

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 5th December, 2023

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);  
Councillors Bell, Black, Bower, R. Brooks, Bunting,  
Canavan, Cobain, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly,  
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Kelly, Magee, Maghie,  
McAteer, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building  
Control;  
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Also, in  
attendance: Councillors T. Brooks, B. Smyth and R. McDowell.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The Committee was asked to note that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th November had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th December, subject to the replacement of the word 'vapes' with 'tobacco products' in the minute under the heading – Smoke Free Generation Consultation Response and update on Vaping – Notice of Motion.

The minutes of the meeting of 7th November were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the foregoing amendment.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Canavan declared an interest in Agenda Item 2 (a) Presentation – Review of Advice Services as she was a Board Member of Springfield Charitable Association which was in receipt of funding from Advice Services and she left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Councillor Black declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 (c) 2023 Leisure Centre Holiday Recreation Scheme as she worked in the Grosvenor Community Centre and she took no part in the discussion.

### **Request to Present - Forward South Partnership**

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation at a future meeting from the Forward South Partnership to provide an overview of the Open Botanic Festival.

### **Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following four items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

### **Presentation - Review of Advice Services**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. Williamson from Williamson consulting to the meeting who had been appointed by the Council to undertake an independent external review into the provision of advice services funded by Belfast City Council (BCC).

Mr. Williamson commenced by providing the Members with an overview of the current provision. This included detail in respect of the current issues facing the sector, including changes to benefits, inflation, an increase in clients with complex needs and the difficulties that providers faced with the recruitment and retention of staff. He continued to provide an overview of the current structure and funding mechanisms, advising that:

- funding was currently allocated on an historical formula across 5 areas: East, North, South and West and Central Belfast;
- the allocation of funding by providers was determined by each consortium with BCC agreement; and
- tribunals were mostly dealt with by the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service.

He then provided an overview of the consortia performance, which included detail in respect of the monitoring and performance undertaken and he highlighted that no Council apart from Belfast utilised a 'grant funding' approach.

The representative concluded by detailing a number of recommended changes that Belfast City Council could make to improve the delivery of advice services.

At this stage in proceedings the Chairperson thanked the representative for his informative presentation on the review findings and he left the meeting.

The Committee then considered a report which detailed the proposed recommendations for progressing the changes, as had been detailed by the consultant.

The Director advised that the review had highlighted that, given the longstanding nature of the current arrangements and in order to avoid negative impacts to service delivery, it was recommended that any changes would be introduced on an incremental basis in 2024/25 and 2025/26. It had also noted that the current model was area based and used population and deprivation figures to identify need and that these needed to be revised to reflect the most up to date figures. Given that this would have a significant impact on providers, it was recommended that this change was not fully implemented until April 2026.

The Committee was also reminded that there was no dedicated budget for BCTS and that since 2012 it had received funding from the Council either through a Notice of Motion or committee consideration of a request from the service in year. The review had highlighted that this approach was not sustainable and that BCTS support should be included as part of an overall advice funding budget.

The Committee noted:

- the contents of the report and presentation and agreed that officers engage with the Belfast Advice Group and other stakeholders to progress the review recommendations;
- that officers would carry out further engagement with Elected Members to agree a future funding approach for Advice Services; and
- the current funding arrangements for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) for the 2024/25 financial year.

### **Quarter 2 Finance Update**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which summarised the Quarter 2 financial position for the People and Communities Committee, including a forecast of the year end outturn. It noted that the Quarter 2 position showed an under spend of £1.4m (2.9%), with the forecast year end position being an underspend of £454k (0.5%), which was well within the acceptable variance limit of 0.1%.

The Members were advised that the main reasons for the quarter 2 Committee under-spend related to vacant posts across a number of services, the receipt of additional income and the timing of grants and programmes.

Following a query from a Member, the Strategic Director confirmed that there remained a significant number of vacant positions throughout the department and he advised that every effort was being made to recruit the posts which were mostly being filled by agency staff.

The Committee noted the financial update.

### **Large scale events - Annual Review**

The Committee considered a report which provided an evaluation of the large promoter events that had taken place at Belfast Park venues throughout 2023.

The Members were advised that 12 events had been held across 6 venues, 9 music events, 1 funfair and 2 circuses. The evaluation provided comprehensive detail in respect of income, engagement sessions, noise complaints and the necessary agreements including entertainment and site licence agreements.

The Members welcomed the engagement that had taken place with the various stakeholders and encouraged more of the same for the events proposed in 2024, using the Belsonic model of engagement.

Several of the Members also referred to the social value levy contributions and discussed their desire to see these reinvested back into the local areas from which they had derived. The Members also discussed the need to manage peoples' expectations as to just what could be achieved with the contributions.

The Committee:

- agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on agreeing a more structured approach for large scale city events, including engagement with residents, promoters, and Elected Members; and
- noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting with recommendations on how the social levy fund should be invested back into the park locations for the long-term benefit of local communities.

### **Saint Brigid's GAC / Musgrave Park**

The Committee considered a report which detailed a proposed approach regarding future options for the management of Musgrave Park.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to extend the management agreement at Musgrave Park to St Brigids' GAC for a 25-year period, with Council officers to liaise with St Brigid's to identify the appropriate options to provide for the continuation of its management. The Committee noted that this would be subject to due diligence and that an update report would be submitted to committee in due course.

### **Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

#### **Notice of Motion – Feasibility Study into a Blackstaff Greenway**

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor T. Brooks and seconded by Councillor Murray, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

“This Council recognises the success of Belfast’s greenways in creating a green lung in the city, providing respite from traffic and delivering safe, accessible routes to employment, education and leisure. It agrees to undertake a feasibility study into a Blackstaff Greenway, which would follow the route of the Blackstaff river from the Stockman’s Way roundabout through Boucher Road playing fields and continuing through

the Boucher Estate terminating at the 'Rise' sculpture; recommends that such a feasibility study should examine connections to Adelaide Train Station; and where a full greenway is not possible this study should also examine alternatives, including the creation of a shared cycle and pedestrian path or the creation of a walking trail."

With the permission of the Chairperson, the proposer of the motion, Councillor T. Brooks, addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the motion which included the sharing of a map which clearly detailed the area being proposed.

A Member suggested that as a positive example of a similar initiative officers should look at the Southwest Gateway when undertaking the feasibility study.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting.

### **Notice of Motion - Tiny Urban Forests**

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor D. Douglas, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

"This Council notes the work that has begun in Plymouth to create 96 mini urban forests in the city and is pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki. The Miyawaki forestation method is a unique way to create an urban forest. With this method of plantation, an urban forest can grow within a short span of 20-30 years while a conventional forest takes upwards of 100 years plus to grow naturally. In the Miyawaki technique, various native species of plants are planted close to each other so that the greens receive sunlight only from the top and grow upwards than sideways. As a result, the plantation becomes approximately 30 times denser, grows 10 times faster and becomes maintenance-free after a span of 3 years.

Tiny Forests are community-led tree-planting initiatives which aim to improve local access to green space and help communities to better understand the challenges faced by nature. These forests are very much suited for small pockets of unused wasteland in urban settings, as well in places such as schools, community centres etc. Urban forests bring many benefits to communities beyond their impact on biodiversity. Green spaces can help to improve people's mental health, reduce the harmful effects of air pollution, and even counter the phenomenon of heat traps in cities, where expanses of concrete and asphalt raise temperatures unnaturally high. We are already aware of a lack of tree coverage in our built up working class areas throughout the city and this offers an opportunity to tackle this, as well as enhancing our urban biodiversity and understanding of the importance of it.

This Council will commit to working with its partners in the One Million Trees project to explore the viability of Tiny Urban Forests being incorporated into it.”

With the permission of the Chairperson, the proposer of the motion, Councillor Smyth, addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the motion.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting.

### **Committee/Strategic Issues**

#### **Notice of Motion Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**1.1 To provide an update to People and Communities Committee on Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance by Members.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 It is recommended that People and Communities Committee:**

- **Notes the updates to all Notices of Motion / Issues Raised in Advance that the Committee is responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1; and**
- **Agree to the closure of Issues Raised in Advance and Notices of Motion as referenced in Appendix 1 and outlined below.**

#### **3.0 Main report**

##### **Background**

**3.1 Members will recall that the previous Notices of Motion update was presented to People and Communities Committee in June 2023.**

**3.2 This report provides an overview of the progress on those Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which remained open following the June 23 update.**

#### **3.3 Notice of Motion Updates**

**There are currently 31 active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which the People and Communities Committee is responsible for. An update on those Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which remain active on the live database is attached at Appendix 1.**

### 3.4 Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance

At SP&R Committee on 20th November 2020, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:

- Category 1 - Notices of Motion which contained an action that has been completed. All Notices of Motion within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a Notice of Motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the Notice of Motion. As these are not technically part of the Notice of Motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The Notice of Motion can therefore be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions are not contained in this report, but will be noted in the live database moving forward.
- Category 2 - Notices of Motion have become Council policy or absorbed in to a strategic programme of work. These Notices of Motion did not contain a specific task that could be complete. Instead, they were more strategic in nature and required changes in Council policy and/ or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.
- Following an update of those Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance on the live database, it is recommended that Members approve the following Motions/Issues for closure.

### 3.5 Category 1 Recommended Closures:

#### Belfast Cycle Network (Ref 285)

As advised in the June 2023 update, processes are in place within Council to address any cleansing issues relating to the cycle network - however, enforcement of obstructions lies with Dfl. BCC officers continue to engage with key partners, in particular Dfl, through established Community Planning structures, however, enforcement of obstructions is not within BCC's remit and lies solely with Dfl.

The Department for Infrastructure has reminded all drivers to 'Think before you Park' ahead of the introduction of new parking restrictions which came into operation on Friday 3rd November. The new restrictions coming into force will help to address this issue by prohibiting parking wholly or partly on a footway at a number of specific locations, including footways adjacent to;

- a bus lane;
- the limits of any bus stop in a lay-by or any bus stop as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time;
- the limits of any bus stand in a lay-by or any bus stand as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time;
- the limits of any mandatory cycle lane as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time; and
- the limits of any mandatory school keep clear as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time.

3.6 The Rule also revokes and re-enacts existing prohibitions on footways. All vehicles found to be in breach of the new restrictions will receive a £90 Penalty Charge Notice, discounted to £45 if paid within 14 days.

3.7 Further details on the new parking restrictions can be found at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/drivers-reminded-think-you-park-new-parking-restrictions-come-operation>

3.8 Given that the specific requests within the Motion have been addressed and that the Council has no further powers to exercise in this regard, it is suggested that this Motion is closed.

3.9 Vaping (Ref 313)

A report updating on progress in relation to this Motion including updates on current policy context and recent strategic level engagements in relation to tobacco control and vaping issues; and a draft BCC response to the 'Creating a Smoke Free Generation' public consultation was noted and agreed at the P&C November 23 Committee meeting. With regards to the proposal for 'the Council to ban the use of vapes by under 18s in all its sites and premises', the Corporate Health and Safety Manager will bring a report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course regarding the use of electronic cigarettes in Council sites and premises. Given that the specific actions requested within this Motion have been addressed, it is recommended that this Motion is now closed.



**3.10 Lagan Valley Regional Park (Ref 323)**

As agreed at August 2023 P&C Committee, a letter was issued to DfI outlining concerns at the withdrawal of funding for LVRP. A response was received and presented to P&C Committee in November 2023. As the specific action within this Issue Raised in Advance has been undertaken, it is recommended that this Issue is now closed.

**3.11 Request to receive a presentation – Causeway Coast Dog Rescue (Ref 333)**

The People and Communities Committee received a presentation from Causeway Coast Dog Rescue at its meeting on 10 October 2023 - it is therefore recommended that this Issue is now closed as the specific action within has been addressed.

**3.12 Category 2 Recommended Closures**

**Policy regarding Bilingual Signage for New Developments (Ref 334)**

A report on Dual Language Street Signage applications made by developers was presented to the People and Communities Committee meeting in November 2023 - the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations as defined in the report and agreed to the proposed process. It is recommended that this Issue is now closed.

**3.13 Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

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

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th November 2021, it had agreed the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Cavehill Mountainbikers Club which had underpinned a Mountain Biking Pilot Project in Cavehill Country Park focusing on a partnership approach to the Club’s management of the ‘The Middle’ trail.

The Strategic Director advised that the MOU agreement, which had commenced in December 2021, for a two-year duration, stated that longer-term extension of the agreement with the Club was “subject to successful conclusion (in the opinion of the Council) of the pilot focusing on ‘The Middle’ trail, “satisfactory review and evaluation and internal Council committee approval”.

He reported that a project Oversight Board had met regularly throughout the pilot period, this was made up of representatives from the Council, the Cavehill Mountainbikers Club, the Belfast Hills Partnership and the Cavehill Conservation Trust. In line with the MOU he advised that officers intended to evaluate the pilot project using the agreed evaluation framework and to submit a report to committee for its consideration.

Given the December 2023 end date of the current MOU, the Committee was asked to agree a two-month extension of the existing MOU between BCC and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club to enable the existing management arrangements with the Club to remain in place until the report detailing the findings of the evaluation and recommendations were submitted to Committee in early 2024.

The Committee acceded to the request.

### **Playground Improvement Programme**

(Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services (OS Portfolio Lead), attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**1.1 Officers are seeking approval to enhance our ongoing independent inspection process for Playgrounds. In addition to the annual suite of independent playground safety inspections, members are asked to approve an additional independent audit that will assess ‘play value’ and accessibility of all council-maintained playgrounds. It is proposed that ‘Play Value’ and accessibility scores arising from this additional audit will inform site selection for future Playground Inspection Programmes (PIP).**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 In addition to next year’s planned suite of independent safety inspections Committee is asked to agree that an independent audit of ‘play value’ and accessibility is undertaken at all council-maintained playgrounds.**

**2.2 Committee is also asked to agree that ‘play value’ and accessibility scores will inform site selection for future Playground Improvement Programmes, replacing ‘quality’ scores derived from annual playground safety inspections.**

- 2.3 Committee is also asked to note that potential infrastructure improvements (E.G Toilet Provision), identified by the audit, will be used to inform future capital projects in our parks and open spaces.
- 3.0 **Main report**  
**Playground Improvement Programme**
- 3.1 Since its inception in 2012, playgrounds to be refurbished under PIP have been selected using quality scores from annual, safety inspection reports. This assessment method provided council with scores for each playground that helped rank play facilities in most need of improvement. The current inspection process focuses on the quality and compliance of existing play equipment but does not audit the types of play opportunities provided or how accessible they are.
- 3.2 Over the previous eleven years PIP has made a positive impact on the overall quality of the city's playgrounds. The first suite of independent, annual inspections in 2012 recorded:
- 25% of all playgrounds were classified as 'poor' condition
  - 33% of all playgrounds were classified as 'fair' condition
  - 42% of all playgrounds were classified as 'good' condition
- 3.3 Following more than a decade of investment, exceeding £6 million across more than 50 sites, the overall quality has dramatically improved. This year's suite of annual independent safety inspections recorded:
- 1% of all playgrounds are classified as 'poor' condition
  - 6% of all playgrounds are classified as 'fair' condition
  - 93% of all playgrounds are classified as 'good' condition
- 3.4 Following delivery of PIP 2023-24, in parallel with ongoing citywide operational maintenance and repairs, we anticipate that 100% of our playgrounds to be classified as 'good' by the end of this financial year. This will be the first time, since the inception of PIP, that all playgrounds will be classified as a 'good' in terms of existing equipment. This provides an opportunity for the Council to go beyond an assessment of safety compliance and quality of existing equipment and audit the 'play value' and accessibility of our playgrounds.
- 3.5 Officers are therefore proposing a new assessment approach that will be used to rank play facilities in terms of 'Play Value'

and accessibility. 'Play value' and accessibility scores associated with the proposed audit would then be used to select playgrounds to be refurbished under future Playground Improvement Programmes (PIP).

- 3.6 If approved, members should note that independent annual playground safety inspections will continue each year to help identify essential repairs and ensure ongoing compliance with relevant safety standards (see Appendix 3) and ensure facilities remain in a good condition. These assessments would occur in tandem with the new assessment approach.
- 3.7 If approved the proposed audit will align with best practice guidance from consultants and organisations such as Playboard NI, Mae Murray Foundation, Play Services Ireland, Play England and Play Scotland. Council's Play Development Team, Landscape Planning & Development Team and OSS Operational Managers have also helped inform the approach. Officers have held discussions with Playboard NI and Mae Murray Foundation and initial feedback to the proposal has been positive. Further meetings are planned for December.
- 3.8 Assessing play value and accessibility will allow council to identify playgrounds that, although good in terms of the quality and safety compliance of their equipment, would benefit from an enhanced range of play opportunities and accessible elements.
- 3.9 In terms of a strategic fit, improving the 'play value' and accessibility of council-maintained playgrounds helps deliver a key outcome in the Belfast Agenda around providing a city that is safe, fair and inclusive for all. This approach also aligns with key principles in the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy's that aim to provide welcoming shared spaces and improve health and well-being.
- 3.10 This proposal seeks to align the assessment of Playgrounds to a number of Notices of Motion. See Appendix 1.
- Notice of Motion – September 2019 – Play Facilities for Children with Disabilities
  - Notice of Motion – June 2022 – Inclusive Play Parks

**'Play Value'**

- 3.11 'Play value' is used to describe the value an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to a child's experience of play, with high 'play value' indicating that children can play in many different ways. Through play children learn and develop their cognitive skills, problem-solving, social skills, and their fine and gross motor skills.

3.12 Play is generally divided into three types:

- Physical - rotating, sliding, rocking, swinging, climbing, balancing, bouncing, crawling and gliding
- Sensory - tactile, auditory, cognitive, interaction with natural features / quiet spaces
- Social – social / cooperative play and imaginative / themed play

3.13 Each type of play is crucial to a child's development and enjoyment of a playground. Going forward, we want to increase opportunities for all three types of play and for each type to be more accessible.

**Assessing 'Play Value and accessibility'**

3.14 The proposed assessment template (see Appendix 3) is derived from a combination of tools used by Play Scotland, Play England and Play Services Ireland Ltd (see Appendix 4, template previously used by other councils in N. Ireland, Scotland and Dublin).

3.15 In line with key recommendations set out in the 'Let Me Play' report, produced by PlayBoard NI and Mae Murray Foundation, we have expanded the proposed assessment template to include an evaluation of how accessible our playgrounds are for children of all ages and abilities.

3.16 The assessment will allocate a 'play value' and accessibility score for each playground based on the types of play opportunities available and their accessibility.

3.17 The independent audit will also include an assessment of entrances, parking and toilet provision. Whilst the existing PIP budget will continue to be focused on new play equipment and safety surfacing, potential infrastructure improvements identified by the audit will be used to inform future capital projects in our parks and open spaces.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

3.18 Subject to a competitive tendering process, we envisage 'play value' and accessibility assessments to be carried out by the consultant who will be appointed to undertake ongoing, annual playground safety inspections.

3.19 The cost of the play value and accessibility audit is included within existing revenue estimates.

**3.20 The cost of potential infrastructure projects e.g. changing places facilities, car parks are not included within the budget estimates.**

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

**3.21 None.”**

A Member reemphasised her colleagues previous request seeking the Council to consider that a pilot be undertaken in the four areas of the city whereby a fully accessible and inclusive play facility would be piloted in each area of the city.

General discussion ensued during which several Members reiterated the need to ensure that Council parks, public and open spaces were inclusive and accessible spaces for all.

A Member also requested that a list of the independent playground scores for last year, along with the new scores for this year be circulated to the Members. She also asked to be furnished with the details of the mechanism used for the old scoring system and the officer undertook to forward this directly to the Member.

Officers were asked to investigate if a map could be prepared for the Council's website which would detail the location and play equipment available at Council parks which were inclusive and accessible to disabled children.

During discussion the need for refurbishment/replacement programmes at Braniel, Finvoy Street and the Tommy Patton Parks was raised, and a Member also queried why the Finvoy Park needed upgraded within such a short period of time. She also highlighted that the ground at the Flora Street playpark was breaking, however, the officer advised that this was being pursued with the contractor. It was also noted that swings at the Flora Street and Clara Street needed repaired.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- agreed that, in addition, to next year's planned suite of independent safety inspections Committee that an independent audit of 'play value' and accessibility be undertaken at all council-maintained playgrounds;
- agreed that 'play value' and accessibility scores would inform site selection for future Playground Improvement Programmes, replacing 'quality' scores derived from annual playground safety inspections;
- noted that potential infrastructure improvements (for example, Toilet Provision), identified by the audit, would be used to inform future capital projects in Council parks and open spaces;
- agreed to circulate the list of the independent playground scores for last year along with the new scores for this year; and

- agreed to investigate if a map could be prepared for the Council's website which would detail the location and play equipment available at Council parks that were inclusive and accessible to disabled children.

### **2023 Leisure Centre Holiday Recreation Schemes Report**

The Members were reminded that, within the annual centre programming strategy, GLL delivered a range of holiday schemes designed to maximise use of the leisure centres by providing physical activities and social engagement for young people in safe and fun environments. These schemes were designed and delivered to be both inclusive and cross community.

The Members were advised that during school holiday periods the daytime user profiles within Council centres changed to reflect the availability of young people and noted the need for options for parents who might face challenges in home caring for their children.

The Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services explained that the schemes were organised throughout the year ranging in duration from a few days , for example, Halloween, to six plus weeks during the longer summer break. The schemes were site specific and tailored subject to variations in centre facilities and local demand, rather than being standardised across the city. In addition to general activity schemes, sports specific coaching camps were included in the programme.

The Committee noted that 2023 had been the first full year of holiday schemes being delivered by GLL since centres returned to normal operating conditions following Covid-19 restrictions.

The holiday schemes had developed throughout 2023 and participation had grown steadily. It was anticipated that 2024 schemes would be further expanded and that participant numbers would continue to grow.

The Members noted that Council officers were actively involved with GLL in ongoing developments around the scale and content of the holiday scheme programme.

A Member highlighted that children with special needs were often not able to avail of these schemes due to their high support needs, he detailed the stress that holiday periods often placed on carers and asked for consideration to be given as to how these children might be accommodated in the holiday scheme programme.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the update and agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would consider the inclusion of children with special needs in the holiday scheme programme.

## Operational Issues

### Pre-Loved Toy Scheme

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Members with an update on the 2023 pre-loved toys scheme operated at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in the run up to Christmas. She reminded the Members that the aim of the initiative was to ease the burden on families during the current cost of living crisis and to increase reuse and reduce waste going to landfill during this period.

She reminded the Members of the success of the 2022 scheme, with around seven tonnes of waste having been diverted from landfill and an estimated 700 families benefitting from the initiative.

The Members were advised that the Council had teamed up with East Belfast Missions (EBM) as the lead re-use logistics partner, EBM would liaise with other charities to distribute the toys back into the community via a network of charity operators. The collection points were located at the Council's four recycling centres and donations would be received up until Monday 11th December.

The Committee noted that, in line with last year's scheme, some items would be resold at affordable prices through charity shops, however, it was envisaged that the vast majority would be gifted free of charge to households in need. The Director asked the Members to contact her directly should they be aware of any charity or community organisation they would like to be considered as a beneficiary of the initiative or alternatively they could signpost the organisation to complete the contact form on the EBM web site: [East Belfast Mission - Contact Us \(ebm.org.uk\)](https://www.ebm.org.uk).

The Committee noted the update.

### Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To consider applications for the erection of dual language street signs for seven existing streets within the city.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to agree to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Knock Eden Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorn View.**



**3.0 Main Report**

**Key Issues**

**3.1** The Council may erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English pursuant to Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

**3.2** Members are asked to consider the following applications to erect a second street nameplate showing the name of the street expressed in a language other than English. The second language is Irish.

**3.3**

<u>English Name</u>	<u>Non- English Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Persons surveyed</u>
Dermott Hill Parade, BT12	Paráid Chnoc Dhiarmada	Off Dermott Hill Road, BT12	49
Sunnyhill Park, BT17	Páirc Chnoc na Gréine	Off Dunmurry Lane, BT17	116
Knock Eden Park, BT6	Páirc Chnoc Éadain	Off Knockbreda Road, BT6	193
Fruithill Court, BT11	Cúirt Chnoc na dTorthaí	Off Fruithill Park, BT11	15
Tullymore Gardens, BT11	Gairdíní na Tulaí Móire	Off Glassmullan Gardens, BT11	175
Pineview Road, BT36	Bóthar Radharc na Giúise	Off Whitewell Road, BT36	56
Hawthorn View, BT17	Radharc na Sceiche	Off Hawthorn Glen, BT17	187

**3.4** The translations were authenticated by Queens University, the approved translator for Belfast City Council.

**3.5** In accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, surveys of all persons appearing on the electoral register plus owners or tenants in actual

possession of commercial premises, for the above streets were carried out and the following responses were received.

**3.6 Dermott Hill Parade, BT12**

- 19 occupiers (38.78%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 30 occupiers (61.22%) did not respond to the survey.

**3.7 Sunnyhill Park, BT17**

- 36 occupiers (31.03%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 6 occupiers (5.17%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 74 occupiers (63.79%) did not respond to the survey.

**3.8 Knock Eden Park, BT6**

- 55 occupiers (28.50%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 46 occupiers (23.83%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 11 occupiers (5.70%) had no preference either way.
- 81 occupiers (41.97%) did not respond to the survey.

Two residents who are not in support of the dual language street sign at Knock Eden Park have raised concerns about the cost of the signs.

Another resident not in support of the signs has advised that they would wish to keep the existing cast iron heritage sign.

Another resident not in support of the dual language sign at Knock Eden Park was concerned at the low threshold of 15% for the application to be considered and that the applicant remains anonymous.

**3.9 Fruithill Court, BT11**

- 5 occupiers (33.33%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 10 occupiers (66.67%) did not respond to the survey.

**3.10 Tullymore Gardens, BT11**

- 70 occupiers (40%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 2 occupiers (1.14%) had no preference either way.
- 103 occupiers (58.86%) did not respond to the survey.

**3.11 Pineview Road, BT36**

- 21 occupiers (37.5%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 9 occupiers (16.07%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 26 occupiers (46.43%) did not respond to the survey.

**3.12 Hawthorn View, BT17**

- 64 occupiers (34.22%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 4 occupiers (2.14%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 2 occupiers (1.07%) had no preference either way.
- 117 occupiers (62.57%) did not respond to the survey.

**3.13 Assessment against policy**

The Council's policy on the erection of a second street nameplate requires that at least fifteen percent (15%) of the occupiers surveyed must be in favour of the proposal to erect a second street sign in a language other than English, to progress to Committee for consideration.

**3.14** All of the surveys listed above demonstrate compliance with the threshold contained within the Policy. However the Committee is reminded that the Council retain a residual discretion under the Policy to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case by case basis.

**3.15** The Policy states that it may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this Policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account:

- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street;
- (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs;
- (c) consideration of the local context of the application;
- (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and
- (e) all material considerations relating to the application.

**3.16 Financial and Resource Implications**

There is a cost of approximately £1,740 to cover the cost of the manufacturing and erection of the dual language street signs. The cost for these street signs has been allowed for in the current budget.

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

Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs.

**3.18 The initial assessments and elected member notification carried out for the seven applications being considered did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the surveys being carried out. However, the Committee is entitled to take into account the concerns raised by the residents as set out above in arriving to their decision.”**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Doherty,

That the Committee agrees to the erection of all the dual language streets as outlined in the report, namely, Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Knock Eden Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorne View.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the Committee agrees to the erection of a dual language street sign at Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorn View and not to erect a dual language sign at Knock Eden Park.

On a vote, 5 Members voted for the amendment and 14 against and it was declared lost.

**Further Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Kelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the Committee agrees to re survey Knock Eden Park and to erect dual language street signs at the remaining locations.

On a vote, 10 Members voted for the further amendment and 9 against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the amendment in the name of Councillor Kelly was put to the Committee as the substantive motion and agreed.

The Committee agreed the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorn View and to re survey Knock Eden Park.

### **Dfi/PSNI Street Access Pilot Update**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**1.1 To provide an update to members on the interagency exercise to improve access for BCC collection vehicles for identified problem streets across Belfast.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of the update report.**

#### **3.0 Main report**

##### **Key Issues**

#### **3.1 Background**

**3.2 As outlined within the Resources and Fleet Waste Update presented at the September meeting of the People and Communities Committee, members may be aware of the ongoing work to look at addressing the issues around access to certain streets for our collection vehicles.**

**Members will be aware that following the single item Committee meeting in March 2023 to discuss access issues, officers have engaged with officers from the PSNI and DFI to look at what measures might be available within their remit to assist collection crews.**

**3.3 By September, BCC officers had identified the most affected streets, based on crew reporting and residents' calls. In parallel to a separate piece of work on the viability of smaller vehicles to increase success rates of collections, these streets had been prioritised by difficulty and sorted by post code.**

Update

- 3.4 As a next step the streets were assessed internally by Waste Collection to identify which streets
- currently had parking restrictions in place
  - might benefit from additional parking restrictions
- 3.5 BCC Officers have continued to engage with DFI in the first instance to move the project forward. This however was delayed due to staff within the Department moving to new roles. Once new contacts were established with DFI officials in late October 2023, a virtual meeting took place between BCC Officers and DFI Officers on 10th November.
- 3.6 At that meeting BCC officers put forward a proposal which included
- a proposal to focus on 10 blocks of identified streets based on the criteria outlined above (2 blocks per working day). These blocks of streets were aligned to bin collection days and were spread across the city.
  - Baselining measures and success rates to be measured by BCC
  - DFI to identify and measure key deliverables eg penalty notices issued etc
  - PSNI Neighbourhood Teams to be asked to have a presence in the area at the same time alongside DFI enforcement teams.
  - After an agreed period of time a review of the effectiveness of any interventions to be carried out
- 3.7 Initial feedback from DFI officials indicated that due to their own resource restrictions and other commitments that the size and timescales of the proposal might be difficult to support.
- 3.8 It was agreed that BCC officers would look at the scale of the proposal. Waste Collections Management teams have carried out further refinement and prioritisation based on their local knowledge and continued difficulty in accessing areas.
- 3.9 We are currently engaging with DFI Officers to arrange further meetings before the end of the calendar year. This engagement will focus on what can specifically be achieved given the Department's resource limitations, and to establish an action plan around introducing additional measures around enforcement as soon as is reasonably practicable.

- 3.10 Officers will continue to update the Committee on a regular basis with progress and proposals on this issue.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.11 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications /  
Rural Needs Assessments**

- 3.12 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

A Member expressed the need for DfI to fully participate as a partner to enable a successful pilot to be undertaken and also discussed those streets that continued to have issues but which currently did not have parking restrictions.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- noted the contents of the update report and agreed to write to DfI seeking its full participation as a partner to enable a suitable pilot to be undertaken; and
- agreed that officers would furnish the Members with a list of those streets that did not currently have parking restrictions but that repeatedly had problems with badly parked cars blocking access.

**Applications for dual language street  
signs for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street  
and Sunningdale Park North**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 To consider if a street survey of occupiers will be carried out for three applications for the erection of dual language street signs for a street within the city where potential adverse impacts have been identified and objections have been received from elected members.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report and objections raised in relation to the applications for dual language street signs received for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Park North and either:

- a) Agree that surveys of occupiers of these streets be carried out.  
or
- b) Agree that no surveys will be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and these three applications are closed.

### **3.0 Main Report**

#### **Key Issues**

- 3.1 The power for the Council to consider applications to erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.
- 3.2 The Dual Language Street Sign policy states that ‘each application will be subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. This assessment will commence when the application is received and where any adverse impacts are identified that information will be brought to Committee.’
- 3.3 The initial assessments were carried out and potential adverse impacts were identified. Draft equality screenings were therefore carried out, assessing the request for dual language street signs in Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Park North for equality and good relations issues.
- 3.4 The screenings have identified that the carrying out of surveys and the erection of Irish language street signs in these areas could cause community tension, as outlined in the equality and good relation section below.  
  
Objections to the applications were also raised by Elected Members.
- 3.5 Ballysillan Road - Oldpark DEA member Cllr Jordan Doran raised an objection stating ‘Ballysillan is an over-whelming Unionist community, and I have strong concerns that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Ballysillan Road would have a strongly negative impact on community relations within the area.’
- 3.6 Ebor Street – Botanic DEA Cllr Tracy Kelly raised an objection stating ‘We must not forget that this is a strong unionist community, and this will not be welcomed at all. My fear is that it will greatly impact community relations and cause upset when it is not necessary.’



- 3.7 Sunningdale Park North – An objection was raised to this application by Court DEA member Cllr Ron McDowell stating ‘The area has been settled for a few years now after some tensions around parading and flags etc. The flags having been curtailed and the parade passing quietly and peacefully again for the first time in a few years. This is a predominantly Unionist area and I do fear a tinderbox effect if these signs are to be erected where they are not wanted.’
- 3.8 While Councillor McDowell is not a DEA member for Castle in which this street falls, this objection has been included for consideration by committee.
- 3.9 These applications are therefore being brought to Committee to determine if surveys of residents of these streets will take place, considering this information.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.10 If it is decided to carry out surveys, the resulting tasks are included within the normal resources for the process.

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

- 3.11 An EQIA was carried out on the main Dual Language Street Signs policy in 2021-22. This confirmed the initial assessment process to be carried out, which may indicate the requirement for equality screening.
- 3.12 The request for dual language street signs (in the Irish language) for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Avenue were assessed for equality of opportunity and good relations issues and the applications for the streets were presented to Elected Members through the notification process. On this occasion objections were raised stating that due to the fact that these are Unionist communities the proposals may lead to a negative impact on community relations within these areas.
- 3.13 The applications were subjected to an initial Section 75 assessment to determine what impact the potential erection of dual language signs might have in the areas surrounding these streets. A full screening process was carried out to address the issues associated with carrying out a survey and the placing of street signs in these streets.
- 3.14 The draft screenings have identified that the carrying out of a survey in itself in these areas could cause community tension, as could the erection of the street sign and therefore has the potential to cause an adverse impact on the grounds of good relations. It is acknowledged; however, the process

could alternatively assist in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity.

- 3.15 Councillors Doran, Kelly and McDowell have raised potential for adverse impacts on good relations grounds through objections received during the Elected Member notification procedure as outlined above.
- 3.16 The council retains ‘residual discretion’ in relation to these applications. In effect this gives Elected Members the option to not proceed to survey and/ or halt the erection of an Irish language street sign in this street where, in the view of Elected Members taking into account the agreed criteria, that this action would be considered inappropriate.”

Several Members addressed the Committee to outline their concerns regarding the potential adverse impacts that the erection of dual language signage would have on good relations within each of the proposed three areas.

Moved by Councillor Kelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Cobain,

That no surveys be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and that the three applications be closed.

#### **Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,  
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly,

The Committee agrees to defer consideration of the decision on whether to carry out surveys of the occupiers of Ballysillan Road and Ebor Street until those applications already received to date had been processed and to proceed with a survey of the occupiers of Sunningdale Park North.

On a vote, 13 Members voted for the amendment and 5 against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the amendment in the name of Councillor Ó Néill, was put to the Committee as the substantive motion and agreed.

#### **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

##### **Signage at Finaghy Community Centre**

At the request of Councillor Murray, the Committee agreed to the erection of additional signage by DfI for Finaghy Community Centre at Finaghy Road South, with the cost of approximately £500.00 to be met by the Council from existing budgets.

**Engagement with LCCC re residents in the  
Colin area using the Cutts Recycling Centre**

At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Committee agreed that officers would liaise with their counterparts in LCCC to discuss the potential of BCC ratepayers availing of the Cutts Recycling Centre, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting.

Chairperson