

North Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 24th February, 2021

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Maskey (Chairperson);
Councillors Bradley, Magee, McCullough,
O'Hara, Pankhurst and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager,
Ms. M. Higgins, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Cobain, Ferguson, McAllister, McCusker and Murphy.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th November, 2020 and 6th January, 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Sustrans - Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. R. Ludlow-Williams, Volunteer Coordinator, and Mr. S. Patterson, Delivery Manager, representing Sustrans Northern Ireland to the meeting.

The representatives presented an overview of the Sustrans - Forth Meadow Community Greenway– volunteer walk and cycle leaders' project. Ms. R. Ludlow-Williams advised that Sustrans was working in partnership to recruit and train 12 volunteer cycle leaders and 12 volunteer walk leaders for a 12km stretch of the Greenway.

She explained that the volunteer opportunity was aimed at individuals and community groups and that the volunteers would receive accessible free training and be supported to lead people to enjoy the greenway and promote the shared space. She explained the role of a cycle leader and walking leader and pointed out that Volunteers were required to commit to a minimum of 30 hours engagement between March and December.

Mr. Patterson informed the Group that community involvement was critical to the success of the project in the context of a shared space. He highlighted that Leaders would be trained in mediation and achieve an OCN accredited qualification, Route planning and group management, safeguarding training, and first aid training.

He explained the benefits and opportunities of the project and encouraged Members to share the volunteering programme information with interested groups and individuals.

During discussion, the representative's advised that suicide prevention training could also be looked into as part of the Leaders training, and they would be pleased to facilitate a walk or cycle around the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, once the Covid 19 restriction were lifted.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their informative presentation and they retired from the meeting.

The Director of Physical Programmes emphasised that this was a major transformational project for this area. She advised that two letters of offer had been received from the Department for Infrastructure (750k) and Department for Communities (500k) towards the Forth Meadow Community Greenway. In addition to this, Section 1 of the Greenway had been granted planning permission at the February meeting of the Planning Committee and she stated that she was delighted to report that works on the project were due to commence next month.

Following discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided and the continued engagement with Sustrans NI would include an invitation to provide an update on its volunteering programme at a future meeting.

Belfast Charitable Society

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. P. Reynolds, CEO, and Mr. D. Watters, Chair, Belfast Charitable Society to the meeting.

Mr. Watters summarised the history of the Society, together with an overview of the work which was currently being undertaken. He advised that the Society wished to raise awareness of its care facilities and funding and grants. This included: Building Better Futures Loans programme; Barbour Fund; BCS Grants programme (NI Hospice, North Belfast Families in crisis, schools' choir, heritage-led regeneration); Covid – Laptops, AgeNI, working with grantees; Heritage centre and Graveyard management; and the Mary Ann McCracken Foundation.

Ms. Reynolds informed the Group of the capital projects and the cultural and developmental projects which were underway, and explained the concept for the North Belfast Heritage Cluster – re-imagining North Belfast. She described the Great Place II project to include: Archive development, Telling our stories, Heritage Trail, North Belfast Festival, and Community Engagement.

During discussion, Ms. Reynolds advised that she would send through further information and online links in relation to the development work with local BAME groups and addressing racism.

She explained further the options for funding such projects and the work undertaken as part of the Mary Ann McCracken Foundation. She advised that it was

delivering a calendar of events to mark her 250th anniversary with a group of other organisations which would be shared with the Area Working Group.

In response to queries from the Working Group, the representative's confirmed that they would be content to host the North Area Working Group and provide a tour or talk of the history of the Society and its role in developing Belfast, together with an update on its current work in relation to addressing disadvantage and developing philanthropy. Ms Reynolds advised that the Crumlin Road Courthouse Viability Study should be completed soon and the Society would be in a position to present a further update on the Project after Easter. The Group agreed to receive a presentation on this at a future meeting and that this should be extended to members of the West AWG given the geographical location of the Courthouse.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their informative presentation and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Chairperson