

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 6th May, 2021

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

Members present: Alderman Copeland (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Rodgers and Sandford;
The High Sheriff, Councillor Long; and
Councillors Brooks, De Faoite, Flynn, Hanvey, Howard,
M. Kelly, Kyle, McMullan, McReynolds, Newton and
Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes,
Ms. S. Kalke, Project Sponsor Officer,
Ms. K. Watters, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager,
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer, and
Ms. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor Mulholland.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 4th February were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Kyle declared an interest in the Lagan Village Youth and Community Association, in that he was Chairperson of the group, and he did not participate in the discussion and left the meeting for the duration of the item.

Congratulations

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, congratulated Councillor M. Kelly and her family on the recent birth of their daughter, Charlotte.

Special Meeting

The Working Group agreed to hold a Special meeting in June to allow representatives from Castlereagh Presbyterian Church to present an update on their project. The date would be agreed with the Chairperson and circulated to the Members.

Presentations

Strand Arts Centre

Ms. Mimi Turtle, CEO of Strand Arts Centre, Mr. Jonathan Hegan, Chair, and Mr. Richard Gaston, Marketing and Fundraising Manager, attended in connection with this item and were welcomed by the Chairperson.

Ms. Turtle provided the Working Group with a presentation on progress of the Strand Arts Centre project. She advised the Members that, since their last presentation, on-site facilitation works regarding wall removals had been completed, reducing development costs and possibly construction time, whilst allowing the current space to be more usable in the interim. She also advised that £28,000 had been secured from the Department for Communities to install disability access in one of the theatres, which could also have an impact on design and development costs.

She confirmed that their 'case for support' statement had been developed, both in hard copy and digitally, and that this would soon be used to launch their private and corporate gifting campaigns. She added that 82% of the £4.6million budget was currently in place and that they had a clear idea of where the remaining £819,000 would come from.

The Working Group was informed of interest from a number of heritage funders, and work with Arts and Business NI who had agreed to champion the project, which would open the door to further funding opportunities.

Ms. Turtle explained that in order to progress with these opportunities, the completion of RIBA Stage 2 surveys was required. She therefore requested that £40,000 of the allocated BIF funding was released to match fund £40,000 of fund-raising money in order to progress with this work. She explained that this was an important step as it would allow a number of detailed surveys to be completed, moving the project forward and providing more reassurance regarding costs and timeframes, as well as giving the opportunity to formally apply to the aforementioned funders.

In terms of next steps, she confirmed that if funding was approved, RIBA Stage 2 would begin in May with a timeframe of 3 months, the gifting campaign would be launched, and work would continue with the Trusts and Foundations. She suggested that, as the project would result in a number of positive outcomes for the arts, community, tourism and regeneration, there were many avenues to progress in terms of financial support. Finally, the Members were advised that, following the completion of RIBA Stage 2 and 3, it was expected that a planning application would be submitted in November, 2021.

In response to a query as to how Strand Arts Centre proposed to fund RIBA Stage 3, Ms. Turtle suggested that if the required £72,000 was not available through fundraising, it was possible that there would be a short delay until that funding was in place, however, she was confident that they would reach that goal.

The Working Group raised a number of concerns regarding increased costs as a result of inflation in the building sector. Ms. Turtle advised the Working Group that RIBA Stage 1 had been reviewed in February, 2020, and that they would be looking at value engineering. She also suggested that there were areas within the budget that could be trimmed if necessary.

In closing, Ms. Turtle thanked the Area Working Group for their support throughout the project and that the BIF funding had been a catalyst in garnering additional financial

support. She also noted that the next steps that had been outlined were critical to the survival of the historic building.

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

Westbourne/Titanic People

Rev. Mervyn Gibson, Director of Titanic People, attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Rev. Gibson explained where the concept of Titanic People had come from and how the Westbourne Presbyterian project had been developed. He advised that the initial idea sought to encourage local people to have pride in their area by raising awareness of successful people from East Belfast, whilst educating visitors about the Church, the history of Presbyterianism, and the history of troubles in the area through so-called 'Troubles Tourism'.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of the funding that had been secured over the course of the project's lifetime, beginning in 2010, and the subsequent delays that had resulted in a range of funding sources withdrawing from the project.

He advised that, as a result of the delays, the Church had now been vacant for 6 years due to dry rot issues, with further work required in relation to this and the external brick work before people could return to the building. He also confirmed that the work required was in excess of the allocated LIF funding, however, he suggested that work could be carried out in stages.

Rev. Gibson advised that discussions were now ongoing with Urban Villages regarding additional funding, though the business case was ongoing and was expected to be complete in late June. He added that building time was expected to be in the region of 9 months once permissions were in place.

In response to a query regarding possible re-investment from the Tourist Board or social enterprises, and whether Short Strand would be incorporated into any proposed tours, Rev. Gibson advised that he had not yet spoken with additional funders but would be open to approaching the Tourist Board again, as well as working as part of a consortium. He also confirmed that they were not proposing to organise tours, but facilitate those that were already in place.

A Member questioned what the overall cost the project was now estimated to be, and how important the Council LIF funding was to securing additional support. Rev. Gibson stated that the LIF funding was vital and, he believed, had been instrumental in securing the interest of Urban Villages. He suggested that, if £600,000 was forthcoming from Urban Villages, that would resolve the dry rot and stone work issues at the front of the building, allowing the church to reopen. He added that the next step would then be to approach further funders to develop additional aspects in terms of the tourism and exhibition offering, but that those would be incremental steps.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his informative presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted the undernoted report in respect of an update on the Council's Physical Programme.

"1. Introduction

The Council's Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, LIF, BIF, Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the projects that the Council is delivering in behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note –

- The update on the physical programme for East Belfast,
- *Titanic People and Strand Arts Centre projects*: representatives from the respective groups in attendance to provide updates to Members.
- *Castlereagh Presbyterian Church*: representatives will attend a future meeting to provide updates.

3. Local Investment Fund

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 with the East being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £1.2m under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. Table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 20 projects received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 18 have been completed; 2 projects at initial stage, Westbourne Presbyterian Church – Titanic People and Lagan Village Youth and Community Association.

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 Delivery				
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (13%)	£250,000	1 (8%)	£15,000

Total Number of Approved Projects	8	£1,127,500	12	£1,161,589
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The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects. Members are asked to note the status of the current live LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF REF	PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	ACTION / RECOMMENDATION
ELIF 002	Westbourne Presbyterian Church – Titanic People	£250,000	Due Diligence stage	Committed in principle September 2012 - Costs for the project have significantly increased since the project was originally proposed some 8 years ago. Discussed at East AWG on 25 Feb 2021 and agreed that the group would be invited to update the Members at the next meeting.	To be discussed at today's meeting.
ELIF 2-17	Lagan Village Youth and Community Association	£15,000	Initial stage	Approved by SP&R Committee on 23 rd October 2020. DfC Letter of Offer (£35k) signed and awaiting final confirmation of land transfer. Initial enabling works and site fencing to commence imminently.	Continue engagement with the group

Members are asked to note that:

- Representative from *Westbourne Presbyterian Church – Titanic People* project is in attendance to provide an update on the project.
- There is an amount of £54,009 available for reallocation under LIF.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration, partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – East Belfast was allocated £7.5 (£5.5m; with additional £2m allocated to Outer East, given additional areas that joined BCC district under LGR).

In East Belfast 9 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 5 projects on the longer BIF list. Each of the 'In Principle' projects are taken through a 3 stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Table below provides a summary of BIF

allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and the funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects:

East	<p>Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k (completed); H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.8m; Bloomfield—£440k</p> <p><i>Stage 2—Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</i></p> <p><i>Stage 1—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 table below provides an overview of the remaining projects. Members are asked to note the actions and recommendations.

BIF REF	PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	ACTION / RECOMMENDATION
BIF14	H&W Welders Club	£2,370,000	Stage 3 – on ground	Works on site progressing well. Project due for completion late summer 2021. Council officers currently liaising with H&W Welders representatives around land transfer and site operations post completion.	Continue engagement with the group and partners
BIF12	Strand Arts Centre	£1,800,000	Stage 3 – design stage	<p>Committed in principle October 2016 with 2 years to secure match funding; with the option to be extended by a further year - October 2019. Discussed at East AWG in Feb 2021 and agreed that SAC be invited to provide an update on progress and their funding strategy.</p> <p>Several meetings with DfC were held to progress the project and further documents submitted to economist. SAC have developed a funding strategy to deal with the budget shortfall which will be presented to Members. The group is exploring the potential to fund a number of surveys themselves to progress the project to</p>	<p>Continue engagement with the group.</p> <p>Group have requested that £40k of BIF allocation goes towards taking the project to RIBA Stage 2 design.</p>

				the next stage, and request that £40k is used from BIF allocation to bring the project up to RIBA Stage 2.	
BIF13	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. Discussed at East AWG on Feb 2021 and agreed to update the business case for the project and to undertake discussion with DfC. The new Economic Appraisal/ Business Plan is out to tender and should be completed by August 2021.	Continue engagement with the group and partners

Outer East Projects

BIF REF	PROJECT	FUNDING	STAGE	STATUS	ACTION / RECOMMENDATION
BIF27	Hanwood Project	£396,000	Stage 3 – On Ground	Pitch and lighting element has been completed. Roller shutters element ongoing. Additional funding required to fully complete the shutter replacements for the business park. Funding deficit/ estimated cost £67k to cover works, fees and contingency.	Continue engagement with the group. Officers are investigating options in relation to this shortfall
BIF18	TAGIT Boxing Club	£434,000	Stage 3 – On Ground	On Ground. Works commenced in October 2020. DfC match funded (£150k). Planned completion Summer 2021.	Continue engagement with the group, DfC and partners
BIF25	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 been secured. Building Control application to be submitted. Tender preparations underway.	Continue engagement with the group.

BIF37	Lisnasharragh Community Schools Project	£398,000	Stage 3 – Design stage	Project moved to Stage 3 in June 2018. Education Authority will be responsible for delivery and will procure contractor. The latest update in March 2021 from EA advises that all tender documents are now ready and pre-tender estimates are within budget however there are risks in terms of potential impact of Covid19 supply and demand issues as well as implementation of NI Protocol. Project to proceed to tender stage and continue to monitor risks.	Continue engagement with the group/ schools and Education Authority.
BIF38	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. Discussed at East AWG on Feb 2021. Correspondence to the Chair of the East AWG received dated 25 March 2021 withdrawing the project (Appendix 1), and subsequent letter dated 16 April 2021 informing that correspondence dated 25 March 2021 be withdrawn and propose that a revised, scaled back refurbishment proposal (not dependant on additional funding) be now considered instead (Appendix 2).	Continued engagement with group. To be discussed at the next AWG meeting, following a meeting with architects on 11 May.

Members are asked to note that:

- **Strand Arts Centre** representatives are in attendance to provide an update and to consider the request from Strand in terms of providing funding under BIF to bring the project up to RIBA Stage 2
- **Castlereagh Presbyterian Church** representatives will attend the next meeting to provide an update on their project.
- **Hanwood** – note the additional funding required to close out the shutter element of this project and that officers are investigating options in relation to this shortfall
- At meetings in January 2017 and February 2020, the East AWG noted that the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre was at BIF **Stage 2- Uncommitted**,

and that this project should be considered first if any funding became available through the BIF programme.

5. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new assets. 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. The table below provides an update on current live projects in East Belfast. Members are asked to note the current status and update.

East Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
Playground Improvement Programme 2020/2021 (City wide)	Stage 3 – Committed. Clonduff (Lisnasharragh) playground completed.
LTP- Avoniel	Stage 3 – Committed. On Ground. Completion anticipated by Sept 2021.
LTP- Templemore- NLHF	Stage 3 – Committed. On Ground. Completion anticipated by April 2022.
Pitches Programme- Blanchflower Playing Fields – New pitch and floodlighting	Stage 3 – Committed – On Ground. Link with H&W Welders Club- Blanchflower Playing Fields (BIF). Planned completion Summer 2021.
New Crematorium	Stage 3 - Committed – Design underway. PAD meeting took place in September 2020 with LCCC Planning and all relevant statutory bodies. Work on design is progressing and regular updates are being brought to the Strategic Crematorium & Cemetery Development Working Group, People & Communities Committee and SP&R.
Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East	Stage 1- Emerging. Officers to work jointly with the EA to develop business case/ plan on a potential youth facility at the council owned Ballymacarrett site. Strategic options study and discussions ongoing.
Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan	Stage 1- Emerging. Linked to Connswater Community Greenway. Link to the UV/DfI funded Ballymacarrett Walkway Environmental and Cycling Infrastructure Improvement project.

6. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. There is one project under SOF for East Belfast - Eastside Visitor Centre – with an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

Project	SOF Award	Status and update
Eastside Visitor Centre	£700,000	Proposal is for the extension of Eastside Visitors Centre, including new C.S Lewis interpretative space. UV funding commitment has been received in principle (£972k).

		Business Case completed and is currently under review. Links to UV project.
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7. **Externally funded programmes**

The Council is the delivery partner for a number of government departments on significant capital investment programmes, namely Social Investment Fund (SIF) and the Urban Villages Initiative (UV) funded by the Executive Office, and number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to East Belfast.

Social Investment Fund (SIF):

Project	Award	Status and update
Greenway Women's Group	£375,462	Project completed in November 2020.
Walkway Community Association	£1,523,863	On Ground. Project commenced on site in December 2020 and on programme, progressing satisfactorily. All legal work is in hand and registration of relevant documents is progressing.

Urban Villages Initiative (UV):

Project	Status and update
Eastside Greenway Ballymacarrett	Match funded capital project. Recently completed pending installation of temporary signage. DfC match funded (£30k).
Pro-Kick Community Gym	Project designs completed and tender process progressing. Planning application submitted in August 2020 and it is anticipated that, pending receipt of final consultation responses, may be presented to May Planning Committee. Additional DfC funding of £75,000 has been confirmed.
Pop EastSide- Landmark East <i>NB partner funder of SOF project 'Eastside visitor centre'</i>	Proposal is for the extension of Eastside Visitors Centre, including new C.S Lewis interpretative space. UV funding commitment has been received in principle (£972k). Business Case completed and under review. Link to SOF project.
Pitt Park redevelopment <i>Council asset</i>	Consultation completed. Business case in final stages of completion and will incorporate consultation findings. LoO expected following finalisation and approval of Business Case. Project at tender stage.
East Belfast Mission Accommodation project	Emerging project at preliminary Business Case stage. Revised refurbishment options and funding opportunities being explored.
Eastside Souk	Emerging project at Business Case stage. Project site relocation being considered. Design and costs progressing.
Titanic People Exhibition	Emerging project at preliminary Business Case stage. Design options being considered. Issues in relation to building safety and associated costs in making site secure as well as outcome measures. Link to LIF project. To be considered further by East AWG.

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Whilst acknowledging the value of the Strand Arts Centre and Westbourne/Titanic People projects, a number of Members raised concerns about the delays in progress, the

likely overspends given the rate of inflation since initial costs had been agreed, as well as the funding gaps.

The Director of Physical Programmes provided some context for discussion, whereby she pointed out that over £2million of funding had been ring-fenced across the 2 projects for a substantial amount of time. She also pointed out that the current proposal at Westbourne Church was for works to the building, rather than the initially proposed exhibition space.

After discussion, it was

Moved by the High Sheriff, Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn and

Resolved –

- that £40,000 of the allocated BIF funding be released to Strand Arts Centre to progress with RIBA Stage 2 but that no further funding would be released for RIBA Stage 3;
- that the Strand project, as part of the RIBA Stage 2 report, would be required to provide up to date costings for the project
- that the projects would be timebound with a definitive timeline for each of the 2 projects developed and communicated to the groups via letter and that if projects were to progress, that stages within the projects would also be timebound against key project deliverables, and;
- that a meeting be scheduled in October in order to review each project's progress against the timelines and to make decisions about any future commitments.

The Director of Physical Programmes suggested that, when restrictions allowed, the Working Group might wish to undertake site visits to a number projects, and hold meetings at project venues in East Belfast.

Alderman Sandford passed on thanks from Cregagh Primary School, who were appreciative of the support for their project, and advised that an invitation to view the project would be issued to the Working Group once work had commenced on site.

Lagan Village Youth and Community Association Hall

The Chairperson advised the Working Group that she had received an email from Councillor Kyle regarding a fire in the hall of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Association (LVYCA) which had caused substantial damage, as well as highlighting that the building no longer complied with fire safety regulations.

Councillor Kyle declared an interest in this item, in that he was the Chair of Lagan Village Youth and Community Association, and he left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

A Member questioned whether the BIF fund could be used to support the work required at the LVYCA site.

The Director of Physical Programmes confirmed that £300,000 of contingency funding had been set aside to support projects which were already underway and so

currently that was unlikely to be a feasible option. She confirmed that a report from the Fire and Rescue Service was due and would inform the scale of the works that were required at the hall. However, she outlined that discussions were also ongoing with the Department for Communities regarding a capital investment for a new build, given the value for money considerations of upgrading a building that was no longer fit for purpose.

The Working Group agreed to discuss the issue again once the fire safety report had been received and that an update to the Working Group would be provided in June.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that a Special meeting would be held on a date, as yet to be agreed, in June, to allow the Castlereagh Presbyterian Church to make representation to the Area Working Group. It noted also that the next quarterly meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 5th August, 2021 at 5.00 p.m.

Chairperson