

# **South Belfast Area Working Group**

Monday, 22nd November, 2021

## **MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP**

### **HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

Members present: Councillor Groogan (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Bunting, Gormley, T. Kelly,  
Lyons, McAteer and McKeown.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager  
(South Belfast);  
Ms. D. Smith, Neighbourhood Integration Manager;  
(South Belfast);  
Ms. E. Mullan, OSS Lead Officer;  
Mr. F. Grant, OSS Area Manager (South Belfast);  
Mr. S. Conlon, OSS Area Manager (Holylands);  
Mrs. M. Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Provision;  
Mr. M. Magee, City Development and Regeneration  
Project Officer;  
Mr. B. Corr, Portfolio and Programme Co-ordinator;  
Ms. S. Kalke, Project Sponsor; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Spratt.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 6th September were approved by the Working Group.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor T. Kelly declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2 – Requests to Present, on the basis that her husband was employed by the Greater Village Regeneration Trust, which worked with Treeco/Tree NI.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2 – Requests to Present, in that he was on the steering group of the Rosario Youth Club's capital funding project.

As permission was only being sought for the organisations to attend a future meeting, there was no requirement for those Members to leave the meeting whilst it was being considered.

Councillor McAteer declared an interest in relation to the presentation on the work of the Lagan Navigation Trust, on the basis that she was on the Board of that organisation. However, since that was a Council appointment, she was not required to leave the meeting for the duration of the presentation.

Councillors Gormley and Lyons declared an interest in relation to agenda item 5 - Alleyway Transformation Programme/Phase V Alleygating Scheme, on the basis that they each lived in a street whose alleyway had been put forward for participation in the transformation programme.

However, as the Working Group did not proceed as far as selecting sites, they were not required to leave the meeting.

### **Request to Attend Meeting**

The Chairperson reported that Chief Inspector A. Hagan, who had been invited to provide details around the installation of CCTV cameras in the Holylands area, had requested permission to join the meeting at the start of proceedings, in order to gain a greater understanding of the role of the Working Group.

The Working Group approved the request.

### **Requests to Present**

The Working Group agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation on the work of Treeco/Tree NI and on Rosario Youth Club's capital funding project.

### **Presentation - Lagan Navigation Trust**

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting on 6th September, it had agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation on the work of the Lagan Navigation Trust.

It was reported that Ms. B. Turnbull, the Trust's Chief Officer, was in attendance and she was welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Turnbull informed the Working Group that the Lagan Navigation waterway stretched for twenty-seven miles between Belfast and Lough Neagh and passed through the Belfast City, Lisburn and Castlereagh and Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon council areas, all of whom were core funders of the Trust. The twenty-seven locks along the route had been designated as Scheduled Historic Monuments, which afforded them protected status, and were the largest such collection within one asset in Northern Ireland.

She explained that the Lagan Navigation Trust, which had been established in 2009, acted as the custodian of the 300-year-old waterway and operated with the primary objective of re-opening the Lagan Navigation waterway from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh.

In terms of current issues, she pointed out that the only route along the waterway from the Harbour currently was via the Lagan Weir, which could only be crossed twice a day when the tide was of sufficient height. There was, therefore, a pressing need for a

sea lock to be constructed to realise the Trust's ambition of eventually linking Lough Neagh to the Eastern seaboard. The Trust's engineers had confirmed that the only location which could accommodate such a lock was at the Queen's Quay, adjacent to the Lagan Weir.

(At this point, Councillor Lyons declared an interest, in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and took no part in the ensuing discussions around the proposed sea lock.)

Ms. Turnbull went on to point out that the Trust was in the process of drafting its three-year business plan, which would reflect current social, economic and climate change issues and link into the Programme for Government and the Council's Corporate objectives. It was envisaged that the Plan would be completed by mid-December and would be shared with the Council. She concluded by congratulating the Council on the completion of its impressive Lagan Gateway project and thanking it for its ongoing support.

During discussion around a potential sea lock, Ms. Turnbull confirmed that preliminary discussions had taken place as far back as 2010 but had yet to be progressed. Lagan Navigation Trust had, in March, produced for Ministerial consideration a briefing paper which had set out the rationale for the lock, the potential benefits and the discussions to date. She undertook to forward that document for circulation to Members and stressed that she would appreciate the Council's support in having the sea lock project progressed.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Turnbull for attending, following which the Working Group noted the presentation and agreed that it would, at its next meeting, having considered the briefing paper, give consideration to how the Council might support the Trust's call for the provision of a sea lock.

### **Presentation - Open Space and Street Scene**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the Working Group with an overview of the new Open Spaces and Streetscene model of neighbourhood working which was now operating across the City.

He explained that the model had been designed to improve integration, flexibility and responsiveness, with an emphasis being placed on teams taking pride in their work, maintaining environmental standards and working together to maintain the public realm for the benefit of the City's residents and visitors. The model consisted primarily of six designations, namely, Area Manager, Assistant Area Manager, Supervisor, Sweeper Driver/Labourer, Combined HGV/LGV Driver/Loader and General Operative and was supported by other specialist roles.

He then provided details of the Open Spaces and Streetscene staffing structure for South Belfast and pointed out that a separate team, operating along the same lines, had been established to deal solely with the Holylands area. He outlined the extent of the work covered by each team and, in terms of current challenges, referred to graffiti, antisocial behaviour, fly tipping, damage to play parks, climate change and legislative restrictions, as well as the theft of bins, which was particularly prevalent in the Holylands area.

He went to highlight a number of notable achievements and awards which had been secured by the Open Spaces and Streetscene service and pointed to the completion of a recruitment campaign, increased learning and development opportunities, a review of equipment and geographical areas and the roll out of additional litter bins and floral displays, moving forward.

In addressing an issue which had been raised by a Member, the OSS Area Manager for the Holylands area confirmed that the Council had currently replaced approximately one quarter of the bins which had been stolen and was working to replace the others. According to information which had been obtained from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, thefts had occurred from both gated and non-gated entries.

In response to a further Member, he pointed out that, whilst the Council did clear leaves from its properties where they were causing a blockage or creating other difficulties, overall responsibility for leaf clearance rested with the Department for Infrastructure. He undertook to raise the issue with that Department and provide clarification at the next meeting of the Working Group.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager then addressed an issue which had been raised around the adequacy of resources in South Belfast, by confirming that an audit of Council vehicles was progressing, as was the recruitment of permanent staff. This should improve overall service delivery moving forward.

The Working Group commended the work of the Open Spaces and Streetscene service and noted the information which had been provided.

### **Alleyway Transformation Programme/ Phase V Alleygating Scheme**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager submitted for the Working Group's consideration the following report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Members will recall that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in September 2021, considered a report from officers on a potential pilot alleyway transformation programme.**
- 1.2 Following discussion at Committee and full Council, Members agreed to the delivery of a number of pilot alleyway transformation schemes throughout the city and further agreed that the final area selection, number of pilots and the detail of intervention be delegated to the Area Working Groups who would be asked to adopt a flexible approach as to how the funding was allocated.**
- 1.3 This report provides the committee with an update on progress to date, in particular, the identification of possible sites by our Area Outreach teams and elected representatives, a matrix for assessing the eligibility of potential schemes and the next steps following the selection of sites by the Area Working group.**

- 1.4 The report also provides a timeline for the key stages of the alleygating process and indicative timescales.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

### **2.1**

The Area Working group is asked to:

- i agree the matrix for the scoring and assessment of pilot sites;
- ii consider the sites identified in this report and agree that these are the sites for alleyway transformation programmes for the SBAWG moving forward;
- iii delegate authority to officers via the outreach team to assess these sites against the scoring matrix and rank them in order of highest score;
- iv note the next steps; and
- v note the timeline for the key stages of the alleygating process and the indicative timescales provided.

## **3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 DFI has agreed that, in order to test the processes required to deliver an alleyway transformation scheme, a number of pilot projects be initiated, to develop a framework which will be used for a larger programme, and be a path-finding exercise, for other councils as a recognised method to access the DfI monies.

- 3.2 Successful pilot projects will involve the community receiving a `Starter Pack` of materials and information to support the regeneration of alleyways and deliver a transformation project.

The pack would / should include: -

- a. Plants, planters, soil / compost, seats etc.
- b. Planting / growing / basic wooden planter and willow plant support(trellis) workshops to develop community capacity for the longevity of the project
- c. Signposting communities to other departments and agencies for issues not within the remit or responsibility of BCC.
- d. Signposting communities to funding opportunities they could avail of to further develop and maintain the area after BCC / DFI funding has been utilised.
- e. Legal information / liabilities and ownership of alleyways.

- 3.3 Members will recall that the Council agreed that the final area selection, number of pilots and the detail of intervention be delegated to the Area Working Groups who would be asked to adopt a flexible approach as to how the funding was allocated.
- 3.4 Officers have prepared a scoring matrix to assess, score and rank each potential pilot and this has been circulated.
- 3.5 It was agreed at the September meeting of the People and Communities Committee that the Council Outreach teams would identify potential alleyway sites across each of the four quadrants of the city, based on officer knowledge, community infrastructure and delivery of improved outcomes. The list would be presented to Members on a North, South, East and West basis.
- 3.6 At the meeting of the SP and R Committee in May, Members considered a report on alleygating and the process for Members to input into the identification of gate locations, specifically through pro-forma. This was issued to Members and, as part of it, they were asked to identify potential gating locations as well as locations suitable for alleyway transformation, for further consideration at the SP and R Committee and Area Working Groups over the autumn.
- 3.7 Officers have collated the returns for this AWG in respect of Alleyway Transformation and these have been circulated. This includes sites identified by the area outreach team.
- 3.8 Members should note that, at the People and Communities Committee, it was decided that up to 5 sites per quadrant of the city would be the limit for this pilot. It is proposed that the 5 that score the highest will be considered for the pilot. Once scoring is complete the ranked list of sites will be reported back to this AWG. Following approval officers will begin the process of drawing down the monies from the Department for Infrastructure for the top five ranked sites.
- 3.9 The learnings from the pilot projects will be used to inform further bids into £1-2 million fund and it is proposed that those alleyways not chosen for this pilot will be completed as part of future phases of this scheme.

#### **Alleygating Phase V Timescales**

- 3.10 The key stages of the alleygating process and indicative timescales are listed below. Members should note this process only commences when the final list of locations to be gated is agreed by Council.

- **Month 1 – Regulatory and Community Consultation Commenced**
- **Month 3 – Regulatory Consultation Completed**
- **Month 4 – Community Consultation Completed**
- **Month 5 – Legal Preparation**
- **Month 7/8 – Notice of Intention Advertised**
- **Month 8/9 – Clarification of Objections**
- **Month 9 – People and Communities Committee Consideration Traffic Regulation Order**
- **Month 10 – Full Council Approval of Traffic Regulation Order**
- **Month 10 – Gates Ordered**
- **Month 12 – Gates Manufactured and Installation Commenced**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.11 Capital expenditure associated with the alleyway transformation programme will be accessed via the DFI alleyway transformation scheme with outreach and capacity building support supported via existing Council resources.**

### **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.12 There are no known Equality, Good Relations or Rural needs implications.”**

During discussion, a Member made the point that some sites on the list would be more suitable for development in the longer term and that the Working Group should focus only on those which would be likely to qualify immediately for the pilot programme. Other Members stated that they were aware of other such sites but had not put them forward as they had been under the impression that numbers were to be limited.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager confirmed that officers would be content to work with Members to identify those sites on the list which were most likely to qualify immediately for the pilot programme, as well as others which Members might wish to put forward. Officers would then rank these in accordance with the scoring matrix and should be in a position to draw down the funding from the Department for Infrastructure straight away. Those sites which had failed to meet the criteria on this occasion would be considered in any future roll out of the programme.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- i. approved the matrix for the scoring and assessment of pilot sites;
- ii. agreed that each Member be allowed one week from the date of the meeting to submit a final list of sites which were most likely to qualify immediately for the pilot programme;

- iii. delegated authority to officers, via the Council's Outreach Team, to assess these sites against the scoring matrix and rank them in order of highest score for inclusion in the pilot programme;
- iv. noted that a list of the sites which had been selected for the pilot programme would be submitted to its next meeting; and
- v. noted the timescales for Phase V of the Alleygating Scheme and agreed that the Neighbourhood Services Manager (Social and Community Recovery) be invited to attend its next meeting, to provide details of the locations which had been put forward for potential alleygating and the selection process.

### **Community Infrastructure Pilot Initiative**

The Working Group considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Working Group on the proposed Community Infrastructure Pilot, including the methodology and resources outlined.
- 1.2 The Working Group is asked to consider the information that is provided in relation to potential areas that could be included within the pilot programme and recommend two areas within South Belfast.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

The Working Group is asked to note the detail of the proposed Community Infrastructure Pilot and agree two areas within South Belfast that will be included in the project.

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **Background**

- 3.1 In June 2021, the Council granted approval for officers to develop a pilot approach to addressing weak community infrastructure in four areas across the city. Officers have been developing the framework for this approach and are seeking approval to develop the project as outlined.
- 3.2 Community infrastructure is commonly defined as a complex system of facilities, programmes, and social networks that aims to improve people's quality of life. These services, networks and physical assets work in tandem to form the foundation of a strong neighbourhood. This pilot initiative will seek to use a new methodology to support identified communities with low community infrastructure.



- 3.3 In Summer/Autumn 21, the Council facilitated engagement to update the community plan for Belfast, the Belfast Agenda. The need to build community infrastructure within certain parts of the city has been identified as a priority and is likely to appear as a key commitment in the refreshed Belfast Agenda plan which will be produced in March 2022.
- 3.4 Recent experience shows that communities require support and resources from a range of services within Council. The development of the community infrastructure pilot will be an opportunity to take an integrated approach to identifying and responding to area needs.
- 3.5 In addition, there are a range of other agencies and organisations who provide considerable support for communities to develop and build strong community infrastructure. These include Department for Communities, NIHE, NICVA and large CVS organisations, especially those funded through BCC Capacity Building Funding. The pilot will engage with relevant partners to ensure complementarity and added value.

#### **Methodology**

- 3.6 Members agreed that Area Working Groups (AWGs) would play an important role in the identification of pilot areas within each area of the city. Initial engagement with AWGs has highlighted that it will be difficult to limit the project to one area in each of the four geographies of the city. Some members have also highlighted the need to work with communities of interest as well as defined geographic areas. Based on this feedback officers are proposing that the pilot will work with 8 areas/communities of interest. Communities of interest that have been identified in specific geographic areas will be highlighted in the area summary.
- 3.7 Phase 1 of the programme will focus on the identification of areas and development of an agreed methodology. Delivery within communities will be on a two-year basis from April 2022 – March 2024 with ongoing and final review to assess impact.
- 3.8 An overall framework will underpin the approach in all identified areas. This will ensure consistency whilst enabling the development of local responses. The framework will be underpinned by a co-design process which will gather stakeholder information about local issues and develop agreed responses which will be captured in a two-year action plan for each area.
- 3.9 The action plan will be produced through a co-design process and there will be a finance of £15,000 per annum to support

delivery of the action plan. This allocation will not be a grant payment but will be allocated for the delivery of specified actions by an identified lead. In most cases this will be a community and voluntary sector organisation but in cases where there is not capacity to deliver on identified actions council officers may act as lead if agreed through the co-design process.

- 3.10 Members should note that this funding allocation will be for revenue rather than capital funding.
- 3.11 Given the Council's ambition that this approach will create an opportunity to review the way in which we resource and support areas/communities which have weak community infrastructure, officers have identified the need to secure external technical support to assist in the development of an agreed methodology that will identify and contribute to changed outcomes for these communities. This resource will identify best practise in other similar initiatives and assist in developing a delivery, reporting and evaluation framework.
- 3.12 To enhance the impact of this project and in recognition of potential linkages with the Belfast Agenda it is recommended that an Advisory Group for the Project is established. It is recommended that this should have representation from relevant stakeholders including but not limited to; Chair of 4 x area working groups, DfC, 2 representatives from VCSE panel, 1 representative from CPP/Living Here Board, NICVA, NIHE and relevant BCC staff. This Advisory Group will have oversight of the overall project delivery and will provide updates to the People & Communities committee and Living Here Board.
- 3.13 Area teams within Belfast City Council community provision will support development of local approaches and updates from these will be provided to the Advisory Group.
- 3.14 Council officers will attend November/December AWG meetings to provide an overview of existing Council resources at a citywide and area level. This will include:
  - Mapping of existing BCC grant funding and council facilities
  - Information on existing interventions (i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages)
  - Indicators of need i.e. multiple deprivation and qualitative feedback

Officers suggest that the following selection criteria are used when identifying an area:

- limited access to funding
- limited access to community facilities
- lower access to services/engagement with Council
- evidence of need/inequalities/deprivation
- limited linkage with other initiatives particularly Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages and Communities in Transition (CIT)
- No more than 1 pilot in every DEA

**3.15 Officers have carried out an initial assessment on those areas that could benefit from the project. Members are asked to consider the information in Appendix 1 (Area Summary) and agree two recommended areas that will be included in the community infrastructure pilot in south Belfast.**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

**3.16 All financial resources outlined in this report can be delivered through existing budgets. Existing human resource will be used to deliver the programme.**

#### **Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment**

**3.17 This programme seeks to address issues of inequality by developing community infrastructure, programme delivery will seek to have a positive impact on good relations and rural needs.”**

After discussion, the Working agreed:

- i to proceed with the community infrastructure pilot for the Lower/Mid Lisburn Road, which had been ranked first in the appendix to the report, subject to it being redesignated as Mid/Upper Lisburn Road, on the basis that the Lower Lisburn Road was located within the Botanic District Electoral Area and that areas of need had been identified in the Upper Lisburn Road area. It was agreed that officers would meet with the Members from the Balmoral District Electoral Area in advance of the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to define the precise geographical area and the organisations with whom the Council should engage; and
- ii that officers would meet with the Members from the Botanic District Electoral Area in advance of the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to discuss the potential for including the Lower Lisburn Road, parts of the Ormeau Road and BAME communities around the wider University area within the Annadale pilot area, which had been ranked second in the appendix to the report.

## **Update on Holylands Area Intervention Proposal/Installation of CCTV**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager drew the Working Group's attention to an Intervention Proposal which had been developed through the Living Here Board, to address longstanding issues in the Wider University and Lower Ormeau area.

He explained that the proposal sought to ensure that the area was welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive, thereby making it an appealing place to live, work and invest. A collaborative inter-agency approach would be adopted to address issues such as community safety and cohesion, housing and physical and environmental regeneration and would include a range of short and medium-term actions with dedicated project management support. Governance would be provided through the Community Planning Partnership, with additional oversight being provided via a co-chairing arrangement between the Strategic Partnership Group and the Council.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager went on to explain that the intervention proposal would comprise the following six Priority Actions:

1. Installation of CCTV;
2. An Alleyway Transformation Programme – to co-ordinate support for residents and groups who wish to transform and regenerate communal and open spaces and building upon the success of previous initiatives;
3. A new Community Involvement Model – recognising the complex environment and ongoing tensions and seeking to enhance inter-community relationships and cohesion;
4. Policy and Legislative Interventions – whilst planning policy and legislative issues were outside the remit of the Interagency Action Group and the Living Here Board, the formation of the Strategic Partnership Group offered an opportunity to escalate escalation of issues requiring legislation and policy changes, with on-street drinking, dispersal orders and housing policy and legislation being identified as requiring an immediate focus;
5. Baseline Analysis – will include a geographical definition, PSNI and crime data, housing and the changing environment attitudinal data and
6. Co-Design Action Plan – co-design of a shared inter-agency action plan to address immediate and medium-term priorities, with a focus on reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, community cohesion, the wellbeing of residents and continued operational planning for peak periods of the year.

Chief Inspector Hagan addressed Priority Action 1 by explaining that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had, in September, submitted to the Interagency Action Group and the Living Here Board a proposal to erect closed circuit television in the Holylands and Wider Ormeau area. Consideration was being given to re-installing cameras at five reported hotspots. He outlined the estimated costs of the project and pointed out that it

would be likely to result in a 16% to 35% reduction in crime, with between 355 and 778 fewer reported incidents. He concluded by stating that consultation on the proposal would take place during the month of December.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager went on to highlight two medium-term actions which had been identified as part of the intervention proposal, the first of which would involve securing an enabling fund to progress a participatory budgetary pilot, with a view to enabling local people to identify priorities and projects aligned with agreed themes. The second action would involve the formulation of a long-term vision and development plan for the area and would examine the potential for regeneration and investment. He then provided details of outcomes and indicators and reviewed the role and responsibilities for the post of Project Manager, who would be appointed for two years initially and be based in the Community Planning Unit. He concluded by outlining the estimated overall costs of the intervention proposal, the key issues which lay ahead and the indicative timeline for delivering the various elements therein.

The Chairperson thanked Chief Inspector Hagan for his contribution, following which the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Chairperson