

West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 26th November, 2020

WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Corr (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner);
Alderman Kingston; and
Councillors Black, Canavan, Carson,
Matt Collins, Donnelly, Garrett, Hutchinson,
McCabe, Magennis and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of
Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. S. Lavery, Interim Neighbourhood Services Manager
West;
Mrs. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration
Manager;
Mr Liam McKinley Open Spaces and Streetscene
Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Michael Collins, Heading and McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 29th October were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No Declaration of Interest were reported.

Update in respect Alignment with Community Planning incorporating Social and Community Recovery

Ms I. Sherry and Mr. J. Girvan attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

Ms. Sherry stated that they had been asked to meet with all of the Area Working Groups as a means to introduce themselves and provide the Members of those Working Groups with an update on their work. She referred to the composition of the

Voluntary and Community Enterprise Sector Advisory Panel, which had been set up to secure links between the elected Members and the various stakeholders, including the community and voluntary sector, as part of the Community Planning process. She referred to the importance associated with securing community engagement and of the broad skill set provided by the 15 members which comprised the panel. Ms. Sherry and Mr. Girvan referred to the success of the panel's first public conference which had been held recently. She explained the importance of providing a platform to engage with both the Community and voluntary sector and of securing strong links with the various Community Planning boards.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager stated that a report would be presented to Members on the details of the conference. In that regard, Ms. Sherry stated that the services of Stratagem had been used to support the panel and that a report was being compiled currently, which would be made available in the near future.

The Members noted the update which had been provided by both Ms. Sherry and Mr. Girvan and they left the meeting.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services then provided the Working Group with a detailed update in regard to the ongoing work to establish and implement the Neighbourhood Regeneration and Area Working Plan, incorporating the following key strands:

- Belfast Agenda and Governance;
- Integrated Service Delivery;
- Capital Investment;
- Evidence based decision making;
- Local Development Plan;
- City Regeneration; and
- Economic Development

He highlighted the need to integrate services and to develop external partnerships in the pursuit of community engagement and Neighbourhood Regeneration and he referred specifically to the City and Neighbourhood Services approach to integrated service delivery including:

- Open Spaces and Streetscene;
- City Protection;
- Community Provision; and
- Resources and Fleet.

The Working Group discussed the Area Profile for West Belfast, including the Shankill and stated that they were keen for the Council and other partners to work together with local communities to jointly plan interventions, services and investments, and to ensure these approaches were tailored to meet local priorities and needs.

Several of the Members stressed the need to ensure that the focus in regard to community planning remained at a local level. They also noted that the area plans needed to be flexible as these were going to be evolving and reiterated the need to engage and consult with the various stakeholders to work towards building a community infrastructure and to ensure that there was no duplication of work.

The Neighbourhood Integration Manager confirmed that the proposed approach recognised the importance of neighbourhood regeneration and of developing a place-shaping approach to drive the effective use of resources by Council and other partners/stakeholders within specific areas where opportunities existed to maximize impact.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager referred Members to the current approach to integrating service delivery at an area level across neighbourhood services. Specifically, within community provision and noted that the following principles already had political and corporate endorsement as the agreed direction for services:

- Support local area problem solving;
- Create opportunities for new ways of working;
- Support cultural change in support of area working;
- Create synergies to pool the great knowledge and experience staff off staff; and
- To align to the vision of community provision.

The Working Group noted that the current Covid-19 crisis had and continued to create a significant economic and social challenge for communities. However, it had also created opportunities for future working. Relationships had been developed between officers and CVSE partners had been at the forefront, with multiple examples of effective partnership working to address urgent community needs, in localities and across the city.

As part of the Council's Covid-19 response (community hub), the Neighbourhood Integration Managers had set up area support teams which had responded quickly and had been extremely flexible in trying to meet the emergency needs that had arisen as a result of the pandemic.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager (West) advised that as part of the learning exercise a revised Area Team approach was being adopted across the city, which would see officers working with residents, the Elected Members and various stakeholders to revitalise the city's neighbourhoods by:

- supporting and working with communities and partners to collectively identify and tackle priority local issues;
- taking innovative approaches;
- being flexible and responsive;
- creating conditions to build capacity;
- empowering communities to build capacity and resilience and creating positive and lasting differences to their quality of life;
- addressing operational challenges in the ever changing environment of Covid-19,
- through the lens of council procedures, but taking into account local nuances;
- leading on the integration and mobilisation of staff in local neighbourhoods,
- maximising opportunities where possible, to improve outcomes for residents;
- designing how resources could be used in a more flexible way, including staff and funding;
- participating in and facilitating community engagement and communications activities associated with their catchment area;

- Working with the Elected Members to act as community advocates to identify and address local needs and support effective ‘place-shaping’;
- Promoting local area knowledge and understanding;
- Strengthening relationships with external agencies, residents, community representatives, partnerships and the wider communities to deliver improved Council services; and
- Identifying area priorities as part of our neighbourhood regeneration approach.

He concluded by stating that he was keen to meet with community partners and, where possible, to undertake site visits in order to progress the community approach.

The Working Group noted the invaluable support and assistance that the Council had received from the community during the pandemic and welcomed the success of the area working approach that had been adopted and which had assisted with the targeted support being delivered so efficiently.

The Chair, on behalf of the Working Group, also commended the officers and asked that their thanks be conveyed to the many Council staff who continued to work hard maintaining vital council services and supporting our citizens and communities during the pandemic.

Area Working

Area Based Update on Strategic and Micro Funding

The Working Group considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update the Working Group with regard to the Summer Microgrant Funding Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Working Group is asked to note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members may recall that in July 2020 a package of financial investment was agreed to support recovery at a community level, which was in addition to the initial investment in communities as part of the COVID-19 emergency response. This investment took into account the lessons learned from the COVID-19 emergency response, in particular, feedback from community partners about the accessibility of funding.

Funding Approach

3.2 The Microgrant funding programme was opened by Council at the beginning of July 2020.

The final budget was approximately £310,000, with a maximum allocation per organisation of £1,000. Only one application per organisation was considered.

Funding was administered in each geography of the city by the area teams, which had been created to deliver support for the COVID emergency response efforts. In order to qualify for funding, activity delivered through microgrants was required to meet at least one of the following themes:

- **Children and Young People:** Summer activities and programmes to address the negative educational and wellbeing impacts of COVID-19 and support digital connectivity;
- **Civic Pride:** Communities are rightly proud of the huge volunteering effort and sense of neighbourliness and community spirit and want to develop that further;
- **Preventing Isolation:** the impact of COVID-19 on those shielding has been significant and a huge community effort is needed to support those individuals, with digital connectivity being an element of addressing this challenge;
- **Emotional Wellbeing:** There is widespread concern about the emotional wellbeing concerns of vulnerable individuals, families and communities;
- **Anti-Social Behaviour:** Levels of anti-social behaviour, particularly in parks/open spaces, increased due to increased use by people not at school/work and periods of good weather over the summer.

Funding Impact

3.3 Micro grant funding enabled 322 organisations across Belfast to deliver an extensive programme of activities with an approximate total allocation of £310,000. In West Belfast 101 applications were approved.

3.4 Programmes delivered in west Belfast focused on all 5 themes; Children & Young People and Emotional Wellbeing were the most common. Activity included:

- Activity Programmes for young people and youth diversionary/outreach
- Community Arts programmes
- Physical activity and community sports programmes
- Literacy/Numeracy workshops and back to school support
- Mental health, wellbeing, mindfulness and resilience programmes
- Environmental Programmes, Community Clean-ups and upcycling from waste
- Digital inclusion programmes

Further detail on projects supported in west Belfast is included in Appendix 1.

3.5 Feedback from grant recipients has been extremely positive, those elements that were welcomed include:

- Higher than average turnaround time for the micro grants programme from receipt of application to payment of funds. In most cases, this was completed within 20 working days;
- More accessible, streamlined process and reductions in unnecessary bureaucracy (in keeping with the Department of Finance Reducing Bureaucracy for the Voluntary and Community Sector Code of Practice 2015);
- Each grant application had a single point of contact within the area teams. This has enabled more effective communication and resolution of issues when they arise. This has been particularly important for new applicants or lower capacity groups.

Future funding

3.6 Feedback has informed our approach to further resourcing of community provision up to March 21 and beyond. Organisations have highlighted the significant challenges of delivering programmes within the current environment, especially with the tightening and easing of restrictions. Officers are mindful of this and we will seek to retain a flexible approach which supports communities to meet locally identified needs.

3.7 Two further rounds of funding will be available from Wednesday 25th November at 9am. Further detail is available in Appendix 2.

- COVID-19 Community Recovery Support Fund Microgrant (up to £1,500)
- COVID-19 Community Recovery Support Fund Medium Grant (up to £5,000)

Financial Implications

3.8 All awards made through the summer programme were made in line with available external and internal resources. At the time of writing resources for the planned Microgrant and Medium Funding programme are £150,000 and £250,000 respectively. In the event that demand exceeds available resources, we will liaise with funders to meet need.

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

- 3.9 This approach proposed seeks to meet the needs of communities through a responsive programme of grants. Future funding approaches from 2021 onwards will be Equality and Rural Needs screened.”

The Working Group noted the update provided and commended the officers on the speed and efficiency shown in distributing the funding streams which had been targeted specifically to support local, grass roots community organisations and delivered to those areas where it was needed most.

Introduce Multi-disciplinary Area Team

The Neighbourhood Services Manager (West) advised that four Neighbourhood Services Managers and four Neighbourhood Integration Managers had now been recruited to support the area approach. In addition, the work to create the Open Space and Streetscene teams (former parks and cleansing) was providing an opportunity to develop links with these staff and staff in other area-based City and Neighbourhood Services for the benefit of local communities.

As part of the Council’s Covid-19 response (community hub), the Neighbourhood Integration Managers had set up area support teams which, as previously discussed, had responded efficiently to the emergency needs that had arisen as a result of the pandemic. She drew the Members’ attention to membership of the area teams as follows and advised that it was anticipated that the expanded teams would begin to meet from late November/early December:

Appendix 1 – West Belfast Area Team

Area	Job Role	Officers
West	Neighbourhood Services Manager	Stevie Lavery
	Neighbourhood Integration Manager	Alice McGlone
	Open Spaces and Street Scene Manager	Liam McKinley
	Open Spaces and Street Scene Manager (covering Shankill)	David Salters
	Safer City Coordinator (Operational)	Pól Hamilton
	Safer City Coordinator (PCSP)	Suzanne Gowling
	Community Services Area Support Manager	Seoirse Caldwell
	Community Services Area Facilities Manager	Yvonne Coyle
	Area Community Development Officers (Facilities, Resource Unit and Area Support)	Area – Alanagh Rea Ciarán Hartley Tommy O’Reilly Central Resource Unit - Bill McClinton

		Facilities – Sean Devine Brian Burns
	Good Relations Officer	David Robinson
	Area ASB Officer	Andy Claydon
	Health Development Officer	Jim Morgan
	Sports Development Officer	Claire Moraghan
	Travellers Liaison Officer	Anne Ross
	Children and Young People’s Manager	Israel Hontavilla
	Parks Outreach Manager	Michael Culbert

The Working Group noted the update provided and agreed that officers would e- mail contact details for the area support teams and some information on general roles directly to the Members.

Date of Next Meeting

The Democratic Services Officer advised the Members that the next quarterly meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for Thursday, 25th February at 4.30 p.m.

The Director of Physical Programmes advised that the Department for Infrastructure had recently launched the ‘Living with Water in Belfast’ Consultation Document, this was a draft strategic plan for drainage and wastewater management for the greater Belfast area that was being developed as part of the Living with Water Programme. More information in regard to the consultation was available [here](#)

The Director advised that the consultation closed on 29th January and the Working Group agreed to convene a special, one issue, meeting to discuss the consider the consultation document from a West Belfast perspective.

It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would liaise with the Chairperson and Director of Physical Programme to identify a suitable date.

Chairperson