



BRCD Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Council Panel
Date:	9.30 am, 4 November 2021
Councillors in attendance:	<p>Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Barra O’Muirí – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p>
Officers:	<p>Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCD Programme Director, Belfast City Council Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Ursula O’Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Theresa Slevin, Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Lorraine Beggs, Lesley Holmes – BRCD Programme Office</p>

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	Cllr McLaughlin welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Belfast City Council and outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.
2.0	Apologies
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Cllr Glenn Finlay - Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Richard Smart - Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robert Logan – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council</p>

	<p>Alderman Philip Brett – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Eric Hanvey - Belfast City Council Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council Councillor Sorcha Eastwood – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>Suzanne Wylie – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Cllr McLaughlin asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Cllr McLaughlin asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Ald Kingston proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.</p> <p>Seconded – Cllr Byrne</p> <p>Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Deal Document
5.1	<p>Ronan Cregan, BRCD Senior Responsible Officer, delivered a presentation summarising the Deal Document and Governance Framework, the timeline of its development and the approval process currently underway. It was noted that approval is now in place from BRCD partners, the NI Delivery Board and NI Executive. Approval from the UK Government is outstanding, however this is expected to be provided in the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>The content of the deal document was outlined, its funding structure and its expected outcomes. Governance arrangements for the delivery of the deal were outlined; these will be similar to current arrangements with the current Executive Board and Pillar Board structure. It was reported that the role of the Finance Directors Group will be enhanced reflecting the increasing role for financial oversight and management of funding. The Council Panel will continue to fulfil a key role in overseeing the implementation of the deal, as well as providing leadership on further collaboration opportunities beyond the city deal.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne queried the plans for the promotion and launch of the overall deal, stressing the importance of promoting the collective package of investment.</p> <p>Ronan Cregan outlined plans to hold a launch event at the end of Nov/start of December, subject to UK Government approval of the deal, to profile the complete programme of investment and all partners will be involved in this event. Damien Martin commented that the scale of the event will be significant, but it will be delivered in line with covid guidelines and. it is hoped that the date for the event will be agreed within the next week.</p> <p>Cllrs Byrne, McLaughlin and Casey stressed the importance of scheduling the event as close to deal approval as possible to maximise the PR potential and avoid the risk of communication being leaked in advance.</p> <p>Members noted the report on the Deal Document and the Government Framework.</p>
6.0	BRCD Programme Update & Next Steps

6.1

Damien Martin, BRCD Programme Director, delivered a presentation on the progress of the overall BRCD programme of activity and outlining the key next steps. Whilst securing the deal is a critical milestone further work is required to develop key documentation to enable funding to flow. The PMO have developed the financial and implementation plan for the deal and are currently working with government departments to agree grant letters of offer and advance the approval of business cases for projects that are at an advanced stage of development.

It was highlighted that significant work has been undertaken over recent months to progress business cases. To date four business cases in the innovation pillar have been approved by Ministers and two projects within the tourism and regeneration pillar have progressed through casework (Mourne Mountain Gateway and Carrickfergus Castle & Regeneration), with the latter also securing DfE ministerial approval. The Digital innovation Programme Business Case has also been approved and further work is required to develop individual Outline Business Cases (OBC) for the projects contained within this aspect of programme. It was stressed that whilst the deal signing is a welcome stage to unlock funding, further work is required to advance many of the projects through the business case process, the approval of which is also required to enable funding to start to flow to individual projects.

It was reported that beyond the capital investment pillars, joint working across the partners continues to take place through the employability and skills programme and reference was made to digital graduate programmes that had been developed as a result of the BRCD, research undertaken on apprenticeship pathways and exploratory work to identify means to increase inclusion and diversity within high growth sectors.

Cllr Dunlop enquired as to the current position with regard to funding for two infrastructure projects (Newry Southern Relief Road and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2) and the funding commitment for the innovation hubs.

Damien Martin responded highlighting that across the tourism and infrastructure pillars the decision of partners was made to prioritise tourism and regeneration projects and that there are therefore some funding constraints within the infrastructure pillar. However, funding is in place for Newry Southern Relief Road and funding is also available for enabling investment in Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2, as detailed within the Deal Document, and engagement is taking place with government departments as to how the scheme can be fully delivered. It was also confirmed that funding for innovation hubs has been secured through the overall Digital Programme but individual business cases will need to be developed for each hub, as per the approach for the i4C project.

Cllr Byrne queried the timeline for the approval of OBCs, specifically from the completion of casework through to ministerial and DoF approval.

Damien Martin reported that experience to date suggested that it has been around 3-months. However, it is difficult to be definitive as caseworks often result in additional queries, impacting upon the speed of approval. Ronan Cregan followed up by highlighting that individual project budgets have been ringfenced. Therefore the allocation of funding is not determined by the speed of approval through the casework process.

Cllr Cathcart congratulated everyone involved in the progress achieved to date, highlighting key projects including the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Scheme and emphasising the importance of the innovation hubs to job creation.

Damien Martin reported that the partners are working on advancing the OBCs for the innovation hubs, highlighting the complexity of developing robust, sustainable financial models for these projects. Reference was made to the progress of the i4C project in helping to develop a pathway through the approval process.

	Members noted the report.
7.0	Communication & Engagement
7.1	<p>A video produced for the Digital programme was showcased and Damien Martin outlined the key communication products being developed for the launch, including a summary deal document and a refreshed look and feel for the deal signing. Plans are also underway to develop a new website for the delivery phase.</p> <p>It was reported that significant engagement work has been underway across the partners aligned to specific projects. In recent months a key focus for engagement activity has been focused upon government partners to secure approval of business cases and approval of the deal. However, recently strategic engagement has also been taking place with key business representative bodies. A draft communication protocol outlining the arrangements between partners and government departments has been developed and this is currently with departments for review.</p> <p>Cllr Byrne welcomed the creation of the video, referencing its ability to promote the collective programme of investment and the benefits it will deliver.</p> <p>Members noted the report and plans for further engagement with government department on the draft communications protocol.</p>
8.0	Schedule of Meetings
8.1	<p>Cllr McLaughlin highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council in February; the date for the meeting is to be agreed and will be circulated amongst Members.</p>