

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 28th February, 2022

MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Groogan (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bunting, Gormley, T. Kelly,
Lyons, McAteer, McKeown and Spratt.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager
(South Belfast); and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd November were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the presentation on the Rosario Youth Centre hub proposal, in that he was on the capital project steering group and his son played for Rosario Football Club.

Councillor T. Kelly declared an interest in relation to the presentation on TREE NI and TREECO, on the basis that her husband was employed by the Greater Village Regeneration Trust, which managed the TREE NI project.

Request to Present

The Working Group agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from the Chair of the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

Presentations

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd November, it had agreed to receive a presentation from the following organisations:

TREE NI/TREECO

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. S. Bowden, Director of Greater Village Regeneration Trust, which managed the TREE NI project, and Mr. G. Bowden, Programme Co-ordinator.

Ms. Bowden informed the Working Group that TREE NI had been established in 2005 as a Timber Recycling Eco Enterprise. By 2010, it had evolved into a Training Reskilling, Education and Employment provider, in response to emerging needs in the area. Funding had been provided by the former Department for Employment and Learning, the European Social Fund and the Department for Communities and, more recently, through the Social Investment Fund, as the construction hub for South Belfast.

She explained that TREE NI worked primarily with young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not in education, employment or training and highlighted its full-time training programme, which focused primarily on enhancing literacy and numeracy, personal development, health and wellbeing and employability. In terms of results, of the eleven young people who had participated in the programme between September, 2020 and June, 2021, seven were now in full-time employment and four had progressed to further or higher education. Fifteen young people were participating in the current programme.

In addition, TREE NI also provided construction-based training at Levels 1 and 2, a ten-week youth summer intervention programme, a vocational school placement scheme, summer intervention programmes and volunteering opportunities, as well as facilitating courses for women's groups and other community organisations. A men's shed project had commenced in July, 2021, with the aim of promoting positive mental health/wellbeing, physical activity and social inclusion amongst participants, whilst developing new skills. She highlighted also TREE NI's cross community and good relations work and pointed out that it was currently involved in a partnership initiative with An Droichead, involving one hundred children.

Ms. Bowden went on to outline the work of TREECO (Training, Reskilling, Education and Employment – Career Opportunities), which had been formally established in 2017, to generate income for TREE NI, in the event of its funding being lost or reduced. TREECO provided a gardening and external maintenance service, including grass cutting, weeding, power washing and fencing. It currently operated with two full-time and two part-time staff, all of whom had progressed through the TREE NI Programme. She then outlined the various contracts which it had secured and referred to a number of prestigious awards which it had attained.

In terms of next steps, she pointed out that TREE NI/TREECO currently operated from a building which was under the ownership of the Department for Communities. A community asset transfer process, which had commenced before the pandemic, was progressing slowly. A recent condition survey report had confirmed that extensive work was required to bring the building up to the necessary standard and this view had been supported in a feasibility study which had been requested separately by TREE NI/TREECO. She outlined the three design concepts which were being proposed and the associated costs and pointed out that the organisations would benefit from having a permanent fit for purpose building, with increased space being available for training and other activities.

She confirmed that representatives from TREE NI would be attending the Council's Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund online information event on the following day and that it was planning to submit an application for funding towards the refurbishment of the building. The proposal would, in her view, meet the objectives of the Regeneration Fund, the Belfast Agenda and the Belfast City Recovery Framework.

Ms. Bowden was thanked by the Chairperson.

Rosario Youth Centre

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. N. Robinson, Youth Worker in Charge, Mr. N. Savage, Chairperson of Rosario Youth Centre, and Mr. C. Toland, Chairperson of Ormeau Boxing Club.

Ms. Robinson informed the Working Group that Rosario Youth Centre, which had been built in 1978, currently accommodated Rosario Youth Club, Rosario Football Club and Ormeau Boxing Club. The building was open every day and its current facilities included a reception area, an IT room, office accommodation, a main sports hall, equipment storage rooms, a social area and an outdoor multi-use games area.

She pointed out that the Youth Centre was currently facing a number of challenges, primarily around the limited capabilities of the main sports hall, given the extent of the area required by the Boxing Club, the limited space available to expand membership across the three partner organisations, the need to comply with Disability Discrimination Act, health and safety and child protection requirements and, lastly, the inefficient use of site, as the building was of a single storey.

With that in mind, she drew the Members' attention to the redevelopment plans for the site and the associated costs and confirmed that it would be a collaborative venture involving all three project partners. The outcome would be an extended fit for purpose shared space facility. Planning approval had been secured in March, 2021, a cross-party capital project steering group had been established and been meeting regularly and the Department for Communities' Ministerial team had been briefed.

Moving forward, Ms. Robinson confirmed that the steering group was preparing an application for Building Control approval and that the three partners had met with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to discuss their ongoing participation in the PEACE IV CCAN project. Further community engagement would take place around the development proposals and a business case and funding applications would be prepared. She pointed out the three project partners made a significant contribution towards achieving the vision for Belfast, as set out in the Belfast Agenda, and concluded by inviting the Working Group to affirm its support for the new hub by recommending that it be considered in the context of emerging Council funding programmes and project development/technical assistance costs.

The deputation was thanked by the Chairperson.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- i. noted the presentations and commended TREE NI/TREECO and Rosario Youth Centre on their work and success to date; and

- ii. agreed that the Director of Physical Projects would draft correspondence, to be signed by the Chairperson and forwarded to Ms. Bowden and Ms. Robinson, firstly, providing details of the Council's new £8m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund and confirming that officers from the Physical Programmes Unit would be available to provide advice and assist with the application process and, secondly, outlining other external capital funding streams which the organisations would be eligible to apply for.

Update on Alleygating and Alleyway Transformation Programmes

Alleygating Scheme – Phase 5

The Working Group was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 18th February, had considered a report on Phase 5 of the Council's Alleygating Scheme. The report had recommended that the Committee:

- i. approve an identified 'long list' of possible alleygate locations for North, South, East and West, based upon the framework agreed by the Committee on 21st May 2021; and
- ii. agree to refer each 'long list' of possible alleygate locations to the relevant Area Working Group for prioritisation, based on the available budget of £125,000 for each quadrant of the City.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager reported that the Committee had, in light of omissions which had highlighted by Members, agreed to defer the matter to allow for a full list of location requests to be circulated and a comprehensive list of potential locations to be drafted and agreed. He confirmed that that work had now commenced.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Alleyway Transformation Programme

The Working Group was reminded that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 7th September 2021, had approved the delivery of a number of pilot alleyway transformation schemes across the City, with the final area selection, number of pilots and the detail of intervention to be delegated to the Area Working Groups. Funding for the pilots had been committed by the Department for Infrastructure via the Blue/Green Infrastructure Fund.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager reported that, in total, between seventy and eighty potential sites had been identified by Members. However, due to resourcing issues, it had not been possible to process, assess and rank applications. He confirmed that he would be writing shortly to the Department for Infrastructure to request that it agree to carry the funding into the 2022/23 financial year and that, if approved, a dedicated resource would be put in place by the Council to move the process forward.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Update on Physical Programme

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for the Working Group's consideration the following report:

“1. Introduction

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the new Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF). It covers also projects that the Council is delivering in behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

The Working Group is requested to:

- i. note the physical programme update for South Belfast; and
- ii. note the request for funding from TEO in the sum of £463k in relation to the Arts and Digital Hub project

3. Local Investment Fund (LIF)

Members are reminded LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation. Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 24 projects received 'In Principle' letters under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 21 have been completed; 1 project at delivery stage, 1 at pre-construction stage and 1 project still at initial stage. Further details of these are outlined below.

LIF breakdown – South	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	No. Projects	Amount (£)	No. Projects	Amount/ (£)
Number of Projects Completed	12 (92%)	£1,053,600	9 (82%)	£676,000
Number of Projects in Delivery			1 (9%)	£80,000
Number of Projects in Pre-construction			1 (9%)	£40,000

Number of Project in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (8%)	£30,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	13	£1,083,600	11	£796,000

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects – Holylands Area Improvement Initiative (£80,000), Finaghy Bridge (£30,000) and John Murray Lockhouse (£40,000). Members are asked to note the status of the live LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	ACTION/ RECOMMENDATION
SLIF2-07	Holylands Area Improvement Initiative	£80,000	Awarded	A contractor has been appointed to undertake these works – challenges remain in terms of supply. There is regular contact with the contractor and community group (QUBA) on the project status.	Continue engagement with the contractor, group and partners
SLIF2-13	LORAG - John Murray Lockhouse	£40,000	Design stage	LIF funding will contribute to the development of the community garden. Project is linked to Urban Villages programme. Project will be submitted for planning together with the overall development of the John Murray Lockhouse. Business case was approved in August 2021 and the next step is for UV to release a funding offer.	Continued engagement with the group.
SLIF017	Finaghy Bridge	£30,000	Initial stage	Dfl Roads are now taking the lead on design and the Council will contribute the LIF funding to Dfl.	Continue engagement with Dfl Roads.

4. Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – South Belfast was allocated £5.5m; with additional £500k ringfenced for new areas (outer South) that had joined the District area under Local Government Reform. In South Belfast, 6 projects received an in-principle funding commitment, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m, and £500k pot of funding. Each project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

South	<p>Stage 3—Lagan Gateway—£2.1m; Lanyon Tunnels—£1.3m; Bredagh GAC—£700k</p> <p>Stage 1— Coffee Culture, Sandy Row Open Space project and BSCR IT Exam Centre project (Arts & Digital Hub) [Sandy Row area projects, formerly Gilpins]— £1.35m</p> <p>Stage 1—<i>Belfast Islamic Centre—no commitment</i></p>
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Balmoral DEA	<p>Stage 3 - Knockbreda Parish Church Hall—£250k</p> <p>Stage 2— Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC—£250k</p>
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BIF Ref	PROJECT	BIF FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	ACTION/ RECOMMENDATION
BIF04	Lagan Gateway	£2.1m	On ground	Phase 1 of the project completed in October 2021. Handover and operation discussions are underway within Council regarding the lock. Design of Phase 2 of the project has started.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.
BIF19	Bredagh GAC	£700,000	Design stage	Works for the required surveys have been completed. Once the reports are received the team will look at the refurbishment design in more detail and get a cost estimate. This is anticipated to be complete by end of March 2022. Following that step, officers will meet the group to discuss and review the option designs. The outcome will be reported to a future meeting of the SAWG.	Continue engagement with the group.

BIF07	Lanyon Tunnels	£1.3m	Stage 3-Committed	Project has been impacted by the JR decision on the adjacent site to the tunnels – the adjacent site is a critical access point for the project, enabling range of connectivity outcomes and benefits. A new planning application has been submitted (October 2021). The SIF programme has expired, and Urban Villages have been approached as potential funder in place of SIF. Ongoing discussions with group, DfC and TEO.	Officer engagement with Executive Office as key funder, and key stakeholders.
BIF33	Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC	£250,000	Stage 3-Committed	BIF funding to progress Phase 1A of larger sports hub project i.e. replacement of Belvoir FC's grass football pitch with associated widening of adjacent road access and resurfacing of existing carpark. Planning consent for wider development agreed early 2020. Project promoter continues to work on project development including governance arrangements and NIHE tenure agreement – remaining issues on disposal and governance are being addressed by the group and their consultancy support.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF46	Coffee Culture	£1.35m - total allocation for the Sandy Area projects (formerly Gilpin's)	Stage 1-Emerging	Partnership project with UV. Final Business Case approved and Letter of Offer expected imminently. At design stage and planning application is required. Options in relation to the property purchase have now been resolved and work is ongoing to progress	Continue engagement with the group.

				the legal issues regarding title. Project funding includes: UV £402k, SOF £100k, DfC £100k, BIF funding commitment agreed at SAWG March 2021. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	
BIF47	Sandy Row Open Space project		Stage 1- Emerging	Work is continuing on the development of a project in the Sand. Initial mtg with group – rescoping project. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF48	Arts and Digital Hub <i>(formerly BSCR IT Exam Centre project)</i>		Stage 1- Emerging	Partnership project with UV. Business Case progressing and is contingent on receiving a confirmation of funding from the Council. Officers continue to work with the UV team and the group to develop up one joint scheme. <i>Part of Sandy Row Area projects.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.

Arts and Digital Hub - Request for Specified Allocation

In September 2020, Members agreed to support the IT Exam Centre proposal from BSCR on Sandy Row under the Belfast Investment Fund. Members have since noted that the project is now a joint initiative, taking in both the IT Exam Centre proposal as well as the Arts and Digital Hub project being developed by BSCR with Urban Villages. Members will note the corresponding change of project title under BIF to ‘Arts and Digital Hub’ which incorporates the IT Exam Centre proposal. Members are asked to consider a request from the Urban Villages Initiative for a specific allocation of £463,015 for the Arts & Digital Hub project. Members are asked to note that an allocation for this project would form part of the £1.35m ringfenced for Sandy Row Area projects.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 3 projects in South Belfast received an in-principle funding commitment. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. Members are asked to note the progress update of each project in Table below.

SOF – South Belfast Projects Overview

Project	SOF Award	Status and update	Recommendation/ Proposed Action
SOF02 Coffee Culture <i>UV partnership</i>	£100,000	Partnership project with UV. Final Business Case approved and Letter of Offer expected imminently. At design stage and planning application is required. Options in relation to the property purchase have now been resolved and work is ongoing to progress the legal issues regarding title. Project funding includes: UV £402k, SOF £100k, DfC £100k, BIF funding commitment agreed at SAWG March 2021.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.
SOF04 Sandy Row Community Forum	£80,000	Development of a Tourism Trail to complement the Transport Hub. Due Diligence complete. The project concept has been developed and costed. Belfast South Community Resources have signed off the project concept. Council will act as delivery agent for the project and will assist in the maintenance of signage as part of the council-wide upkeep of tourism signage. The project is expected on site early 2022 - supply chain and cost issues have caused significant delays.	Continue engagement with the group

6. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is a rolling programme to either enhance existing Council assets or build / buy new assets or facilities. Table below provides an update on current live projects South Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

South Belfast – Capital Programme Overview

Project	Status and update
Playground Improvement Programme 2021/2022 (City wide)	Stage 3 – Committed. Ormeau (Park Road) playground project onsite, completion expected early March 2022.

Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	Stage 1 - Emerging. Consultation stage
Palm House, Botanic Gardens	Stage 1 - Emerging. Link to Tropical Ravine

7. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

Members are reminded that the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund has recently been launched and is a new £8m capital programme to support capital projects across the city. The fund is now open for Stage 1 applications via an open call process and will close on 12 May 2022. Communications activity is already underway via a variety of tools to promote the fund to as wide an audience as possible.

8. Externally Funded Programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government department on key capital investment programmes, namely Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office as well as a number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to South Belfast.

Social Investment Fund

The table below provides a status update on SIF projects in South Belfast. Officers continue to liaise with TEO officials in relations to these projects.

SIF – South Belfast Projects Overview

Project	Status and update
Mornington Community Project	Project completed on 14 January 2022.
Lanyon Tunnels	Project has been impacted by the JR decision on the adjacent site to the tunnels – the adjacent site is a critical access point for the project, enabling range of connectivity outcomes and benefits (SIF business case dependent on connectivity). Members are asked to note that discussions are ongoing with Executive Office under SIF and Urban Villages.

Urban Villages Initiative

Table below is the status update on UV projects in South Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined South Belfast geography (Sandy Row; Donegall Pass and Markets).

UV – South Belfast Projects Overview

Project	Status and update
Coffee Culture <i>SOF and BIF</i>	Partnership project with UV. Final Business Case approved and Letter of Offer expected imminently. At design stage and planning application is required. Options in relation to the property purchase have been resolved and work is ongoing to progress the legal issues regarding title. BIF funding agreed at SAWG March 2021 (£1.35m ringfenced for Sandy Row Area projects). Match funding anticipated from DfC and Urban Villages.
John Murray Lockhouse—wider development	Partnership project with UV. Business Case approved. Council has commented on a draft Letter of Offer has been and the final Letter of Offer is expected imminently. Design team has been appointed and liaison with Group continues to finalise designs. Complex legal issues regarding land transfers continue to be progressed.
Arts and Digital Hub <i>BIF (formerly IT Exam Centre)</i>	Council acting as delivery agent. Business Case progressing. At design stage. This is a joint project - BIF BSCR IT Exam Centre project – the project is now one proposal on the same site. In March 2021 SAWG agreed to support as Stage 1 emerging under BIF (£1.35m ringfenced for Sandy Row Area projects). The Executive Office has submitted a funding request in sum of £463,015 – see above under BIF updates.
Accidental Theatre (Shaftesbury Square)	Business Case at preliminary stage and progressing.
School of Music Redevelopment	Emerging project at feasibility stage.

DfC Funded Projects

Outlined below is the status update on a project funded by Department for Communities.

Project	Status and update
Belfast Islamic Centre <i>- Renovations of Aldersgate House, University Rd</i>	The Council is the delivery agent for this project. Working in conjunction with BIC and DfC the project has progressed to tender. Unfortunately, the project has not proceeded to award as there is governance issues that are required to be resolved between BIC and DfC. All parties are however committed to the project and funds are in place to undertake the project.

9. Documents attached

None.”

After discussion, the Working Group:

- i. noted the contents of the report;
- ii. agreed to resume site visits to view ongoing and completed projects within the Physical Programme; and
- iii. agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Arts and Digital Hub project be allocated £463,015 of the £1.35m which had been ringfenced for Sandy Row area projects (formerly Gilpin's) and that Urban Villages be advised accordingly.

Chairperson