

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 7th February, 2019

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Alderman Haire (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff of Belfast (Alderman Sandford);
Aldermen Copeland and McGimpsey; and
Councillors Dorrian, Graham, Hussey, Johnston,
Kyle, Long, Mullan, Newton and O'Donnell.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Strategic Director of Finance and
Resources;
Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Interim Programme Director;
Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Ms. S. Grimes, Programme Office Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

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

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 3rd January were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

The High Sheriff of Belfast (Alderman Sandford) declared an interest in Item 5, Physical Programme, in so far as he was on the Board of Governors of Cregagh Primary School, and he left the room for the duration of the discussion.

Councillors Newton and Kyle declared an interest in Item 5, Physical Programme, in that they were members of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre steering committee, and they left the room for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Long declared an interest in Item 5, Physical Programme, in that he was a member of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church, but, as the item did not become the subject of discussion, he remained in the room for that item.

“Amazing Spaces Smart Places” Small Business Research Initiative

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the ‘Amazing Spaces Smart Places’, Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) challenge. £120,000 of funding for Small Medium Enterprises (including community and voluntary organisations) was awarded by the Department for Economy to a partnership between Department of Justice and Belfast City Council to explore the use of innovative digital technology and data-driven solutions to help manage parks and open spaces.

2.0 Recommendations

Area Working Group Members are asked to note the update, in particular the assurance arrangements in place to manage potential privacy and data protection implications.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 People and Communities Committee have been updated in recent months as part of the quarterly ASB Update on the progress of this initiative. Since the last update to Members, the challenge was officially launched, expressions of interest received and shortlisted.

3.2 The final selection panel involved range of Council Officers (Community Safety, Parks, Business Development and Smart Cities) as well as the Department of Justice, Department for Economy and the Strategic Investment Board. Dublin City Council have been in attendance throughout as through their own Smart Cities Team identified the similarities in the challenges Belfast and Dublin are experiencing. Dublin City Council also made a small financial contribution to the project to allow them to work with successful companies on testing in Dublin if appropriate.

3.3 Members should note however, the majority of testing and solution development will take place within Belfast.

3.4 A number of well attended information sessions were rolled out across the city and sixteen applications received & reviewed, including from SME’s based in Belfast. As a result of the final selection process five awards have been made to SME’s working in the following areas:

3.5

- 1. An Internet of Things (IoT) network anonymously logs presence of smartphones in the park. Analytics provided on a cloud-based platform to inform park**

managers of usage/resources and interventions needed.

3.6

- 2. A real time solution for the public and park managers detailing what is happening in parks and open spaces. Company plans to provide insights using a variety of data including Wi-Fi data. It will also test the use of QR codes on park signage to encourage greater engagement.**

3.7

- 3. A dashboard with real time information for park users and managers on usage of facilities to support booking, allocation of resources and planning. The proposal builds on an existing pitch booking solution that collects data on 'organised' usage of facilities and will add data on 'ad hoc' usage. 'Ad hoc' data gathered via Wi-Fi probe devices or dongle and software will anonymously log when a device sends a Wi-Fi request.**

3.8

- 4. A solution that encourages 'civic' action to ensure parks and open spaces are well maintained. Individuals who earn 'Civic Dollars' as a reward for use of parks & reporting issues etc. Devices carried by individuals will connect to beacons that use Wi-Fi or IoT technology. Small, temporary beacons installed onto lampposts. Citizens who sign up will gain rewards via a social digital currency built on Blockchain.**

3.9

- 5. A flexible low cost system located on street furniture that uses artificial intelligence and machine vision to provide real time alerts to relevant agencies when unusual activity is taking. This is not a human-operated CCTV system – rather it is a less-invasive rules-based system that will train itself to generate alerts based on unusual activity.**

3.10

In the coming weeks Officers will support the successful SME's in engaging directly with community, residents and 'friends of' groups who have interests and/or are users of the parks/open spaces the technology will be developed to support.

A primary focus of the project is to discover how technology may innovate open space management and help address the challenges and impacts of anti-social behaviour as well as encouraging positive usage.

3.11

The technology will be developed with communities at a small number of parks and open spaces in North, South, East and

West Belfast. The site list is being finalised but the following factors are being considered in the selection:

- Current priorities being managed within the department
- A site which maximises the potential return
- Community interest/ support
- ASB hotspots
- Geographical suitability
- Type of activity being targeted e.g. transient/ ASB or utilisation etc.

3.12 Each test will be completed in Phase 1 (end March 2019).

3.13 The objective of the Phase 1 funding is to determine the viability of the technological solutions proposed in achieving the project objectives of promoting safe and positive parks and open spaces.

3.14 An end of Phase 1 update will be brought to both People and Communities and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

Privacy Impact/Data Protection

3.15 Real and perceived concerns about any privacy/data protection impacts from the project were identified at the initiation stage and a full privacy/data protection screening exercise was completed.

3.16 Additionally, an element of the essential criteria within the assessment process was that SME's making an application had to demonstrate how they would manage any privacy/data protection implications and put control measures in place.

3.17 Council's Information Governance Unit (within Legal Services) are actively engaged in providing support to Officers and the successful SME's in ensuring ongoing and full compliance with legislation and Information Commissioner Officer Guidance.

3.18 Financial & Resource Implications

The total available project budget is £120,000. The Department for Economy have provided £100,000 of this funding with Dublin City Council providing another £10,000. Given the potential for this work to have a positive impact on reducing anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces and encouraging positive use, City and Neighbourhood Services have contributed £10,000.

3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

As mentioned in the main report, equality and privacy implications have been proactively managed & mitigated on an ongoing basis. This includes avoiding bias or stereotyping in the project. The equality and privacy impact screening process remains under review.”

During discussion, the Neighbourhood Services Manager confirmed to the Members that the proposal was in its initial stages and that some of the required technology had not yet been developed.

In response to a number of Members' questions, she confirmed to the Working Group that no personal sensitive data would be collected as part of the initiative.

The Members noted the information which had been provided and that a report on the initiative would be submitted to the People and Communities for further consideration.

Transform for Change – Peace IV Programme Update

(Ms. D. McKinney, Programme Manager, and Ms. K. McIvor, Building Positive Relations Project Manager, attended in connection with this item).

The Project Manager provided the Members with an overview of the “Building Positive Relations – Transform for Change” Programme and the work which had been carried out to date. She advised the Members that it was a European Union (EU) funded programme which had been designed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border region and was managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The Members were advised that the aim of the Transform for Change Programme was to develop new, innovative and collaborative approaches to peace building, reconciliation and to address prolonged social and economic disadvantages as a result of living in segregated communities in Belfast. It aimed to build the leadership skills of citizens, the political sector, public and statutory providers to address issues of division, segregation, prejudice and hate that directly impacted on life opportunities and community cohesion.

It was explained to the Members that the Programme would focus on creating a new strategic model of cohesive working together on an area basis. As the community planning framework continued to emerge, the project would provide benefit to the wider community by enabling leadership and transformation for change a local level.

The Programme Manager advised the Working Group of 12 proposed targeted areas, which were made up of clusters across interfaces as follows:

1. Suffolk/Lenadoon;
2. Springfield Road;
3. Falls/Shankill;
4. The Village/Westlink;
5. Inner Ring;
6. Duncairn Gardens;
7. Limestone Road/Alexandra Park;

8. Lower Oldpark/Manor Street;
9. Crumlin Road/Ardoyne/Glenbryn;
10. Ligoniel;
11. Whitewell Road/Longlands; and
12. Shortstrand/Inner East.

The Working Group was advised that an additional three areas were still to be decided upon, with a total of 15 areas across the City, and that officers would welcome any suggestions from Members.

The officers explained that they hoped to engage 960 participants in the programme, including 90 from the political sphere, 720 from the Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise sector, 150 from public agencies as well as representatives from regional support organisations and charitable foundations.

The officers provided the Members with an overview of the Integrated Delivery model, timeline and engagement plans.

During discussion, a Member stated that it would be useful for officers to engage with those who had been involved in similar programmes previously. The Programme Manager explained that they would be building on previous work which had been carried out and would also be working with The Executive Office.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Bloomfield Walkway Environmental Improvements – Verbal update

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Working Group with an overview of a number of environmental improvements which were planned for the Bloomfield Walkway.

He explained that the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) had confirmed funding upwards of £190,000 for the project and that the Council would act as the delivery agent.

The Members were advised that meetings had been held with the Inner East Forum, with a further meeting in the coming weeks.

After discussion, the Working Group:

1. noted the update which had been provided;
2. agreed that additional information be submitted to a future meeting of the AWG relating to the Connswater Community Greenway and on the planned works at Bloomfield Walkway, highlighting in particular how the plans differed from what was already there; and
3. agreed that officers would proceed with the necessary engagement regarding the Bloomfield Walkway.

Physical Programme Update

The Programme Office Manager provided the Working Group with updates on the Local Investment Fund (LIF), which included the completion of the Carew II Newtownards

Road Women's Group project and the Dundela Football Club project. The Working Group were reminded that they had an outstanding unallocated amount under LIF of £54,009.

The Members were provided with an overview of projects under the Capital Programme, the Social Outcome Fund and projects funded through the Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Urban Villages.

The Programme Office Manager provided the Members with the following update on the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF):

“Strand Arts Centre

Members were updated at the last East AWG on 29th November that a meeting with DFC on the Strand was due to take place. Members are asked to note that this meeting took place on 11th December. A summary of the current position is outlined below.

DFC highlighted that they are working closely with Strand Arts Centre on finalising the business case for the project. SAC finalised the business case and it was submitted to the DfC Economist. A number of additional queries were raised by the Economist and forwarded to SAC. The response to those queries were submitted to DfC Economist and DfC case officers are awaiting the economist decision this week.

Once the business case is completed then this is required to go through the central government approval process for capital projects – as this project is seeking an investment of more than £1million this would be required to be submitted to the Department of Finance (DoF) to be appraised by their economists. The business case must be signed off by the DoF.

DfC confirmed that their maximum commitment to this project (if approved) would be to match fund the Council's £1.8m commitment under BIF.

Members are asked to note that the current pre-tender estimates for the full works at the Strand are now approx. £6million (including fees). This is because of the more detailed works which have been done on the design together with more information on the current condition of the building and are based on the latest figures which were received in November.

Members will note that this an increase of the original figure for the works within the Economic Appraisal of £4.2m. However Members will be aware that the EA was carried out in 2016 and construction costs have risen since this time. In addition the detailed design work has identified that further work on asbestos removal and exterior works are required which have increased the costs along with a requirement for more specialist mechanical and engineering work than had previously been identified. There was also no allowance for FFE which has now been built in. A value engineering exercise has already taken place which identified a potential phasing of the project.

In considering the current costs Members are asked to note that this means that even if DfC committed match funding to the project that this would still leave an overall funding short-fall.

It should also be noted that the current costs are a pre-tender estimate.

Members will be aware that the final costs for any project are not known until the tender figures are returned. Council officers are continuing to work closely with SAC to ascertain if other funding can be secured and if the project can be phased. SAC submitted funding applications to a number of funders however these organisations will only contribute to the capital part of the project.

Bloomfield Community Association

Members were also updated at the last East AWG on 29th November that a meeting with DfC on the Bloomfield was due to take place. Members are asked to note that this meeting took place on 9th January 2019. A summary of the current position and discussion is outlined below.

- DfC highlighted that they are willing to consider providing capital support towards this project within their 2020/21 capital programme;
- DfC are starting to develop their capital programme and anticipate their budget will be in the region of £3m - £5m; and
- DfC representatives and the Director of Property & Projects agreed that it would be useful to set up a meeting sometime in March 2019 with other DfC senior management and officers as required.”

She highlighted to the Members that discussions were ongoing with other agencies regarding additional funding for the Strand Arts Centre project but that there had been no other commitment of funding to date.

After discussion it was

Moved by Alderman Copeland
Seconded by Councillor Graham and

Resolved – that any further decision on funding for the project be postponed until the next meeting given that a further meeting with Strand Arts Centre is due to take place in the coming weeks, as well as the results of the economic appraisal.

The Working Group noted the update which had been provided.

Poetry Jukebox

The Interim Programme Director explained the details of a proposed temporary installation of a Poetry Jukebox at C.S. Lewis Square.

The Area Working Group noted the temporary installation of the Jukebox at C.S. Lewis Square, subject to the Eastside Partnership meeting all operational, statutory and health and safety requirements.

Correspondence received – St. John’s Orangefield, Church of Ireland

The Working Group noted correspondence which had been received from St John’s Orangefield, Church of Ireland. The Church was requesting Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) funding towards the upgrade of its facilities. The correspondence noted that it had identified some funding from its own resources towards the project.

After discussion it was,

Moved by Alderman McGimpsey,
Seconded by Councillor Graham and

Resolved – that the Working Group agrees to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the project be moved to Stage 1 for consideration of funding under the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)

Update on Leisure Transformation Programme

The Strategic Director of Finance and Resources provided the Working Group with an overview of the Leisure Transformation Programme in the east of the City.

He advised the Members that some correspondence had been received in relation to concerns relating to the closure of the Avoniel Centre.

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services stated that he had recently attended a meeting to hear concerns relating to its closure.

In response to a number of Members’ suggestions, it was agreed that, in order to better inform the public of the plans for each Leisure Centre, the floor plans and images of, and key messages regarding provision in the new centres would be installed in each of the existing centres.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday, 7th March.

Chairperson