the Council more accessible to all with key points of contact for specific area matters.

The Working Group noted the invaluable support and assistance that the Council had received from the community during the pandemic and welcomed the success of the area working approach that had been adopted and which had assisted with the targeted support being delivered so efficiently.

Area Working

Area Based Update on Strategic and Micro Funding

The Neighbourhood Services Integration Manager provided an update on the following report:

Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to note the contents of the report.

Main report

Members may recall that in July 2020 a package of financial investment was agreed to support recovery at a community level, which was in addition to the initial investment in communities as part of the COVID-19 emergency response. This investment took into account the lessons learned from the COVID-19 emergency response, in particular feedback from community partners about the accessibility of funding.

Funding Approach

The Microgrant funding programme was opened by Council at the beginning of July 2020.

The final budget was approximately £310,000, with a maximum allocation per organisation of £1,000, only one application per organization was considered.

Funding was administered in each geography of the city by the area teams which had been created to deliver support for the COVID emergency response efforts.

Activity delivered through the microgrants had to meet one of the following themes:

- **Children and Young People:** Summer activities and programmes, negative educational and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 and digital connectivity
- **Civic Pride:** Communities are rightly proud of the huge volunteering effort and sense of neighbourliness and community spirit and want to develop that
- **Preventing Isolation:** the impact of COVID-19 on those shielding has been significant and a huge community effort is needed to support those individuals, with digital connectivity an element
- **Emotional Wellbeing:** There is widespread concern about the emotional wellbeing concerns of vulnerable individuals, families and communities
- **Anti-Social Behaviour:** Levels of anti-social behaviour, particularly in parks/open spaces

has increased due to people not being at school/work and periods of good weather.

Funding Impact

Micro grant funding has enabled 322 organisations across Belfast to deliver an extensive programme of activities with an approximate total allocation of £310,000.

92 applications from the north Belfast area were supported at a value of approximately £88,400. This represents 29% of the total number of projects supported citywide.

Programmes delivered in north Belfast focused on all 5 themes; Children & Young People and Emotional Wellbeing were the most common. Activity included:

- Activity Programmes for young people and youth diversionary/outreach
- Community Arts programmes
- Physical activity and community sports programmes
- Literacy/Numeracy workshops and back to school support
- Mental health, wellbeing, mindfulness and resilience programmes
- Environmental Programmes, Community Clean-ups and upcycling from waste
- Digital inclusion programmes

Feedback from grant recipients has been extremely positive, those elements that were welcomed include:

- Higher than average turnaround time for the micro grants programme from receipt of application to payment of funds. In most cases this was completed within 20 working days.
- More accessible, streamlined process and reductions in unnecessary bureaucracy (in keeping with the Department of Finance Reducing Bureaucracy for the Voluntary and Community Sector Code of Practice 2015).
- Each grant application had a single point of contact within the area teams. This has enabled more effective communication and resolution of issues when they arise. This has been particularly important for new applicants or lower capacity groups.

Future funding

Feedback has informed our approach to further resourcing of community provision up to March 21 and beyond. Organizations have highlighted the significant challenges of delivering programmes within the current environment, especially with the tightening and easing of restrictions. Officers are mindful of this and we will seek to retain a flexible approach which supports communities to meet locally identified needs.

Two further rounds of funding will be available from Wednesday 25th November at 9am.

- COVID-19 Community Recovery Support Fund Microgrant (up to £1, 500)
- COVID-19 Community Recovery Support Fund Medium Grant (up to £5,000)

Financial Implications

All awards made through the summer programme were made in line with available external and internal resources. At the time of writing resources for the planned Microgrant and Medium Funding programme are £150,000 and £250,000 respectively. In the event that demand exceeds available resources we will liaise with funders to meet need.

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

This approach seeks to meet the needs of communities through a responsive approach. Future funding approaches from 2021 onwards will be Equality and Rural Needs screened.

The Working Group noted the information provided

Introduce Multi-disciplinary Area Management Team

The Neighbourhood Services Manager and the Area Cleansing Manager provided an overview of the following report:

Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to note the contents of the report.

Main report

Background

One of the key priorities of the Belfast Agenda is to deliver better outcomes for our neighbourhoods, through developing our emerging area approach, and building capacity within communities.

This area approach recognises the importance of neighbourhood regeneration and developing a place shaping approach to drive the effective use of resources by Council and other partners / stakeholders within specific areas where opportunities exist to maximise impact. The need for Council and other partners to work together with local communities to jointly plan interventions, services and investments, and to ensure these approaches are tailored to meet local priorities and needs, has never been greater.

Over the past two years City & Neighbourhood Services (CNS) has developed its approach to integrating service delivery at an area level across neighbourhood services. Specifically, within community provision the following principles already have political and corporate endorsement as the agreed direction for our services;

- **Support local area problem solving;**

- Create opportunities for new ways of working;
- Support cultural change in support of area working;
- Create synergies to pool the great knowledge and experience staff have;
- Align to the vision of community provision.

We have appointed four Neighbourhood Services Managers and more recently we recruited four Neighbourhood Integration Managers to support this area focus. In addition, the work to create the Open Space and Streetscene teams (former parks and cleansing) creates the opportunity to develop links with these staff and staff in other area based C&NS services for the benefit of local communities.

Area teams operating during Covid-19

The current Covid-19 crisis is creating significant economic and social challenges for our communities. However this has also created opportunities for future working. Relationships developed between officers and CVSE partners has been at the forefront, with multiple examples of effective partnership working to address urgent community needs, in localities and across the city.

As part of the Council's Covid-19 response (community hub) the Neighbourhood Integration Managers then set up area support teams which responded quickly and flexibly to the emergency needs that came out of the pandemic.

Now that we are in the recovery phase, and taking on board and account of the Covid-19 collective learning, we are establishing a revised Area Team approach across the city that will work with residents, members and stakeholders to revitalise our city's neighbourhoods by:

- supporting and working with communities and partners in collectively identifying and tackling identified local issues;
- taking innovative approaches;
- being flexible and responsive;
- creating conditions to build capacity;
- empowering communities to build capacity and resilience and creating positive and lasting differences to their quality of life;
- address operational challenges in the ever changing environment of Covid-19, through the lens of council procedures, but taking into account local nuances;
- lead on the integration and mobilisation of staff in local neighbourhoods,

maximising opportunities where we can to improve outcomes for our residents;

- design how we use our resources in a more flexible way, including staff and funding;
- participate in and facilitate community engagement and communications activities associated with their catchment area;
- Work with our elected members to act as community advocates to identify and address local needs and support effective 'place-shaping';
- Promote local area knowledge and understanding;
- Strengthen relationships with external agencies, residents, community representatives, partnerships and the wider communities to deliver improved Council services;
- Identify area priorities as part of our neighbourhood regeneration approach.

These expanded teams will begin to meet from late November/early December.

Financial Implications

None

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

This approach seeks to deliver a more collaborative, integrated approach which will help to identify gaps in service and avoid duplication. It will have a positive impact on equality, good relations and rural needs considerations.

The Working Group noted the information provided

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Physical Programmes reminded the Working Group that, at its previous meeting, discussions took place with regard to underspends from BIF projects which would become available for reallocation.

She informed the Members that the Cancer Lifeline project had completed and its underspend totalled £79,896, which was available for reallocation, and that the Grace Family Centre project, which was nearing completion, had an anticipated underspend of £225,287, which would be confirmed in the following weeks. She reported that the total anticipated underspend was £305,183 and Members were asked to consider reallocating the funds under the BIF programme

She highlighted that the BIF project for Marrowbone Millennium Park had a funding gap of £250,000 and that the Urban Villages Team had been developing a business case for funding the deficit. She asked Members to consider reallocation of the surplus funds.

Following discussion, the Working Group agreed, upon confirmation of the Grace Family Centre underspend becoming available, to allocate £250,000 of the available BIF funding to the Marrowbone Millennium Park project

It was further agreed that the Director of Physical Programmes would consider the technicalities in transferring funds from BIF to LIF and undertake a scoping exercise in relation to potential capital works for Love Works Cooperative in Duncairn Gardens.

Following a suggestion from the Director of Physical Programmes, the Working Group also agreed to invite the Living with Water team to present at a meeting of the Working Group in December.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted the date of the next scheduled meeting, Wednesday, 24th February 2021.

Chairperson