



Present Members: Alderman: Callan (DUP), Knight-McQuillan (DUP)
Councillors: Anderson (DUP), Holmes (UUP), McCully (All), K McGurk (SF), Nicholl (SF)

Officers: D Jackson, Chief Executive (Chair)
R Baker, Director of Leisure & Development
N McGurk, Head of Prosperity & Place
N Harkness, SIB Project Manager
J Beggs, SIB Project Manager

In Attendance: M Higgins, Northern Regional College Principal/Chief
L Maguire, UU Pro Vice-Chancellor Research
P McKeown, Director of Finance and Economic Engagement, North West Regional College

NO.	ACTIONS	
1.	Introductions and Apologies	
	<p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p> <p>Due to a change in EPB membership, introductions were provided.</p> <p>Apologies: Councillors: Bateson (SF), McShane (SF), represented by Cllr Nicholl (SF) Others: J Gilmore, Head of City & Growth Deals, Department of Finance</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
2.	Executive Summary / Purpose of Meeting	
	<p>Members were provided with an overview of the decision points leading to the current Growth Deal Projects.</p> <p>Members were reminded that Council is not the investment decision maker but that Government departments will approve subject to business case review, and that significant partnership contributions are expected, minimum of 10%. £72m total funding makes £7.2m partnership funding a challenge for Council.</p> <p>The programme is currently at Strategic Outline Case stage. The SOC's are being shared informally with Government Departments for review and comment.</p> <p>The current proposal does leave £9m in the budget to be reallocated, but this will be for decision at a future point.</p> <p>Purpose of meeting: For members to consider the officer recommendations for the 10 projects previously approved by Council to proceed to SOC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree 7 project SOC's for submission to Government. • Agree 3 projects for removal from Growth Deal. • Agree combination of elements for 2 projects. • Agree retention of budget for project elements where need and sustainability are yet to be proven. <p>P McKeown pointed out that the information presented regarding the Food Incubation Hub project was misleading. The project is not being removed from the growth deal programme, it would be continuing albeit in a different format.</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>N Harkness agreed to amend this to reflect the current status – The food grade element being combined with the Business Innovation Hub and the Food Innovation element remaining with NWRC.</p> <p>Similar would apply to the Dunluce project in that it is not being completely removed from the programme but has an element being incorporated within Connected Causeway. This would leave only one project being recommended for removal.</p>	
3.	SOC Updates / Preferred Way Forward	
	<p>N Harkness provided Members with an overview of each project including key risks, budgetary position along a summary of the SOC objectives and preferred way forward. Full details can be found in Annex A, the presentation previously circulated.</p> <p>Centre for Drug Discovery and Pharmaceutical Innovation – Ulster University (UU) are taking the lead. £22m cost including £2m UU contribution. Preferred way forward is option 4 to remain within budget. £18.3m will be for the upgrade of equipment, £1.4m for capital works to labs, £1.1m challenge fund. There are higher cost options remaining within the Business Case, subject to affordability.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson enquired as to the portability of the equipment and the possibility of it being moved out of the Borough.</p> <p>N Harkness confirmed that any funding offer would include conditions preventing transfer or disposal. It would also likely include claw back within the lifespan of the equipment.</p> <p>Food Innovation and Incubation Hub (FIIH) – The original project was a ‘one stop shop’ including food grade units, shared kitchens and technical support however the NWRC vires do not allow for operation of food grade units. As there is a need for food grade units, particularly within the Coleraine area, the co-location with the wet lab units within the Business Innovation Hub could provide many benefits, including the need for only one operator, the alignment with research elements at the adjacent university, and the overall sustainability of the project.</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>NWRC will retain the food innovation element and a Business Plan is to be produced for review at OBC stage. £2.2m is to be reserved in the budget and the 10% contribution will need to be identified within the Business Plan.</p> <p>M Higgins said that a letter of support for the project could be provided by NRC to demonstrate collaboration. NRC concentrate on hospitality and do not have space for a food innovation based facility.</p> <p>It was pointed out that another college did try the 'one stop shop' approach but that it was reproached for stepping outside its area of responsibility.</p> <p>L Maguire queried what stage the SOC is at. N Harkness confirmed that the combined project concluded at Economic Case. The elements will now be considered at OBC stage without completion of the SOC. The Head of Prosperity and Place confirmed that the work to date has been shared with the Departments and that they are comfortable with this approach.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson sought confirmation that the proposal was for the food grade units to be located in Coleraine but that the food innovation element would remain at NWRC. P McKeown confirmed that although it is disappointing, this option would enable some element to remain within the college and that there would be a clear partnership between the two facilities.</p> <p>The Chair commented on the wish to spread the benefit of the Growth Deal across the Borough as much as possible, but that the economic side also needs to stack up to avoid project failure.</p> <p>Business Incubation and Innovation Hub (BIIH) – The SOC has identified the Atlantic Link site as the preferred location. Confidence is growing in the site with private sector interest and co-location with the university. The preferred way forward is to consider the inclusion of food grade units. The combination of the wet labs and the food grade units will also help to spread the risk but a budget increase to £16.5m will be required. It will be key to appoint an experienced operator early to provide input into the facility design.</p>	

NO.	ACTIONS	
	<p>Bushmills Regeneration – The SOC has indicated that not all elements included within the project are affordable within the £7.5m allocated budget. The preferred way forward is to reduce the scale of the Public Realm, remove the entrance improvements at Dundarave carpark (reliant on Connected Causeway hub proceeding), and remove of the lowest priority element, the sculpture trail.</p> <p>Dungiven Regeneration – Members were advised that the current budget for the project which includes Public Realm improvements, a co-worker hub and off road path networks will not be adequate to complete the scheme. An increase of £3.5m is proposed which would be affordable due to the change/removal of other projects.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson queried the need for this increase. N Harkness explained that there were no plans defined for Dungiven when the initial programme money was allocated. Bushmills on the other hand was much further along and was adapted from the 2020 village plan. The budget therefore was much more accurate with minimal changes required to remain within budget.</p> <p>The Chair also confirmed that the Departments do not look at the original budget allocation before completion of the technical work. The scrutiny will start now at SOC stage onwards.</p> <p>Councillor McGurk asked about progress with the Benbradagh Masterplan. The Head of Prosperity and Place advised that the Terms of Reference are being drawn up for development of the Masterplan. Progress was paused to allow for completion of other projects such as Banagher Glen. The Masterplan will be required as part of the OBC.</p> <p>Councillor McGurk also enquired as to whether the Sperrins Development Group have been involved/been able to provide feedback on the ToR. The Head of Prosperity and Place confirmed that there has been engagement through the Coast and Countryside Team.</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>AP 1 – It was agreed that the draft Terms of Reference for the Benbradagh Masterplan should be shared with the EPB and the Sperrins Development Group.</p> <p>Mountsandel – Members were advised that the SOC concluded at Economic Case due to project unaffordability. The recommendation therefore is to remove this project from the Growth Deal programme. Costs for infrastructure alone were estimated between £27m and £33m. The preferred way forward is for a lower cost educational/recreational focused project. It is being retained on Council’s capital project programme. This releases £6.5m back into the Growth Deal programme.</p> <p>Dunluce Castle – Members were advised that as the landowner has failed to engage with Council a standalone project it is not viable. The preferred way forward is to remove the standalone project from the growth deal programme but to retain £2.5m of the budget for inclusion within the Connected Causeway project for improvements to the Castle site to incentivise visits and extend the stay.</p> <p>Grow the Glens – Phase I of this project is now completed and is operational. The preferred option for phase II is a 3 storey wraparound extension with new entrance and fit out. Current predictions are that it will be £400k over budget although discussions are underway with DfI regarding active travel funding. £200k partnership funding and VAT require further exploration.</p> <p>Connected Causeway and Traffic Infrastructure (CCTI) – Members were reminded of the complexities surrounding this project, particularly with regards to the Bushmills Hub. Although great progress has been made with partners agreeing a ‘Heads of Terms’, N Harkness advised that this is informal only at this stage and is not legally binding.</p> <p>Alderman Callan asked about the likelihood of having the terms agreed legally and it was confirmed as 50/50. The project is reliant on the National Trust having a business model that works for them with the operation of a Park and Ride facility. Currently 75% of visitors to the Causeway are independent travellers and they would need to be excluded from accessing the site completely.</p>	<p>NM</p>

NO.			ACTIONS
	<p>Councillor Nicholl asked about the opinions of local residents on the scheme. N Harkness confirmed that, when surveyed, their main complaints were traffic congestion and lack of parking for people to stay and spend within the village. The hub would help considerably with these issues.</p> <p>Councillor McCully pointed out that it is not viable with the current PROW situation, many visitors bypass Bushmills particularly coaches which are on a tight schedule.</p> <p>N Harkness advised that coaches will still need to access the Causeway and that the hub will be targeting the independent traveller. He also advised that TNI and the NT are having discussions regarding the regulating of coach travel. He also advised that this is just the start of the project as there is technological side still to be developed, an app for parking across the borough utilising car park counters. R Baker added that accommodating EV chargers and motorhomes within the hubs will also be looked at as part of the project.</p> <p>Councillor McCully enquired as to whether Dunluce School has been considered as a location for the Bushmills Hub. N Harkness confirmed that it had been considered but that the timescale would not fit with the Growth Deal Programme. It could take up to 15yrs for the proposed school merger to take place.</p> <p>Portrush to Bushmills Greenway – Members were advised that this Greenway project has been met with favourably. Recent public consultation resulted in an 85% positive response. Landowner engagement has been good with less than 15 owners across the whole route. Although some sections could be technically challenging, a phased approach could be taken as each section can standalone in their own right. DfI have expressed an interest in completing the section between Portrush and White Rocks, however this is not guaranteed.</p> <p>L Maguire enquired as to whether the Greenway will link into the parking hub. N Harkness confirmed that it will.</p>		

NO.		ACTIONS
4.	Budget Update	
	<p>J Beggs provided Members with an update on the programme budget, the original scenario in comparison to the current budget scenario at SOC stage, subject to Council approval. ANNEX A clearly shows the proposals for project budget increases and decreases. If approved this will leave a potential surplus of £9m in the programme budget.</p> <p>It was pointed out that the OB has already built in provision for potential risks, net zero and inflationary increases.</p> <p>P McKeown advised that the £2.2m for NWRC would be net as the VAT can't be recovered. This would potentially decrease the surplus.</p> <p>L Maguire enquired as to why the NI govt funding figure was low for the Greenway project. J Beggs confirmed that 40% of funding would be from the Growth Deal with approximately 50% from the Dfl active travel budget.</p> <p>J Beggs drew Members attention to the need for a minimum of 10% partnership funding across the Deal. This can be in the form of direct financial contribution, in kind contribution / land or buildings. This will be firmed up at OBC stage.</p>	
5.	Balancing the Programme Budget	
	<p>The Director of Leisure & Development informed members of the potential options for allocation of the surplus £9m.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uplift budgets for remaining projects (likely to be a necessity as OBCs consider more detailed design); 2. Introduce new projects (that are at a state-of-readiness); 3. Hold some contingency budget for projects not yet identified such as Food Innovation in Limavady. <p>With regards to the introduction of new projects, this could assist Council with meeting the partnership funding expectations across the whole programme - adding an existing Council prioritised project in to the Growth Deal.</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>The next projects in line were discussed. Coleraine Harbour would require legislative changes from previous discussions with the Harbour Commissioners which would be outside of the Growth Deal timeframe. Portrush Harbour has no SOC developed yet. Coleraine Leisure Centre has an OBC completed and there is the potential to submit an application for LUF funding. A Health Hub option is currently under discussion, similar to Derry and Strabane, with the Northern Trust. A legally binding lease would be drawn up to use part of new facility.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson asked what would be needed to complete CLC. The Director of Leisure & Development advised that it would cost approximately £25m.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £9m from the Growth Deal • £14m potentially from LUF • £5.2m Council contribution <p>£7.2m is the minimum partnership contribution required across the Growth Deal Programme. With a UU contribution of £2m, adding CLC as an additional project would cover the remaining £5.2m required. This means that Council covers the required partnership funding for the Growth Deal programme leading to no additional funding being required to complete on the leisure centre.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson and Holmes both asked what would happen if the LUF application was not successful. The Director of Leisure & Development confirmed that the project would probably be dependent on this funding. Council could look at funding the shortfall but this may not be an affordable option in the current capital programme.</p> <p>Councillor Holmes asked about any other potential projects that could be considered. The Director of Leisure & Development advised that no other projects would be in the required state of readiness, although it is possible to hold back funds for projects not yet identified, spending power would be reduced.</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	Members were advised that a further EPB meeting is scheduled to further discuss and make a decision regarding the Growth Deal Programme budget surplus.	
6.	Next steps	
	<p>Director of Leisure & Development provided a recap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the current SOCs to proceed, 7 in total with the changes in budget as discussed. • Agree the modification to the Food Incubation Hub – Incorporating Food Grade Units within the Business Innovation Hub with an associated uplift in budget. Progressing with the Food Innovation element separately (with an element of budget retained), Business Plan to OBC. • Agree the modification to the Connected Causeway project, incorporating an element for Dunluce Castle with an associated uplift in budget. • Agree the removal of Mountsandel from the Growth Deal Programme <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to September L&D Committee for approval of SOC decisions. • Reconvene EPB for final budget and additional project considerations. • Report to October L&D for approval of final budget and additional project considerations. • Formal submission of SOCs to Government Departments. <p>L Maguire enquired as to whether the SOCs are submitted together. It was confirmed that they can be informally submitted as and when they are ready but that all need to be formally submitted together.</p> <p>Councillor Anderson asked how much work has progressed on the potential Health Hub. The Director of Leisure & Development confirmed that a MOU with the Health Trust is already being progressed and that a meeting with Derry and Strabane has already been arranged. There are many projects within the area such as proposed Anderson Park regeneration, Chronicle buildings, Coleraine Football Club which along with CLC will be a catalyst for change in the</p>	

NO.		ACTIONS
	<p>area. Councillor Anderson noted that he was content that the correct process was being followed.</p> <p>L Maguire requested that revised CAPEX figures be provided at the next meeting when considering the introduction of Coleraine Leisure Centre.</p>	
7.	Any Other Relevant Business	
	<p>The Head of Prosperity and Place provided an update of the current situation with the Atlantic Link Enterprise Campus.</p> <p>There has been private interest in the site with one local R&D company currently entering into Heads of Terms.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with DfE regarding extending the enhanced capital allowances and the B1/B2 planning classifications.</p> <p>Alderman Callan asked what discussions have taken place with the permanent secretary regarding extending the enhanced capital allowances. It was confirmed that there have been no discussions as yet.</p> <p>AP2 – To commence discussions with the Minister/Permanent Secretary on extending the capital allowances at the Enterprise Zone.</p>	CE
8.	Date of Next Meeting	
	Thursday 28 September, 7.30pm.	

Meeting closed at 8:10pm