

# Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 15th October, 2009

## MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Stoker (Chairman); and  
Councillors Hartley, Humphrey, B. Kelly, Kyle,  
Mac Giolla Mhín, C. Maskey, McCann, McClenaghan,  
McKenzie and Rodgers.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;  
Ms. E. Boyle, Policy and Business Development  
Manager;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator; and  
Miss L. Hillick, Committee Administrator.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Cush, Ekin, McCarthy, McCausland, O'Reilly and Stafford.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th September 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 October.

### Fire at Mary Peters' Track

The Director reported that on Wednesday, 14th October, a fire had occurred at the Mary Peters' Track site resulting in approximately £37,000 damage to two containers located thereat. He stated that a report in relation to the full extent of the damage would be submitted for the Committee's consideration subsequent to an assessment of the damage which was being undertaken by the Council's insurers.

Noted.

### Strategic Review of Leisure

The Committee agreed that a half-day workshop, to which all Members of Council would be invited, be held during a Saturday morning in November in order to discuss the key issues arising from the research which had been conducted in relation to the Council's review of leisure.

**Connswater Community Greenway –  
Public Paths Creation Orders**

(Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services, and Mr. C. Campbell, Principal Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“Purpose of Report**

To seek the Committee’s recommendation to the Council to make nine Public Path Creation Orders under the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983 in respect of the Connswater Greenway Project.

**Relevant Background Information**

The Committee at its meeting on 13th March 2008 agreed to provide £4.2M capital funding to the Connswater Greenway Project, and agreed to the engagement of officers in relation to the scheme. This included the land assembly necessary for the Greenway being led by the Director of Legal Services with the support of the Estates Team.

At its meeting on 11th June 2009 the Committee endorsed a proposal to utilise the provisions of the Access to the Countryside legislation to secure elements of the critical path for the scheme.

**Key Issues**

The Council’s Estates Officers have been undertaking negotiations with landowners to secure the route for the Connswater Greenway Project.

It has not been possible to secure the acquisition of some portions of land, due either to the ownership being unknown, or to negotiations having broken down with the landowner. Negotiations may have broken down due to the landowner’s reluctance to sell to the land, or due to them asking for an excessive price.

The strategy agreed by the Committee for dealing with areas of land such as these is to use the Access to the Countryside legislation to secure the Greenway critical path along those areas which have proved problematic to acquire. This legislation is suitable in the context that the purpose of the scheme is to connect inner urban areas with the rural hinterland.

Following on from the Committee's endorsement of the strategy, officers have identified nine stretches of land over which it is proposed to make Public Path Creation Orders. Officers have undertaken the required statutory consultation in respect of these areas of land and no objections have been forthcoming, although there is some apparatus belonging to Statutory Undertakers along some of the routes. The proposed orders will therefore include a section protecting the Undertakers' rights to maintain their apparatus.

The nine maps circulated with the report show the areas over which it is proposed to make the Public Path Creation Orders.

Under the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983, the orders require to be made by resolution of full Council.

The Committee is therefore being asked to recommend to Council that the orders be made.

Once the orders are made at Council there are a number of advertisement requirements to be completed with a four week objection period during which members of the public or other interested parties can object to the making of the orders.

If these objections have substance, then the Department of the Environment has the power to convene a tribunal to adjudicate in relation to them.

These orders are essential to the success of the Greenway Scheme as it is very important that the whole of the critical path of the scheme is acquired before the project construction contract is awarded.

The Committee may be asked to endorse further orders in the future should difficulties arise in respect of further areas of land.

The Committee should also note that officers have identified a further area at Orby Drive where a Public Path Creation Order would be desirable. The local residents have, however, indicated very strong objection to this order on the basis that they feel that it could lead to anti social behaviour. Officers are therefore convening a number of meetings with local residents in order to allow them to express their fears and to allow officers to discuss possible solutions with them. It is therefore possible that endorsement of a Public Path Creation Order over that area will be sought at a future meeting, but this depends on the outcome of these negotiations.

### **Resource Implications**

The Connswater Greenway budget has been agreed at £4.2M capital expenditure to support the project, and Legal and Estates officers are currently engaged in land acquisitions. Adoption of the Access to the Countryside approach is not likely to involve any further Council resources.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to recommend to Council that Council makes nine Public Path Creation Orders under the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983 over those areas of land outlined on the maps which had been circulated, copies of which are available for inspection on the Council's intranet/internet websites."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Acquisition of Land for Future Burial Provision**

(Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

The purpose of this report is to:

- (i) provide Members with an update on the burials land acquisition project;
- (ii) outline some early indicative results from Tier 3 tests at the Nutts Corner site and the potential implications of these;
- (iii) seek Committee approval to consult with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) regarding the report on the Tier 3 tests at the Nutts Corner site; and
- (iv) seek Committee authority to revisit the planning assumptions for the new cemetery site.

### **Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware that there is an ongoing project to select a site for a new cemetery for Belfast and that update reports are brought to Committee on a bi-monthly basis, the last of which was in June 2009.

The background to the project is:

- BCC originally commenced a search for new lands for burials in 1999 - 2001 following the appointment of DTZ Pidea Consultants;
- the DTZ report recommended two large sites, one at Hightown and one at Drumbeg;
- in September 2005 BCC appointed Ferguson McIlveen (now Scott Wilson) to re-visit the search for suitable sites in order to provide the Council with a robust case for BCC in the probable event of a public inquiry;
- in March 2006 Scott Wilson produced a Stage 1 report which proposed a new methodology for the revised study;
- in May 2007 Scott Wilson produced a Stage 2 report which gave a shortlist of 4 sites – Lisleen, Drumbeg B, Nutts Corner and Hightown;

#### Current Council Policy Position

The current Council policy with regard to the acquisition of lands for new cemetery provision was most recently defined by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 15 November 2007 when the Committee agreed the following recommendations:

- (i) Lisleen and Nutts Corner sites are selected as the Council's preferred sites and that Drumbeg and Hightown are no longer in the shortlist (within the context of the Council developing one large cemetery);
- (ii) the Council proceeds to a Tier 3 risk assessment at both Lisleen and Nutts Corner;
- (iii) in the meantime, discussions take place with the Environment and Heritage Service (now the Northern Ireland Environment Agency) to receive feedback on the collated hydro-geological reports and to ascertain Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) views in respect of the feasibility of developing each site; and
- (iv) further discussions with neighbouring councils take place on the issues of mutual concern with regard to the provision of burial space both at present and in the future.

Since late 2007 the Council has been progressing the project with regard to the two shortlisted sites, Lisleen and Nutts Corner.

### Current Position

The most recent developments in the project are summarised below:

- the Council's consultants developed a detailed specification outlining the extent and cost associated with the Tier 3 tests and Scott Wilson were appointed during the period April – May 2008 as the lead consultants for the Tier 3 tests;
- in the period from June – September 2008 the masterplan designs for each of the two shortlisted sites were developed to enable the planning for the Tier 3 tests to take place and to allow for modelling and analysis of soil and rainfall data to occur;
- in December 2008 a letter was sent to landowners affected by the testing and a newsletter was produced and sent to all potentially affected landowners in both the Nutts Corner and Lisleen areas;
- an update letter and a copy of the newsletter was also sent to the Chief Executives of Antrim and Castlereagh Borough Councils, the Chairman of the Ulster Farmers Union, Belfast City Council's Party Group Leaders and Members of the Parks and Leisure Committee;
- all the boreholes and window samples have been in place since February and the extraction of 'samples' is ongoing;
- a water feature survey and a topographical survey were undertaken at both sites during the period June – July 2009;
- an update newsletter was sent to all landowners at both sites in July and the Director spoke with the Chief Executive of Antrim and the acting Chief Executive of Castlereagh Borough Councils to update them.

Following on from a meeting on 26 May 2009 where the consultants outlined initial findings at Lisleen and Nutts Corner, it was agreed initial 'data modelling' would be carried out at the Nutts Corner site based on the samples collected to date and the findings of the water feature and topographical surveys. A report would then be submitted to the Council giving more detailed findings and a fuller indication of the suitability of this site. The implications of these findings are outlined below.

If it were the case that the Council was to change its policy from the provision of one large site to consider.

### Key Issues

The conclusions of the interim Tier 3 assessment at the Nutts Corner site demonstrate that at least part of the site is unsuitable for the proposed development in its current form.

- soil thickness – areas of the site that are less than 2.7m would not be capable of accommodating the proposed graves and areas where the depth is between 2.7m and 3.7m thick are not recommended for use as burial sites. Approximately 64% of the site has a soil depth of under 3.7m. The remaining 36% of the site has a soil depth of between 3.7m and 4.5m and this would be suitable for use in terms of soil thickness.
- groundwater depth – the depth across the majority of the site is less than 2.7m meaning that most graves would be below the water table. Whilst this does not automatically make the site unsuitable it is likely that some if not the majority of graves would need to be pumped prior to burial.
- contaminant modelling – the modelling has shown that whilst the majority of potential pollutants will be below water quality standards at the selected compliance points, ammonia and formaldehyde are predicted to be at concentrations above them.

The 36% of the site considered suitable for development in terms of soil thickness is situated in the south eastern portion of the site and this coincides with the area where groundwater is at its deepest. If the development of the site was limited to this portion then this would allow increased dilution and dispersion of contaminants prior to their arrival at potential receptors due to the additional distance travelled.

The consultants have recommended that the interim report on the Tier 3 tests at the Nutts Corner site be discussed with the NIEA. This will allow the Council to update them on the process, test the methodology we have used and ascertain their views on the potential issues with the site. Scott Wilson has advised us that the NIEA have never assessed a proposal such as this before and therefore are unsure of how long the timescale for a response will be.

While the report indicates that the majority of the site at Nutts Corner is unsuitable for the proposed development in its current form, if the council's policy were to change to the development of a number of smaller cemeteries, then the south eastern proportion of the site, 36% of the total site may be suitable for development subject to the issues of groundwater being resolved.

### Communications

An update newsletter will be sent to all landowners at both sites in late November/early December and the Director will speak with the Chief Executives of Antrim and Castlereagh Borough Councils to update them.

### Review of planning assumptions

Since the inception of this project there have been changes which will have impacted on the assumptions that were made around our requirements for a new cemetery site. These include the expansion at Roselawn and the increase in the number of cremations taking place. To allow the members to properly reconsider its policy on cemetery provision given the information on the Nutts corner site and the final Tier 3 reports for both sites at Lisleen and Nutts Corner

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

There is provision of £13.9 M in the Council's capital programme for new cemetery provision for Belfast City Council. The forecast cost for the Tier 3 phase is approximately £150K and was previously approved by Committee.

#### Human Resources

There are no human resource implications at this stage.

#### Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage although the final phases of the project will inevitably increase the Council's land ownership and associated liabilities.

### Recommendations

The Committee is asked to;

- (i) note the contents of the report;
- (ii) grant approval to consult with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) regarding the report on the Tier 3 tests at the Nutts Corner site; and grant approval for the planning assumptions for the new cemetery site to be revisited



### Key to Abbreviations

**NIEA - Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
EHS - Environment and Heritage Service"**

The Committee granted the approvals sought.

### Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the progress achieved in connection with two Departmental projects, that is, Cultural Diversity in Sport and Programming Open Spaces, which were being funded by the Peace III Programme through the Council's Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan.

### Musgrave Park Car Parking

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### "Relevant Background Information

The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) contains a number of designations which relate to the preservation of Musgrave Park as open space. In its responses to dBMAP the Council raised an objection in relation to the restrictions on that portion of the park with frontage to Stockman's Way and immediately to the rear of the petrol filling station at 134/136 Stockman's Lane. The aim of the objection was to preserve the longer term asset realisation value of the portion of the park between the 'army road' and Stockman's Way.

Following a decision by the Client Services (Parks and Amenities) Sub-Committee on 10 February 2004, the Council entered into a 21 year Facility Management arrangement (dated 9th March 2006) with St Brigid's GAC, for land at Musgrave Park. St Brigid's subsequently completed development of new playing pitches within this area. As part of the development St Brigid's also sought, and were granted, planning permission to develop a car park on land which fell outside the area covered by the facility management agreement. A roughly surfaced car parking area has now been developed by the club on the portion of land between the 'army road' and Stockman's Way i.e. that portion of land upon which the Council aimed to preserve longer term asset realisation potential. No written authority or consent was sought or provided to St Brigid's GAC for development of the car park outside the boundary of the facilities management agreement.

As part of the development of facilities associated with the new playing pitches, St Brigid's GAC hope in the next few years to provide permanent changing accommodation on the site. In the interim they are also considering installation of some form of temporary changing accommodation. Subject to further study (and potential planning approval) council officers have identified a possible location for the proposed permanent changing accommodation and associated car parking which would not conflict with the potential asset realisation as outlined above. This would involve re-location of the existing unauthorised car parking. In discussions with St Brigid's officials it is mutually agreed that the club do not require all of the lands currently contained within the boundary of the 2006 facilities management agreement. Some rationalisation of the existing facilities management boundary is anticipated following further discussions with the club.

As a stop gap measure it is proposed that the council provide St Brigid's with a short term licence agreement to cover the unauthorised car parking area and the possible provision of temporary changing accommodation (at the club's expense) thereon. The duration of this agreement would be for a maximum period of two years with detailed terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager.

#### Key Issues

The main issues for the Committee to consider are:

- Portion of Musgrave Park between the 'army road' and Stockman's Way identified as having some future asset realisation potential.
- Most of this area is currently used by St Brigid's GAC as unsurfaced car parking but this area falls outside St Brigid's facilities management agreement.
- Until proposals for an alternative car parking location (and potential permanent changing accommodation) are fully developed, Council officers wish to regularise St Brigid's use of the current roughly surfaced car parking through a short term licence agreement which may also facilitate the placing of temporary changing accommodation at this location.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

No financial implications at this stage. Potentially part financing of permanent car parking to facilitate park users as well as St Brigid's use of the site may be possibility in order to preserve any asset realisation potential on the existing temporary parking area.

#### Human Resources

No additional human resources required. Parks and Cemeteries, Estates Management and Legal Services resources required to take forward proposed licence agreement and consider longer term car parking and changing accommodation arrangements.

#### Asset and Other Implications

The purpose of the proposed arrangements is to preserve longer term asset realisation potential on a portion of land at the northern end of Musgrave Park.

### Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to approve entering into an arrangement with St Brigid's GAC, on terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and incorporated in a suitable licence agreement to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services, to regularise use of the car parking area and to authorise the continuation of discussions with St Brigid's GAC in relation to the location etc. of longer term car parking and changing accommodation provision, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 60.

### Key to Abbreviations

**GAC**      Gaelic Athletic Club  
**dBMAP**    Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan"

The Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to no costs being incurred by the Council in relation to the regularising of the temporary car park.

### Watch this Space Project

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### "Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's continued support for the partnership arrangement with the Ulster Wildlife Trust in respect of the Watch This Space programme.

### **Relevant Background Information**

The Committee is reminded that the former Parks and Cemeteries Sub-Committee agreed in January 2007 to fund a pilot project with the Ulster Wildlife Trust for one year. Through the project the Trust would provide a range of educational activities within Woodvale and Falls Parks. The main purpose of this partnership project, entitled 'Watch This Space', was:

- to encourage greater use of and involvement in local parks by children, and
- to develop their understanding of parks and the importance and relevance of the natural environment to their lives.

Specifically the project was intended to deliver crucial parts of the Open Spaces Strategy and Local Biodiversity Action Plan, in particular:

- to increase the appreciation and knowledge of the heritage value of parks, in particular the biodiversity and priority species identified in the council's local biodiversity action plan;
- to provide through partnership working an educational outreach programme in parks;
- to increase use of parks; and
- to promote the value of parks as healthy, safe places.

The pilot project began around May 2007 and ran through to June 2008.

At its meeting in May 2008 the Committee reviewed progress and agreed to its continuation for a further two years, and to extend it to include additional parks in North and West Belfast and to include the East of the city. This work, which complements the on-going work of the Parks' Outreach officers, has been continuing since May 2008.

The Committee received a further report in June 2009 updating Members on progress in 2008/09 which highlighted that set targets had been achieved and indeed exceeded. The Committee also agreed targets for the current year 2009/10.

### Current context

The main achievements of the Watch This Space project can be summarized as follows:

1. An environmental education outreach programme in 11 different parks in the North, West and East of the city. In partnership with the Ulster Wildlife Trust we have worked with over 600 local schoolchildren each year from 18 different primary schools and 3 secondary schools – engaging each child in the project on five occasions through park visits and pre/post visit classroom activities;
2. A programme of monthly Saturday clubs in Falls, Woodvale and Victoria Parks, delivering environmental activities for 5-11 year olds and parents.
3. We have established contact with local youth groups, organisations and summer schemes to initiate a programme of appropriate park-based activities.
4. Delivery of a programme of environmental activities for 5-12 year olds at each of 15 summer fun days organised by Belfast Parks section.
5. Production of a comprehensive set of teacher/pupil worksheets and information sheets to be available on the council's web site for teachers and schools using parks for outdoor learning activities – all linked to the new curriculum 'Education for Sustainable Development'

### Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee to consider is whether to continue to support this community based, educational outreach focused programme within our parks.

The achievements outlined above are significant. It is important that a community understands and appreciates the natural environment around it. Education and promotion is one way in which the council can contribute to this.

It is the view of officers that the project has been successful and met the objectives set out in 2007. Through the project we have been able to deliver elements of the Open Space Strategy and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, within the sections on heritage, partnership working, people and community involvement, and education.

The project took time to establish itself but there is a growing sense of ownership within the young members of the communities involved, and the project has been welcomed by local people and teachers.

The risk is that should the project cease it is unlikely that any other organisation will fund a similar project in these communities where open space is largely owned by the Council.

It is recognised that the continuation of the scheme would have revenue implications at a time of financial constraint. To assist Members in making a decision as to the continuation of the scheme a number of options are set out below. There are four possible options, each has been worked up and costed. The pros and cons of each are examined as outlined below.

### Options

#### Option 1    Continue the Watch This Space project in its current format for another year until June 2011.

#### *Pros*

- There will be opportunity to build on the good work of the last 3-4 years with schools and local communities.
- Continued educational outreach work, school visits to local parks, Saturday clubs as per existing programme.
- Another year of P5 pupils will have the opportunity to learn about value of parks.
- There will be opportunity to build on initial contacts made with youth groups and secondary schools.
- Development of further resources.
- Environmental education element included in Belfast Parks Summer fun days during 2010
- Continued positive public relations for Parks
- Opportunity to further develop teacher training element

#### *Cons*

- Financial commitment c£65k.

**Option 2** **To withdraw the Watch This Space project from June 2010**

*Pros*

- Financial saving of £65k – no further cost.

*Cons*

- Break in relationship with schools and local community built up over last 3-4 years.
- Saturday clubs would probably not continue, as local parents not ready to take these over.
- Initial contacts with youth and secondary schools not followed up.
- No further resources developed.
- No environmental education element to events such as Summer Fun Days.

**Option 3** **To cease Watch This Space partnership and employ an officer to develop educational outreach work.**

*Pros*

- Increase capacity of Council staff to provide service.
- Provide possible closer links with Parks' Outreach Officers. Watch This Space officer could be a 3rd Outreach Officer.
- Saving of £30k on this year's provision.

*Cons*

- Cost in region of £30-35k
- Reduced capacity to deliver full programme previously delivered by UWT in Watch This Space programme.
- Need to rebuild relationships with schools etc.
- Saturday clubs may require overtime working.

- No access to UWT environmental guide staff for additional help and back up with school groups, tours, clubs, events.
- No additional PR for scheme from partner UWT, who advertise Watch This Space at other opportunities.

**Option 4** **To continue Watch This Space project in partnership with Ulster Wildlife Trust, but at a reduced level: i.e. reducing UWT staff from 1 full time and 1 part time officer to 1 officer equivalent, and using UWT guides to supplement workload.**

*Pros*

- Continuity of links made with schools and other groups
- UWT guides available for use as back up and assistance
- Opportunity to further pursue engagement with youth/community groups and therefore widen the target audience/age groups.
- Continued positive public relations for Parks.
- Opportunity to further develop teacher training element.
- Saving of £12k on this year's provision.

*Cons*

- Financial cost c£48k
- Reduced capability to work with schools, which would mean fewer classes or visits organised.
- Saturday clubs may have to be reduced from monthly to every other month.
- Aims of the project delivered but at a reduced cost to the council.

**Resource Implications**

**Financial**

Only Option 2 has no financial implications for the Council. The implications will depend on the preferred option. Should Members accede to the recommended option 4, the implications would be in the region of £48k. This has been included in the 2010/11 draft estimates, officers will continue to explore with the Ulster Wildlife Trust possible external funding opportunities to offset the costs of the programme.



### Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications for options 1, 2 and 4, the scheme will continue to be managed by the Conservation and Promotion Manager. Option 3 includes employing an additional outreach officer.

### Asset and Other Implications

The programme continues to significantly improve the profile of the parks and will enhance the local value of the assets. It will support the physical elements of parks management in both sites.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- adopt Option 4 as outlined above to continue the Watch this Space project with the Ulster Wildlife Trust, but at a reduced level.
- agree to a further review in a year's time to assess how the project is working at a reduced level.

### Key to Abbreviations

UWT – Ulster Wildlife Trust”

After discussion, the Committee agreed, due to the benefits which were derived from the Project, to adopt Option 1 contained within the report. It was agreed also that the Project be extended to include Parks located in South Belfast.

### Refurbishment of Woodvale and Dunville Parks

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to update the committee on the DSD timetable for the economic appraisal of the proposals for the refurbishment of Woodvale and Dunville parks.

### Relevant Background Information

At its meeting in September 2008 the Parks and Leisure Committee agreed as part of the parks improvement agenda to undertake design work for the redevelopment of two parks in the city.

It was subsequently agreed that Woodvale and Dunville parks be selected for this process because of existing funding commitments by Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) to them as part of the neighbourhood renewal action plan and that:

- officers work up scheme designs; project plans and detailed costings in relation to each of the parks;
- officers continue to liaise and work with BRO and undertake, in conjunction with BRO, an economic appraisal on each of the parks;
- the two parks be put forward to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration for inclusion in the council's capital programme.

#### Current context

Council officers have worked with representatives from both communities to prepare concept drawings in respect of each of the parks. There is broad agreement on the design at Dunville Park and the economic appraisal has commenced and should be completed by the third week in December.

Agreement on the design drawing for Woodvale is expected within the next 3 weeks, consultants have been appointed to undertake the economic appraisal and completion of this is expected also around the middle of December.

Discussions have continued with BRO who are still keen to support the refurbishment of both parks, subject to the findings of the economic appraisals. However, the committee will be aware that owing to the review of public administration BRO has a time constraint and must incur all expenditure by the end of March 2011.

The proposals for both parks have been submitted for inclusion in the Council's capital programme but are currently uncommitted. On completion of the economic appraisal and a firmer commitment from BRO regarding both schemes the Council will have to consider these proposals relative to other priorities and determine whether they should be elevated to committed status within the capital programme, subject to affordability limits.

#### Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following key points:

- It has been previously agreed that as part of the parks improvement programme there be advanced design work on two major parks in the city.

- It was agreed that the redesign of parks should include continuous involvement of the local community.
- Work has been ongoing in conjunction with local community groups, political representatives and BRO in respect of the refurbishment of both Dunville Park and Woodvale Park;
- Both parks are included within the neighbourhood renewal action plans for Falls/Clonard and Greater Shankill.
- Economic appraisals are currently underway for both parks to be completed by mid December, the results of which will determine which proposals are feasible.
- Both parks have been proposed for inclusion in the capital programme but have not been prioritised for capital investment.

#### Resource Implications

##### Financial

The proposal to refurbish Dunville and Woodvale Parks will have capital and revenue implications for the council. The Council's capital expenditure requirement for these two proposals would be in the order of £2m. There would also be revenue implications to determine once the scheme is approved.

##### Human Resources

To undertake major refurbishment of the parks will require significant effort on the part of officers from across the Council; this work can be carried out within existing resources.

##### Asset and Other Implications

The refurbishment of the parks will make a significant contribution to the quality of life of the community and will support neighbourhood renewal through delivery of the action plan.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report and commend the proposals to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for advancement into the 'committed' section of the capital programme."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### Parks Events Grant Scheme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th October, 2008 it had agreed to allocate a budget of £60,000 in respect of the Parks Events Grant Scheme, which had been distributed to 28 local community-based groups in order to encourage more events within the Council's Parks.

The Director pointed out that the Scheme, which had been welcomed by local community groups, was now entering its fifth year and the maximum grants available to individual Groups had been reduced gradually from £5,000 in 2005 to £2,250 in 2009. This had permitted 28 groups to be funded, resulting in over 30 events being held at the Council's Parks across the City. He stated that, although not all event report forms had been submitted yet, the feedback received had indicated that the number of participants had been similar to those in previous years and that the Scheme provided valuable support to local communities and encouraged greater ownership and use of the Council's Parks. He recommended that provision be made in the 2010/2011 Revenue Estimates for the continuation of the Parks Events Grant Scheme and requested that the Committee consider the four main funding options outlined hereunder:

Option 1: Discontinue the Scheme

This option would result in a cost reduction of £60,000, plus administration and advertising costs;

Option 2: Increase the budget allocation

Given that the maximum grant payable has been set at £2,250 and the majority of groups seek that amount, it would be necessary to increase the allocation by a minimum amount of £10,000 in order to make an impact;

Option 3: Decrease the budget allocation

Given that the amount of the maximum grant payable has been reduced from £5,000 to £2,250 to enable more groups to be supported, this option would result in a reduction of the amount payable and have a negative impact on the quality of events; and

Option 4: Maintain the Scheme at 2009 levels

By retaining the Scheme at 2009 levels, it would be possible to provide tangible support to a wide-range of local community groups to provide quality events at the Council's parks and open spaces and enhance community ownership.

The Director stated that it was proposed that the same criteria, which had been agreed by the former Parks and Cemeteries Sub-Committee at its meeting on 11th October, 2007, would be utilised to assess the applications. The Scheme would be advertised in the November issue of City Matters, with supplementary advertising in local community papers and information and application forms being made available on the Council's website. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee approve the continuation of the Parks Events Grant Scheme and approve also Option 4 as the preferred approach.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that a simplified application form be devised in relation to the Scheme.

**Belfast Zoological Gardens –  
Mountain Tea House**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report in relation to the progress achieved in respect of the options being developed for the replacement at the Belfast Zoo of the Mountain Tea House, which had been destroyed by fire, and noted also that a report in connection with the incidents of vandalism occurring at the Council's facilities would be submitted for its consideration at its meeting scheduled to be held on 12th November.

**Tenders for the Procurement  
of Goods and Services**

The Director sought and was granted authority to instigate tendering exercises for the appointment of a contractor in relation to the following items:

- (i) to supply and deliver for a period of one year, with the option to renew annually until 2012, two verti-drainers, the estimated cost of which was approximately £40,000 per annum;
- (ii) for the supply and delivery of high quality bedding plants for a period of one year, with an option to renew annually up until 2012, the estimated cost of which was approximately £79,000 per annum;
- (iii) to provide works to control invasive weed species, for a period of one year, with an option to renew annually until 2012, the cost of which would be approximately £33,000 per annum;
- (iv) to supply and deliver grounds maintenance plant and equipment, for a period of one year, with an option to renew annually until 2012, the estimated cost of which was approximately £180,000 per annum;
- (v) the provision of maintenance and small civil engineering works at the Council's Parks and Cemeteries properties throughout the City for a period of one year, with an option to renew annually up to a further three years, the cost of which would be approximately £360,000 per annum; and

- (vi) the provision of repair and maintenance services to fitness equipment at the Council's Leisure Centres for a period of twenty-seven months, commencing January, 2010 till March, 2012, with the option to renew annually for a further two years until 2014. The cost of the Service would be approximately £100,000 per annum.

In addition, the Committee noted that the tenders would be evaluated against criteria based on both cost and quality and, in accordance with the authority delegated to him, the Director would be accepting the most economically advantageous tender submitted.

**City of Belfast Playing Fields –  
Synthetic Cricket Wicket**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“Relevant Background Information**

The Committee is reminded that it received a deputation from the Northern Ireland Cricket Union on 13th March 2008 relating to the provision of cricket facilities throughout Belfast. Based on that meeting committee received a report on 14 May 2009 requesting approval to supply and install a synthetic cricket wicket at City of Belfast playing fields. This was agreed on the basis that Cliftonville Cricket Club would receive a grant of £3,000 from the Lord's Taverners charity and the council would provide £4,500 towards the supply and installation received.

However the Council has been informed by Cliftonville Cricket Club that their application for funding of £3,000 has been unsuccessful. This is because the location of the artificial wicket will be on Belfast City Council land.

In the interim, officers have been in contact with a major supplier of artificial cricket wickets. The supplier has inspected the site location and confirmed the lower base of the existing sub base is in good condition and does not need replacement as originally thought necessary. This has reduced the estimate to supply and install from an original estimate of £7,500 to an estimate of £6,000. This still leaves a shortfall of £1,500 from the original Belfast City Council committee approval to finance £4,500. It was highlighted that there was not sufficient finances in the budget for the site and that the shortfall would need to found from within other elements of the Parks and Cemeteries overall budget.

### Key Issues

The Committee will be mindful that:

- It has previously received a presentation on the issue of the under provision of facilities for cricket; and
- It will be receiving a report on the issue of playing field provision across a range of sports in due course.
- It had agreed on 14 May 2009 to fund £4,500 towards the cost of an artificial cricket wicket.

There is an opportunity to increase provision for cricket clubs at a relatively modest cost. In addition to the request by Cliftonville, the proposal has received support from:

- The Northern Cricket Union;
- Academy Cricket Club;
- Belfast International Cricket Club; and
- Cricket Ireland

All have expressed willingness and a desire to use such a facility.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial Implications

The cost of the works would incur a total expenditure in the region of £6,000 which has not been provided for in the revenue estimates for 2009/10. There is a property maintenance budget which could be used, however, this would further reduce the budget and would have an impact on other projects during the course of the year. The Parks and Leisure Committee has already approved expenditure of £4,500 for this purpose at its meeting on 14 May 2009.

There would be minimal revenue implications in terms of maintenance.

The life of the pitch would be in the region of 8 -10 years and would require replacement at the end of its useful life. This would be at an estimated cost of £6,000 based on 2009 figures.

The provision of the wicket will provide a modest source of income which would offset any small increase in revenue costs. At this time there is no pricing schedule and no firm figure on usage levels which would enable an estimated income to be established.

### Human Resource Implications

There are no additional human resource implications, other than officer time.

### Asset and other implications

The installation of the synthetic surface would improve provision.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee agree to the request to meet the shortfall of approximately £1,500 to install a synthetic cricket wicket at City of Belfast playing fields.”

The Committee agreed to accede to the request.

### Digitisation of Cemeteries Records Project

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that since June 2005 a project has been underway to capture in digital form the records of the Cemeteries Office dating back to 1869. This has been a corporately funded project under the direction of the Director of Corporate Services involving employees from the Cemeteries Office; ISB; and the Records Management Unit, Chief Executive’s Department.

As Members will be aware the Director of Corporate Services is shortly leaving the Council and, before the project is handed over to Parks and Leisure it was thought that it would be helpful for the Committee to receive an update on the considerable progress achieved and a re-assurance that the project is scheduled to be completed on time and to budget.

### Key Issues

#### Project information

This project was initiated, with considerable support from a number of key Members, to address the problems arising from the quickly deteriorating physical condition of the older burial and cremation records held by the Council. Kept for many years in a basement of the City Hall for reasons of security and to be easily accessible for the daily checks required for this important public service, the binding and pages of the books were reaching a point



where some of the older ones were at significant risk of loss if they continued to be handled. Several successive soakings over the years as the basement was subject to flooding had not helped. As a first step the records were moved out of the basement to a newly created temporary storage area on the second floor while a team involving the relevant services was established to address the issue.

At that stage some corporate funding was available to supplement the departmental resource and it was decided to undertake three strands of work

1. to create a high-quality digital record all of the data contained in the records of grants of burial, burial and cremation orders. This would permit the Cemeteries Office's employees to access the records in future without handling them and therefore protect the physical condition of the books as well as improving the efficiency of accessing the information;
2. concurrently to develop in-house a new record-keeping database compatible with the format of the information being digitised – this would enable the complete record stretching over 140 years to be in a single accessible source; and
3. as these continue to be administrative records of the Council which cannot be transferred to the Public Record Office for Northern Ireland, to create a greatly improved storage facility within the City Hall basements given the opportunity to do this was available in the context of the refurbishment of the building. This would give the Council, now and in the future, a confidence that these records are being cared for properly and effectively.

#### Current project successes

I am pleased to advise the Committee that all three strands have been successfully progressed and the overall aims for these important Council records are being achieved.

- a. Despite the original scanning company going into voluntary liquidation during the project, we successfully negotiated for another company to take on the work at no additional cost. By 31 March 2010 we will have created a high quality database of approximately half a million individual records at a cost of approx. £270,000. I will have a sample of the quality of the scanning work for Members to view at the meeting.

- b. Records relating to Cemeteries/Crematorium are being scanned at present in order to preserve an image of the relevant documents. Full data capture of the information held on these images is also taking place. Since February 2004 Cemeteries Office staff has been keying newly created information relating to Roselawn/City of Belfast Crematorium directly to the Cemeteries/ Crematorium database in preparation for full data capture of all records. With effect from April 2010 this will provide the Council with a seamless record pertinent to all burials/cremations from mid 1869 to the present day.
  
- c. The new storage area in the basement will provide a temperature and humidity controlled environment suitable to the longer-term storage of these and subsequent paper records for the Cemeteries staff. It is not done to a full archival specification as that is not the statutory role of the Council but it is vastly better than anything previously created by this organisation and reflects the importance of these records (similar improvements have been made for the storage of the Council's legal records). So as not to delay the digitisation project the cemetery records will not be moved from their current temporary location in a another council building until the project is completed.

#### Future use of information

Consideration is currently being given on how best to use these records and a report will be brought before the Committee on this issue in due course.

#### Continuing project governance arrangements

In terms of management of the project between the date on which the Director of Corporate Services leaves and its anticipated completion, I will agree who will chair the cross-departmental project board and report directly to me. I will bring a final report to the Committee by June 2010 at which time the Committee may wish to consider how the achievement of this task can be recognised and communicated to the public, bearing in mind that public accessibility to the database is within legislative constraints.

#### Resource Implications

The resources for this project are in place and it will be delivered within budget.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

1. note the progress to date and that the project is expected to be completed on time and to budget;
2. acknowledge the work of the cross-departmental project board and the staff currently involved in the data capture which will be over almost 5 years when the project is completed; and
3. agree the proposed arrangements for the management and reporting on the project in the future.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Siting of Memorial at Botanic Gardens**

The Director of Parks and Leisure reminded the Committee that, on 4th September, 2006, an accident had occurred at the former Dargan Road Landfill Site, which had resulted in the death of Mr. Ashley Cunningham. He reported that Mr. Cunningham's family had expressed a desire to have a memorial to him placed at the Botanic Gardens, which he would have visited, and had suggested that it take the form of a park bench and commemorative plaque. He informed the Members that the Health and Environmental Services Committee, at its meeting on 7th October, had agreed that the Parks and Leisure Committee be recommended to place in the Botanic Gardens a park bench and commemorative plaque as a memorial to Mr. Cunningham.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Conditions of Hire for Leisure Centres**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, it had agreed that, in order to ensure a consistent approach and to ensure also that the Council complied with its legal obligations, a review be undertaken corporately in relation to the condition of hire for Council premises.

The Director reported that the Chief Officers' Management Team had considered the matter and had agreed that the Director of Legal Services should undertake a review of the conditions of hire for Council premises and prepare a report for the consideration of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Accordingly, that Committee would be considering the matter in due course.

Noted.

**Replacement of Pool Cover and Associated Mechanisms  
at Andersonstown Leisure Centre**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“Relevant Background Information**

At a special meeting on 12th February 2009, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed revenue estimates for 2009/10 including £500,000 for the establishment of a corporate thematic budget to finance those elements of crosscutting work, which could not be delivered solely within functional budgets. Accordingly, as part of the Council’s Sustainable Development Action Plan 2009-2011, an application was submitted to the corporate thematic budget to support the delivery of a waste characterisation study for a range of council premises in the order of £35,000.

Delays in assigning the corporate budget have meant however, that the waste characterisation study cannot be completed fully within the 2009/2010 financial accounting period, resulting in an estimated £18,000 underspend. Chief Officers considered this underspend at their meeting of 23rd September 2009 and recommended that it be used to support other crosscutting work contributing towards the corporate strategic theme of better care for Belfast’s environment – a clean, green city now and for the future and as outlined within the Sustainable Development Action Plan.

Accordingly, as part of the Council’s energy conservation and carbon emission reduction activities, Chief Officers recommended that the £18,000 corporate strategy budget underspend be used to replace the pool cover and associated mechanism at Andersonstown Leisure Centre subject to Committee approval. The cost of a replacement pool cover and associated mechanism is estimated at £15,000.

**Key Issues**

The existing pool cover at Andersonstown Leisure Centre is 9 years old. Due to a collapse of the boom however, a complete new cover and housing is now required.

The Department of Finance and Personnel Public Sector Energy Campaign (PSEC) has identified that swimming pools are large energy consumers and, with rising energy costs, ensuring that the pool water evaporation rate is as low as possible is imperative.

High pool water evaporation rates occur in the absence of a pool cover, necessitating a high ventilation rate in the pool hall in order control humidity levels. High evaporation rates also increase the pool water-heating load leading to increased energy consumption and elevated energy bills.

The single most effective means of reducing evaporation from a pool is therefore via the installation and operation of an effective pool cover. Indeed, given that most swimming pools are unused overnight, but many maintain heating and ventilation regimes suitable for daytime occupancy, it is estimated that a well-fitting pool cover can reduce night-time energy usage by as much as 90%, giving overall energy savings of around 25%.

Research conducted in 1994 by The Sports Council, The Institute of Sport & Recreation Management (ISRM) and the Institute of Leisure Amenity Management (ILAM) has shown a swimming pool similar to Andersonstown, in Cardiff City Council installed a pool cover and the payback period on their investment was estimated at 1.6 years. Pool covers generally pay for themselves in energy savings alone in less than three years.

#### **Resource Implications**

##### **Financial**

Facilities Management have given estimated costs of £15,000 to replace the pool cover on the main pool at Andersonstown. On approval they will seek competitive quotations for this cover. Maintenance costs of £100 per year can be provided from existing budgets

##### **Human Resources**

N/A

##### **Asset and Other Implications**

N/A

#### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members approve the use of the £18,000 corporate strategy budget underspend to replace the pool cover and associated mechanism at Andersonstown Leisure Centre

**Key to Abbreviations**

**PSEC: The Department of Finance and Personnel  
Public Sector Energy Campaign**

**ISRM: The Institute of Sport & Recreation Management**

**ILAM: The Institute of Leisure Amenity Management”**

The Committee granted the approval sought.

**Support for Sport**

**Small Development Grants**

The Committee noted a Schedule of Support for Sport applications in relation to Small Scale 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 Modern.gov.

Chairman