

NORTH FORESHORE MEMBERS' STEERING GROUP

Minutes of Meeting of 16th April, 2018

Members Present: Alderman Convery (Chairperson);
Aldermen L. Patterson and Spence; and
Councillors M.E. Campbell, Hutchinson and
Murphy.

In Attendance: Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects,
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Estates Manager; and
Mr. G. Graham. Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th November, 2018 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

North Foreshore Development Proposals

The Director of Property and projects submitted the undernoted report in respect of the future development proposals at the North Foreshore.

“1 Commercial Leisure Led / Mixed Use Development

1.1 As Members will be aware, the Stage 2 process for a proposed commercial leisure led/mixed use development is currently underway. These proposals relate to the 200-acre portion of the site located to the north and west. This follows completion of the Stage 1 open marketing process and the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23 June 2017 that eight of the submissions received from prospective developers should progress to the more detailed Stage 2 process. This required developers to provide a much more detailed submission in respect of their initial Stage 1 development proposals including detail on finance, funding, delivery programme, economic and social benefits etc.

1.2 As at the closing date of 28 February 2018, 4 development submissions were received. These included an extensive range of commercial leisure and mixed use proposals. A further update will be provided at the Steering Group meeting.

1.3 Following receipt of the submissions an officer evaluation panel has been working through all submissions in detail and a series of clarification queries are being sent out to all prospective developers (as provided for in the Development Brief). The evaluation panel comprises officers from Property & Projects-Estates, Economic Development and Legal Services, together with GVA surveyors (Council's appointed agent) with additional consultancy advice from a financial and economic perspective. Upon return of the clarification queries from developers and subsequent evaluation by officers it is proposed to request developers to present their proposals to Committee Members. It is envisaged that this will be in May/June with a view to subsequently appointing a preferred developer.

2 Environmental Resource Park

2.1 The Council's appointed agent (Lisneys) continues to market development opportunities in the Environmental Resource Park to the cleantech sector with availability of sites promoted on both their website and the Council's, together with an onsite advertising board from which a fairly steady stream of enquires continue to be received. To date various proposals have been discussed with more than 20 individual companies.

2.2 Heads of Terms have been issued to two developers, setting out the basis of the Council's offer and proposed terms and seeking further information on site specific requirements, funding arrangements, delivery programme etc. These developers are currently undertaking site investigation works for two respective 5 acre sites to inform specification of their prospective developments and appropriate gas protection measures

2.3 The first proposal is for the construction of a purpose built standalone Data Centre development which would provide the plant and equipment necessary for a facility with capabilities to support FDI companies across Northern Ireland. The prospective developers have indicated that their proposal represents a potential £30-40M investment, in a state of the art Data Centre that connects to the Project Kelvin Transatlantic Fibre which links NI to North America, UK and Europe.

2.4 Data Centres are considered as being critical to supporting the digital economy by facilitating business critical IT solutions and this IT can help create and preserve jobs, as well as delivering the technologies that enable a low carbon economy. Discussions are however underway with Invest NI regarding this potential use in the context of the ERDF funding requirements.

2.5 The second of these proposals is for the potential construction of an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility to produce bio gas for production of renewable electricity for

export to the NIE Grid. This circa £20M development would intend utilising a proportion of the Council's unused export electricity capacity, resulting from the decreased electricity generation capacity from a depleting gas field at the North Foreshore. It represents a potential viable project to sustain a continuing commercial return from the Council's initial capital investment in development of the grid connection. This proposal is however entirely dependent upon the developer/company receiving income from the sale of Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROC's) which it had applied for in advance of the closure of the scheme. The company is awaiting the necessary Ofgem accreditation and confirmation on this.

- 2.6 In general terms, AD is a sustainable means of diverting waste from landfill, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and producing renewable energy. AD is a natural process in which micro-organisms break down organic matter, in the absence of oxygen, into biogas and digestate. The bio gas produced through the processes can be used to generate renewable energy (and heat) and in some instances the digestate can be used as a renewable fertiliser or soil conditioner.
- 2.7 These prospective developments still remain contingent however upon a number of factors but further detail will be brought back to the Steering Group and to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for approval if final Heads of Terms can be agreed.
- 2.8 However, it must be highlighted that the current land of market incentivisation for the environmental / energy sectors and primarily the abolition of Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROC's) and that NIE have for some time closed all new applications for grid connection has led to somewhat limited market demand within the Environmental Resource Park. A lot of the previous interest was premised on getting ROCs and a grid connection and in the absence of these many potential projects are no longer viable. Whilst there remains some interest it is a lot less than general market interest for other commercial interests which may not align with the ERDF funding criteria.
- 3.0 **Film Studio**
- 3.1 As Members are aware, the new film studio at Giant's Park has recently been used by Warner Television for the production of 'Krypton', a Superman sequel. Krypton aired in the US at the end of March and it is understood that Warner purpose to produce further series given the current success of this first series.
- 3.2 As a result of the success of the existing studio and due to ongoing demand from the film and television sectors (as advised by NI Screen) Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) very recently approached the Chief Executive with proposals to extend the current media facilities at Giants

Park to respond to demand. They are keen to further extend the facility on land to the south of their existing site, as well as maintaining the Option they have with the Council for the 2-acre site to the north of their existing site.

- 3.3 It is recognised that the ongoing development of Belfast as a world-class global film making hub and the development of studio facilities provides potential for Belfast to continue to attract major international productions with resultant economic and social benefits.
- 3.4 However, the extension of the film studio onto lands to the south will impact on both the lands reserved for the Environmental Business Park as well as the site where Arc 21 had an option agreement with the Council. As referred to above, the environmental and cleantech market is a niche market and the current lack of market incentivisation and grid issues has resulted in more limited market interest. A further meeting is to take place later this month with Arc 21 in relation to the site they had an option on.
- 3.5 In the context of this strong market demand from the media /film sector and a more limited market demand from the cleantech sector Members may therefore wish to consider whether the land reserved for the Environmental Resource Park could be reduced in order to facilitate a media /film hub.
- 3.6 In this scenario however there are likely to be funding implications associated with the ERDF funding provided for the infrastructure works for the Environmental Resource Park. Any such funding implications could be factored into the commercial deal associated with the film studio development although the detail of this would need to be considered upon confirmation of the funding implications from INI. Officers will seek the detail of these funding implications from INI and explore with BHC, on a without prejudice basis, as to any potential commercial deal /agreement in respect of the use of additional lands for a media hub, as well as further detail on prospective jobs and economic impact. This proposal for the film studio extension, which has just recently been received, was briefly discussed at the Budget Panel on 12 April. Following further detail being obtained on the various issues, a further detailed report will be brought back to the Steering Group and Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for further consideration.

4 Site Development Works

- 4.1 As previously advised to Members, site landscaping and entrance works have been ongoing. In order to provide an enhanced environment with a sense of destination, proposals have been advanced to provide two impressive entrances from Dargan Road incorporating branding the site as "Giant's Park, North Foreshore" within a sculptural

wall that reflects the bird wetland habitat associated with the location.

- 4.2 Additional landscaping proposals within the site, primarily at the two roundabouts, will also provide an appropriate setting commensurate with the Member's aspirations for the site as a key regeneration asset, emphasising the quality of environment achieved in the plans to regenerate this former landfill site into an economic and environmental landmark for the City.

5 Heathrow Expansion Logistics Hub

- 5.1 In the latter part of last year, the Council's Economic Initiatives Unit received a request from Heathrow Airport Ltd for an Expression of Interest to a regional site search to facilitate construction of a facility in connection with the proposed extension of Heathrow airport's infrastructure, with the aim of disseminating the economic benefits of this £16B infrastructure project across the UK. The expansion of Heathrow will be one of the largest infrastructure projects in the UK.
- 5.2 In recognition of the scale of investment and the potential for all parts of the UK to benefit from supply chain and skills development opportunities, Heathrow sought expressions of interest for up to four Logistics Hub locations. The proposal was that these could be used as off-site centres for construction and manufacturing in order to help the airport to deliver its expansion plan, within an agreed timeframe and with minimal on-site disruption.
- 5.3 The initial requirement indicated by Heathrow was for a site (approx. 5 acres) that could accommodate a building of 215,000 sq feet for a temporary period. The list of potential sites provided included Giants Park as it met the locational criteria specified in this requirement.
- 5.4 From an initial 121 applications, 65 potential sites were shortlisted. Six of the sites are located in Northern Ireland. As well as Giants Park they also include Global Point Business Park; Belfast International Airport; Former Michelin Site; Silverwood Business Park, Lurgan and Former Shackleton Barracks, Ballykelly.
- 5.5 As part of their assessment process, a number of representatives from Heathrow visited some of the Northern Ireland sites in early March, including Giant's Park. The remainder of the site visits will take place in June 2018. In the course of the engagement, it emerged that Heathrow would be open to a joint NI bid involving multiple sites and a collaborative programme of support around supply chain development and skills development. This could potentially align to some of the work being undertaken as part of The City Deal.

- 5.6 In order to improve the chances of making a successful bid, partners from the other Councils /sites have identified that a collaborative proposition involving all six NI sites as part of a “fully packaged solution” is likely to be favoured over individual, stand-alone site solutions. This will involve engaging with major construction companies as well as co-ordinating the local supply chain and working with Heathrow to understand skills requirements in order to develop tailored solutions.
- 5.7 A report was brought to the City and Growth Committee on 11 April 2018 updating Members on the proposals and seeking approval to make a financial contribution (£10,000) to develop a business case for the combined NI bid. This is to enable the submission to be made to Heathrow by the November 2019 closing date. In parallel with the work on the Logistics Hub joint bid, the Council has agreed to host a ‘Meet the Buyer’ event in Belfast City Hall on 20 June 2018. This will enable local businesses to meet with key buyers in Heathrow, focusing on existing supplies and services requirements. This event will give local businesses an introduction to doing business with Heathrow and will enable them to get an understanding of future investment and procurement opportunities.

6 Waste Transfer Station extension

- 6.1 Arising from the proposed change to kerbside collection schemes and any associated recyclables the Council’s Waste Plan had identified the potential requirement for the construction of an additional Waste Transfer Station (WTS) facility. Following a feasibility study it has been recommended that this potential expansion and improvement could potentially be achieved by extending the existing waste transfer facility at Giant’s Park. The preferred option was for expansion onto an immediately adjacent site of approx.1.0 acre. This additional capacity would also provide contingency arrangements in the event of an unplanned closure of one of the bays in the existing WTS.
- 6.2 At its meeting of 24 November 2017 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee endorsed a recommendation that this project was now added to the Capital Programme as an Emerging Project with further detail to be worked up and brought back to Committee in due course for consideration - and this work is now underway.

7 Dfl Park & Ride (Dargan Road)

- 7.1 At the last meeting of the Steering Group Members had requested that officers explore other potential options in response to a request from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to develop a temporary Park & Ride (P&R) facility at Giant’s Park to facilitate their York Street Interchange scheme.

- 7.2 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24 November 2017 subsequently approved the Council entering into without prejudice discussions with Dfl for the development of a temporary Park & Ride facility on alternative Council owned land at Dargan Road. This land comprises land at Dargan Road previously used as a car compound, located to the rear of Duncrue Complex, as well as an adjoining area of land within the complex itself, currently used as a bin storage compound. Discussions are ongoing with Dfl around the terms of a lease agreement and accommodation works to be carried out by Dfl. Dfl have also submitted a planning application for the facility and a further report is to be brought back to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for approval of terms in respect of any proposed lease.
- 7.3 Whilst the former car compound is a surplus property asset (which was being marketed at the time of the Dfl request) the bin storage compound remains an operational asset. In order to facilitate this request from Dfl the Council's Health & Environmental Services section are proposing that the existing operational bin storage compound can be relocated to a site immediately adjacent to the Waste Transfer Station on Giant's Park.

8 Summary of Key Issues

Members are asked to note the following:

8.1 1. Commercial Leisure /Mixed Use Development Proposals:

As at the closing date of 28 February 2018, development submissions were received from 4 no prospective developers for an extensive range of mixed use and commercial leisure proposals for the 200-acre site to the north and west of the Giant's Park site. The evaluation process for this is ongoing, with clarification queries currently being sent to all developers (as provided for in the Development Brief). It is proposed that developers present their development proposals to Committee Members in May/June with a view to subsequently appointing a preferred developer.

8.2 2. Environmental Resource Park:

Heads of Terms draft agreements are currently with two prospective companies in respect of proposals for both a Data Centre and for an Anaerobic Digestion facility on two sites within the Environmental Resource Park. Both these prospective developments remain contingent however upon various factors but further detail will be brought back to the Steering Group and to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for approval if final Heads of Terms can be agreed.

However, it must be highlighted that the current land of market incentivisation for the environmental / energy

sectors, primarily the abolition of Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROC's) and that NIE have for some time closed all new applications for grid connection, has led to somewhat limited market demand within the Environmental Resource Park.

8.3 3. Film Studio:

Members are asked to note that BHC have very recently requested additional lands to facilitate further development of film studio and production workshops to create a media /film studio hub. This was discussed briefly at the Budget Panel on 12 April. BHC and NI Screen have advised that this is in response to strong market demand from the film and television production sector and provides potential for Belfast to continue to attract major international productions with resultant economic and social benefits. However, the development of these additional lands would impact upon the lands reserved for an Environmental Resource Park with resultant ERDF funding implications, as well as impacting on land where Arc 21 had an option to develop.

Officers will seek the detail of these funding implications from INI and explore with BHC, on a without prejudice basis, as to any potential commercial deal /agreement in respect of the use of additional lands for a media hub, as well as further detail on prospective jobs and economic impact. Officers will also consider the implications associated with any reduction in size for the Environmental Resource Park as well as the current contractual position with the Arc 21 site. Following further detail being obtained on all the various issues, a further detailed report will be brought back to the Steering Group and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration.

8.4 4. Site Development Works:

Site development works in terms of additional landscaping and high quality entrance works / signage is ongoing, further emphasising the site as a key location for development and investment and the ongoing transformation of this former landfill site into an economic and environmental landmark for the City.

8.5 5. Heathrow Logistics Hub:

A site at Giants Park has been included on a shortlist of potentially suitable sites for a temporary regional logistics hub to facilitate the expansion of Heathrow Airport. 6 no sites in N. Ireland have been identified and as part of their assessment process, representatives from Heathrow visited some of the shortlisted Northern Ireland sites in early March, including Giant's Park. In the course of the engagement, it emerged that Heathrow would be open to a joint NI bid involving multiple sites and a collaborative

programme of support around supply chain development and skills development.

A report was brought to the City and Growth Committee on 11 April 2018 updating Members on the proposals and seeking approval to make a financial contribution to develop a business case for the combined NI bid. This is to enable the submission to be made to Heathrow by the November 2019 closing date. The Economic Development Section are leading on this from a BCC perspective. Further update reports will be brought back to the Steering Group as this progresses.

8.6 6. Waste Transfer Station Extension:

Following a decision of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 24 November 2017, a proposal to extend the existing Waste Transfer Station on the Giant's Park site has been added to the Capital Programme as an Emerging Project with further detail to be worked up and brought back to Committee.

8.7 7. Temporary Park and Ride Facility:

Discussions are currently underway with Dfl respect of proposals to develop a temporary Park and Ride facility (to facilitate the York St Interchange) on Council lands at Dargan Road opposite the North Foreshore. This follows on from an initial approach by Dfl to develop the facility on the North Foreshore and the request by Members to explore alternative options."

Commercial Leisure Led/Mixed Use Development

In response to a request from a Member, the Estates Manager provided the Steering Group with outline proposals in respect of the four development submissions which had been received as part of the Stage 2 process. She advised that these were currently being evaluated in line with the requirements as set out in the Development Brief marketing particulars and that various matters for clarification were being sought from the prospective developers.

The Director reminded the Members that the Development Brief marketing particulars had requested proposals for a mixed use and commercial leisure led development, without being too prescriptive as to uses, which was at Members' request, so all submissions would need to be considered in this context. He advised the Steering Group also that developers could be requested to present their proposals at a future meeting of the Steering Group, to which other Members could be invited, but with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee being responsible for any subsequent decision in relation to the award of a preferred bidder. It was agreed that the presentation by developers should be arranged for early June.

During discussion Members raised the issue of access to the site, requesting that officers explore the possibility of improving access to the site by means of a rail connection and/or pedestrian footbridge.

Noted.

Environmental Resource Park

The Director highlighted that the current land of market incentivisation for the environmental/energy sectors had led to somewhat limited market demand within the Environmental Resource Park.

He did however advise of two current proposals from developers, one for an Anaerobic Digestion Facility and the other for a Data Centre.

In response to Members' concerns in relation to the anaerobic digestion process, the Director advised that this was not an incineration process. He suggested that if this proposal was to progress that it may be useful to arrange a site visit for Members to another anaerobic digestion facility in order to better understand the processes involved. The Estates Manager also provided the Steering Group with clarification in relation to the Data Centre proposal for the site, including the advantages in supporting the digital economy and in attracting investment.

The Director also advised of a circular economy paper that had recently been discussed at the Waste Board and it was agreed that the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services be requested to attend the next meeting of the Steering Group to discuss this paper in the context of the Environmental Resource Park.

Noted.

Update on Film Studio

The Director informed the Steering Group that, owing to the success of the film studio and in response to demand from the film and media sector, a request had recently been received to potentially acquire additional land to the south of the existing film studio to develop further film studio and media facilities. He advised Members that this would impact on the land reserved for the Environmental Resource Park and would have potential financial consequences associated with the E.R.D.F. funding, previously received for the road infrastructure. He highlighted that these matters would need to be considered in more detail by the Council, if the proposed extension to the film studio were to proceed.

The Director advised that he would consider the various issues associated with the proposal in more detail, including the potential E.R.D.F. funding implications, and report back to the Steering Group and to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. During discussion Members raised queries in relation to jobs and employment opportunities, both at the existing film studio and in respect of any proposed extension. The Director suggested that it may be beneficial to arrange a site visit for Members to the Film Studio and advised that he would report back to the Steering Group if this could be arranged.

Noted.

Update on Site Development Works

The Estates Manager provided the Steering Group with an update on site works including landscaping and entrance works which had been undertaken to further emphasise the site as a key location for development and investment.

Noted.

Update on Heathrow Expansion Logistics Hub

The Director provided the Steering Group with an update on a proposal from Heathrow Airport Limited, to construct regional site facilities in connection with the

proposed extension to Heathrow airport. He advised the Steering Group that six potential sites in Northern Ireland had been identified as possible locations for a logistics hub including the Giant's Park. He advised further that a report had been brought by the Director of Economic Development to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 11th April, 2018 regarding a potential combined Northern Ireland bid. He indicated that further updates would be brought back to the Steering Group in due course.

Noted.

Update on Waste Transfer Station Extension

The Members were provided with an update by the Director on a proposal to extend the Waste Transfer Station on the Giant's Park and that it had been included in the Council's capital programme as an emerging project, following a decision by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24th November, 2017.

Noted.

Update on Department for Infrastructure Park and Ride (Dargan Road)

The Director referred to a proposal by DfI to develop a temporary 'Park and Ride' facility in order to facilitate traffic management associated with the York Street Interchange scheme. The Steering Group was reminded of the proposal, agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, which permitted the Council to discuss with DfI the possibility of providing a temporary 'Park and Ride' facility at Council-owned land on Dargan Road located directly opposite the Giant's Park.

The Steering Group noted the information which had been provided and requested information in regard to the progress of the planning application in respect of that proposal.

Date of Next Meeting

The Steering Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 15th May at 12.30 p.m. to primarily consider the Circular Economy proposals being progressed by the City and Neighbourhood Services Department and that the proposed June meeting be changed to Thursday, 7th June 2018, in order to facilitate presentations by the proposed developers for the commercial leisure led and mixed use proposals, with this meeting being open to other Members to attend.

Chairperson