

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 2nd December, 2021

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

Members present: Alderman Sandford (Chairperson),
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire and Rodgers;
The High Sheriff, Councillor Long; and
Councillors Brooks, de Faoite, Flynn, Howard,
M. Kelly, McMullan, McReynolds,
Newton and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. S. Conlon, Open Spaces and Streetscene Area Manager;
Mr. C. Willetts, Open Spaces and Streetscene Area Manager;
Ms. K. Watters, Neighbourhood Integration Manager;
Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer - Community Provision;
Ms. P. Conway, Strategic Sites Development Surveyor; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Copeland and Councillors Hanvey, Kyle and Mulholland.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 4th November were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Open Spaces and Streetscene Update – Presentation

Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager, provided the Working Group with an overview of the work of the Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) service. He explained that the service had been created in 2019, with the merging of the former Parks and Street Cleansing sections. He explained the services that they provided which included street sweeping, bin collections, entry clearing, graffiti, litter, recycling, the maintenance of parks, open spaces and playgrounds.

The Members were advised that Council staff had issued 2,500 Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and dog fouling offences, emptied over 9 million wheelie bins, carried out 38,500 bulky waste collections and that over 4,787 streets were cleaned across the city per week.

He outlined a number of challenges that the OSS Service faced, including the creation of multi-tasking teams, new assets, the implementation of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS). He outlined that the Covid-19 pandemic had added a number of pressures on the service, particularly in terms of ensuring staff safety through social distancing, such as reduced staff access to vehicles, staff being redesignated to other key service areas and the impact of staff sickness absence. He explained that, cumulatively, the service had, at times, been operating at a reduction of 35-40% capacity. He advised the Working Group that that had invariably led to a drop in service and he apologised on behalf of the section for that.

The Working Group was advised that new routes for street cleansing were currently being examined for an improved service. The Neighbourhood Services Manager also advised the Members that further staff recruitment was underway and that, by March 2022, they would have a full complement of 400 staff in full time employment.

A number of Members thanked Mr. C. Willetts, Open Spaces and Streetscene Area Manager for East, for his hard work in what was a challenging time.

A Member raised concerns in relation to some recurrent missed bin collections but stated that, when reported, Council staff were quick to respond within a few days. He further queried whether Cherryvale Park changing facilities were still unavailable for use and an issue regarding overgrown trees over one of the football pitches within the park.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised the Working Group that routine bin collections fell under the remit of City Services and that perhaps it might wish to request a presentation in relation to recurrent issues at a future meeting.

A further Member asked officers whether, in terms of future proofing the Council, they would consider reintroducing horticultural apprenticeships through the Council, perhaps in conjunction with CAFRE or a university. He also requested an update on the works at Cherryvale Park and for more benches and bins to be installed, given the increased use of the park over the pandemic.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised the Working Group that, in terms of future proofing, a Driver Academy had recently been established within the Council, in which 20 staff were currently training for their Category C licence. He added that, as the park improvement plans were established and, given that biodiversity was a key concern for Members, they would certainly consider a similar programme for horticultural skills, particularly in the context of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy. In response to a Member's question, he added that the Biodiversity Strategy for the City would be completed soon.

A Member reminded the officers that a motion had been passed by the Council, in July 2020, in respect of seeking to provide additional bins, including recycling facilities, across the City's parks and public spaces.

During further discussion, Members raised issues relating to the maintenance of the railings around the City's parks, the removal of weeds on pavements, the removal of leaves from the greenways, the provision of lamppost bins for dog fouling and the provision of bike racks.

In response to a Member's question, the Open Spaces and Streetscene Area Manager for East confirmed to the Working Group that Holland Drive, Sandown Road and the Comber Greenway were cleaned on a weekly basis.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised the Members that they would look into the other issues which had been raised by the Members.

The Chairperson thanked the officers for the update which had been provided.

Alleyway Transformation Update

The Working Group considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

Members will recall that the People & Communities Committee, at its meeting in September 2021, considered a report from officers on a potential pilot alleyway transformation programme.

1.2 Following discussion at committee and full Council members agreed to the delivery of a number of pilot alleyway transformation schemes throughout the city and further agreed that the final area selection, number of pilots and the detail of intervention be delegated to the Area Working Groups who would be asked to adopt a flexible approach as to how the funding was allocated.

1.3 This report provides the committee with an update on progress to date, in particular, the identification of possible sites by our Area Outreach teams and elected representatives, a matrix for assessing the eligibility of potential schemes and the next steps following the selection of sites by the Area Working group.

1.4 The report also provides a timeline for the key stages of the alleyway transformation process and indicative timescales.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Area Working group is asked to:

- To agree the matrix for the scoring and assessment of pilot sites,
- To consider the sites identified in this report and to agree these are the sites for alleyway transformation programmes for the EAWG moving forward and,
- To delegate it to officers via the outreach team to assess these sites against the scoring matrix and rank them in order of highest score.
- To note the next steps.
- Note the timeline for the key stages of the alleyway transformation process and the indicative timescales provided.

3.0 Main report

3.1 DfI have agreed that in order to test the processes required to deliver an alleyway transformation scheme, a number of pilot projects be initiated, to develop a framework which will be used for a larger programme, and be a path-finding exercise, for other councils as a recognised method to access the DfI monies.

- 3.2 Successful pilots projects will involve the community receiving a `Starter Pack` of materials and information to support the regeneration of alleyways and deliver a transformation project.**

The pack would / should include: -

- a. **Plants, planters, soil / compost, seats etc.**
 - b. **Planting / growing / basic wooden planter and willow plant support (trellis) workshops to develop community capacity for the longevity of the project.**
 - c. **Signposting communities to other departments and agencies for issues not within the remit or responsibility of BCC.**
 - d. **Signposting communities to funding opportunities they could avail of to further develop and maintain the area after BCC / DFI funding has been utilised.**
 - e. **Legal information / liabilities and ownership of alleyways.**
- 3.3 Members will recall that at full Council it was agreed that the final area selection, number of pilots and the detail of intervention be delegated to the Area Working Groups who would be asked to adopt a flexible approach as to how the funding was allocated.**
- 3.4 Officers have prepared a scoring matrix to assess, score and rank each potential pilot and this is attached as Appendix 1.**
- 3.5 It was agreed at the September meeting of People & Communities Committee that the Council Outreach teams would identify potential alleyway sites across each of the 4 quadrants of the city, based on officer knowledge, community infrastructure and delivery of improved outcomes. The list would be presented to Members on a North, South, East & West basis.**
- 3.6 At the May SP&R committee members considered a paper on alleygating and the process for Members to input into the identification of gate locations, specifically through a pro-forma. This was issued to members and as part of it they were asked to identify potential gating locations as well as locations suitable for alleyway transformation, for further consideration at SP&R committee and Area Working Groups over the autumn.**
- 3.7 Officers have collated the returns for this AWG in respect of Alleyway Transformation and these are outlined in Appendix 2. This includes sites identified by the area outreach team.**
- 3.8 Members should note that at People & Communities committee it was decided that up to 5 sites per quadrant of the city would be the limit for this pilot. It is proposed that the 5 that score the highest will be considered for the pilot. Once scoring is complete the ranked list of sites will be reported back to this AWG. Following approval officers will begin the process of drawing down the monies from the Department for Infrastructure for the top five ranked sites.**

3.9 The learnings from the pilot projects will be used to inform further bids into £1-2 million fund and it is proposed that those alleyways not chosen for this pilot will be completed as part of future phases of this scheme.

3.10 **Alleygating Phase V Time scales**

The key stages of the alleygating process and indicative timescales are listed below. Members should note this process only commences when the final list of locations to be gated is agreed by Council.

- **Month 1 – Regulatory and Community Consultation Commenced**
- **Month 3 – Regulatory Consultation Completed**
- **Month 4 – Community Consultation Completed**
- **Month 5 – Legal Preparation**
- **Month 7/8 – Notice of Intention Advertised**
- **Month 8/9 – Clarification of Objections**
- **Month 9 – People & Communities Committee Consideration of Traffic Regulation Order**
- **Month 10 – Full Council Approval of Traffic Regulation Order**
- **Month 10 – Gates Ordered**
- **Month 12 – Gates Manufactured and Installation Commenced**

3.11 **Financial & Resource Implications**

Capital expenditure associated with the alleyway transformation programme will be accessed via the DFI alleyway transformation scheme with outreach and capacity building support supported via existing Council resources.

3.12 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

There are no known Equality, Good Relations or Rural needs implications.”

Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager, advised the Working Group that he was content to receive any further suggestions from Members within the next few weeks.

The Working Group recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would agreed the contents of the report and to add the following alleyways for consideration within the pilot scheme:

- rainbow alley in Reid Street;
- the alleyway between Knockbreda Park and Ormeau Road; and
- the alleyway between Rosetta Park and Knockbreda Road.

Community Infrastructure Pilot Update

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the proposed Community Infrastructure Pilot including the methodology and resources outlined.**

Members are asked to consider the information that is provided in relation to potential areas that could be included within the pilot programme and recommend 2 areas within east Belfast.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the detail of the proposed Community Infrastructure Pilot and agree 2 areas within east Belfast that will be included in the project.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 In June 2021 Council granted approval for officers to develop a pilot approach to addressing weak community infrastructure in 4 areas across the city. Officers have been developing the framework for this approach and are seeking approval to develop the project as outlined.**
- 3.2 Community infrastructure is commonly defined as a complex system of facilities, programmes, and social networks that aims to improve people’s quality of life. These services, networks and physical assets work in tandem to form the foundation of a strong neighbourhood. This pilot initiative will seek to use a new methodology to support identified communities with low community infrastructure.**
- 3.3 In Summer/Autumn 21 Council facilitated engagement to update the community plan for Belfast, the Belfast Agenda. The need to build community infrastructure within certain parts of the city has been identified as a priority and is likely to appear as a key commitment in the refreshed Belfast Agenda plan which will be produced in March 2022.**
- 3.4 Recent experience shows that communities require support and resources from a range of services within Council. The development of the community infrastructure pilot will be an opportunity to take an integrated approach to identifying and responding to area needs.**
- 3.5 In addition, there are a range of other agencies and organisations who provide considerable support for communities to develop and build strong community infrastructure. These include Department for Communities, NIHE, NICVA and large CVS organisations, especially those funded through BCC Capacity Building Funding. The pilot will engage with relevant partners to ensure complementarity and added value.**

Methodology

- 3.6** Members agreed that Area Working Groups (AWGs) would play an important role in the identification of pilot areas within each area of the city. Initial engagement with AWGs has highlighted that it will be difficult to limit the project to 1 area in each of the 4 geographies of the city. Some members have also highlighted the need to work with communities of interest as well as defined geographic areas. Based on this feedback officers are proposing that the pilot will work with 8 areas/communities of interest. Communities of interest that have been identified in specific geographic areas will be highlighted in the area summary.
- 3.7** Phase 1 of the programme will focus on the identification of areas and development of an agreed methodology. Delivery within communities will be on a two year basis from April 2022 – March 2024 with ongoing and final review to assess impact.
- 3.8** An overall framework will underpin the approach in all identified areas. This will ensure consistency whilst enabling the development of local responses. The framework will be underpinned by a co-design process which will gather stakeholder information about local issues and develop agreed responses which will be captured in a two year action plan for each area.
- 3.9** The action plan will be produced through a co-design process and there will be a finance of £15,000 per annum to support delivery of the action plan. This allocation will not be a grant payment but will be allocated for the delivery of specified actions by an identified lead. In most cases this will be a community & voluntary sector organisation but in cases where there is not capacity to deliver on identified actions council officers may act as lead if agreed through the co-design process.
- 3.10** Members should note that this funding allocation will be for revenue rather than capital funding.
- 3.11** Given Council's ambition that this approach will create an opportunity to review the way in which we resource and support areas/communities which have weak community infrastructure, officers have identified the need to secure external technical support to assist in the development of an agreed methodology that will identify and contribute to changed outcomes for these communities. This resource will identify best practise in other similar initiatives and assist in developing a delivery, reporting and evaluation framework.
- 3.12** To enhance the impact of this project and in recognition of potential linkages with the Belfast Agenda it is recommended that an Advisory Group for the Project is established. It is recommended that this should have representation from relevant stakeholders including but not limited to; Chair of 4 x area working groups, DfC, 2 representatives from VCSE panel, 1 representative

from CPP/Living Here Board, NICVA, NIHE and relevant BCC staff. This Advisory Group will have oversight of the overall project delivery and will provide updates to the People & Communities committee and Living Here Board.

3.13 Area teams within Belfast City Council community provision will support development of local approaches and updates from these will be provided to the Advisory Group.

3.14 Council officers will attend November/December AWG meetings to provide an overview of existing Council resources at a citywide and area level. This will include:

- Mapping of existing BCC grant funding and council facilities
- Information on existing interventions (i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages)
- Indicators of need i.e. multiple deprivation and qualitative feedback

Officers suggest that the following selection criteria are used when identifying an area:

- limited access to funding
- limited access to community facilities
- lower access to services/engagement with Council
- evidence of need/inequalities/deprivation
- limited linkage with other initiatives particularly Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages and Communities in Transition (CIT)
- No more than 1 pilot in every DEA

3.15 Officers have carried out an initial assessment on those areas that could benefit from the project. Members are asked to consider the information in Appendix 1 (available on mod.gov) and agree two recommended areas that will be included in the community infrastructure pilot in east Belfast.

3.16 **Financial & Resource Implications**

All financial resources outlined in this report can be delivered through existing budgets. Existing human resource will be used to deliver the programme.

3.17 **Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment**

This programme seeks to address issues of inequality by developing community infrastructure, programme delivery will seek to have a positive impact on good relations and rural needs.”

During discussion, a Member queried what had happened to the former Community Centre Committees which used to have Councillors as Committee members in addition to

community representatives. The Lead Officer - Community Provision agreed to look into those Committees.

She advised the Members that the East Area team, through community safety, was carrying out a mapping exercise of residents' groups and that officers would share the information with Members when it had been completed.

She explained that each area had been ranked based on an assessment of the following 3 criteria:

- access to Council funding;
- access to Council facilities; and
- whether it was in receipt of support from other government initiatives, for example, Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages, Communities in Transition.

She advised the Working Group that, based on the analysis and on the agreed approach of only 1 in each DEA, the suggested areas in east Belfast were Braniel (Ormiston) and Clonduff (Lisnasharragh).

A number of Members stated that, while there were a number of areas which were in need of support, they agreed that Braniel and Clonduff should be selected as the areas for East Belfast for the pilot.

Moved by Councillor Flynn
Seconded by Councillor Brooks and

Resolved – that Braniel and Clonduff be included in the pilot project.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group was advised that a Special meeting was proposed to be held at 12.30pm on Thursday, 13th January, 2022. A number of Members advised that a lunchtime meeting was not suitable, due to their other work commitments, and that all meetings should take place in the evening to allow full attendance.

Ms. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager, advised the Members that she believed that the date had been selected as it was related to a DFI consultation and that officers wanted to engage with Members at the earliest opportunity. However, she suggested that officers could perhaps circulate the information relating to the consultation to the Members, or to liaise with the Chairperson to find another suitable evening on which to meet.

The Working Group agreed to that course of action.

Request to Present at a Future Meeting **– Hawarden Tennis Club**

The Working Group noted that correspondence had been received from Hawarden Tennis Club and agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Club at a future meeting.

Upon receiving advice from the Neighbourhood Services Manager, the Working Group further agreed to the phasing and coordinating of any future presentations by officers.

Chairperson