West Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 25th November, 2021

WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present:	Councillor Corr (Chairperson), Alderman Kingston; and Councillors Baker, Black, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Donnelly, Garrett, Hutchinson, McCabe and Verner.
In attendance:	Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services; Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager; Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager; Mr. S. Conlon, Open Spaces and Streetscene Area Manager; Ms. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; Mr. L. McKinley, Open Spaces and Streetscene Area Manager; and Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie, McLoughlin and Walsh.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th August were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Baker declared an interest in respect of the item 2(b) – Presentation from Lagmore Youth Project, in that he was a volunteer and board member of Lagmore Youth Project.

Councillor McCabe declared an interest, in that her husband worked for the Upper Andersonstown Community Forum.

Presentations

Request to Present at January meeting - Belfast Celtic

The Working Group agreed to receive a presentation from Belfast Celtic its next meeting.

Presentation from Lagmore Youth Project

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Colm Fanning from Lagmore Youth to the meeting. Mr. Fanning pointed out to the Members that Lagmore had a population of more than 9000, equating to the population of Ballyclare, and larger than towns such as Magherafelt and Ballycastle.

He reported that the Lagmore Community was built over 30 years ago, and that the area had very little infrastructure or resources to support its growing population. He added that there were no community development officers, that four part-time youth work staff had recently been assigned to the area and that it had been volunteers who had been supporting youth work in the area.

He pointed out that Lagmore Youth Project had been established in 2019 to meet the needs of the community which lacked the resources and infrastructure to engage the population of the Lagmore and Mount Eagles areas.

He informed the Working Group that the youth project had been working with an architect, on a design plan for a youth centre adjacent to pitches at Whiterise and a small playpark, through engagement with young people to ensure that the facility would meet the needs of the young people of the area. He stated that the design included indoor climbing, sports facilities, a minor hall space for young people to visit and relax. A social enterprise housing a restaurant or café was also proposed in order to support the youth project.

He highlighted that the design included direct access from the existing MUGA pitches to changing facilities to support the use of the pitches by football clubs and young people. He added that the design also incorporated training rooms and ICT areas to facilitate leadership and good relationship programmes and allow young people to have an quiet area for homework and informal education.

Mr. Fanning informed the Working Group that Lagmore Youth Project was asking the Members for their support to continue the development of the Whiterise Playpark and for the construction of the much-needed community facilities.

A number of Members complemented Mr. Fanning on the design plan and the impact that Lagmore Youth Project had on the area and the Chairperson thanked him for his presentation to the Working Group.

Open Spaces and Streetscene Presentation

Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager, provided the Working Group with an overview of the work of the Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) service. He explained that the service had been created in 2019, with the merging of the former Parks and Street Cleansing sections. He explained the services that they provided which included street sweeping, bin collections, entry clearing, graffiti, litter, recycling, the maintenance of parks, open spaces and playgrounds.

The Members were advised that Council staff had issued 2,500 Fixed Penalty Notices for littering and dog fouling offences, emptied over 9 million wheelie bins, carried out 38,500 bulky waste collections and that over 4,787 streets were cleaned across the city per week.

He outlined a number of challenges that the OSS Service faced, including the creation of multi-tasking teams, new assets, the implementation of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS). He outlined that the Covid-19 pandemic had added a number of pressures on the

service, particularly in terms of ensuring staff safety through social distancing, such as reduced staff access to vehicles, staff being redesignated to other key service areas and the impact of staff sickness absence. He explained that, cumulatively, the service had, at times, been operating at a reduction of 35-40% capacity.   He advised the Working Group that that had invariably led to a drop-in service and he apologised on behalf of the section for that.

The Working Group was advised that new routes for street cleansing were currently being examined for an improved service. The Neighbourhood Services Manager also advised the Members that a learning and development programme had been developed for new OSS staff to ensure consistent standards across the city and that recruitment had been ongoing.

During discussion several of the Members commended the OSS staff for their work during the pandemic and asked that the support the staff had been receiving recently would be maintained, as the improvements had been felt across the community.

The Chairperson thanked the Neighbourhood Services Manager for his presentation and the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Alleyway Transformation Update

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 **Purpose of Report**

1.1 **Members will recall that the People & 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 sits 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:**

- **To agree the matrix for the scoring and assessment of pilot sites,**
- **To consider the sites identified in this report and to agree these are the sites for alleyway transformation programmes for the WAWG moving forward and,**

- **To delegate it to officers via the outreach team to assess these sites against the scoring matrix and rank them in order of highest score.**
- **To note the next steps.**
- **Note the timeline for the key stages of the alleygating process and the indicative timescales provided.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 DFI have 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 pilots 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 at full Council it was 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.

3.5 It was agreed at the September meeting of People & Communities Committee that the Council Outreach teams would identify potential alleyway sites across each of the 4 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 & West basis.

3.6 At the May SP&R committee members considered a paper on alleygating and the process for Members to input into the identification of gate locations, specifically through a 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 SP&R committee and Area Working Groups over the autumn.

3.7   Officers have collated the returns for this AWG in respect of Alleyway Transformation. This includes sites identified by the area outreach team.

3.8   Members should note that at People & 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.

Allegating Phase V Time scales

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 & Communities Committee Consideration of Traffic Regulation Order
- Month 10 – Full Council Approval of Traffic Regulation Order
- Month 10 – Gates Ordered
- Month 12 – Gates Manufactured and Installation Commenced

Financial & 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."

The Area Working group:

- agreed the matrix for the scoring and assessment of pilot sites;
- agreed the proposed sites for alleyway transformation programmes for the WAWG moving forward;
- delegated authority to officers, via the outreach team, to assess the sites against the scoring matrix and to rank them in order of highest score; and
- noted the timeline for the key stages of the alleygating process and the indicative timescales provided.

Community Infrastructure Update

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

"1.0   Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update members on the proposed Community Infrastructure Pilot including the methodology and resources outlined.

Members are asked to consider the information that is provided in relation to potential areas that could be included within the pilot programme and recommend 2 areas within west Belfast.

2.0   Recommendations

Members are asked to note the detail of the proposed Community Infrastructure Pilot and agree 2 areas within west Belfast that will be included in the project.

3.0   Main report

Background

3.1   In June 2021 Council granted approval for officers to develop a pilot approach to addressing weak community infrastructure in 4 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 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.

<u>Methodology</u>

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 1 area in each of the 4 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 & 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 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:

- o limited access to funding
- o limited access to community facilities
- o lower access to services/engagement with Council
- o evidence of need/inequalities/deprivation
- o limited linkage with other initiatives particularly Neighbourhood Renewal, Urban Villages and Communities in Transition (CIT)
- o 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 the Area Summary and agree two recommended areas that will be included in the community infrastructure pilot in west Belfast.

Financial & 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 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."

The Working Group noted the Community Infrastructure Pilot and agreed the following two areas (ranked as 1 and 2 in appendix 1) as the areas within west Belfast to be included in the project:

1. Colin - Black's Gate (former Visteon site)
2. Blackmountain - Suffolk

Chairperson