

West Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 28th February, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson),
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Black, M. Donnelly,
R. M Donnelly, Duffy,
Canavan, Garrett,
McCabe, McDowell, R. McLaughlin,
Nic Bhranair, Verner and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. M. Doherty, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration Manager;
Mr. S. Lavery, Programme Manager;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer - Community Provision; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported from Councillor I. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 23rd November 2023 and 11th January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation - First Street Community Benefit Society

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. Kathleen Smyth, Mr. Seán Byers and Ms. Naomi Connor, representing First Street Community Benefit Society.

The representatives commenced by advising that First Street Community Benefit Society was a recently established entity and was a collective of cooperative and charitable organisations.

They advised the Members that First Street CBS proposed to develop a Community and Cooperative Hub at 4 North Howard Street. The building which had been built in the 1860s was currently owned by NTL Hodge Ltd, it was a three storey former linen mill, on a site area of 0.54 acres, and was currently for sale on the open market for approximately £500k.

The representatives explained that the existing building was a heritage building at risk as it was once part of the linen industry in Belfast and sadly it had been derelict for over 15 years. With the aid of powerpoint, the Elected Members were shown pictures of both the location and inside of the property.

The representatives then provided the Members with an overview of the timeline of works to date.

In term of progressing with the vision to see this old mill brought into community ownership for local social and economic benefit, the representative advised that, to date, engagement had been undertaken with the following stakeholders:

- Conway Mill;
- Community organisations/representatives;
- Local Elected Members;
- NIHE;
- Heritage based organisations;
- Department of Justice;
- Department of Finance;
- Department for Communities HED;
- Department for Communities Neighbourhood Renewal;
- Belfast City Council; and
- Potential funders.

In terms of funding, the Members were advised that funding had been secured from the NIHE, Architectural Heritage Fund, The Pilgrim Trust, DfC Historic Environment Fund, BCC Go Social/Go Succeed and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Further funding was being sought from Peace Plus (1.4 Reimagining Communities), the Community Ownership Fund and the NIHE.

The representatives concluded by advising that the next steps would be to set up a stakeholder round table, complete a feasibility study for the redevelopment and to explore options for acquisition of the building, either through purchase or community asset transfer.

They advised that they would be keen to engage further with the Elected Members and the communities that they represented and encouraged them to make contact directly should they wish to discuss the proposal further or undertake a site visit to 4 North Howard Street.

The Democratic Services Officer undertook to e-mail a copy of the presentation to the Members of the West Area Working Group, along with a video link containing further information on the proposals.

Following some discussion with the Members, who broadly welcomed the vision which the organisation had for the building, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for attending and they left the meeting.

Physical Programmes Update

The Programme Delivery Manager, Property and Projects, presented the following report to the Working Group:

“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 updates on the Physical Programme for West Belfast,
- note the project movement for Glencairn Community Project to *Stage 3 - Committed*.

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	
	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	Contractor works and all other utilities connections are now complete. Liaison with NI Water for final sewer connection is ongoing - fees paid and awaiting connection date.	Continue engagement with NI Water Re: sewer connection.

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	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, Stage 2— Glencairn Community Project— £700k; St Mary's CBS— no commitment Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF29	Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL	BIF- £300,000; SOF- £507,000	Complete	Project completed. Handover held on 21 February 2024.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF09	Glencairn Community Project	BIF- £700,000; NRF- £200,000	Uncommitted; Due Diligence	The revised concept design for a smaller scale modular build has	Move to Stage 3- Committed

				been prepared and costed. Project has received an in-principle NRF allocation of £200k.	
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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	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
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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
SOF05	Roddy McCorley Museum	SOF: £1,350,000 DfC: £250,000; £20,840	Complete	Project completed and premises open to the public. Landscaping works complete. Official opening took place in September 2023.	Continue engagement with the group.
SOF10	Shankill Road Environmental Improvement Project	£50,000	Complete	Funding agreement for Phase 2 to be prepared. Due Diligence complete.	Continue engagement with the group.
SOF13	Woodvale Park	SOF: £80,000; IFA/DMCS: £120,000	Due Diligence	Works for replacement MUGA and floodlights are scheduled to commence on-site after Easter 2024, funded by IFA / DCMS.	Continue engagement with the group. Management arrangements to be confirmed with the club along with a response on their requests.

				<p>Discussions on management arrangements are ongoing including consideration of additional requests from club.</p> <p>The cost estimate for a sensory garden was estimated at £310,000 in Jan 2023 and would require additional funding sources in order to progress.</p>	
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6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is a £10m capital fund to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. £3.3m was allocated to West Belfast and 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment. Each 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 Fuiseoige, 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
The Mountainview Hotel	£1.5m	Stage 3- Committed	Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the	Continue engagement with the group.

			group to discuss next steps.	
Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre	£647,000	Stage 3- Committed	Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps. Group has secured a development grant funding of £99k from Heritage Fund.	Continue engagement with the group.
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£500,000	Stage 3- Committed	Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps.	Continue engagement with the group.
The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre	£295,000	Stage 3- Committed	Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3- Committed	Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps.	Continue engagement with the group.
Glencairn Community Project	£200,000	Stage 3- Committed	Link to BIF project. NRF Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps.	See note above at BIF09

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's Capital Programme in the West Belfast area.

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</i>

	<i>project until the other external works and signage are completed.</i> Final restoration works are now complete at the Central Steps, and work is continuing on the Victorian Fountain. External dual language signage works are due to be installed in March.
Playground Programme – Northlink	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Northlink playground works are scheduled to complete in April 2024.
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. Members are to be informed via CNS when that consultation process commences.
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.
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.
Colin Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case related to the development of the Colin Active Travel Routes prepared. In contact with funding partners requesting support to deliver the project. Ongoing engagement with DfI as key partner.
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. It is one of identified routes submitted in the Peace Plus Local Action Plan application.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	Further expansion – Workshop with Members to be arranged. Falls Road/Coláiste Feirste – complete and operational since October 2023. Glencairn – will be installed in Spring 2024. The contract with existing operator that is coming to an end in March 2024, will be extended until the end of the year. The tender for a new provider/operator will be published in Spring 2024.

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	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. Planning application submitted. Funding application submitted by the Group to the PeacePLUS Programme.

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	Project completed. Signage package to be installed subject to agreement via Committee and Council.
Black Mountain Shared Space Project	On ground. Phase 1. Works progressing. Liaising with end users regarding reducing the deficit through applications for funding. Funding deficit being finalised. Phase 2. Design team appointed. Planning permission received. Procurement of works contractor complete. Funding deficit and currently liaising with existing funders IFI/DfC/DoJ and BMSSP regarding additional funding.
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 tentatively set for 27 June 2024.

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> Complete - Andersonstown Leisure Centre, Páirc Nua Chollann and Brook Leisure Centre. 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 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	<i>On ground.</i> Refurbishment of the existing 3G pitch, provision of floodlighting, changing facilities and associated amenities. 3G pitch completed. Base for changing facilities has been installed and modular unit now on site. Changing facilities will be operational in March. Ongoing discussions with DfC regarding land arrangements."

A Member highlighted antisocial behaviour issues that were occurring at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway at Springfield Road, and asked officers to liaise with Youth Workers and Community organisations in the area to try and resolve any issues.

A further Member referred to the success of the refurbished Muga Pitch at Woodvale Park and asked officers to liaise with her outside of the meeting in regard to the possibility of the Shankill Juniors accessing the Pavilion space at Woodvale Park.

The Working Group recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it adopt the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report and note the update on the capital projects related to the PEACEIV Programme.

Summer Programming Additional Needs - Verbal update

The Lead Officer - Community Provision explained that children with special needs were often not able to avail of summer schemes due to their high support needs and that a report had recently been submitted to the People and Communities Committee to consider the inclusion of children with special needs in the holiday scheme programme.

He outlined that, in order to contribute to addressing that gap in provision, the Committee had agreed that a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking funding for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, one in each area of the City, at a total cost of £80,000 (maximum £20,000 per scheme), which would allow increased numbers of children to participate in summer schemes that were suitable for their needs, with discussions to take place with the relevant Area Working Groups and the Youth Council in advance of any locations being agreed.

Several Members welcomed the introduction of the additional summer schemes but highlighted the need for the programme, post pilot, to be needs based rather than area-based.

Noted.

Request to Present at a Future Meeting – St Michael’s Boxing Club

At the request of the Chairperson, Councillor McCann, the Working Group agreed to invite St Michael’s Boxing Club to a future meeting of the Working Group.

Chairperson