

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 10th March, 2022

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian and Rodgers; and
Councillors Brooks, Canavan, de Faoite,
Flynn, Gormley, Hanvey, Long, McCann,
McKeown, McLaughlin, Spratt and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Strategic Director, City and Organisational
Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Mr. R. McLernon, Resilience Co-ordinator; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of The Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Haire and Alderman Sandford.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Overview of agreed Terms of Reference

The Committee noted the agreed Terms of Reference.

Climate actions – headline summary of business plan

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the work programme coordinated by the Belfast City Council Climate Unit at both city and council level.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the climate business plan, which includes workstreams at both council and city level.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Climate Unit is a small team within Belfast City Council currently comprising four staff. The Unit is in the process of being restructured and expanded to replace the temporary roles in order to deliver the city and council needs to address climate and resilience as outlined in the Belfast Agenda and Resilience Strategy. Once recruitment is completed, the team will comprise the following posts:

- Climate Commissioner,
- Climate Programme Manager – Council,
- Climate Programme Manager – City,
- Adaptation and Resilience Advisor,
- Green Economy Advisor,
- Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer,
- Project Support Officer – Climate, and
- Project Support Assistant.

3.2 The initial focus of the Climate Unit was the development of the Belfast Resilience Strategy, which was launched in December 2020 following approval by Council. In the same month the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap and the Belfast One Million Trees Programme were also publicly launched.

3.3 The Belfast Resilience Strategy set out a goal “to transition Belfast to an inclusive, net-zero emissions, climate-resilient economy in a generation” and identified three key areas of focus – Climate adaptation and mitigation, Participation of children and young people, and Connected net-zero emissions economy, along with thirty projects that collectively would enhance city resilience.

3.4 Since then, the Climate Unit has been focused on coordination of city and council structures, and the development of the city and council climate plans, as well as delivering projects such as Belfast One Million Trees and the VPACH project. The Unit is responsible for two separate but related workstreams at City Level and Council Level.

City Level

Governance structures

The Climate Commissioner co-chairs the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board (with NIHE, the Utility Regulator and NI Water) within the Belfast Community Planning Partnership structure and the Climate Unit handles all coordination and secretariat functions. The Board is responsible for delivering the Belfast Resilience Strategy.

The Climate Commissioner co-chairs the the Belfast Climate Commission in partnership with QUB, as part of the PCAN (place-based climate action) Network with Leeds, Edinburgh and other cities. The Climate Commission has set up a number of working groups including Just Transition, Youth Working Group, Business and Finance, Food, and Community Climate Action Working Group. The Commission is co-chaired by Belfast City Council and QUB.

The Resilience and Sustainability Board has typically been responsible for citywide planning and delivery, while the Commission provides advice and research, such as the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap.

Projects

The Resilience Strategy is being delivered through 30 projects (summarised in the Ambitions document). These are led by a range of different institutions and include:

- Green Port - Belfast Harbour is planning reach Net Zero by 2030
- Sustainable Urban Drainage - DfI is working to ensure that Belfast has a network of sustainable drainage systems in place to cope with the expected increase in flood events and to cope with an expanding population.
- Zero Emissions city bus fleet by 2030 - Translink is in the process of decarbonising its entire bus fleet by 2030 via H2 fuel cell and electric buses
- Bolder Vision for Belfast - a blueprint for creating a greener more accessible city centre;
- Belfast One Million Trees Project - at both city and council levels, working with a wide range of voluntary, community, statutory and private partners including the Woodland Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, the National Trust, and Belfast Hills Partnership;
- VPACH Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Project - has examined the potential for residential charge points in Belfast;
- Training and skills for an inclusive low-carbon economy – BCC has secured £220,000 to develop a Retrofit Skills Academy;
- Investment in existing NIHE stock - NIHE have an investment programme that is retrofitting it's existing stock to make it more efficient and also making sure that new builds are future proofed so that they don't require retrofitting in future;
- Sustainable Tourism - Belfast is now ranked in the top 20 cities in the GDS (Global Destinations Sustainability) Movement, the world's leading benchmarking and performance improvement

- programme for tourism destinations – the team provides support to Visit Belfast in making annual submissions to the Index;
- **Belfast Stories - A Low Carbon Exemplar for the City, this will be a landmark signature experience in the heart of our city centre;**
 - **Developing a Hydrogen Ecosystem - city partners including NI Water, Catagen, B9 Energy and Artemis are investing to develop green hydrogen across energy, waste, housing, water and transport sectors;**
 - **LDP – the statutory framework to enable an inclusive, net zero, climate resilient transition – its core objectives are to promote a green and active place and a smart connected and resilient city;**
 - **Ulster University Architects of Change Project - delivering a training programme to business leaders across the region on strategies for smart cities, zero emission buildings and neighbourhoods, due to launch with a series of workshops in March 2022;**
 - **Linenquarter BID Sustainable District Project - working collaboratively with city partners, the city's first 'Sustainable District' bringing together business, the public sector and the private sector to collaborate and innovate on energy, water and waste efficiency, decarbonisation and sustainable practices, to accelerate the city's transition to a climate-resilient economy, includes the REACT festival which took place during COP26.**

The team is also responsible for reporting to the Carbon Disclosure Project across a range of categories in relation to the city's emissions and climate plans – Belfast's first submission was made in 2021, with the city receiving a B grade.

Last year the Council signed up to the Race to Resilience, Race to Zero, WWF One Planet City Challenge, the Real Play Coalition as an Ambassador City, and the Glasgow Food and Climate Pledge.

The team also engages with numerous cities globally via membership of city networks such as Core Cities, APSE Energy, ICLEI, the Resilient Cities Network, and Eurocities, which has led to involvement in projects and opportunities to learn from other UK and international cities. Other work include:

- **Coordinating the Belfast City Council Yoursay Engagement Platform sections which relate to Resilience and Sustainability, the Belfast One Million Trees Project and the Youth Climate Engagement process;**
- **Supporting the development of a local delivery framework for the Energy Strategy and Green Growth Strategy, working with DAERA, DfE, SIB, Invest NI and three other Councils;**

- **Mainstreaming Climate/Environment in the Belfast Agenda via the ongoing review process;**
- **Supporting and facilitating the development and delivery of a portfolio of investable climate projects aligned to international best practice to accelerate the transition to a green economy; and**
- **Leading the delivery of the Sustainable Futures work under the 'Reset for Growth' report under the Inclusive Growth Commission.**

Council Level

Governance structures

The Belfast City Council Climate Plan Programme Board, which is an officer Board established to guide the development of the BCC Climate Plan. It is chaired by the Director of City and Organisational Strategy.

There are a number of ongoing workstreams summarised below.

- **Coordinating of the BCC Climate Fund and coordination of the project pipeline process, working closely with Physical Programmes and City and Neighbourhood Services. The fund is examining the feasibility of projects such as EV infrastructure on the council estate, use of Solar PV, development of a larger tree nursery following the development of Grovelands tree nursery pilot, single use plastic policy and a number of suggested pilot projects primarily from Physical Programmes and City and Neighbourhood Services.**
- **Commissioning the Belfast City Council Environmental Sustainability Review which completed in March 2021.**
- **Developing the Belfast City Council Carbon Baseline, Trajectory, and Energy Audit process, which will be completed in March 2022.**
- **Developing the draft Belfast City Council Adaptation Plan through a co-design process throughout 2020 and 2021.**
- **Developing the of Belfast City Council Climate Plan, Climate Risk Assessment and Climate Investment Plan.**
- **Membership of Sustainable NI, and the Local Government Climate Action Network, which are networks of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland established under DAERA to promote cross council learning and collaboration.**

- Coordinating the Council’s involvement in COP26 and subsequent city to city and network activity including links to Greater Manchester, Liverpool Region and Dublin.
- Coordinating responses to relevant consultations including the DFE Energy Strategy, DAERA Green Growth Strategy and DFI draft Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 – 2027.
- Managing the delivery of the Horizon 2020 Upsurge Project, in a partnership with QUB which is focused on bringing unused land back into use at Lower Botanic Gardens for research, training and engagement purposes, with links to satellite sites at BCC run community gardens and allotments.
- Supporting the integration of climate across council functions such as the Physical Programmes capital project pipeline, Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, and support for the Bolder Vision.
- Coordination of climate training for Council officers, CMT and Elected Members, working with Climate NI to deliver Climate Emergency Training across Council.
- Participating in the TRACE pilot to enable reporting, assessment, aggregation and management of supply chain emissions so we can use our procurement power in support of climate commitments.
- Supporting the establishment of a housing Retrofit Delivery Hub to drive the retrofit agenda in Belfast.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 All activities are financed through previously approved internal and external funding.

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Implications**

5.1 Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council’s screening process.”

The Committee noted the contents of the Climate Business Plan.

Update on Current Issues

The Committee noted the following report which provided an update in relation to the progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a progress update on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and work on a development plan, strategy and action plan to progress this work.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and progress to date to develop the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At its meeting on 9th June 2021, Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee were provided with an update on progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor including proposals for work on a development plan and governance structure involving business and elected representatives. Members noted the progress to date and endorsed the approach.

3.2 The DBEC group proceeded with the commissioning of a development plan, strategy and action plan for the partnership. Belfast City Council acted as lead partner on the tendering and contract management of this work. The development plan is progressing well. It is being supported by a working group of officials from across the partnership. Activities include:

- Review of successful corridors, including staffing, funding, legal and governance structures including powers and purpose, and successful initiatives or projects carried out by the partners
- Review of existing cross border structures/entities and funding, legislative environment
- Review of existing research and delivery in priority sectors to identify gaps in provision/research, areas of alignment and potential for collaboration
- Identification of options to support the development of a DBEC entity aligned with the partnership's ambitions including recommended governance, legal and operating structures
- Development of a detailed resource plan to support the delivery of the DBEC entity including identification of potential sources of funding.

3.3 To date, the delivery team has undertaken research in relation to future governance, operational, legal and resourcing models for the partnership. This has included a comparative analysis of other corridors and consultations with existing cross border institutions and relevant internal and external stakeholders. The next steps for stage 1 include finalising consultations with cross border bodies and preparing the implementation and resourcing plan. Once approved the delivery team will proceed to stage 2 of the project.

Since the previous update, the inaugural meeting of the Dublin Belfast Political Oversight Group took place on 23rd November 2021 at City North Hotel, Dublin. The CEOs of the council partners attended the meeting along with the three elected representatives from each council. A Chair and Vice Chair of the group were elected to serve a one-year term. The Chair is Councillor Pete Byrne from Newry Mourne and

Down District Council and the Mayor of Fingal, Councillor Seána Ó Rodaigh, of Fingal County Council was elected as Vice-Chair. The team delivering the development plan used this session as an opportunity to undertake a consultation workshop with elected representatives and officials and this will feed into the development plan.

- 3.4 It was previously decided to delay the convening of a business advisory group until work on the development plan and strategy has progressed. It is expected that the private sector will be consulted as part of the current work.
- 3.5 The first stage of the research is being finalised and emerging priorities are listed below,
- The need for dedicated resourcing plan including a single staff resource to drive the development of the corridor and make applications for funding
 - The need for the creation of a standalone entity and provision of associated annual budget
 - Agreement on key areas for policy co-operation – skills, research and innovation, climate mitigation/action etc.

Next Steps

- Proposal for resourcing and funding model for consideration by CX and elected member advisory board
- Appointment and in parallel funding applications to be made to secure annual budget

3.6 **Financial and Resource Implications**

The work on the development plan will be resourced from the 2021/22 Enterprise and Business Growth budget.

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

The unit is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.”

**Proposed areas of focus for future meetings
of the Climate and City Resilience Committee**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 **Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members on the proposed areas of focus for discussion at future meetings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the suggested topics and agree those which should form the agenda for the forthcoming meetings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee. Members may wish to suggest additional items for consideration.

3.0 Main report

3.1 It is proposed that the Committee undertake Climate Emergency Training which will be delivered by Climate NI, working with officers in the Climate Unit. Options for training include:

- a) Delivery by dedicating a future meeting of the Committee (7th April for example) to a three-hour training session which would be followed by individual work to complete the full seven-hour training and receive accreditation. This approach would support Belfast City Council being accredited as a Climate Literate Organisation and would show leadership as we seek to embed climate training throughout the organisation.
- b) Delivery at two future Committee meetings so that all content is delivered in by Climate NI within the Committee meeting structure.
- c) Delivery through a session held outside of the existing meeting schedule, however, we are mindful of Members time and the challenge of finding time for such as session.

3.2 It is proposed that the subsequent meetings of the committee would focus on the following key areas:

- An update on the Electric Vehicles Initiative (EVI) which would be set in the context of the DFE coordinated NI Energy Strategy, ongoing work on this topic by DFI, and the work undertaken to date in Belfast through the VPACH project;
- The One Million Trees Programme;
- The Council's baseline emissions and results of the energy review;
- Climate Fund – update on pilot projects;
- Bolder Vision;
- Belfast Stories;
- Housing retrofit and decarbonising heat in buildings;

- **Challenges and opportunities for collaboration through the Shared Island Unit and Shared Prosperity Fund;**
- **The Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor initiative;**
- **Cyber Security arrangements in Belfast City Council and wider considerations;**
- **Port Health and Port checks legal position**

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 No financial or resource implications are anticipated at present.

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Implications**

5.1 Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process."

In response to a number of questions, the Strategic Director confirmed that there were a number of items which fell within the remit of other Committees. However, where there were specific areas of work relating to climate, reports would be submitted to this Committee for consideration.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed to a Member's request that Prof. Ciaran White BL and Francis Costello be invited to a future to address the Committee in relation to their research on the possibility of Northern Ireland securing European Parliament and European Committee of the Regions elected representation.

Chairperson