

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 9th November, 2023

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOТЕLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,
Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly, D. Douglas, S. Douglas,
Kelly, Long, McAteer, McCabe, McKeown, Smyth
and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate;
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor McCabe.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th October, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were reported.

Schedule of Meetings 2024

The Committee agreed its schedule of meetings for the period commencing 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024.

Kerbside EV proposal from BT (Presentation BT Openreach)

Mr. P. Fyfe, Mr. P. Wade, Mr. D. Lunney and Mr. A. Irwin, BT Openreach, attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Climate Commissioner provided an overview on the proposal to provide the Council with the opportunity for Belfast to take part in a U.K. trial, by BT Openreach, to make use of DSLAM cabinets, distributed throughout the city, in order to provide on street charging

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for electric vehicles. She stated that given twenty percent of emissions in Belfast were attributed to transport, this would assist in helping the province meet its carbon reduction targets and make the city a much healthier place to live and work.

Mr. Wade reported that 90,000 DSLAM cabinets had been provided throughout the UK, of which 60,000 were suitable for EV charging. He stated that the provision of the charging ports would assist in meeting the government's target to provide 30,000 charging ports by 2030 and would assist those residents who had no access to off street parking. The Committee was informed that BT would be undertaking a trial, at its own cost, and would remove any associated hardware after the trial was completed, again at its own cost.

The Members were provided with a map showing the distribution of the various DSLAM cabinets distributed throughout the city, including the exchange locations. Mr. Fyfe confirmed that six initial EV charging sites had been identified as part of the technical trial, including details of the proposed DSLAM cabinets and charger ports which would be subject to planning permission.

In response to a question from a Member regarding any potential cost for users should the technical trial be successful, Mr. Wade confirmed that BT had not worked up a costing profile as yet which would be subject to market conditions and a commercial decision and stated that he would endeavour to come back with a response on the differential pricing mechanism between on street and off street EV charging.

A Member raised concerns in regard to BT by virtue of owning the EV infrastructure and the risk associated with monopoly supply. Mr. Wade stated that there were other potential suppliers within the marketplace, including Virgin, and that there were no commercial barriers restricting other potential suppliers from entering the marketplace and competition would be a factor in comparative pricing.

The Committee raised further issues in regard to restricted access for disabled pedestrians and cyclists given the infrastructure requirements and was assured that BT was required to comply with Public Realm and relevant planning legislation and that it was anticipated that a significant layout of cabling would be delivered underground.

The Climate Commissioner reported that many of the Committee's concerns would be addressed in the EV Strategy which would be used to coordinate the Council's interventions in terms of equitable access to charging ports, including disabled groups and dedicated EV parking bays. She stated that it would be her intention to report back to a future meeting of the Committee on the EV Strategy.

The Committee noted the information provided and thanked the representatives from BT Openreach for their detailed and informative presentation.

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**Update - Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership
(Presentation - Beth Bell, Co- Chair of the
Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership/ Mura Quigley-
Adaptation and Resilience Advisor)**

Ms. Quigley informed the Committee that food production had a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions and equated to 35% from the food and drink industry. She stated that the demand for food was increasing, including the global impact of food scarcity. The Members were informed that the issue of food nutrition and obesity had been identified as a major problem for many European nations and that access to good quality food was not distributed equally in the UK. Ms. Quigley reported that access to cheap fast food was more readily available in socially deprived areas.

The Committee was informed the work surrounding sustainability and food was one of the actions contained within the Resilience Strategy and that, in 2021, the Council had signed up to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration. The Declaration provided a commitment by local authorities and regional governments to tackle the climate emergency, through integrated food policies, with a call on national governments to take affirmative action.

The Members were informed of the work undertaken by the Belfast Food Network with support from Belfast City Council and with the remit to improve access to healthy, local fresh food in the city and to build community wealth in a way that addressed the climate emergency. To that end, she reported that the Council had been asked to establish a new community food partnership.

Ms. Quigley explained that the Sustainable Food Partnership was people focussed with an ethos based on the notion that people had the right to gain access to good nutritional food. She highlighted the need to empower people to access food systems, including a vision to transform food systems that protect national resources for future generations, and which was both economically and environmentally sustainable. To that end, she referred also to the importance attached to the provision of good food options.

She highlighted the work undertaken, as part of the sustainable food economy, manifesting itself with such initiatives as food cooperatives, enabling lower income households to access climate and nature friendly food. In terms of catering and procurement food policy, she highlighted the important work undertaken by the Council in that regard and the need to offer plant-based food alternatives, including sourcing food with a short supply chain. The Committee was informed that food insecurity was an increasing challenge and provided the Members with an overview of the governance structure associated with the food partnership.

Ms. Quigley referred to several successes associated with the food partnership, including, amongst other things, the establishment of an open food network for sharing ideas, learning and creating opportunities, including a public event which had been held in June 2023.

The Committee was requested to allocate £30,000, from within existing budgets, to develop a food strategy and vision, including a city-wide and communication plan.

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After discussion it was

Proposed by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to the allocation of £30,000, from within the City and Neighbourhood Services budget, to develop a food strategy, including a comprehensive city-wide and communication plan as part of the Council's food strategy and vision.

The Committee recognised also the need to support local communities in the creation of social supermarkets and to engage with both schools and young people as part of a food strategy for the city and to address those areas which lead to the elimination of food poverty.

Noted.

Local Development Plan - Presentation - Kate Bentley

Owing to the inability of Ms. K. Bentley to attend, the Committee agreed to defer this item to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Update - Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub –
Brenda Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate)**

The Committee considered the undernoted report outlining the progress made in regard to delivery of the Belfast Retro-fit Delivery Hub.

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

i) note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub was established in November 2022 following publication of the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap which identified that emissions from domestic, public and commercial buildings account for 63% of the city's greenhouse gas emissions. The Hub recognises that the majority of buildings in Belfast in 2035 already exist, and as a result, there is a need to focus resources on improving energy efficiency and

decarbonising the heat supply to these buildings in order to achieve emission reduction targets and reduce energy costs.

The Hub takes a consortium approach to catalyse retrofit activity across the public, commercial and private building sectors in Belfast, engaging stakeholders from across the construction supply chain, funders, academics, public bodies, housing providers and consumer bodies. Belfast City Council's Climate Team convenes and supports the Hub's activities as part of the wider support the team provides for the Belfast Community Planning Partnership. The Hub's work is informed by the National Retrofit Strategy produced by the Construction Leadership Council and is Chaired by Peter Roberts (previously chair of NIHE) with technical advisory support provided by Professor Alice Owen from Leeds University.

3.2 The Hub's principal duties are:

- To identify opportunities for retrofit across the city and bring together the partners who can realise those opportunities.
- To identify and endorse the required standards of building performance that retrofit in Belfast needs to achieve.
- To identify ways of supporting the economic activity, skills and jobs that achieving those standards requires
- To draw together partners to source and release funding, using a funding-ready rather than a funding-led approach.
- To promote a collaborative, solutions approach sharing knowledge across ownership and tenure.
- To ensure engagement with stakeholders across the city, and to support and promote complementary initiatives.
- To ensure that retrofit work considers climate resilience.
- To report on progress, initially to the Community Planning Partnership's Resilience and Sustainability Board

3.3 Achievements and process to date

Participants in the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub meetings over the past 12 months have confirmed the city's aspiration to transform the city's buildings in line with its carbon reduction commitments and discussions have generated a rich range of insights and potential interventions.

Belfast's approach so far has had some distinctive features compared to how other cities are tackling the retrofit challenge:

- Stakeholders from all aspects of retrofit delivery have been involved – including installers, customers, housing providers, property owners, policymakers, researchers. The benefits of

getting the ‘whole system in a room’ have been evident in the information that has been shared and the depth and breadth of ideas produced.

- Using the UK National Retrofit Strategy as a reference point has enabled discussions to reflect on how delivering retrofit, at scale, is a complex problem where many different elements all need to move at once. Skills, technical standards, funding, policy/regulation, market demand, supply chain capacity have to be progressed in parallel.
- Political constraints – whilst there is frustration at the constraints imposed whilst the NI Assembly is not functioning, there is also the recognition that the city stakeholders need to do what they can rather than waiting for restoration of the Assembly’s functioning.
- Aiming to be funding ready rather than funding led i.e. developing the projects that the city needs and then finding ways to fund those projects.
- Thinking through how to work across tenures – most retrofit programmes focus on one tenure only.

Discussions have focussed mainly on the residential sector to date, in part because improving homes is an important social priority as well as being essential for carbon emissions reduction. This discussion has gone further than many other cities by including consideration of the private rented sector alongside social housing and owner-occupied homes. Hub participants have also identified a need to retrofit commercial and public buildings in parallel with upgrading the housing stock.

3.4 Next steps

Based on discussions to date, ten ‘work packages’ – clusters of actions – are proposed, to run in parallel:

Foundation Work Packages – cross-cutting activities that underpin all the actions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data and information 2. Co-ordination, learning and knowledge exchange. 3. Ensuring the just transition – checking for equality of opportunity
Themed Work Packages – clusters of actions identified:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Pipeline development & funding options 5. Creating customer demand – Improving understanding, creating the market 6. Building energy performance assessment and monitoring 7. Supply chain development

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New work packages – filling important gaps:	8. Commercial sector 9. Local Area Energy Plan integration 10. Resilience assessment
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A series of 43 actions was identified by Hub members, clustered into three work packages and ranked by a combination of potential level of impact, ease/difficulty of implementation, timescale to deliver and dependency on factors outwith the Hub. A full list of actions is included in Appendix A.

Task and finish groups are being set up for each work package with Hub members invited to lead and participate in those relating to their experience and expertise. The groups will examine the actions in detail, exploring if/how they can be taken forward and commencing work as appropriate. Workshops are scheduled to take place in late November 2023 with progress reported to the Hub consortium at its next quarterly meeting in January 2024.

Outputs of the task and finish groups will be integrated into and will serve as a delivery plan for the Draft Retrofit Strategy which will be a Hub consortium document. Plans are under development for a launch event of the strategy in February 2024.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 None.

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

Corporate policies will be followed, and appropriate screening and mitigating actions for individual work packages delivered where necessary.

The Committee was informed that, in response to a question from a Member, due to the lack of governance in Northern Ireland by way of the Northern Ireland Executive, it was not in a position to legislate and provide grant funding for retro-fit schemes, which created an impediment to progress in that particular area.

Noted.

Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be held on Thursday, 7th December at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson