

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 10th April, 2008

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Stoker (Chairman); and
Councillors Ekin, Adamson, Attwood, Austin, D. Browne,
M. Browne, Convery, Cush, Humphrey, Kyle, C. Maskey,
McCann, McCausland, Newton and Stalford.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Ms. F. Holdsworth, Principal Parks and Cemeteries
Services Manager; and
Miss L. Hillick, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the High Sheriff (Councillor McKenzie) and Councillor McClenaghan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April. In addition, the Council had agreed, during discussion of the minute under the heading "Grove Wellbeing Centre – Staffing Structure", that the gym at the Grove Leisure Centre remain in operation until the new gym opens at the Grove Wellbeing Centre.

North Belfast Play Forum - Request for Financial Assistance

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th March, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the North Belfast Play Forum in relation to a request for financial assistance. Accordingly, it was reported that Messrs. D. O'Connor and B. Wylie were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. O'Connor advised the Committee that the North Belfast Play Forum had been established during 1995 in order to address the lack of youth provision within the North Belfast area and to develop sport within that community. The Forum operated the Waterworks Multi-Sports Facility which had proven to be the most successful community sports project throughout the Province. He pointed out that the Forum was requesting that the Council provide funding in the sum of £63,673 for a three-year period in order to sustain a Facility Co-ordinator post which would be based at the Waterworks facility. In addition, the funding would be utilised to enhance the Forum's role in developing sporting opportunities throughout the City.

Mr. Wylie outlined the various activities in which the organisation was involved currently, including coaching centres, midnight soccer schools, crime diversion programmes and learning disability initiatives. In conclusion, he outlined the impact which the North Belfast Play Forum had had on the community and pointed out that the organisation had been successful in obtaining from various bodies funding in the sum of £500,000 during the previous two years.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Director pointed out that, while funding in the sum of £63,673 had been requested over a three-year period, financial support for one year only had been allocated within 2008/2009 Revenue Budgets to support the post.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to:

- (i) offer funding for the 2008/2009 financial year;
- (ii) the development of a policy in relation to the funding of posts within community-managed facilities; and
- (iii) advise the North Belfast Play Forum that the Committee would consider providing additional funding in the remaining two years subsequent to the development of the above-mentioned policy.

Belfast Multi-Sports Stadium

The Committee agreed that a special meeting, to which all Members of the Council would be invited, be held to consider the business plan which had been prepared by Drivers Jonas Consultants in relation to the development of the Belfast Multi-Purpose Sports Stadium.

Strategic Plan for Leisure Services

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In 2003/04 the Council approved a suite of decisions referred to as the Strategic Review of Council Owned Indoor Leisure Facilities. As the title suggests, this review was largely restricted to a review of current and planned leisure centre facilities.

Key Issues

Members will be aware that there is now a need to develop a strategy for leisure which is outcome focussed, takes into account other provision in the City, reflects best practice and allows for future decisions on Council provisions for Leisure.

Since the 2003/04 review a number of key actions have taken place, not least of which has been the formation of the new Parks and Leisure Department.

Some Leisure Centres have closed or transferred to community management and some new facilities have been constructed. In addition a number of other key actions have been implemented including the following examples:

- Opening Hours have been reviewed to include early morning opening
- All fitness suites have been refurbished and new equipment purchased
- A substantial Building Upgrade Programme has been completed
- Admission charging has been radically reviewed and the new Boost leisure card introduced
- The activity programme available at leisure centres has been reviewed and upgraded to offer many more classes and activities
- Sports Development opportunities have been substantially increased
- Access to external funding opportunities has also improved

In light of this and to ensure that leisure services continues to improve, it is proposed to develop a leisure strategy over the coming year.

In developing strategic options it will be necessary to explore areas such as:

- what leisure outcomes are required;
- what is the current and future need;
- what existing or proposed leisure services are there in the City;
- synergy opportunities with Parks, other Council services and partner organisations;
- the optimum use of required resources;
- how services may be improved;
- how services may best be delivered; and
- how services may be developed in future.

Such a comprehensive review will require substantial consultation and benchmarking of best practice. It is envisaged that Members will have a leading role at all stages in development of leisure strategy.

In terms of a potential timeframe for the project, the following is offered as an initial guide for Members:

- May – July...consultants appointed
- Project initiated in August 2008
- Interim report to Members in December 2008
- Final report to Members March 2009

Resource Implications

Financial

It is envisaged that a comprehensive review of leisure services would cost in the region of £80,000. This expenditure is available from within approved Parks & Leisure revenue budgets. Tenders will be evaluated on the basis of:

- methodology;
- overall cost;
- experience of the team of similar projects;
- ability to meet timescales; and
- environmental impact/management.

Human Resources

Officer time associated with a strategic review of Leisure Services will be met from within existing resources.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve:

1. The development of a comprehensive strategy for leisure;
2. The appointment of consultancy support for the project through the tender process in line with the criteria set out above.”

The Committee granted the approvals sought.

Grove Wellbeing Centre - Project Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Construction began at Grove Wellbeing Centre on 29th August 2005 and in line with a projected 24 month build programme, the original completion date was identified as 29th August 2007.

At the Community and Leisure Services Sub Committee of 3rd April 2007, Members were advised that the target completion date for construction of the project was 12th November 2007 however, due to the necessity to incorporate landscape works within the project to the value of £1,064,400 associated with funding received from Belfast Regeneration Office, the construction completion date had to be adjusted and the earliest completion date was projected as 4th February 2008.

The building was actually handed over from the contractor to the Council on Friday 21st March and Members were advised at the Parks and Leisure meeting on 11th October 2007 that a period of approximately 2 months would be required to enable the commissioning of plant, service testing, staff training and familiarisation, before the new facility becomes available for public use and fully operational.

At the Parks and Leisure Committee on 14th February 2008 Members agreed to refer to the Council at its meeting on 3rd March the question of the closure of the Grove Leisure Centre. The Committee also agreed that, in the event of the closure of the Centre, there should be a seamless transfer of operations from the Grove Leisure Centre to other Council facilities and agreed to the allocation of the necessary resources and to the restriction of the use of the Grove Leisure Centre during that period to clubs only.

At the monthly meeting of Belfast City Council on Monday 3rd March 2008, the decision was taken to close the Grove Leisure Centre and examine uses for the site which would maximise benefits to the area.

At the monthly meeting of Belfast City Council on Tuesday 1st April, the decision was taken to keep the fitness suite at Grove open to the public. Officers will update Committee on 10th April on the arrangements that have been made.

Key Issues

Key issues during the next 2 months;

- 1) In order to achieve the objective of a seamless transfer for clubs it is necessary to provide adequate staffing levels at the existing site until the new facility opens. Designations affected by this decision include, receptionists, leisure attendants, swim teachers, cleaners and staff involved in duty management and all affected designations have the opportunity to work at both sites. Staff will remain onsite in the Grove Leisure Centre on a rotating basis and will ensure the safety of the clubs and groups as well as assisting with the closing down of the old centre.

- 2) This 2 month pre-opening is necessary to complete all the work on the snagging list and for the delivery and installation of equipment and also to facilitate training, both BCC site specific training and joint training with the BHSCT & BELB as well as operations testing prior to opening.
- 3) The process to recruit the additional staff for the centre, as approved by Members at the Parks & Leisure Committee on 13th March 2008 is currently underway and it is anticipated that these posts will be filled prior to the centre opening.
- 4) Ten pin bowling alley – two tenders have been received for installation of bowling equipment and advice is currently being sought from the Procurement Section as a result of the poor standard of response. It is anticipated that the bowling alley will now not open at the same time as all of the other leisure facilities.
- 5) Following the decision by Members at the Parks and Leisure Committee on 13th March 2008 regarding franchise catering for Leisure Centres, the new quotation documents for the Grove Well Being Centre will be issued by Friday 4th April 2008. It is still hoped that the successful caterer will be in place either before the centre opens in May or shortly afterwards.
- 6) To assist with the smooth opening of the centre, and due to the technologically advanced nature of much of the plant, it is the intention to hold 'field trials'. Invited groups will be asked to use facilities so that staff can test the systems in a realistic situation. The invitations will also be useful in promoting the Centre amongst potential users prior to opening.

A full programme of tests, covering a six-day period, from Monday 19th - Saturday 24th May, and requiring groups representing a wide range of ability-levels, age-groups and special interests, is being produced at present by officers, and it is proposed that, since these tests are necessary for the effective operation of the centre, no charges be levied. It is further proposed that the first group to be given the opportunity to use the Centre during this period be the Elected Members and the suggested date is Monday 19th May.

- 7) The delay in the handover of the building to the Council has impacted upon the proposed timing of an official opening ceremony to mark the occasion. It is proposed that the centre will have 'soft opening' before the end of May and options will be presented to Members for consideration. Officers would welcome any suggestions regarding the 'soft opening' or for the official opening which is now proposed to take place in late September or early October 2008

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of the official opening will depend on the decisions made, particularly in terms of the Official opening. All costs would be met from approved budgets.

Human Resources

There are no additional resources required to implement the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and to:

- a. Consider the nature and format of the 'soft opening'.
- b. Approve the pre-opening field trials as outlined in the report."

The Director informed the Committee that an official opening ceremony would be held in late September or early October. The opening of the leisure element of the centre to the public would also provide an opportunity to permit the media to tour the centre and to interview representatives of the Council, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Belfast Education and Library Board. He also informed the Committee that the Council's Reference Group on Older People was organising at the Centre on 29th May an Older People's Convention.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McCann,
Seconded by Councillor C. Maskey,

That Councillor D. Browne be nominated to represent the Council at the "soft opening" ceremony for the Grove Wellbeing Centre.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Stalford,
Seconded by Councillor Ekin,

That the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Parks and Leisure Committee represent the Council at all opening ceremonies in connection with the Grove Wellbeing Centre.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the amendment and seven against and it was accordingly declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor McCann and seconded by Councillor C. Maskey was thereupon put to the meeting when eight Members voted for and five against and it was accordingly declared carried.

In addition, the Committee approved the arrangements in connection with the "pre-opening field trials" at the Grove Wellbeing Centre.

Franchise Catering at Leisure Centres

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th March, it had agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to Franchise Catering at the Council's Leisure Centres to enable a legal opinion to be obtained from the Director of Legal Services regarding the cessation of a current procurement exercise which was designed to offer franchise catering on a service-wide basis.

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the legal opinion had confirmed that clause 18 of the advertised procurement terms had stated that "the Council reserves the right not to award a contract to any tenderer under this process" and it was evident that the Council could stop the current procurement process. Accordingly, he recommended that the procurement process be terminated and that instead all Leisure Centre Franchise Catering Contracts be let on a site-by-site basis as and when contracts became available or expired.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Templemore Users' Trust

The Committee was reminded that the former Community and Leisure Services Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 9th May, 2006, had received a presentation from representatives of the Templemore Users' Trust, which had provided an update on the potential restoration project proposed for the Templemore Avenue Baths. At that meeting, the Sub-Committee had agreed, in principle, to support the Templemore Avenue Baths Conservation Plan and had noted that a further report, detailing the costs which the Council might incur from supporting the Plan, would be submitted to a future meeting.

The Director pointed out that the Templemore Users' Trust held currently a 25-year lease in relation to the property which was due to expire during 2019. In addition, a Facility Management Agreement, which had been agreed between the Council and the Trust during 2003, required the Council to provide an annual Revenue and Maintenance Grant and to meet the costs of utilities and insurance. The existing five-year financial support arrangement between the Council and the Trust had expired on 31st March and, apart from the lease, no formal written Agreement had been developed in respect of ongoing financial support. The Director explained that, should the Committee be minded to approve the continuation of the arrangement, it was proposed that it be extended to cover the financial period 2008/2009 only and that a formal Facility Management Agreement be drawn-up between the Council and the Trust to enable the Committee to consider a longer-term arrangement.

The Director recommended that the Committee agree that the current financial support arrangements in the sum of £132,600 be extended to cover the financial year 2008/2009 and that a formal Facility Management Agreement be drawn-up between the Council and Templemore Users' Trust.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from representatives of the Trust in relation to the progress achieved in connection with the Templemore Avenue Baths Conservation Plan.

Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Sport Belfast is a partnership organisation established in 1999 with the key objective of promoting sport and physical activity within the city of Belfast. A number of key partner organisations make up this group including Belfast City Council, Sport NI, Queens University Belfast, Belfast Education and Library Board, Belfast Community Sports Development Network, Coaching NI and WISPA.

Over the past number of years the partnership has been building the development of a citywide Physical Activity & Sports Development Strategy for the City and in 2006 Members of the Belfast City Council offered its support to the principles contained within the strategy.

The strategy encourages a close working relationship between all of the partner organisations towards the common goals of promotion of physical activity and development of sport. The partnership will ensure that this is achieved in a planned and coordinated way within available resources, targeted for optimum benefit to the citizens of Belfast.

Over this past year, the various Sport Belfast partner organisations have been working together to develop actions plans under the seven key initiatives contained within the strategy and these initiatives are:

1. Targeting schools and 3rd level institutions for promotion of physical activity and sports development
2. Building sustainable club and community sports development
3. Raising the profile of sport and physical activity in the City
4. Promotion of health and physical activity
5. Developing coaches and volunteers
6. Supporting leisure centres in working with communities to develop physical activity and sports development programmes
7. Developing pathways to improved performance

The aims of the strategy are obviously very closely aligned to those of the Council in promoting the health and wellbeing of the citizens of the city and the strategy also reflects wider compliance with for example the draft Northern Ireland Strategy for the Development of Sport and Physical Recreation.

The Strategy has also supported our bid to the Big Lottery's 'Live & Learn' fund which potentially could result in an award of £1m to the Council for the promotion of physical activity within local communities. The Council has been successful at stage one of this bidding process and our stage two application will be submitted by September 2008.

Key Issues

A key role within the Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy is the building and promotion of partnership arrangements essential to ensure delivery of the strategy's objectives. In order to meet the strategy's commitments in this area it will be necessary to establish a 3 year fixed term post to enable the required partnership development to be attained.

For a number of years, up to 2007, the Council has offered funding amounting to £15,000 per annum to Sport Belfast in support of a Projects Officer post, with the post holder being accommodated within the Leisure Services section at the Cecil Ward Building. As part of a restructuring of Sport Belfast and to enable delivery of the Strategy it is proposed to replace this Project Officer post with a 3 year fixed term Partnership Development Manager post and again it is proposed that this post holder be accommodated within Leisure Services.

In terms of funding for the proposed Partnership Development Manager post, SportNI have offered substantial additional funding for the post; however have also asked that, as the Council is the lead organisation within the strategy project, the post be line managed through Belfast City Council. The Council would also be required to make a financial contribution as in previous years to fund this post. This will be in the amount of £20,000. Council Officers would recommend support for this proposal as such an arrangement would also afford opportunities for development of wider partnership arrangements between the Parks & Leisure Department and other organisations in the promotion of sports and physical activity.

Resource Implications

Financial

It is envisaged that salary, administration and minimum programme costs associated with this post will be in the region of £40,000 per annum.

Our partners within Sport Belfast and SportNI are committed to supporting the post to the value of £20,000 per annum for the duration of the 3 year fixed term, pending approval by elected Members of equivalent funding from the Council.

The required supporting funding from the Council can be made available from within existing budgets.

Human Resources

It is proposed that this fixed term post be placed within the Leisure Development Unit of Leisure Services.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve the appointment of a Partnership Development Manager for a fixed term period of 3 years, pending availability of match funding from SportNI/Sport Belfast of £20,000 per annum.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Belfast Taste and Music Fest 2009

The Director reported that a request had been received from Connie Cunningham Associates in connection with the use of the Botanic Gardens during the period from 7th till 10th August, 2009 in respect of the Belfast Taste and Music Fest. The project would be financed by the promoter and the payment of a fee to the Council would be based on the time spent on site.

He pointed out that the 2009 Fest would be a new style food and music festival utilising the best of Northern Ireland food with a Chicago twist in presentation and style. In addition, the Mayor of Chicago would be sending over twenty chefs who would produce food daily and present Chicago-style menus using local produce. The event would be held before the Tall Ships event, scheduled for 13th till 16th August, and a further element of the festival would include the promotion of extended tours from Chicago to attend the festival, visit Northern Ireland's visitor attractions and attend also the Tall Ships event.

The Director stated that there was a potential for a Partnership arrangement to be developed between the Botanic Gardens and the Chicago Botanic Gardens to develop a major event in the City to increase tourism and build a long-term relationship with a major American city. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to accede to the request, subject to the conditions of the use of the site and all legal agreements being adhered to.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

City of Belfast Golf Course - Golf Ball Encroachment

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

City of Belfast Golf Course, Mallusk was built in 1984. It is a nine hole golf course. There is a facility management agreement with City of Belfast Golf Club to manage the golf course partly involving grounds maintenance activities but mainly relating to receptionist and cashier responsibilities.

In 1984 there was relatively little residential or commercial property surrounding the course. Over the last 23 years there has been an increasing build up of residential and commercial property around the golf course. Subsequently there have been occasions when golf balls have damaged property or cars in the surrounding properties.

A process has been in place for some time that requires an Officer, when informed of alleged damage, to investigate the alleged damage. If agreement is reached that it was the result of damage from a golf ball then remedial payment for damage caused is paid to the claimant. No precise records are currently available concerning how many claims have been made and settled, however from the information which is available approximately 10 claims for damage have been received in the last 5 years resulting in a total cost of £4,000.

Key Issues

A new housing development at Rogan Manor, adjacent to number 1 golf hole, has been in existence for approximately one year. Residents of this development have requested action be taken to avoid golf balls landing in their back garden and subsequent risk of harm to themselves and their children. We have also been contacted by other residents concerning golf hole number two and it is considered that remedial works can be made to reduce the likelihood of golf balls causing damage without serious expenditure.

There are a number of options, both short term and long term, to reduce the risk of golf balls landing in residential houses in Rogan Manor. The options are based on consultation with Health and Safety Officers, residents from Rogan Wood and officers from the City of Belfast Golf Club.

Option One

Install 150 metre x 12 metre high fence adjacent to fence line with Rogan Manor. The cost will be approximately £98,000 and will require planning permission to erect the fence. This is dependent on Northern Ireland Electricity Service re routing the electric pylons or diverting them underground. Detailed specification and plans were sent to N.I.E.S in November 2007. Confirmation has been received from N.I.E.S on 10th March 2008 informing us it will cost £30,000 to relocate the cables underground. They have expressed a requirement for a six month lead in period before work could commence.

It is our understanding option 1 is the preferred option of the residents but this can only be confirmed upon a successful planning application for the fence line whereby all residents affected will have an option to object to the fence line being erected.

This option would also require consideration within the capital programme process.

Total cost of this work will be approximately £130,000

Option Two

Relocate the tee box and relocate the golf green. Add additional tree planting and additional bunkers to left hand side of green to encourage golfers to veer to the right away from houses.

It is considered this option may not reassure the residents on a long term basis because they may not consider the risk of golf balls landing in their gardens has been sufficiently reduced without the additional security of a 12 metre ball stop fence. In addition this will require the number 1 golf hole to be closed for at least three months and therefore a reduction in play. Committee is reminded the golf course has been playing on the basis of 8 hole golf course for the last two years due to the realignment of water service pipeline. However, it should be noted if planning permission is sought and subsequently refused for the option of the fence (option 1) then this Option 2 may be the only option available.

Total cost of this work will be approximately £35,000.

Option Three

Install 12 metre high fence and relocate tee box and golf green plus additional bunkers and tree planting. This is a combination of option one and two and it is not the preferred option.

Total cost for this work will be approximately £165,000.

As stated option 1 and 3 will require planning permission to erect the fence line. If decision to proceed with erection of fence line is given there is a waiting period for planning permission plus installation time.

Short term option

Reduce the length of the hole for non members by approximately 60 metres by moving the tee box to the far left of the hole and erect a ball stop fence at the tee box. Add additional tree planting and bunkers to the left hand side of the fairway to encourage golfers to hit towards the right, away from the houses.

This will reduce the risk of golf balls landing in the houses of Rogan Wood. This reduction of 60 metres to the green will reduce the chance of golf balls 'hooking' to the left towards the houses. By erecting a 4 metre x 3 metre high ball stop fence immediately adjacent to new tee box this will reduce the chance of 'hooking' towards the houses.

Total cost of short term option will be £5,000

Future for City of Belfast Golf Course

Members should note that plans have been submitted to the Council by the Golf Club for a replacement Club House. If this were to proceed the Club would require a long lease to be agreed by the

Council. This now requires the Council to assess the longer term relationship with the City of Belfast Golf Club. A report will be brought forward in due course.

Resource Implications

Financial

There is no revenue budget for option number one, two or three. There is sufficient revenue budget for the short term solution.

Human Resources

There are no serious implications for staff resources concerning this issue.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members grant authority to:

- proceed with the short term solution as outlined above and agree to a feasibility study to be completed into option 1 within the context of the consideration of the future options for the City of Belfast Golf Course.”

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Mountain Biking at Cave Hill Country Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In September 2002 a report was taken to the Parks and Amenities Sub-Committee regarding a Strategic review of Off-Road Cycling In Northern Ireland. At this time the Sub-Committee agreed in principle to the possible development of a dedicated mountain biking facility on Cave Hill and its future management arrangements. Since 2002 a range of different funding sources have been explored and a subsequent report was taken to Special Community & Recreation (Parks and Cemeteries) in January 2006 seeking approval to submit an application to the Sports Lottery Fund and to continue discussions with the various stakeholders.

Following approval from the Parks and Amenities Sub-Committee to investigate funding from the Sports Lottery for a purpose built down-hill mountain biking facility at Cave Hill, officers consulted with Belfast Activity Centre, Countryside Activities

Network (CAAN) and local residents through the Cave Hill Conservation Group. There was an overriding feeling, particularly from the Cave Hill residents, that such a facility would attract large numbers of specialised down-hill mountain bikers from a wide area to Cave Hill, as it would be the only facility of its kind in the east of the province. This could lead to over use of the hill and present a danger and nuisance to other users, for example walkers. After discussion it was felt that such a facility would not be popular among residents and walkers on the hill, and was not appropriate for this site. The original proposals are therefore not being pursued.

Key Issues

Mountain Biking is an ever increasing sport within the Belfast area. Currently there are no off road facilities available to enable users to pursue this activity, this has led to the creation of unauthorized trails. These unauthorized trails have been built on a number of Council sites, namely Cave Hill Country Park, Barnett Demesne and Mary Peters. These trails are currently being removed by Council officers but are quickly being rebuilt; these trails are not sanctioned and are potentially very dangerous.

Talks with some local mountain bikers have taken place, with Officers explaining that they are currently repairing some paths within Cave Hill Country Park and Officers fear that if mountain biking on the site is not managed correctly then the damage caused to these new paths could be substantial.

To try to remove mountain biking from Cave Hill Country Park would be a very costly exercise in terms of man hours and possibly with little success given the nature of the sport.

Officers are requesting permission to continue talks with the local mountain biking representatives and other interested parties to try to accommodate the sport within the Country Park and to explore avenues of funding available. The benefits of such being that we are pro-actively pursuing an outdoor activity, which has huge health benefits to Belfast rate payers, seeking to reduce existing user conflict and making the Country Park a positive visitor attraction. If we do not tackle this problem then the unsanctioned trails will continue to be built in an unregulated manner, leaving huge health and safety implications for the Council, the complaints will continue from members of the public and the damage to other areas of woodland within the Country park could be substantial.

Resource Implications

Financial

Other than staff time there are no specific costs relevant to this matter.

Human Resources

These talks are being carried out by Anne Reid, Fintan Grant, and Brendan Toland.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Officers be given permission to continue talks with the local mountain biking representatives and to try to accommodate their sport in a manageable way within Cave Hill Country Park, exploring sources of funding, reporting back to the Committee any detailed proposals.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

New Water Main at Musgrave Park

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that, by means of a Grant of Easement dated 8th December, 1962, the former Belfast Corporation had granted the former Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority a right to install, maintain and, if necessary, replace a water main at Musgrave Park. He pointed out that the water main which had been installed during 1962 was now in a poor condition and that the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust wished to replace the existing pipe across Council-owned land at Musgrave Park. The route of the new main did not follow that which had been defined within the Grant of Easement and thus required the drawing-up of a new legal agreement.

He advised the Committee that the following terms had been agreed with the Trust:

- (i) the original Grant of Easement would be surrendered and, in consideration of this, the Trust would pay to the Council the sum of £2,500 and be responsible for the Council's legal fees and surveyor's expenses;
- (ii) the new Easement would grant the Trust a working width of six metres along the route of the new pipe;

- (iii) the Trust would maintain the new installation and minimise disruption to the Park during such maintenance and would reinstate fully any disruption to the Council's lands as a result of maintenance activities; and
- (iv) the Trust might be required, on request from the Council, to relocate the water main at their own expense.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee approve the surrender of the Grant of Easement dated 8th December, 1962 and grant a new Easement to the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust on the above-mentioned terms.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

A2 Sydenham Road Widening Scheme

The Committee agreed that a special meeting, to which all Members of Council would be invited, be held in order to receive a presentation from representatives of the Roads Service in relation to the A2 Sydenham Road Widening Scheme.

Right-of-Way at Stranmillis Road and Hillside Drive

The Director reported, that under Article 3 of the Access to the Countryside Order (Northern Ireland) 1983, all local Councils had a duty to "assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any public right-of-way". He pointed out that during September, 2007 the Council had been contacted by the Crown Solicitor's Office in relation to a laneway which ran between Stranmillis Road and Richmond Park. The laneway had fallen to the Office as "ownerless goods" and it was the Crown Solicitor's intention to dispose of the land due to the fact that it was not required for any Crown purpose. The Council had been contacted prior to its sale in order to ascertain whether a public right-of-way existed.

In this regard, discussions had been held with the Department for Regional Development, Roads Service, which had confirmed that the laneway was not an adopted surface and, therefore, fell under the remit of the Access to the Countryside legislation. Consequently, it had all the legal attributes of a public right-of-way in that it was a clearly well-defined path which linked two public spaces. Evidence had suggested that it had been in place for some time and was used regularly by members of the public. The Director recommended that the Committee assert the laneway from Stranmillis Road (beside No. 342 to between numbers 22 and 24 Hillside Drive) as a public right-of-way under the Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Support for Sport - Development Grants

The Committee noted a Schedule of Support for Sport applications in relation to Development Grants which had been approved by the Director of Parks and Leisure in accordance with the authority delegated to him. A copy of the Schedule was available on the Modern.gov intranet site.

Safer Neighbourhood Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report in relation to the Safer Neighbourhood Antisocial Behaviour Pilot Scheme.

Media Report

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report which outlined the amount of media coverage and extent of press and media enquiries received concerning the work of the Committee during the period from December, 2007 till March, 2008.

Chairman