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BRCDC Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCDC) Council Panel
Date:	12.30 pm, 27 September 2023
Councillors in attendance:	<p>Mayor Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell - Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Michael Goodman – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Jay Burbank - Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Sarah Bunting – Belfast City Council Alderman Amanda Grehan – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Tim Mitchell – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Gary McCleave – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor John Lavery – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Oonagh Hanlon - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council</p>
Officers:	<p>Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council Susie McCullough – Director of Place, Ards and North Down Borough Council John Walsh - Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Sharon McNicholl – Deputy Chief Executive, BRCDC SRO, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCDC Programme Director, Belfast City Council David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Caroline Magee – Director of Organisation Development and Innovation, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Arlene Barton – Programme Co-Ordinator - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Jonathan McGrandle – City Deal Programme Director, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Majella McAlister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Theresa Slevin, Stephen Wallace, Emer Husbands, Lorraine Beggs– BRCDC Programme Office</p>

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	The Mayor of Ards & North Down Borough Council, Councillor Jennifer Gilmour, welcomed the members of the BRCDC Council Panel to the meeting hosted in the City of Bangor by Ards & North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) and outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.
2.0	Apologies
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Councillor Matthew Magill – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Emmett McDonough-Brown- Belfast City Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Robert Logan, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robin Stewart, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council</p>

	<p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>Valerie Watts – Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council</p>
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	<p>Councillor Jennifer Gilmour asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.</p>
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Councillor Jennifer Gilmour asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Alistair Cathcart proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed. Seconded by Alderman Amanda Grehan Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Programme and Governance Overview
5.1	<p>At the first meeting of the new BRCD Panel Damien Martin (DM) presented an overview of the programme and its associated governance. DM outlined the BRCD history, geography, ambition and pillars of investment and explained in detail the BRCD governance, including the role of the Council Panel and the various boards in place.</p> <p>Alderman Alan McDowell welcomed the presentation and enquired about the funding landscape for introducing new projects or complementing existing projects. DM explained that many of the BRCD partners were now being successful in accessing and leveraging external funding as a result of BRCD funding being in place for projects. DM also explained that revenue funding would be more helpful in order to support the skills pipeline, capacity building and ongoing sustainability of projects. Stephen Reid (SR) added that in addition to funds already mentioned, such as shared prosperity and peace plus, there is also an NI-wide City / Growth Deals Complementary Fund – for which phase 2 is likely to go out to consultation in around a year’s time. SR also highlighted the strong partnership that has been built within the Belfast Region and the benefit seen by partners and that consideration should be given towards a ‘second Deal’ – particularly with strategic issues such as net zero to be addressed.</p>
6.0	BRCD Annual Report
6.1	<p>Cllr Jennifer Gilmour highlighted the first BRCD Annual Report which had been circulated to members. DM provided an overview of the content of the Annual Report which outlines in detail progress to date, challenges met by the partnership and by partners and the aims for the year ahead.</p> <p>Cllr Alistair Cathcart requested clarification in relation to the change in approach in operation of the Studio Ulster project, emphasising the need for it to be industry facing and commercial in nature. DM explained that whilst the proposed operating model had changed, it was in line with the Outline Business Case but agreed that it was essential that the project continued to be commercial in nature –significant and increasing demand from end users in the sector is anticipated.</p> <p>Alderman McDowell welcomed the Annual Report and stated that he believed the timelines were very helpful for each project. Alderman McDowell requested further clarity in relation to timelines under the Employability & Skills pillar and projects such as Digital Twin. DM explained there were detailed timelines in place for the planned skills assessments under the Employability & Skills pillar – and that the Digital Twin project, due to its</p>

	<p>nature may be operational in just a number of months. Jonathan McGrandle set out latest timelines in relation to the i4c project, led by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council.</p> <p>Members agreed to publish the Annual Report and requested that the presentation be shared with members of the Panel.</p>
7.0	BRCD Programme Update
7.1	<p>Cllr Jennifer Gilmour highlighted the detailed programme update paper which had been circulated amongst members.</p> <p>DM explained that the programme update set out the progress since the end of the financial year period covered by the Annual Report. DM updated in relation to contracts for funding, business case approvals, funding drawdowns and progress on wider regional projects such as the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and the Advanced Manufacturing skills assessment.</p> <p>DM also set out some continuing challenges on which there is continuing engagement with Government partners, such as the complexity of the overall programme and associated governance and approval mechanisms and the impact of this on pace of progress and a new challenge relating to the new Subsidy Control regime which was impacting on the timelines of a number of projects currently.</p> <p>DM explained that there was now an increasing focus on strategic engagement and communications including with industry, political representatives and the public and that this would be ramping up over the next period.</p> <p>Alderman McDowell welcomed the renewed focus on strategic communications and stated that he believed that all stakeholders had a part to play in highlighting the positive opportunities under the City Deal.</p> <p>Members noted the programme update.</p>
8.0	Overview of Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Project
8.1	<p>Susie McCullough (SMcC) Director of Place at ANDBC provided Members with an update in relation to the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration Project – a key project within the BRCD Tourism & Regeneration pillar.</p> <p>Before setting out the detail of the Bangor Waterfront Regeneration project, SMcC explained that ANDBC were also developing a proposal for a Regional Innovation Hub under the BRCD Digital pillar focused on the creative industries, aligning with industry strengths in the area and with Studio Ulster and Belfast Stories. A site had been identified in Holywood and soft market testing had been completed – with an OBC now being developed for consideration by partners in the coming months.</p> <p>SMcC also updated on the Queen’s Parade project which has strong alignment with the BRCD-supported Bangor Waterfront Regeneration project.</p> <p>SMcC detailed the range of plans for various elements of the programme of investment including across the Marina, Pickie Fun Park, the courthouse and at Ballyholme. SMcC explained that work was ongoing in relation to appointing an integrated design team – with a range of tenders expected to be awarded in 2024 – and the project anticipated to be on site by 2026.</p> <p>Cllr Cathcart queried as to whether there was flexibility with the programme in order to phase different elements of the project if there are problems with some parts. SMcC explained that there was flexibility in relation to the timing of the programme – for example Ballyholme Yacht Club has recently been prioritised due to its self-</p>

	<p>contained nature, but there is less flexibility in relation to funding – with set funding across the five different elements of the project. Any change to this funding would require Departmental approval through the Belfast Region City Deal structures.</p> <p>Cllr Jennifer Gilmour thanked Susie McCullough for the detailed presentation.</p>
9	Press Release
9.1	<p>Cllr Jennifer Gilmour asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Members agreed the press release.</p>
10.0	Date of next meetings
10.1	<p>Cllr Jennifer Gilmour highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Belfast City Council on 31 January 2024.</p>