

# South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 27th January, 2020

## MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillors Bunting, Gormley, Graham, Groogan, T. Kelly and McKeown.

In attendance: Mr. N. Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager (South Belfast); and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Election of Chairperson**

The Working Group was reminded that, since this was the first meeting to have taken place since the Local Government Elections in 2019, it was required to elect a Chairperson.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor T. Kelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Bunting and

Resolved – That Councillor Graham be elected to serve as Chairperson of the South Belfast Area Working Group for the period to end on the date of the Annual meeting of the Council in June, 2020.

(Councillor Graham in the Chair.)

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Terms of Reference**

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference for the Area Working Groups which had been approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20th September.

## **Neighbourhood Regeneration**

The Working Group received a presentation on Neighbourhood Regeneration and Area Working which provided information on:

- Belfast Agenda and Governance;
- Integrated Service Delivery;
- Capital Investment;
- Evidence Based Decision-making;
- Local Development Plan;
- City Regeneration; and
- Economic Development.

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhoods provided a brief introduction to the concept of Neighbourhood Regeneration and reviewed the role of the Area Working Groups within the Council's overall governance arrangements.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services drew the Working Group's attention to four initiatives, namely, Open Spaces and Streetscene, City Protection, Community Provision and Resources and Fleet, which were being progressed under the City and Neighbourhood Service's Transition and Improvement Programme, with the aim of integrating service delivery.

He provided a brief overview of the various funding streams associated with the Council's Physical Programme and drew the Members' attention to a map which outlined the location of projects relating specifically to South Belfast.

He provided details on the outcome of a statistical analysis which had been undertaken for South Belfast around crime, housing, education and the environment and confirmed that the main issues facing the area were:

- Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Mental health;
- Drugs and Alcohol Abuse;
- Social Housing
- Educational underachievement;
- Growing Elderly Population;
- Transient Population; and
- Ethnic Diversity.

He reviewed the relevance of the Local Development Plan and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy to the work of the Working Group and, in terms of economic development, pointed out that, whilst the focus would be primarily upon city-wide service delivery, there would be opportunities for flexible approaches to take account of local needs.

In terms of next steps, he confirmed that a facilitated workshop would be held for each Working Group in April, to begin the process of identifying key issues at a wider area level, determining the key elements of neighbourhood regeneration and choosing two or three main priorities.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

## Update on Physical Programme

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for the Working Group's consideration the following report:

**“1. Introduction**

**The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams, including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), and the Social Outcome Fund (SOF). In addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.**

**2. Recommendations**

**The Working Group is requested to:**

- i. note the physical programme update for South Belfast;**
- ii. note the update on LIF and BIF projects and current ongoing actions (Sections 3 and 4) and agree to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that BIF funding which had been allocated previously to a project at Gilpins be ringfenced to a project(s) in the Sandy Row area;**
- iii. note the SOF update, including the request from TEO - Urban Villages regarding the funding of the Coffee Culture project (Section 5); and**
- iv. note the SIF update and the closure of the programme in March, 2020 (Section 7).**

**3. Local Investment Fund (LIF)**

**LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-Council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation. Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.**

**Table 1 below outlines the funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 24 projects received 'In Principle' letters under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 21 have been completed; 2 are at pre-construction stage and 1 project still at initial stage.**

**Table 1**

LIF breakdown - South	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	No. Projects	Amount (£)	No. Projects	Amount/ (£)
Number of Projects Completed	12 (92%)	£1,053,600	9 (82%)	£676,000
Number of Projects in Delivery				
Number of Projects in Pre-construction			2 (18%)	£120,000
Number of Project in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (8%)	£30,000		
<b>Total Number of Approved Projects</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>£1,083,600</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>£796,000</b>

An appendix providing an overview of progress and actions around the remaining 3 live projects, namely, Holylands Area Improvement (£80,000), Finaghy Bridge (£30,000), John Murray Lockhouse (£40,000), has been circulated.

Members are asked to note the status of the current live LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

**4. Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)**

BIF is a £28.2m investment fund for regeneration, partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – South Belfast was allocated £5.5m; with additional £500k ringfenced for new areas (outer South) that had joined the District area under Local Government Reform. In South Belfast, 6 projects received an In-Principle funding commitment, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m, and £500k pot of funding. Each project is taken through a 3 stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

<b>South</b>	Stage 3—Lagan Gateway—£2.1m; Lanyon Tunnels—£1.3m; Bredagh GAC- £700k Stage 2— Gilpins— £1.3m Stage 1—Belfast Islamic Centre—no commitment
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<b>Balmoral DEA</b>	Stage 2— Linfield FC/ Boys Brigade and Belvoir FC—£250k; Knockbreda Parish Church Hall—£250k
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The appendix provides a progress overview and update on all projects. Members are asked to note projects that remain a RED RAG status - Lanyon Tunnels project, which also has initial SIF funding but is at risk given the SIF Programme will end March 2020 (see Section 7 below for specific SIF update); and Gilpins, where the original proposal is no longer viable as Gilpins site is now sold.

In relation to these projects Members are asked to note:

- **Gilpins** – that discussions have been ongoing on a wider project within the Sandy Row area regarding the development of a sensory garden/playground. Members are therefore asked to agree that the money which was previously allocated to a project at Gilpins is ringfenced to a project(s) in the Sandy Row area with further details to be brought back to the AWG as required.
- **Lanyon Tunnels** – note that discussions are ongoing with TEO and DFC and that a further update will be provided at the next meeting of the Working Group.

5. **Social Outcome Fund**

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 3 projects in South Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

**Table 2**

<b>Project</b>	<b>SOF Award</b>	<b>Status and update</b>
Assembly Buildings Conference Centre	£90,000	Project completed – new Exhibition and Genealogical Research Space.
Coffee Culture <i>NB - UV partnership project (£402k)</i>	£100,000	Proposal is for a barista type social enterprise cafe that creates a shared space and place that connects the Café, including heritage café and other projects the area. Project is at Business Case development stage, which needs to be completed in order to secure UV funding – a funding shortfall has been identified and formal request from UV to BCC for a further £387k contribution to this project to make up the full amount of the shortfall.

Sandy Row Community Forum	£80,000	Proposal is for the development of a Tourism Trail (with digital element) to complement the Transport Hub - project was been considered in terms of its Due Diligence status, and number of issues raised that need to be resolved (project concept, delivery on site and future maintenance arrangements). Further updates to be reported back to Due Diligence in due course. Ongoing engagement with group.
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Members are asked to note the progress update of each project in Table 2 above, in particular, the current funding shortfall issues with Coffee Culture project. The Director of Physical Programmes has received a Letter from the Urban Villages Programme Director providing an update on the project current status and requesting the Council to look at the funding shortfall of £387,000.

Member are asked to note the position with respect to Coffee Culture and that officers will work in conjunction with UV investigate the potential for addressing the funding shortfall

## 6. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is a rolling programme to either enhance existing Council assets or, build / buy new assets or facilities. Members are reminded of the 3 stage approval process in place for every project on council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. Table 3 below provides an update on current live projects South Belfast area. Members are asked to note current status and update.

**Table 3. South Belfast – Capital Programme Overview**

Project	Status and update
Alleygating Phase 4 – City wide	Stage 3 – Committed. Phase 4A and 4B completed. Phase 4C almost completed.
Playground Refurbishment Programme 2019/2020 (City wide)	Stage 3 – Committed. Preparation on going Ormeau Park Lower playground, Geeragh Community Centre playground and McClure Street playground
Palm House, Botanic Gardens	Stage 1- Emerging. Link to Tropical Ravine

7. **Externally- Funded Programmes**

The Council is the Delivery partner / agent for a number of government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely TEO Social Investment Fund (SIF), TEO Urban Villages (UV) Programme, and number of schemes with DfC Regeneration directorate. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to South Belfast.

**SIF**

Table 4 below provides a status update on SIF projects in South Belfast. Members are asked to note that the SIF Programme will end March 2020, which has resulted in a number of capital projects now at risk. Officers continue to liaise with TEO officials, in particular for South Belfast, around Mornington Community project, and Lanyon Tunnels projects.

***Table 4: SIF – South Belfast Projects Overview***

<b>Project</b>	<b>Status and update</b>
South City Resource and Dev't Centre (St. Simon's)	Anticipated completion date of 3rd February, 2020.
Mornington Community Project	Liaison ongoing between BCC design team and HBK Architects to verify the proposed reduced works and whether a planning application will be required for same. Site meeting held on 10 January and further detailed work is ongoing. Recently advised by TEO that funding may be withdrawn however officers working with Group on a reduced funding option.
Lanyon Tunnels	Project has been impacted by the JR decision on the adjacent site to the tunnels – the adjacent site is a critical access point for the project, enabling range of connectivity outcomes and benefits (SIF business case dependent on connectivity). Project may be affected by SIF programme closure timeframe (March 2020). Members are asked to note that discussions are ongoing with the TEO.

## UV capital programme

Table 5 below is the status update on UV projects in South Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined south Belfast geography (Sandy Row; Donegall Pass and Markets).

***NB The Coffee Culture project is linked to the Council's SOF - see Section 5 SOF update.***

**Table 5: UV – South Belfast projects overview**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Status and update</b>
Sandy Row Play Park	Project completed and handed over
Rev Robert Bradford Memorial Park	Project completed and play park opened on December 19. Feedback received from Donegall Pass Community Centre is very positive. Communications event being progressed.
Coffee Culture <i>NB Linked to BCC SOF</i>	Project business case being developed. Potential funding mix includes; UV contribution £302k and BCC SOF- £100k. UV issued a letter to BCC to request additional funding (£387k) to fully fund the current shortfall, as per SOF update.”

After discussion, the Working Group adopted the recommendations.

## Area Specific Issues

### Update on Wider University and Lower Ormeau Area

The Working Group considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**To provide the Working Group with an update on the actions which were agreed by the People and Communities Committee in October 2019 in respect of the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area.**

#### **2.0 Background**

**The following motion regarding Anti-Social Behaviour in the Holylands and surrounding area was proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor McKeown at the Council meeting on 1st October, 2019.**

***‘This Council condemns the persistent and serious anti-social behaviour that residents of the Holylands and the surrounding***



***area endure throughout the year due to the high numbers of HMOs that exist there.***

***This Council will review its policy for dealing with all aspects of anti-social behaviour in the Holylands area, particularly around on-street drinking, noise and littering and bring forward an action plan for tackling the ongoing problems experienced in this area.'***

**Subsequently, the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 29th October, agreed the following actions, which were ratified by the Council on 4th November:**

- 1. to designate the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area as a Special Action Area under community planning and to develop a long-term vision and development plan for the area to include a housing plan, a spatial planning approach and a regeneration programme;**
- 2. that the Department for Communities, and other agencies such as SOS Bus and Sure Start, which work with vulnerable communities in the area, be invited to join the ongoing conversation;**
- 3. that the Council writes to the NIHE and to social housing operators regarding the potential of them 'buying back' properties in the area;**
- 4. to write to the VCs of Queens University Belfast and the Ulster University and to the owners of privately-owned Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation throughout the city to ask them to reduce the price of their accommodation in the city centre to make it more affordable for students;**
- 5. that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining what enforcement powers were available to agencies for those who were operating a property as an Airbnb without the appropriate certification from the NI Tourist Board; and**
- 6. that a further briefing would be offered on the topic of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), with all Members to be invited to attend and as part of that it would update members on the impact of re-definition of HMOs, and any effect it has on standards in terms of fire safety and building control regulations**

### **3.0 Key Issues**

**Officers have been progressing the actions agreed by the People and Communities Committee in October, with progress updates against each action being provided below:**

**To designate the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area as a Special Action Area under community planning and to develop a long-term vision and development plan for the area to include a housing plan, a spatial planning approach and a regeneration programme:**

The particular issues which have arisen in the wider university and lower Ormeau areas over time prompted the formation in 2005 of the Holyland Inter-Agency Group (IAG). This brought together key stakeholders – education providers, government departments, the Council, accommodation providers, student representatives and community representatives – who have sought to promote a joined up approach to tackling the issues and addressing concerns.

Since 2012, the Council and other statutory partners adopted the *Belfast: A Learning City, Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study*. Many of the short to medium term recommendations have been achieved, with the long-term ambitions to be reviewed and progressed through the Local Development Plan and Community Planning structures.

The Belfast Agenda sets out our joint city vision and long-term ambitions and outcomes for Belfast's future, as well as outlining our priorities for action every four years. The establishment of community planning governance and infrastructure, coupled with the development of a 'Transformational Places' approach across the City offers a real opportunity to make a sustained impact in the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area, particularly given its proximity to the South Corridor.

This area based approach is about how the Council, partners and local communities work together to tailor projects/interventions within particular neighbourhoods where we believe there are opportunities to maximise synergies and improve outcomes at a local level. The alignment of governance within community planning infrastructure is therefore essential and a revised governance model is in the process of being developed with partners.

To help inform the development of a long-term vision and development plan for the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area, officers have secured the commitment from the Department for Communities and the Department of Finance to hold an Innovation Lab (ILAB).

The ILAB is a 3-day workshop which will be hosted by expert facilitators who will work with a representatives from all key stakeholders to identify local challenges and agree strategic level recommendations on how to best address them. It was envisaged that the ILAB events would take place between January and April 2019, however, the return of the Assembly has resulted in the redeployment of officers within DoF and as such they are currently assessing their capacity to meet this timeline with an update expected in the coming weeks.

Following completion of the ILAB event officers will work with partners to develop an agreed governance model, within the context of existing community planning infrastructure, and an integrated action plan to deliver the strategic recommendations. Two critical elements within this process are:

- a) to ensure that all partners work collaboratively to identify/address issues and deliver the integrated action plan within their own spheres of responsibility; and
- b) the development of a new community involvement model to ensure effective stakeholder involvement in the design and delivery of the emerging programme of work.

In addition to the ILAB event, officers have been working with Queens University Belfast in relation to securing support over a 3-year period from its School of Natural and Built Environment, towards the development of a long term vision and development plan. Work is underway to confirm the scope of this work and to ensure that it aligns with other academic work that has been completed or underway within the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area.

That the Department for Communities and other agencies, such as SOS Bus and Sure Start, which work with vulnerable communities in the area, be invited to join the ongoing conversation

Meetings with statutory and community stakeholders took place in October and December with key updates being as follows:

- general public messages and planning required for peak periods i.e. Halloween, St Patrick's Day etc – Council will continue to work with partners through PACT and other structures to address day-to-day operational issues and prepare for peak periods that have seen a rise in complaints around noise and anti-social behaviour;
- a long term action plan for the area to be developed – the first step in this process is the completion of the ILAB event which will involve all key statutory and community stakeholders within the area;
- while leading community stakeholders have been effectively engaged for some time, securing participation at the citizen level, from what is a largely transient and ethnically diverse population has proven difficult. To try and address this challenge, officers have submitted an expression of interest to the Community Foundation Northern Ireland's (CFNI) Civic

Innovation Programme, seeking to secure up to £50,000 funding to develop new and innovative methods of increasing citizen engagement within the area.

**That the Council write to NIHE and to social housing operators regarding the potential of them 'buying back' properties in the area**

Officers have written to the NIHE and DFC and Housing Associations have also been contacted in relation to engaging with the Innovation lab.

**To write to the VCs of Queens University Belfast and Ulster University and to the owners of privately-owned Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation throughout the city to ask them to reduce the price of their accommodation in the city centre to make it more affordable for students**

Both universities were subsequently written to. QUB has held an initial meeting with Council staff and is keen to engage with members on the pricing structures in place for PBMSA. It is happy to attend a future South Belfast Area Working Group meeting to discuss the issue and has offered a tour of its current facilities. To date, there has been no reply from the Ulster University.

**That a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining what enforcement powers were available to agencies for those who were operating a property as an Airbnb without the appropriate certification from the NI Tourist Board**

Officers are preparing a follow up paper for the People and Communities Committee meeting in March.

**That a further briefing would be offered on the topic of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), with all Members invited to attend and as part of that it would update members on the impact of re-definition of HMOs, and any effect it has on standards in terms of fire safety and building control regulations.**

Officers are preparing a follow up paper for the People and Communities Committee meeting in March.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

The Working Group is requested to note the content of this report and approve the following next steps:

- i. officers will continue to liaise with the Department of Finance, Department for Communities and key stakeholders in relation to the delivery of the Innovation Lab event;

- ii. **funding through NICF's Civic Innovation Fund will be pursued with a view to developing new and innovative ways of increasing citizen engagement; and**
- iii. **officers will continue to liaise with QUB in relation to securing academic support with the development of a long term vision and development plan."**

After discussion, during which Members welcomed the progress which had been made to date, the Working Group adopted the recommendations.

#### **Next Meeting**

The Working Group noted that its next meeting would take place at 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 27th April.

Chairperson