

West Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 22nd May, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

- Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson),
Councillors Black, Canavan, M. Donnelly,
R. M Donnelly, Duffy, Canavan, Garrett,
McCabe, McDowell, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin and Verner.
- In attendance: Ms. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration Manager;
Mr. D. Logan, Programme Delivery Manger;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer - Community Provision; and
Mr. D. O’Kane, Planning Manager, Plan and Policy;
Mr. C. Campfield, Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 28th February 2024 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation from BUILD Shankill

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. B. Drummond representing BUILD Shankill.

Mr. Drummond provided an overview of the Shankill BUILD (Better Understanding in Land Development) project. He advised that it had evolved from a Communities in Transition programme led by Greater Shankill Community Network. It began at the start of 2021 with a survey and scoping exercise identifying derelict and unused land and sites in the Shankill, particularly on the arterial routes.

He explained that the BUILD Shankill Working Group had identified 82 undeveloped, vacant or derelict sites within the Greater Shankill area that were either in public or private ownership and was committed to developing innovative and community-led approaches to addressing these as well as lobbying and campaigning for Government backed intervention to improve the local environment through an increase in public and private investment.

He highlighted that the regeneration and redevelopment of the vacant sites was not just the building of houses and that different sites needed different interventions. He advised that the Group had explored best practice models and a wider framework for economic drivers. He pointed out that 57 of the 82 sites had development potential.

Mr. Drummond provided details of feasibility assessments and cost evaluation that had been undertaken, together with the Groups vision and strategic long-term investment objectives.

During discussion, the Working Group highlighted the importance of the project and its links to the city centre core and the Belfast Agenda.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Drummond for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Presentation from St Michael's Amateur Boxing Club

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting representatives of St Michael's Amateur Boxing Club.

Mr. J. Pollock, Club Chairman, provided an overview of the work of the club to tackle deprivation and provide important community outreach in the area, together with the Club's ambitious plans to develop its industrial unit.

He highlighted that the dream of the club was to open its own purpose-built facility where people from all backgrounds from the local area could come and take part in boxing and exercise and gain all the benefits of being involved in the healthy activities the sport had to offer, both contact and non-contact.

He advised that their current provision included:

- Boxing;
- Exercise Programmes;
- School Engagement;
- Partnership Work; and
- Social Provision and Community Outreach.

He outlined the Club's Sports Development Plan and stated that, currently, they were unable to facilitate a large number of users, due to the size of the unit which did not have changing facilities. He highlighted that they could not cater for males and females at the same time, and could only facilitate up to 20 users, due to the restricted space.

He described the facility ambitions and plan for the site, together with costings and potential funding streams.

During discussion, the Working Group praised the work of the club and the importance of providing a space to introduce females to the sport, together with future proofing the club.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the contents of the presentation.

Physical Programme Update

The Working Group considered 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 Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- **Note the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1):**
 - **Belfast Bikes Expansion – Glencairn Station – Capital Programme.**
 - **Playground Improvement Programme – Northlink Playground – Capital Programme.**
 - **Paisley Park Sportsplex Refurbishment – DfC funded project.**
- **Note the reallocation of an additional £93,878 to West NRF (£74,116 for West and £19,762 for Shankill) and consider any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.**

3. Local Investment Fund

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. (LIF 1 – West - £1,127,500 + Shankill £490,000 and LIF 2 - £1,400,000).

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 50 projects have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 49 have been completed and 1 project is at delivery stage. In total, 98% of all LIF West projects have been completed. Further details of these are outlined below.

LIF breakdown – West	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	25 (100%)	£1,617,500	24 (96%)	£1,341,788
Number of Projects On-going Delivery			1 (4%)	£58,212
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)				
Total Number of Approved Projects	25	£1,617,500	25	£1,400,000

The table below shows an overview of the remaining live project:

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
WLIF2-08	Berlin Swifts Football Club	LIF £65,085; SOF £113,000	On Ground	NI Water have advised sewer connection is scheduled for this week (w/c 20 May). All other works complete.	Continue engagement with NI Water.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration, partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment. The West AWG had a total allocation of £9m comprising £5.5m from the original allocation, an additional £1.2m which was ring-fenced for projects in the Shankill area when this became part of the West AWG following the Council elections in 2015, and £2.5m which was ringfenced for projects in the Colin area following LGR.

6 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF accounting for the full allocation. Each of the 'In-Principle' projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

West	<p>Stage 3—Davitt's GAC—£1m; Raidió Fáilte—£950k; St Comgall's-£3.5m; Colin Glen Forest Park—£2.5m; Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project- £300k, Glencairn Community Project— £700k</p> <p>Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment</p> <p>Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment</p>
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF09	Glencairn Community Project	BIF- £700,000; NRF- £200,000	Committed; Due Diligence	Smaller scale concept design agreed. Procurement underway for design team (PQQ stage) with tender due to be issued in June 2024. Discussions on land continuing with NIHE.	Continue engagement with the group.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is a £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 5 projects in West Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

SOF – West Belfast projects overview

West	<p>Stage 3— James Connolly Interpretative Centre—£650,000; Rock Centre — £200,000; Belfast Orange Hall Museum- £80,000; Roddy McCorley Museum - £1,350,000; Berlin Swifts Football Club - £113,000; Greater Shankill Community Council - £507,000; Shankill Road Environmental Improvement Project - £50,000; Woodvale Park - £80,000</p>
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An overview of the remaining SOF projects is outlined in the table below –

SOF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
SOF10	Shankill Road Environmental Improvement Project	£50,000	Complete	Funding agreement for Phase 2 to be prepared. Due	Continue engagement with the group.

				Diligence complete. Progressing.	
SOF13	Woodvale Park	SOF: £80,000; IFA/ DMCS: £120,000	On Ground	Project is on site and progressing.	Continue engagement with key stakeholders.

6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Members will note that in April 2024, Council agreed an additional allocation of £280,000 to NRF on top of the original £10m. Following the agreed funding allocation model and the agreed project pathway, the overall NRF allocation for West has therefore increased from £3,352,776 to £3,446,654, with an increase of £93,878. The increase can be broken down into West - from £2,647,017 to £2,721,133 (increase of £74,116) and Shankill - from £705,759 to £725,521 (increase of £19,762). It is also agreed that any additional funding is only allocated to existing projects which have already passed the threshold level and/or already been agreed at Stage 3- Delivery.

Each NRF 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.

West Belfast – NRF overview

West	<p>Stage 3— The Mountainview Hotel, Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre, Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1, The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre, The Road, Glencairn Community Project (Hub)</p> <p>Stage 1— <i>Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanaí na Faiseoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy & External Lighting Improvement scheme, St. Gall's Milltown Community Development, Colin Glen Eco Air-Cruizer, CNP Regeneration of Cloona House</i></p>
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West Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre	£647,000	Stage 3- Committed	Planning permission granted in May 2024. Procurement preparation is underway.	Continue engagement with the group.

			A researcher is being appointed to inform a capital bid to Heritage Fund. The group is also exploring a further phase to the project to develop landscape around trim trail pathways and potential funders.	
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£500,000	Stage 3-Committed	Planning Permission granted in March 2024. Discussions ongoing with potential funders and engagement will continue with the group.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Mountainview Hotel	£1.5m	Stage 3-Committed	Negotiations with the landowner continuing. Expected to proceed to Due Diligence in the Autumn of 2024.	Continue engagement with the group.
The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre	£295,000	Stage 3-Committed	Purchase of building complete and the Council awaits legal documents for finalisation. Procurement process to be initiated for exhibition in late May 2024.	Continue engagement with the group.
Glencairn Community Project	£200,000	Stage 3-Committed	As above at BIF09. Smaller scale concept design agreed. Procurement underway for design team (PQQ stage) with tender due to be issued in June 2024. Discussions on land continuing with NIHE.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3-Committed	Officer awaiting response from group to discuss next steps.	Continue engagement with the group.

Members are asked to note the reallocation of an additional £93,878 to West NRF (£74,116 for West and £19,762 for Shankill) and consider any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's

Capital Programme in the West Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

West Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
City Cemetery Visitor Centre– Heritage Fund/ DfC	Project complete. The new centre is operational. <i>Members will continue to receive reports on this project until the other external works and signage are completed.</i> Works are still ongoing on the Victorian Fountain. Dual language signs are currently being installed on site. Work is underway to issue an Expression of Interest for an operator for the Visitors Centre.
Playground Improvement Programme – Northlink	Project complete. The upgraded playground is complete and now open to the public.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> In January, SP&R Committee agreed terms of reference for a local inquiry in the event that an objection to a proposed Gating Order is received. Members granted approval for the publication of a Gating Order in November 2023 for certain streets and to proceed with a ten-week consultation for the remaining streets. Committee agreed 51 gates in May and works will progress once ratified by full council in June. Approval will be sought to proceed at more locations in June and September 24.
Black Mountain / Upper Whiterock Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Design stage. Design team is continuing to develop the project to prepare for planning application. Ongoing engagement with DfI as key partner. Public consultation is now closed and the next step is a meeting via the PAD process.
Colin Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Meeting with DfI, DfC, NIHE, BCC held on 29 April 2024. DfC presented short, medium and long term Belfast Cycle Network (BCN) routes for the Colin area which encompasses some of the routes included in the Colin Active Travel Business Plan. Next steps are to identify any gaps with respect to the Active Travel Plan to clarify the funding requirement to deliver the remainder of Phase 1 Colin Active Travel Plan.
Access to the Hills - connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> This is also being considered within the wider study as below and is part of the Peace Plus 'Access to the Hills' application.
Connectivity - Access to Hills Programme (city wide)	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Secured DAERA funding for the Access to the Belfast Hills Feasibility Study. Study and delivery plan was completed in April 2023. Ongoing consultation with other stakeholders. Presented to Members in Autumn 2023. Three of the identified routes submitted in the Peace Plus Local Action Plan application.

Belfast Bikes Expansion	<p>Glencairn – Project complete and operational since March 2024.</p> <p>The contract with existing operator that was coming to an end in March 2024, has been extended until the end of the year. The tender for a new provider/operator will be published in Summer 2024.</p>
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8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office, Peace IV, DfI as well as schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to West Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in West Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined West Belfast geography (Colin area).

West Belfast – UV overview

Project	Status and update
Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub	<p>Council is acting as Delivery Partner. This is a developing project from Colin Neighbourhood Partnership. At business case stage and subject to TEO approval. This project is classified as transformational. A planning application has been submitted. A funding application has been submitted by the Group to PeacePLUS. The outcome of the application is pending.</p>

PEACEIV – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACEIV Programme.

West Belfast – Peace IV Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	<p>Project completed. Signage package to be installed subject to agreement via Committee and Council.</p>
Black Mountain Shared Space Project	<p><i>Phase 1 - Handover stage.</i> Completion and handover is scheduled for 24 May 2024. Liaising with end users regarding reducing the deficit through applications for funding. Funding deficit being finalised. Discussions are ongoing with end users Black Mountain Shared Space Project regarding handover and their operation of the facility.</p> <p><i>Phase 2 - Mobilisation.</i> Contractor scheduled to begin works on site at end of May 2024.</p>

Shankill Shared Women's Centre	On ground. Works complete, snagging and mobilisation underway. End users staggered decant from their existing premises from March to June to maintain existing service provision. Liaising with end users regarding reducing the deficit for programming. Funding deficit being finalised. Official opening 27 June 2024.
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Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on projects funded by Department for Infrastructure in West Belfast

Dfl – West Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Covered cycle stands Phase 2	<i>Via Dfl Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i> Funding has been received for Phase 3 of this programme. It will see the delivery of covered cycle stands in locations at Musgrave Park, Falls Park, Bog Meadows and Whiterock Leisure Centre.

DfC funded projects

Members are asked to note that projects match funded by Department for Communities are covered elsewhere - Berlin Swifts Football Club, Forth Meadow Community Greenway, Black Mountain Shared Space Project, except Paisley Park Sportsplex refurbishment which is reported below.

Project	Status and update
Paisley Park Sportsplex refurbishment	Project complete. Refurbishment of the existing 3G pitch, provision of floodlighting, changing facilities and associated amenities completed. Ongoing discussions with DfC regarding land arrangements.”

During discussion, the Working Group discussed the reallocation of an additional £93,878 to West NRF (£74,116 for West and £19,762 for Shankill).

During further discussion, in response to a Member’s query in relation to the progress of the Sensory Gardens in Woodvale Park, together with toilet facilities, the Programme Delivery Manager advised that this would be investigated with City and Neighbourhood Services in relation to the priority lists.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1):
 - Belfast Bikes Expansion – Glencairn Station – Capital Programme.
 - Playground Improvement Programme – Northlink Playground –

- Capital Programme.
- Paisley Park Sportsplex Refurbishment – DfC funded project.
- Agreed to the following reallocation of the additional £93,878 of the West Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund:
 - £74,116 (West) to be allocated equally between Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre (£37,058) and Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1 (£37,058); and
 - £19,762 (Shankill) to be retained as a contingency for the Shankill projects.

Local Development Plan - Local Policies Plan

The Principal Planning Officer and the Senior Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Emerging Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and set out the Council's growth strategy up to 2035. The Working Group was advised that it mirrored the aims of the Belfast Agenda and set out operational policies against which all planning applications would be assessed. The LPP would set out development zonings and Key Site Requirements and other site specific proposals related to sites and allocations.

The Members were advised that a Call for Sites had closed on 1st March, 2024, which provided an early opportunity for engagement to suggest sites, for example, for housing or commercial retail. It was reported that Belfast was the first authority to do this in Northern Ireland and it had provided an opportunity to draw in a variety of stakeholders, mostly targeting private land assets.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of Lands for Protection within West Belfast, including the Settlement Development Limit, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

During discussion, the Working Group commended the Team for their work and highlighted the importance of community engagement and consultation,

The Principal Planning Officer answered a range of questions in relation to the protection of greenways and sites. In response to a Member's suggestion for Grosvenor Road to be protected, he confirmed that this could also be considered.

The Members were advised that officers would plan further workshops to discuss the Local Policies Plan with Members in more detail.

Noted.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs) -

The Lead Officer (Community Provision) reported that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in February 2024, had agreed that £20,000 would be allocated to each of the four areas of the city for specialist providers to facilitate additional summer

schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the additional schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the City.

The Working Group agreed to defer consideration of the funding to allow further information to be provided at its Special Meeting on Wednesday, 5th June.

Request for Special Meeting - Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Working Group was advised that a decision had been taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in September 2023, to outline emerging proposals on the strategic site assessment work to the Area Working Groups. The Place and Economy Department was keen to outline the strategic review of Council assets, on a citywide basis, for housing-led regeneration, which included Council assets, in conjunction with wider public and private sectors.

The Working Group agreed to hold a Special Meeting on Wednesday, 5th June, at 5.15pm to consider the item.

Chairperson