



BRCDC Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCDC) Council Panel
Date:	12.30 pm, 29 May 2024
Councillors in attendance:	Councillor Michael Goodman – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council – Chair Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Gretta Thompson – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor John Lavery – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Robert Logan, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Officers:	Richard Baker – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Sharon McNicholl – Deputy Chief Executive, BRCDC SRO, Belfast City Council David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Jonathan McGrandle – Programme Director, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Majella McAlister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Emer Husbands, Stephen Wallace, Theresa Slevin, Clare Walls – BRCDC Programme Office Michael Forster – Programme Lead, DTFF, Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Ciarán Prunty – Head of Project Delivery (AMIC), Queen’s University Jenny McAuley – AMIC Skills Lead, Queen’s University

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	Councillor Michael Goodman, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, acting as Chair, welcomed the members of the BRCDC Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted in Mossley Mill and outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.
2.0	Apologies
2.1	Apologies were received from: Alderman Matthew Magill – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Mark Cosgrove - Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Tim Mitchell – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Robin Stewart, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Oonagh Hanlon - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Apologies were received from the following Officers: John Walsh – Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Valerie Watts – Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Susie McCullough – Interim Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Councillor Michael Goodman asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.

4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Councillor Michael Goodman asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Alderman Robert Logan proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed. Seconded by Councillor Gretta Thompson Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRC D Programme Update
5.1	<p>Richard Baker, Chief Executive, Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council presented an overview of the programme update which was circulated with the papers, an overview of the progress on the individual pillars of investment and an update on the business case approval and signing of contracts for funding.</p> <p>Highlights included the FBC approval for AMIC and Studio Ulster, signing of contracts for funding for the Gobbins, Mourne Mountain Gateway and Digital Twin and the agreement of the contract for funding for Destination Royal Hillsborough, to be signed shortly. RB explained that contracts for funding had been signed for projects which now totalled over half a billion pounds. The first Challenge Fund project has also been launched and design teams continue to be appointed to progress projects including Bangor Waterfront, CDHT and Destination Royal Hillsborough.</p> <p>RB also explained that BRC D partners are currently finalising the annual report and that a successful business engagement meeting was held and which was attended by First & Deputy First Minister and Lord Caine from the Northern Ireland Office.</p> <p>A video was played with some of the highlights from the event.</p> <p>Members noted the progress of the programme. Proposed by Alderman Alan McDowell Seconded by Cllr John Laverty</p>
6.0	Update on Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre
6.1	<p>Ciarán Prunty (CP), Head of Project Delivery at the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) from Queen's University (QUB) presented an update on the progress of the flagship project for the Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council area.</p> <p>CP provided members with an update on the capital build, including timelines and a summary of the wide range of activities undertaken since the approval of the Full Business Case in March.</p> <p>Highlights from the report included construction works commencing on 25th March – which is due for completion by end of 2025 with full operations and expected opening in March 2026. CP also highlighted the 5G Innovation Regions funding has also been secured to support innovation utilising 5G connectivity through the construction period. This additional funding is as a result of the Belfast Region being successful in a UK Government DSIT award.</p> <p>Cllr Michael Goodman thanked CP for the comprehensive update and welcomed progress to date for an important project to the Borough and to the wider region. In response to a query from Alderman Alan McDowell, CP outlined the work AMIC is doing with other centres including CAFRE, i4c and HyTech to ensure partnerships are developed to support local delivery and benefit.</p> <p>Members noted the project update.</p>

7.0	Advanced Manufacturing Skills Assessment
7.1	<p>Cllr Goodman introduced the next agenda item, the skills assessment for the advanced manufacturing sector. Cllr Goodman noted the importance of this agenda item in supporting accessibility for people across the region to jobs.</p> <p>Jenny McAuley (JMCA), Skills Lead for AMIC at Queen’s University presented to the panel, updating on the skills assessment process and methodology and focusing on the advanced manufacturing skills assessment which has now been completed and which has been shared with the panel. The assessment has been highly collaborative and has been undertaken on a cross- City & Growth Deal basis. JMCA explained that the assessment has identified gaps in skills provision within the sector and the recommendations of the assessment were summarised. JMCA also highlighted some early progress in the sector including funding applications being developed and the Smart Industry Readiness Index assessment which has already been rolled out.</p> <p>Members welcomed this assessment and highlighted they were keen to support in the implementation of the report. JMCA confirmed that the Employability and Skills groups were engaging with all councils and FE colleges to maximise the job opportunities across the deal.</p> <p>Cllr Goodman thanked JMCA for her presentation.</p> <p>Members noted the skills assessment update.</p>
8.0	Digital Transformation Flexible Fund
8.1	<p>Cllr Goodman introduced the next agenda item relating to the £7.5m Digital Transformation Flexible Fund, which is funded by the NI City & Growth Deal Complementary Fund and DAERA, and which is a demand led capital grant operating across NI.</p> <p>Michael Forster (MF), Programme Lead for the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) at Newry, Mourne & Down District Council presented an update on progress to date on DTFF to the panel. MF explained that DTFF had its OBC approved in September 2023 and then launched in November 2023.</p> <p>MF highlighted the alignment of DTFF to other City & Growth Deal projects and a key objective of DTFF which is to accelerate digital transformation across small and micro enterprises – and to enable them to benefit from new and emerging technologies – offering grants of £5k-20k with a supportive 70% intervention rate.</p> <p>MF explained that there had been a good response to both calls to date, with call 2 launched in March 2024 and call 3 due to launch in June. To date, the scheme had supported a range of projects including robotics in sectors such as welding and stone cutting, virtual reality to support architecture and design and Internet of Things technology to support smart heating and lighting.</p> <p>MF highlighted that pre-briefing sessions being are being held in June within each of the BRCD Council areas and encouraged attendance.</p> <p>Cllr Goodman thanked MF for his detailed presentation.</p> <p>Members noted the programme update.</p>

9.0	Press Release
9.1	<p>Cllr Goodman asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release which was circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Proposed by Alderman Alan McDowell Seconded by Cllr Allan Ewart Members agreed the press release.</p>
10.0	Date of next meetings
10.1	<p>Cllr Goodman highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council on 25th September at 12.30 pm.</p> <p>Cllr Goodman thanked the panel for their attendance – and closed by sharing an updated video highlighting the BRCD investment programme.</p> <p>Alderman Alan McDowell asked if the video could be shared with the panel and it was confirmed that the video would be shared following the meeting.</p>