

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 10th June, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: The Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray);
Councillors T. Brooks, Bunting, Groogan,
Kelly, McAteer, McKay and McKeown.

In attendance: Ms. C. Reynolds, City Regeneration and
Development;
Ms. P. Conway; Regeneration Development Surveyor;
Mr. A. Ferguson, Senior Development Manager;
Mr. M. Kelly, Regeneration Project Officer;
Ms. E. Gowdy, Lead Officer OSS; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by The Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray) and

Resolved – that Councillor McKeown be elected to serve as
Chairperson of the South Area Working Group until the date of the Annual
Council Meeting in 2025.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Citywide Strategic Site Assessment

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update in terms of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) programme across the city. She explained that this followed previous decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth Committees to undertake strategic site assessments of Council owned lands across the city to identify potential for housing led or mixed-use regeneration, either in isolation or in partnership with the private/voluntary sector or other statutory agencies. She referred to the report which had been circulated which highlighted that housing led regeneration had been identified as a corporate priority and a priority within the Belfast Agenda. Following a recommendation of the Strategic

Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023 it was agreed to bring emerging proposals in respect of Council assets city wide to respective Area Working Groups.

The Director provided an update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 which included a number of strategic Council owned city centre lands as well as a partnership approach in respect of adjoining public sector lands. Concept regeneration plans, community and stakeholder engagement and planning Pre-Application Discussions had been undertaken in respect of a number of cluster sites, some of which were located in the southern part of the city centre. She advised that following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of September 2023, the Council was currently undertaking a Competitive Dialogue procurement process for a long-term partner for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration across these sites, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity. She advised that recommendations on the outcome of this would be brought to Elected Members later in the year.

The Members were also reminded that it had previously been reported to both the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in September 2023, that a Development Brief for lands in the ownership of the Department for Communities (DfC) and Belfast City Council at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St (the Inner North West Development Brief) had been reissued following input from DfC (as the land owner of part of the lands) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The Members were reminded that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decision, the reframed brief had been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return of 28th June 2024.

The Director also referred to the Housing Led Regeneration Group which had been established under the Belfast Agenda Community Planning structures, chaired by the NIHE Chief Executive and included senior officers from BCC, NIHE, DfC, LPS and SIB. She reported that a key task of this group had been to identify and map public lands across the city with potential for housing led regeneration as well as identifying strategic private sector land opportunities and exploring partnership opportunities and identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

As a second phase of the Strategic Site Assessments programme, and as agreed by Council, a comprehensive assessment had been undertaken in respect of Council lands across the city to ascertain the potential for housing led and /or mixed-use regeneration. This had also included working in partnership with other public sector bodies as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Group to include wider public land review and where appropriate to also include private sector land.

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director updated the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work. She advised that the policy context across the various policies and plans included:

- By 2035 to deliver to 31,600 new homes, with 8,000 units within city centre and to increase population by 66,000 people;
- To increase city centre living across all tenure types;
- To identify publicly owned land for housing and mixed use developments;
- To see Belfast transition to an inclusive, low carbon climate resilient economy; and

- To recognise that housing was an equivocal lever for economic development.

She referred to various barriers and challenges associated with demand and housing supply and the potential role for Council. The Members considered and discussed potential assessments/options for housing led/mixed use regeneration for various Council owned lands identified through this SSA process in the south of the city. It was highlighted that these were intended to be initial high level options for consideration by the Members to help inform next steps.

The Director advised that officers had been working with Mr K. Carlin, Carlin Planning Ltd to consider potential options for the various lands. Mr. Carlin was welcomed to the meeting. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director and Mr. Carlin provided the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work.

During discussion on barriers to bringing forward increased residential development including city centre living, the Director advised the Members that one of the constraints was that Belfast did not have access to certain funds which were available in England to assist with development and viability issues, such as the Brownfield Infrastructure Levy Fund.

Given the finite suitability of public lands across the city, the Members were encouraged to advise officers of any lands they considered might potentially have housing led regeneration potential and which could be assessed through the work of the HLRG referenced above.

Noted.

Chairperson