

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 8th October, 2020

MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, de Faoite, Flynn, Howard, Hussey, M. Kelly, Kyle, Long, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland Newton and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes; Ms. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager; Ms. K. Watters, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

The Area Working Group was advised that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – that Alderman Copeland, representing the Ulster Unionist Party, be elected to serve as Chairperson to the East Belfast Area Working Group until June, 2021.

(Alderman Copeland in the Chair)

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Aldermen Haire, Dorrian and Rodgers, and Councillors Brooks, Flynn, M. Kelly, McMullan and McReynolds declared an interest in Item 2, Physical Programme Update, in that they were Board Members of the Eastside Partnership.

Councillors Newton and Kyle declared an interest in Item 2, Physical Programme Update, in that they were Board Members of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre.

Alderman Sandford declared an interest in Item 2, Physical Programme Update, in so far as he was on the Board of Governors of Cregagh Primary School.

Update on the Physical Programme

Local Investment Fund (LIF)

The Director of Physical Programmes explained to the Members that LIF was a £9million fixed programme of capital investment in non-Council neighbourhood assets over two tranches. LIF1, from 2012-2015, comprised a total of £5million, with East having been allocated £1.127million. LIF2 comprised a total of £4million, with East having been allocated £1.2million. The Members were advised that each LIF project was taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

She explained that 19 projects had received “in principle” support under East LIF1 and LIF2, of which 18 had been completed.

LIF breakdown – East	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	7 (87%)	£877,500	11 (92%)	£1,146,589
Number of Projects in On-going Delivery				
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (13%)	£250,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	8	£1,127,500	11	£1,146,589

The Members were advised that the “Westbourne Presbyterian Church – Titanic People” was still at the initial stage. She explained that the Working Group had committed £250,000, in principle, in September 2012. However, the Director explained that the Executive Office had recently written to the Council to advise that they were withdrawing their Letter of Offer under the SIF programme. She explained that the overall costs for the project had significantly increased since the project had originally been proposed and that it was now estimated at £2.2m from their original estimate of £1.05m. The Director advised the Committee that Westbourne Presbyterian Community Church/Roundtower CIC had requested that the Council would proceed with a smaller scale project which would deliver refurbishments to the Church to allow it to be used for some tourism purposes but that no further details had been provided in relation to this.

The Working Group was advised that further project, The Dock TQ, had been withdrawn. She explained that The Dock TQ had withdrawn its LIF application for £15,000 and that they had been extremely grateful for the financial help offered by the Council. The Members were advised that the £15,000 could therefore be reallocated and that projects had to have a minimum £15,000 requirement to comply with the LIF criteria.

(During discussion, Councillors Newton and Kyle declared an interest in the item and left the room for the duration of the discussion.)

Moved by Alderman Dorrian,
 Seconded by Councillor Howard and

Resolved – that the Working Group agrees to allocate, in principle, £15,000 towards the Lagan Village Youth and Community Association garden project.

The Working Group further agreed that officers would formally write to the Westbourne Presbyterian Church – Titanic People project, to seek an update on the plans and to confirm whether they still wished to be part of the LIF programme.

(Councillors Kyle and Newton re-joined the meeting at this point)

Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)

The Director explained that BIF was a £28.2million fund for regeneration, partnership projects with a minimum £250,000 investment from the Council. She advised the Working Group that East Belfast had been allocated £5.5million under BIF, with an additional £2million allocated for use in Outer East, which took account of the areas which had been subsumed into the Belfast area under Local Government Reform.

She outlined that 9 projects had received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF in the east of the City. She explained that there were 5 projects on the longer BIF list. The Members noted that each of the ‘In Principle’ projects were taken through a 3 stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement was approved and put in place.

East	<p>Stage 3 Willowfield—£560k (completed); H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.8m; Bloomfield—£440k</p> <p>Stage 2 <i>Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</i></p> <p>Stage 1 <i>East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John’s Orangefield, Church of Ireland—no commitment / on long list</i></p>
Outer East	<p>Stage 3 TAGIT- £434k; Braniel—£390k; Hanwood—£396k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k</p>

The Working Group was provided with a detailed update on the status of each of the projects in respect of the Strand Arts Centre and Bloomfield Community Association:

PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Strand Arts Centre	£1,800,000	Stage 3 – design stage	Committed in principle October 2016 (with 2years to secure match funding; with the option to be extended by a further year – October 2019) Revised Stage 1 Design Report complete for £4.6m preferred option. Match funding in secured in principle from DfC subject to business case review which is underway- DfC indicate that funding will only match the funding offer from the Council. Group are actively fundraising to meet shortfall. It is noted that, despite requests, DfC have not provided a timescale for a funding decision.	The Group be invited to a future meeting to present its current proposals and how additional funding for the project would be secured along with a timeline
Bloomfield Community Association	£440,000	Stage 3 committed – In Principle	Committed in principle September 2016 with Group given 6/9 months to secure match funding (would have been June 2017). No significant progress for more than 3 years. The preferred option leaves a shortfall of £178,000 (as of 2016). Discussions have been had with DfC but to date no additional funding has been secured. Discussions with group ongoing.	The group be invited to a future meeting of the AWG to present its current proposals and how additional funding for the project would be secured along with a timeline

The Members were provided with updates on the Outer East BIF projects which were at Stage 3, as follows:

PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Hanwood Project	£396,000	Stage 3 – On Ground	Project on site. Pitch and lighting element has been completed. Project encountered difficulty in procuring the contractor	To continue engagement with the group on timescales once

			for the roller shutters element of the project. Currently out to tender again in order to complete these works. Tender returns are due 16 Oct.	procurement is complete.
TAGIT Boxing Club	£434,000	Stage 3 – On Ground	Following a successful bid to the Department for Communities (Sport Section), BCC Due Diligence has now been completed and the BIF Funding Agreement has been completed. The agreed start date for project works onsite is on the 5 th October. See Appendix 4 for correspondence being issued to residents from the contractor for information.	To continue engagement with the group, DfC and partners
Braniel Church	£390,000	Stage 3 – Tender stage	Application for funding to National Churches Trust unsuccessful. Work ongoing with group to progress the scheme. Planning Permission has now been secured. Tender package preparations are now underway with Design Team (recently returned from furlough). Tender exercise anticipated in early 2021 with start on site to follow.	To continue engagement with the group.
Lisnasharragh Community Schools Project	£398,000	Stage 3 – Design stage	Project moved to Stage 3 in June 2018. Education Authority has agreed it will be responsible for delivery and will procure contractor. Costs in Economic Appraisal exceed BIF funding allocation. Schools are aware of the funding gap and are going to work with the £398k committed rather than seeking any additional funding. EA is leading on developing a feasibility study and business plan but this has been delayed while	That a satisfactory timeline for delivery be sought from the Education Authority, with consideration given to further action to be taken if progress is not secured

			capital work was prioritised to facilitate the restart of schools. It is noted that, despite requests, no further clarity on timescales has been received.	
Castlereagh Presbyterian Church	£382,000	Stage 3 – Due Diligence	Project moved to Stage 3 in March 2018. Project still at final Due Diligence stage. Funding shortfall remains. Group confirmed earlier in 2020 that they wish to remain in the scheme. It is noted that, despite requests, no further information has been received.	That the Group be invited to a future meeting of the AWG to present its current proposals and how additional funding for the project would be secured along with a timeline

The Working Group agreed to invite representatives from the Strand Arts Centre, the Bloomfield Community Association and Castlereagh Presbyterian Church to attend the next meeting, in order to present their current proposals and how additional funding for the project would be secured, along with a timeline.

The Working Group further agreed that the Education Authority be invited into the next meeting, in order to provide an update in relation to the timeline of delivery for the Lisnasharragh Community Schools project.

The Director provided the Working Group with an overview of the Council's Capital Programme, Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and of externally funded programmes where the Council was the delivery partner/agent for a number of government departments on capital investment programmes such as The Executive Office's (TEO) Social Investment Fund (SIF), TEO Urban Villages (UV) programme and a number of schemes with the DfC Regeneration Directorate.

The Members were advised that officers had proactively engaged with the Department for Communities (DfC) to explore opportunities for match-funding. The Director explained that DfC had sought proposals on projects which matched their criteria, such as projects within a Neighbourhood Renewal Area, on an arterial route, and which could be delivered within 2020/21 financial year. She explained that a number of capital projects had been identified on the Council's existing committed physical programme list and that DfC had indicated that they would be willing to provide additional funding to existing projects at the Eastside Greenway Ballymacarret, the Hanwood Roof and the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre, subject to the completion of appraisal/Contract for Funding process.

The Chairperson thanked the Director of Physical Programmes for the comprehensive updates which had been provided.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held on Thursday, 5th November at 5pm.

Chairperson