

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 8th February, 2018

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Alderman Haire (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Copeland;
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor Howard;
Aldermen McGimpsey, Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Armitage, Dorrian, Graham, Hussey,
Kyle, Long, McReynolds, Milne,
Mullan and O'Donnell.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer;
Mrs L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Johnston and O'Neill.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 11th January were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were recorded.

Public Access Defibrillator Programme - Ormeau Park

(Mr. S. Stockman, City Parks Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The City Parks Manager advised the Area Working Group that, further to the Group's request for a different proposed location for a defibrillator within the Ormeau Park, it was felt that a defibrillator could be fitted at the toilet block at the Ormeau Road side of the park. He explained that this defibrillator was in addition to one which was already available at the O-Zone at the other side of the park.

The Working Group agreed to the installation of the second defibrillator at the toilet block in Ormeau Park.

In response to a Member's question as to whether training on defibrillators would be considered as part of the rollout of the Pilot Programme, the City Parks Manager advised that he would raise the issue with the Director of City and Neighbourhoods.

Lagan Village Youth and Community Group

In relation to the Lagan Village Youth and Community Group's broken heating system, which had been raised at the previous month's meeting, The Director of Property and Projects reminded the Members that they had asked that he investigated options

which could assist the Group in attaining the required £15,000 of works to repair the system. He advised that he had since spoken with the Department for Communities (DfC), which owned the building.

He advised the Members that DfC had agreed to provide £15,000 to the Council in order that the heating system in the building could be repaired.

The Members thanked the Director and noted the update.

Presentation

Laburnum Development

The Chairperson advised the Members that Mr. Stephen Blayney, Mr. Peter Robinson and Mr. Alan Mains were in attendance to provide the Area Working Group with an overview of their proposed plans for a “Laburnum Leisure Village” and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Blayney outlined to the Members that the 12-acre site, formerly known as Laburnum Playing Fields, would be accessed from Prince Regent Road. He explained that the site would, he hoped, form another destination along the Connswater Community Greenway in the east of the City.

He advised the Members that they proposed to develop 10-13% of the site as a leisure village, to include a 3G pitch, a multi-purpose grass pitch, a children’s play area, changing facilities, a function room/clubhouse, a gym, a mini golf course, a café/juice bar and tennis courts. In addition, the Working Group was advised that they planned to incorporate an 85-100 bedroom sports-themed hotel, 100 apartments and parking for 280 cars on the site.

Mr. Blayney explained to the Members that the hotel and the apartments would enable the development of the entire scheme.

He explained to the Members that they, as the developers, felt that the project would bring together a wide variety of substantial community benefits and enhance the existing open space provision in the area. He highlighted to the Working Group that the scheme respected the existing designation of the land, while providing investment and employment in the area and would pull tourism into East Belfast.

In response to a Member’s question regarding the use of the 3G pitch and the other leisure facilities, Mr. Blayney clarified that they would be available for public use.

A Member stated that the junction with Prince Regent Road and the Castlereagh Road was a busy junction and if they had taken this into consideration. Mr. Blayney advised that RPS had been appointed as the Environmental Consultant for the site and that they would examine the junction and determine any improvements which would be required. Mr. Robinson added that the peak times for proposed users of the Leisure Village would not coincide with the other users of Prince Regent Road and that they were happy to liaise with Roads Service regarding the possibility of a different access point from the A55.

A further Member stated that he was pleased to see that the plans included a 3G pitch, which was much-needed within the east of the City, and asked whether they had considered whether the Council could take ownership of the 3G pitch. In response, Mr. Mains confirmed that there had been some discussion with the Council’s Property and Projects Department and that it was a possibility.

A number of Members asked whether any social housing would be included within the site. Mr. Blayney advised the Working Group that there was no scope for social housing within the scheme as the leisure facilities which would make up 90% of the site would be paid for through the sale of the hotel and the apartments.

In response to a further Member’s question regarding the consultation with the local community, Mr. Robinson advised the Members that they had employed a Public Relations company to assist with the public consultation and that all the plans which had been provided to the Members this evening would be available to the public at the consultation events.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from Laburnum Leisure Village for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

Physical Programme Update

The Director indicated that, due to the nature of the agenda item, it was likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information, in that it related to individual or financial business affairs, and therefore it was restricted.

He advised the Area Working Group that the Council’s Physical Programme covered over 200 live projects under a range of funding streams which included the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) and the projects which the Council was delivering in behalf of other agencies.

He explained that, through LIF, the East Area Working Group had committed its initial allocation of £1,127,500 to 8 projects and the Phase 2 allocation of £1,200,000 to a further 12 projects. The Members were advised that, through the initial allocation, 7 out of the 8 projects had been completed and through LIF2 allocation, all projects had passed through the due diligence stage, with project works being delivered or completed at 9 out of the 12 projects. The Working Group noted that they had an outstanding unallocated amount under LIF of £54,009.

In relation to the Belfast Investment Fund, he reminded the Members that £5.5million had been allocated to the East Area Working Group, with a further £2million having been ring-fenced for projects in the Outer East area following Local Government Reform and that the funding had been allocated as below:

East	<p>Stage 3 Willowfield — £560k (completed); H&W Welders — £2.37m; Strand — £1.8m; Bloomfield — £440k</p> <p>Stage 2 Lagan Village Youth & Community — <i>no commitment</i></p> <p>Stage 1 East Belfast Mission and Belmont Bowling Club — <i>no commitment</i></p>
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Outer East	<p>Stage 2 TAGIT- £434k; Branial - £390k; Hanwood - £396k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church - £382k;</p>
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Lisnasharragh Community Schools - £398k.

He provided the Working Group with an update on the Council's engagement with Bloomfield Presbyterian Church in relation to its request for £450k of BIF funding from the Council. He reminded the Group that, while BIF for the east of the city had been fully allocated, the Church was going ahead with the project regardless, having already raised £1million of funding towards the £1.65million project.

In respect of the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Director reminded the Members that an independent options appraisal had been commissioned in respect of the management options at Templemore and reported that this was due to be appointed in the week commencing 12th February, 2018. The Working Group noted that a Special meeting would be held at a future date in relation to the management arrangements at Templemore and regarding the sequencing of the leisure projects across east Belfast.

The Director provided the Working Group with an overview of the Social Investment Fund (SIF), where the Council was acting as delivery agent on behalf of the Executive Office to deliver capital projects. He outlined that approval had been received from the Executive Office for two refurbishment projects, one at Glenburn Methodist Church Community Outreach at a cost of £77,488, and the other at Mount Merrion Parish Development at a cost of £90,661. He confirmed to the Members that officers were continuing to engage with the Executive Office on the remaining SIF projects in east Belfast, namely, Greenway, Oasis, Titanic People and Walkway Community Association.

The Director advised the Members that he had recently met with NI Water and had advised him that their pumping station, which required significant upgrading works, would require works to be carried out over a large portion of the King George V Playing Fields site. He advised the Members that the Council's proposed 3G pitch for this site was therefore no longer financially viable, given that the site would undergo significant disruption and would ultimately need to be re-laid within a number of years.

The Director of Finance and Resources suggested that the Area Working Group agree to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that, instead of continuing with the installation of a 3G pitch at the King George V Playing Fields, it instead be installed at Blanchflower Playing Fields. He added that, if the Area Working Group was to agree to this course of action, a joint tender for both it and the Welders pitch could be lodged, ultimately saving ratepayers' money.

During discussion, a number of Members expressed their disappointment that the 3G pitch could not proceed within the King George V Playing Fields but agreed that it would be unwise to go ahead given the necessary NI Water works.

A Member suggested that other locations within east Belfast could be considered, such as Orangefield Park. In response, the Director of Finance and Resources advised that Orangefield would be a bigger scheme and that it had to be comparable with the pitch being installed at Ulidia. He also stated that Blanchflower would cause less displacement for football teams, given that there were a number of additional pitches.

In response to a Member's question regarding whether floodlighting would be installed as part of the installation at Blanchflower, the Director of Property and Projects confirmed that it would.

After discussion the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that, given that the proposed 3G pitch for the King George V Playing Fields was no longer viable, it should instead be installed at Blanchflower Playing Fields.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 8th March at 5p.m.

Chairperson