

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 14th October, 2010

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor O'Reilly (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors Adamson, Cush, Hartley, Kyle, Mallon,
C. Maskey, Mac Giolla Mhín, McCabe, McCann,
McCarthy, McKenzie, L. Patterson, Robinson,
J. Rodgers and Stoker.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Head of Parks and Leisure; and
Miss L. Hillick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Ekin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 6th and 16th 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 4th October.

Roselawn Cemetery - Order of Cremation

The Director of Parks and Leisure drew the Members' attention to an incident involving the use of an Order of Cremation as a sign in a public toilet at the Crematorium at Roselawn Cemetery site.

After discussion, during which the Director reported that an investigation in relation to the matter was being undertaken currently, the Committee agreed that the Director and the Lord Mayor meet with the family concerned and that a report in relation to the incident be submitted for its consideration at a future meeting.

Parks Improvement Programme - Team Leaders

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

At the February 2010 Parks and Leisure committee Members were advised of the outcomes of the first phase of an operational efficiency review of Parks management arrangements. The review was undertaken to streamline and reconfigure the duties and responsibilities of Area Managers and Park Managers in order to more effectively and efficiently deliver the Parks and Cemeteries service.

As part of the operational efficiency review a number of significant changes have taken place within the service with operational boundaries redrawn; roles and responsibilities redefined, job profiles established for City Park and Community Park Managers and implementation of the voluntary redundancy trawl.

A further stage of the operational efficiency review has examined the allocation of Team Leaders within Parks operational areas. This report sets out the findings and recommendations from the review.

Key Issues

There is a requirement for parks and leisure services to be highly responsive and tailored to the needs of the community – an effective approach to community and customer engagement is required at the point of delivery as well as effective supervision of staff for the delivery of operational tasks.

The culture of the department generates a tendency towards upward delegation and a lack of decision making at the appropriate level for the Parks and Cemeteries Service. It is vitally important that decisions are made whenever possible at the point of service delivery in order to deliver a responsive, customer focussed service. For this reason it was important that the role of the Team Leader was thoroughly examined.

Team Leaders

Following on from the review of management arrangements, the Team Leader role has also been reviewed to assess the operational impact from the management tier and to identify further opportunities for efficiency and service improvement. It has been identified that the Team Leader post is underutilised and that the operation could be provided effectively with a reduction in numbers and a change to working practices.

It has been necessary to reconfigure the duties of the post to a new role with a designation of Community Park Supervisor at a notional grade of Scale 6. This will enable a clearer supervisory role within the parks newly defined geographical areas which will reflect the work of the newly created Community Parks Managers. This approach will promote additional accountability for the delivery of effective services on site and support the need for a more customer focused approach.

There are currently 26 Team Leader posts within the structure (plus an additional two who have been recruited on long term secondment). This recommendation will result in the Team Leader posts being reduced from 26 to 20. The additional two members of staff on secondment should be returned to their substantive posts. It is also recommended that the duties and responsibilities of this post are reconfigured and renamed as Community Parks Supervisors. There is agreement with staff and trade unions that this is the preferred proposal to improve efficiency, service and to empower supervisors at a local level. However to achieve this would require a voluntary redundancy exercise. The department has already asked for expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy and to date six members of staff have completed the VR2 forms.

It was reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24 September 2010 that the year end forecast for the council was currently £2.9m. Given that it is difficult to make an accurate forecast so early in the year, the Committee agreed to consider specific proposals for use of the forecast underspend of up to £1.9m at its meeting on 22 October 2010. It would be intended to submit this voluntary redundancy proposal as part of that process, subject to the P&L Committee approval. Should the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree to fund this VR proposal from the 2010/11 underspend, this would impact positively on the rate setting process for 2011/12.

Should it not be agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to fund this VR proposal from the 2010/11 underspend, further options for consideration will be reported back to the Parks and Leisure Committee at its November meeting.

Resource Implications

Financial

The financial implications of the deletion of these posts will result in a saving of £159,952. The estimated cost of voluntary redundancy is £248,097 with a claw back period of 1.55 years. Should the notional grade of the Community Park Supervisor post change to Scale 6 this would incur an additional cost of £43,780 and a claw back period of 2.2 years. This would be subject to the costs of £291,877 for this proposal being agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to be funded from the 2010/11 underspend. If this is the case, then the savings will be available for 2011/12.

Human Resources

The department and human resources have been fully involved in the development of these recommendations and the Trade Unions have also been fully consulted with and have agreed to the proposals contained within this report. The recommendations therefore comprise an 'agreed' position by both management and the Trade Unions.

The trade unions and staff will be fully consulted on the allocation of the new posts of Community Park Supervisors.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

- note the outcomes of the review of Team Leaders in Parks; and
- approve the submission of this proposal for the deletion of six Team Leader posts and the release of staff through voluntary redundancy for consideration for funding from the 2010/11 underspend by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 October 2010.

Decision Tracking

Action to be taken by Head of Parks and Leisure.”

After discussion, the Committee granted the approval sought.

Departmental Plan 2010/2011 Update

(Ms. C. Wilson, Policy and Business Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a progress report in relation to the implementation of the Departmental Plan 2010/2011 and the changes which would be made to the format of future progress reports.

Boost Card: Means-Tested Benefits

(Ms. C. Wilson, Policy and Business Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Since the implementation of the Boost leisure discount scheme in April 2006, Belfast residents in receipt of Means Tested Benefit (MTB) and their dependant children have availed of a flat rate discounted charge for accessing leisure services. Currently over 26,000 customers are taking advantage of the £1.25 charge in the MTB scheme.

The council agreed in 3 March 2008 to extend the scheme beyond the Belfast boundary. Approval to extend the scheme was provided by DOE on 21 March 2008 and DCAL on 6 January 2009.

Key Issues

In addition to the benefits already created by the scheme, the council has been requested to consider providing wider access to the MTB discount scheme to include participants in the Training For Success programme and asylum seekers.

A report was brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee in August 2010 outlining the case for providing wider access to the MTB discount scheme to include participants in the Training For Success programme and asylum seekers. At this meeting Members asked for confirmation of whether the proposed groups were means tested.

It has been confirmed that participants on the Training For Success programme are not means tested. The National Asylum Support (NAS) cash support payment is means tested.

Equality Issues

There are no equality implications in the extension of the scheme. However, as a matter of best practice an equality screening was carried out on the scheme and indicated no adverse impact on any of the Section 75 groups and therefore this can be screened out.

Resource Implications

Financial

There will be an increase in revenue but unquantifiable at present. However, MTB memberships are reported in performance reports.

Human Resources

The amount of officer time required to validate additional applications could be managed within existing structures.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. MTB criteria are extended so that the scheme can now be accessed by Asylum Seekers in receipt of payments from the Home Office National Asylum Support scheme.
2. MTB criteria does not include participants on the Training for Success programme, on the basis that it is not a means tested benefit.

Key to Abbreviations

MTB:	Means Tested Benefit
DCAL:	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
DOE:	Department of the Environment
NAS:	National Asylum Support.”

After discussion, it was

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

That the Committee agrees that the Boost Leisure Discount Scheme be extended to include participants on the Training for Success Programme and Asylum Seekers, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor Stoker,

That the matter be considered within the review of the Boost Leisure Discount Scheme.

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

Refurbishment of Floral Hall

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose

The purpose of the report is to set out a proposed way forward in respect of the refurbishment of the Floral Hall.

Relevant Background Information

The Committee is reminded that at a Special Meeting on 6 September 2010 it received a presentation from Consarc Consultants outlining proposals for the refurbishment of the Floral Hall. Some of the main conclusions from the report are as follows:

- The building is considered to be of growing heritage importance with the potential to attract a wide range of visitors and attractions;
- The structural fabric of the building is considered to be in a satisfactory condition; remedial works to the main building fabric are considered relatively straightforward and achievable.

The report sets out three main options:

- Option 1 is for Zoo Use Only at a cost of £3.8m;
- Option 2 is for events use only at a cost of £4.0m;
- Option 3 is for a combination of Zoo and event space use at a cost of 3.7m;

The recommended option is option 3. The report presents an outline case to support the economic sustainability of a refurbished Floral Hall. This is based on a model that builds on the 300,000+ visitors to the Zoo each year combined with the unique attraction offered by the Floral Hall to a wide range of potential users, private individuals and a myriad of organisations looking for something a little different.

The cost of option 3 excludes a range of fees and possible contamination works and also excludes interpretation and education, a more realistic figure is likely to be in the region of £5m.

- The report outlines a range of potential funding bodies that might assist with the development.
- It suggests that the project might be progressed along three steps:
 - Undertake immediate condition work at a cost of £360k (excl VAT and fees)
 - The development of a robust business case including concept drawings and associated costs; an economic appraisal; and management options;
 - Restoration works.

Current context

The current context is as follows:

- The Floral Hall is a listed building (B1 Status) owned by Belfast City Council;
- There is an element of current momentum to refurbish the building in so far as there is a range of stakeholders interested in delivering a sustainable building. These stakeholders include, Belfast City Council; NI Tourist Board; NI Environment Agency; Heritage Lottery Fund and Belfast Building Preservation Trust;
- A review of the 2004 feasibility study has been carried out and has concluded that a sustainable building and associated business is deliverable;
- The estimated capital cost of the project is in the region of £5m, no funding has been secured and there are no applications currently under consideration;
- It is view of the stakeholders that further work is required to reassure the potential stakeholders and funding bodies of the economic sustainability of the Floral Hall should it be refurbished;
- In addition, the council has commissioned a piece of work to assess the development options in relation to the Old Zoo lands adjacent to the Floral Hall.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee relates to the future of the Floral Hall itself and whether a refurbished building is both deliverable and sustainable and will not impose a further revenue burden on the rate. While there are a number of interested parties engaged in discussions about the Floral Hall, as the owner of the building it is primarily a matter for Belfast City Council to determine its future direction. In reaching its determination it is important to reflect on a range of issues including:

- The capital cost of refurbishment and associated funding sources;
- The revenue implications including increased running costs and income generation;
- The potential benefits of a refurbished Floral Hall, aligned to the business model for the Zoo and the wider Council's Corporate Objectives;
- Future management options; and
- Consideration of the status quo option.

The current context would suggest that a refurbished building, along the lines suggested in the feasibility study, would be able to generate sufficient income to meet its liabilities. However, the assessment to date is not sufficiently robust to enable a decision on this to be taken without a more detailed economic appraisal being completed. Such an economic appraisal would also be required by potential funding bodies and would clearly establish strategic fit, need, deliverability and sustainability.

At this time, the Committee must decide on how to move forward. The following section sets out options for consideration.

Option 1 – Proceed with refurbishment based on the feasibility study.

As outlined above, the Feasibility study has set out three main options. Its preferred option is to refurbish the Floral Hall and integrate it within the existing Zoo business at an estimated cost of £5m.

The study believes that the building would be sustainable in economic terms. However, it also alludes to the need for additional work to establish the case and define costs more accurately.

Option 2 – Seek to De-list the Floral Hall and demolish the building

The Committee will be aware that the refurbishment of the Floral Hall has been considered on several occasions over a number of years and that none of the proposals have resulted in the development of a deliverable or sustainable project. Clearly, given the condition of the Floral Hall the situation cannot be permitted to continue indefinitely. An alternative route to refurbishment would be demolition. However, the building is listed. Should the Council determine that the best course of action is demolition it would be necessary to make application to have the building de-listed. Our indications are that this would be resisted by the NI Environment Agency and potentially other, non statutory, but interested parties.

It would be the view of Officers that without having exhausted all other options that de-listing and demolition is not a viable option at this time. However, it would be appropriate to consider this within a wider economic appraisal process.

Option 3 – Adopt, in principle, the preferred option outlined in the feasibility study, subject to a more detailed economic appraisal

Within this option the Council is acknowledging the conclusion in the feasibility that there are grounds to support the view that the refurbishment of the Floral Hall is both deliverable and sustainable. By endorsing this option, subject to an economic appraisal, the Committee is presenting an opportunity for all stakeholders and interested parties to contribute to this project.

Within this option it is proposed that:

- An economic appraisal be commissioned and completed;
- The findings of the economic appraisal are presented to a future meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee for consideration;
- In addition, a funding strategy be presented to the Committee setting out potential funding opportunities and time scales for applications in support of refurbishment, on the assumption that the economic appraisal supports this option;

At this time a clear direction and associated project plan can be determined. It is also proposed that no remedial work be carried out until this study has been completed and a decision taken as to the future of the building itself.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of an economic appraisal will be in the region of £5-10,000 and will be commissioned through the Project Management Unit. The cost will be met from existing revenue budgets.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

The refurbishment of the Floral Hall would add a prestigious renovated and functioning building to the Council's asset base. However, members should be aware that the inclusion of the Floral Hall on the Capital Programme will have implications for other projects.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee adopt option 3, as outlined in the Options Section in this report and agree to the commissioning of an economic appraisal to further explore the deliverability and sustainability of the refurbishment of the Floral Hall.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Ligoniel Environmental Heritage Project

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose

The purpose of this report is to consider the Committee's position in respect of the presentation from representatives of the Ligoniel Improvement Association which was received by the Committee at a Special Meeting on 6 September 2010.

Relevant Background Information

The Committee will recall the presentation by representatives from the Ligoniel Improvement Association in respect of proposals to create and improve access from the Forthriver and Glencairn up through Ligoniel, its parks, dams and rivers and on into the Belfast Hills.

The Association itself is funded and exists with its own constitution. The Association is focused on two major projects; the environmental heritage project is the one which impacts on Belfast City Council. The other project relates to the development of its current site and has no Council involvement.

Figure 1 attached provides a graphical illustration of the proposal. The Committee will note that the proposal, which is in its early stages, impinges on several Council owned and managed parks, Forthriver, Glencairn, Glenbank Park and Ligoniel Park.

The Committee agreed at its meeting on 10 June 2010 to support the Ligoniel Improvement Association's application to Biffaward (Landfill Communities Fund Scheme) for funding for phase 2 of its project located around the old dams at Wolf Hill. The Committee also agreed to make a financial contribution of £5,116.14 to support the application.

At this point the Council is not being asked for additional funding. However the Association wishes to:

- obtain Council support to the principle of creating and improving access through this part of the City to the surrounding Hills
- position the project within the context of Council Plans and Strategies
- seek the continued support of Council Officers to work with and guide the Association in the further development of this project.

The Association wishes the council to note that through the project it is intended that a positive contribution can be made to benefit the city in terms of:

- Increased opportunities for walking which would improve aspects of health and well being
- Improved access across the city which would help build community cohesion and shared space

- Increased opportunities for education and awareness which would help promote, protect and protect the natural environment
- Increased opportunities to attract visitors and groups of people to the area through interpretation strategies which tell the history of the area and its contribution to the development of the city.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee to note that the project is consistent with the Open Spaces Strategy in terms of the desirability of connecting people and our open space. Through this project the potential exists to create links between discrete pieces of open space and other parts of the public realm to create access through this part of North Belfast to the Belfast Hills and to create further connectivity with its neighbours in the West of the City.

Resource Implications

Financial

There are no additional financial implications at this time.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

If delivered this project would greatly enhance access between West and North Belfast and into the Belfast Hills and would help promote the natural environment.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Note the content of the report
2. Agree in principle to support the concept of the Ligoniel Environment Heritage Project
3. Incorporate, where appropriate, the project within the Departmental Plan;
4. Agree to continued Officer involvement with the Association to support and guide the project as appropriate
5. Agree to receive a update report at a future meeting and no later than September 2011."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Shankill Community Greenway

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose

The purpose of this report is to establish a position with regard to the proposal to develop the Shankill Greenway. This position would relate to:

- supporting of the concept in principle; and
- establishing a working relationship with the partnership to pursue the vision and to ensure that the potential implications for BCC are taken into account

Relevant Background Information

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in June 2010 it agreed to receive a presentation in respect of proposals to develop a Shankill Greenway. The Committee received the presentation from representatives of the Greater Shankill Partnership Board (GSPB) on 6 September.

Members will recall that the proposed greenway has been divided into three distinct geographical zones:

- Shankill;
- Woodvale; and
- The Hills.

Each of these zones consists of a number of bespoke standalone potential projects which when joined together will form the Greenway. There are approximately 28 key individual locations within the overall concept. The Partnership wishes to develop these individual projects in collaboration with the relevant organisation. Belfast City Council is a significant partner for a number of reasons:

- It is a major landowner and its open spaces at St Michaels, Shankill Rest Garden, Woodvale Park, Ballygomartin, Forthriver and Glencairn will be integral in the development of the greenway.
- The Committee will be aware that the Council, through the Parks and Leisure Committee, provide financial support to the Belfast Hills Partnership and is represented on the Partnership at both elected Member and Officer level.

- In addition, the Council corporately can offer support to the project through its roles in arterial routes, tourism development, culture, arts and heritage and community safety. Further, the Council's experience in issues relating to land acquisition and disposal and the delivery of capital projects, combine to provide an important suite of skills.

Current context

The Director of Parks and Leisure currently represents the Council on the GSPB Steering Group.

Through its presentation to Committee the GSPB wishes to continue its relationship with Belfast City Council and envisages that Parks and Leisure will be the primary conduit through which this relationship is maintained and developed.

However, it is important to note that Belfast City Council also engages with the GSPB on a range of matters. Of specific relevance to the development of the Greenway there are the relationships with Arterial Routes, Tourism, and the Community Safety Team and discussions with Parks and Leisure. The success of the project will require the support of these and other Officers within the Council such as from within the Property and Projects Department.

Key Issues

Strategic fit

The project is broadly consistent with the Council's aims and objectives and proposes to deliver beneficial outcomes in areas such as:

- community cohesion
- health and well being
- the environment and
- economic growth and prosperity.

Deliverability and sustainability

At this time the proposal is largely conceptual in nature. It is an ambitious project and the estimated cost is in the region of £65-£78m. Issues around deliverability and sustainability remain to be worked up. However, the Partnership has identified a number of priority projects attached to each of the three main zones and it may be possible to focus on elements of these to optimise the cost benefit.

Delivery and sustainability will be largely dependent on securing appropriate levels of capital and revenue expenditure. At present there is no dedicated funding in place to deliver the project. There is some funding in existing Belfast City Council revenue budgets in respect of those sites along the greenway. Therefore, securing capital funding is a key issue and a high risk for the project as a whole.

Support for the project

The Committee will recall that at the meeting on 6 September 2010 whilst members stressed the challenging financial times that faced Councils and funding organisations there was general support for the principle of having a vision and high level plan for the area.

Governance

The key issue for Committee is its support in principle for the project in principal and the working relationship between Council Officers and the GSPB.

Resource Implications

Financial

There are no additional financial implications at this time.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resources at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

The development of a Greenway would greatly improve mobility across the city and has the potential to contribute in a positive way to other strategic outcomes including community cohesion, environmental improvement, community safety and economic growth.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Agree to support the concept of a Community Greenway located within the Greater Shankill Area stretching from the lower Shankill to the Belfast Hills and creating the potential for physical links through to the North of the City, the East and the West;

2. **Agree to continue to work in collaboration with the Partnership Board through Officer involvement in discussions to develop the overall concept and individual elements of the greenway;**
3. **Agree that plans and proposals regarding our parks and open spaces are developed in a sensitive manner towards the greenway; and**
4. **Agree to receive periodic progress reports as necessary.**

Key to Abbreviations

GSPB – Greater Shankill Partnership Board.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Ulster Farmers' Union

The Director of Parks and Leisure reminded the Committee that a tier-three assessment, including hydrogeological modelling had indicated that the site at Lisleen would be suitable as a potential site for the Council's future burial provision. In addition, he reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 16th September, it had agreed that:

- (i) a robust business plan be developed in relation to the development of additional crematorium facilities and the extension of the Roselawn Cemetery;
- (ii) officers make arrangements for site investigations at the Dundrod sites, with priority to be given to the site offered through the expressions of interest process;
- (iii) the Nutt's Corner site was not suitable as a potential site for a new burial cemetery;
- (iv) legal advice on the implications for potential future compulsory purchases be sought; and
- (v) an update newsletter be sent to all potentially affected landowners and other key stakeholders.

The Director stated that, throughout the process of site investigations in relation to the Lisleen site, the landowners had expressed concern regarding the implications of the burial land's project for their land holdings. In this regard, the Ulster Farmers' Union, on behalf of their members residing within the vicinity of the Lisleen site, had written to the Council seeking an opportunity to present their concerns to the Committee. Accordingly, he requested that the Committee consider the request which had been received from the Ulster Farmers' Union.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor J. Rodgers,

That the Committee agrees to withdraw its interest in the Lisleen site as a potential location for the Council's future burial provision.

On a vote by show of hands three Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to accede to the request which had been received from the Ulster Farmers' Union.

Ulster Sports Museum

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th November, 2008, it had received a presentation from representatives of the Ulster Sports Museum Association in relation to the development of an Ulster Sports Museum at the Old Museum building located at College Square North. The Director reported that, for various reasons, the Association had been unable to proceed with the establishment of the Museum at that site. However, the organisation had continued to expand its plans to develop a permanent Museum by 2012 and had advertised to identify those potential partners which would be interested in hosting the museum. Accordingly, Bangor, Belfast and Newtownabbey had been selected as the preferred locations for the Museum and, in relation to Belfast site, the Association had proposed locating the facility at the former Bank of Ireland building at Royal Avenue.

The Director reported that consultants had been appointed to assess the feasibility of the location and the Association had outlined the possible arrangements for developing the Museum as follows:

- (i) the host City or Town would meet the capital costs of providing the premises and would then lease them back to the Association;
- (ii) the Association meet the costs of fitting out and running the Museum; and
- (iii) the relevant District Council would make an annual grant to the Association to cover the leasing and other costs.

The Committee was advised that Council officers had met with representatives of the Association to discuss their proposals for locating the Sports Museum within the City and that, at this stage, it was unclear whether the former Bank of Ireland building would be suitable. It would therefore be necessary for the feasibility study to be completed.

The Director pointed out that, given the current economic situation, finding additional funding in the 2011/2012 financial year to support the leasing costs of the building would be unlikely and any costs would be recurrent on an annual basis.

The Association had been encouraged to look at alternative sources of funding for the project. He reported that, should the current process in which the Association was engaged not prove successful, it would revisit its options for the development of the Museum.

The Director then drew the Committee's attention to correspondence which had been received from Mr. R. Spence, Chairman, Ulster Sports Museum, requesting that the Council provide an indication, in principle, if it would consider becoming involved in a partnership arrangement. At this stage, it was not possible to accurately determine the annual leasing costs for the preferred Belfast site. However, based on initial discussions with the Association, costs could be in the region of £80,000 to £120,000 per year, provision for which had not been made within the draft 2011/2012 Revenue Estimates. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to continue to support the concept of an Ulster Sports Museum but indicate to the Association that it would not be possible currently to make a financial contribution to the project.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed to assist the Association to pursue other funding options.

Cemeteries' Records

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Purpose

To advise Members of the progress being made regarding digitisation of cemeteries records and to bring forward proposals for making these records available on-line.

Relevant Background Information

The Parks and Leisure Committee will recall that in 2006 a contract was awarded for the scanning of Council-owned cemetery records and keying of cemetery data into electronic format. This project, which encompassed the scanning of all burial/cremation orders, grave leases records and a data capture exercise, was completed in March 2010. This provides the Council with a significant information asset.

The next stage of the project entails the provision of a web site which will enable members of the public to search the Council's burial records at anytime.

Key Issues

It is recommended that this project is considered over 3 phases using the following approach:

Phase 1

In line with the EU Services Directive making information accessible to the public as soon as possible.

Steps involved:

- **Importing of records into Cemetery system**
- **Creation of a search facility for these records**
- **Improving customer service by making this information available to the public via the Councils website**
- **Information displayed as a summary of selected fields in tubular form**
- **Record verification via customer-enabled correction facility**
- **Market testing of options to charge for the viewing/printing of burial order images.**

Issues:

Certain fields are subject to data protection legislation. Data protection legislation applies to the data relating to living individuals. However there is information on the burial orders e.g. grave owner details that could be 'live data'.

As a result of meetings with the Councils' Records Officer and with Legal Services it has been agreed that certain fields should not be shown.

The information that has been recorded is currently undergoing an accuracy check to reduce factual error. It is proposed that the information is displayed in its current format with the option to submit corrections should any spelling mistakes or other errors be noticed by users.

This phase will be completed by January 2011 and will run as a pilot for 3 months to gauge public interest in the records.

Phase 2

Facility for the public to view and print burial records, these are the digital images of actual records.

It is anticipated that this phase would be progressed with Committee approval with a review of Phase 1 based on take up of the service and assessment of demand.

Steps involved:

- **Update web pages to allow the public to view and print burial records**
- **Redacting (blinking) of record information which is protected by the Data Protection Act and Legal perspective**
- **Option to create charging to recover redacting costs or potential income stream**

Issues:

- Images could only be viewed when certain parameters e.g. grave owner name/grave owner address have been supplied.
- It is essential that owner details are known before a burial can be confirmed so that an individual can be buried in the right place. These details are also requested in the sensitive situations that require a grave to be re-opened, and so it is important that only the relevant people should have this information to avoid staff disclosing incorrect information to families.

Potential Phase 3

A complete historical picture of burial records for Belfast

- Investigation regarding potential collaboration with Milltown Cemetery
- Investigation regarding funding

This phase would be an opportunity to explore the possibility of completing the historical picture for the city and increase the value of our city heritage. It is proposed that this phase would include a series of meetings to assist Milltown with finding the income that they require to carry out a scanning and data capture exercise similar to the one that we have completed. It is anticipated that this would be a local project that may be able to benefit from heritage and lottery funding and that systems developed for Belfast City Council could be extended to allow access to this information.

The following issues have been considered and will need to be reviewed in the design of the full service:

- Data protection legislation
- Legal issues
- Consultation with other public sector organisations
- Options to charge for information

Resource Implications

Financial

It is planned that Phase 1 will be completed by January 2011 developed using internal resources in ISB.

Human Resources

ISB Project Team with input from Cemeteries office

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to approve the recommendation that Phase 1 is implemented and that market research is undertaken.

After discussion, the Committee granted the approval sought and authorised the Director of Parks and Leisure to investigate the possibility of undertaking a visit to the Glasnevin Cemetery in order to view the facilities thereat.

**Lease of Containers at
Parks and Leisure Facilities**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to the use of containers at Parks and Leisure facilities to enable further information to be obtained.

Parks Events Small Grants Scheme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th October, 2009, it had agreed to allocate a budget of £60,000 in respect of the Parks Events Small Grants Scheme, which had been distributed to twenty-six 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 6th year and the maximum grant available to individual groups had been reduced gradually from £5,000 in 2005 to £2,250 in 2010. This had permitted twenty-six groups to be funded, resulting in forty-two events being held at the Council's parks across the City. He stated that the Scheme continued to be popular with community groups, churches, friends' groups and other organisations and that approximately 38,000 people had attended events which had been funded by the Scheme. He requested that the Committee consider whether it wished provision to be made within the 2011/2012 revenue estimates for its continuation and requested that the Committee consider the four main funding options outlined hereunder:

- Option 1: Continue the Scheme at the 2010 level;
- Option 2: Reduce the level of budget allocation to £50,000;
- Option 3: Increase the budget to £70,000; and
- Option 4: Discontinue the Scheme.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee approve the continuation of the Parks Events Grants Scheme and approve also Option 1 as the preferred approach.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Exchange of Land at Annadale Embankment
with Northern Ireland Water**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

To advise Committee of the proposal.

Relevant Background Information

The Council has been approached by Northern Ireland Water who wish to upgrade the Pumping Station facilities at the junction of Sunnyside Street and Annadale Embankment to replace an existing one in the vicinity. The aim is to reduce the amount of overflow discharge to the River Lagan at peak times and to screen discharges to vastly reduce or eliminate the discharge of solid matter to the River.

The planned new Pumping Station is to be located in relatively close proximity to the existing facility for engineering and cost reasons. The exact location will be determined by the suitability of the Council land for vehicle access and egress and to satisfy DRD Roads Service sightline requirements.

The main holding tank and pumping station will be located underground and the majority of the site will be surfaced with reinforced grass (grass-crete or similar). The area above the 9 metre diameter tank and pumping station will be formed in concrete hardstanding. Two control cabinets approximately 2.4 metres high will be located, above ground, on the site, adjacent to the public footway. A 4 metre high vent stack and aerial will be installed close to the cabinets. Landscape Planning and Development Unit, within Parks and Cemeteries Services Section consider that finishing the site with reinforced grass will assist in minimising the visual impact of the scheme and that no additional screen planting is desirable at this location. In Planning terms the site is currently open space to which PPS 8 applies. It also falls within the draft BMAP ‘River Lagan/Botanic Local Landscape Policy Area’. It falls outside the road protection corridor for the southern approaches SuperRoute. Full Planning Permission for the NI Water scheme at this location was granted on 7 June 2010 having been passed by the Town Planning Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2010 without comment.

The site of an existing NI Water pumping station which NI Water would consider disposing of to the Council in part exchange for the land required for the new pumping station. In view of the existing use of the area outlined blue, acquisition of this portion by the Council would be subject to provision of suitable decommissioning works being carried out by NI water and the provision of an indemnity to the Council in terms of any potential contamination which may lie within this area or emanate from it.

Under the provisions of The Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, NI Water are precluded from compulsorily acquiring land from any public body unless the compulsory acquisition has been approved by a resolution of the Assembly. For this reason NI Water are seeking to acquire the subject land from the Council by agreement and have instructed Land and Property Services (LPS) to negotiate potential purchase of the land on their behalf. Following negotiations with LPS the following levels of value have been agreed subject to approval by NI Water and relevant Council Committee(s).

- (i) Disposal of approximately 541 square metres (0.134 acres) for £27,000.

OR

- (ii) Disposal of land at i) plus acquisition of approximately 87 square metres (0.22 acres) on the basis of a net receipt to the Council of £24,500.

Key Issues

Proposed acquisition of Council land by Northern Ireland Water 'by agreement'. If the Council object to disposal of the land then for NI Water to proceed with compulsory acquisition they would require approval by resolution of the Assembly in order to proceed.

Resource Implications

Financial

Modest capital receipt reflects proposed low key use and existing planning status.

Human Resources

No additional human resources required.

Asset and Other Implications

It is proposed that use of the land be restricted to NI Water's statutory functions and that if their need for those purposes ceased, then the land would be offered back to the Council. As referred to in the body of this report, acquisition of the area outlined blue would be subject to adequate reassurances being provided by NI Water. The proposed new pumping station is likely to initiate the installation of additional sewers across adjoining Council land. Any such sewer installations remain subject to separate compensation payments to be negotiated between the Council and NI Water in due course.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to note that the disposal of approximately 541 square metres and acquisition of approximately 87 square metres for a net receipt to the Council of £24,500 is recommended, subject to ratification by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 60 and further subject to title and an appropriate legal agreement to be drawn up by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive.

Key to Abbreviations

DRD – Department for Regional Development
BMAP – Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
NI Water – Northern Ireland Water
LPS – Land and Property Services”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Road Widening Scheme at Sydenham By-Pass

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report providing an update in relation to proposals to widen the road at the Sydenham By-Pass.

Land at Slievegallion Drive

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose

To update Members on the position in relation to the site of the former Social Security Offices at Slievegallion Drive, adjoining an area of Council owned land; and to ascertain if they would wish to have the acquisition and development of this site considered as part of the Council's Capital Programme, to be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Relevant Background Information

The site of the former Social Security offices at Slieveban Drive/Slievegallion Drive was recently declared surplus by the Department of Finance & Personnel, and the availability of the site was trawled to all public sector bodies under the LPS Central Advisory Unit trawling process. The subject site extends to an area of 0.93ha (2.3 acres) and adjoins Council owned land at Slievegallion Drive which is currently used as informal open space.

Members will be aware that a pitches strategy is currently being prepared by officers for their consideration, and whilst it is indicating a need for Gaelic pitches, the Council's land at Slievegallion hasn't been specifically prioritised. The Council's land could accommodate a soccer pitch without the need for additional lands, but it is not big enough for a Gaelic pitch. Historically a Gaelic pitch was marked out on the Council's site; however this did not meet the current minimum size requirements of the GAA.

Given the tight (3 week) timeframe for lodging expressions of interest with LPS, an initial expression of interest was therefore made to LPS by Council Officers in respect of the Social Security Offices site, with a view to potentially developing this site together with the Council's existing land, for the purpose of a 3rd generation Gaelic hybrid pitch, changing facilities and car parking. This was on the basis that further detailed consideration would be required in terms of working up costs, ascertaining its strategic fit with the emerging pitches strategy and affordability and prioritisation within the Council's Capital Programme. Expressions of interest to LPS are not binding in any way but provide a further timeframe within which more detailed consideration can be given as to whether the land should be acquired.

However, the NIHE via their nominated Housing Association is also interested in acquiring the site for social housing purposes and North & West Housing Association has been nominated to develop the site in the event that they can acquire the lands. DSD have indicated that funding would be available for site acquisition in this financial year although North & West Housing Association have indicated that as their acquisition would be subject to planning and appointment of design team etc it is essential that they commence this process within the next couple weeks.

Given the site's suitability for housing, LPS have confirmed that the value of the site will be based on housing value and not open space/recreational values. The indicative site valuation provided by LPS is £1M/£1.25M. It should also be noted that there are considerable differences in level between the Council's land and the subject site, which would result in significant increased development costs and a requirement for retaining structures as well as ball stop and additional perimeter fencing.

Detailed costings to acquire and develop this site can only be prepared when there is more clarity on the nature and specification of any facilities to be provided and an agreed valuation for the site. However, indicative figures at this stage would indicate a cost of circa £3.5/£3.7m which reflects that the land value will be based on housing land values; development of a 3rd generation hybrid pitch (with additional costs due to level differentials between the two sites), retaining structures, changing facilities, and demolition of the existing offices. In addition, empty rates would be payable in respect of the social security offices pending demolition.

Council officers have also been in discussion with the principal of the de La Salle College with a view to ascertaining potential for developing a soccer pitch on the Council's Slievegallion site. Discussions on this are at a preliminary stage and whilst funding will remain an issue, the cost of development of the Council's site for soccer will be considerably less than the estimated cost of £3.5/£3.7m (as above) as there will be no site acquisition costs, demolition costs or increased costs as a result of site level differentials.

There are other sites in the area which could be suitable for GAA pitches, for e.g. the Council's land at North Link, which is within close proximity of Slievegallion.

LPS have advised that a Ministerial Briefing was held recently in respect of this site and following this it was agreed that, in light of the two competing interests, a timetable must be put in place to ensure that the decision making process of assessing which interested party has the greatest need is completed as soon as possible. LPS have informed the Council that they are required to prepare a business case for the proposed use by 10 November and confirm that funding is available for the transfer this financial year. Both parties are to submit their business case and the Minister will have to agree which need has the greater priority. If no business case is available from the Council by 10 November its interest will be withdrawn and a transfer to the nominated Housing Association will be progressed accordingly.

Members should be aware that given the tight timeframes no decisions have been made as to the suitability or prioritisation of this site as a potential Gaelic pitch and there is currently no identified funding for development of these lands. The acquisition and development of these lands would have to be considered as part of the Council's Capital Programme which will need to go the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Key Issues

- Site of former Social Security Offices at Slievegallion Drive, declared surplus by DFP, trawled to all public sector bodies by LPS. Adjoins Council owned land currently used as informal open space.
- Initial expression of interest made to LPS, with a view to potentially developing this site together with the Councils existing land, for the purpose of a 3rd generation Gaelic hybrid pitch, changing facilities and car parking.
- NIHE via their nominated Housing Association also wish to acquire land for purposes of social housing.
- Business Case to be submitted to LPS by 10 November, together with confirmation that funding will be in place this financial year.
- Indicative site acquisition and development costs are likely to be in the region of £3.5M /£3.7M.
- The subject site has not been prioritised as a Gaelic pitch in terms of the emerging Pitches Strategy and there is currently no identified funding in the Capital Programme for site acquisition or development of these lands.
- If the land value for the site was based on open space (recreational use) this would be a reasonable acquisition for future pitch provision and therefore the committee could ask the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider acquiring the site as part of this year's capital programme. However, given the site's suitability for housing and the LPS indicative valuation of £1m/£1.25m it does not appear to be value for money for pitch provision given the limited funds available for capital works.
- This land is shown as white land in the BMAP and whilst this has no specific zoning as it lies within the development limit and has been previously developed the presumption will be in favour of development. However it should be noted that the valuation has not been agreed yet and will be subject to negotiations between LPS and the purchaser.

Resource Implications

Financial

Detailed costings to acquire and develop this site can only be prepared when there is more clarity on the nature and specification of any facilities to be provided and an agreed valuation for the site. However, indicative figures at this stage would indicate a cost of circa £3.5/£3.7m, with future ongoing maintenance and renewal cost implications. There is currently no identified funding in the Capital Programme for this proposal.

Human Resources

Staff Resource to progress any proposals.

Asset and Other Implications

The development of the subject land together with the Council's adjoining lands would result in an improved recreational facility for this area.

Recommendations

It is recommended that, given the current proposed site acquisition costs, the Committee inform the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that this does not represent a value for money proposition for pitch provision and therefore the expression of interest should be withdrawn."

After a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor McKenzie,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation contained within the report.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Mac Giolla Mhín,
Seconded by Councillor Cush,

That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be notified that the Committee wishes to maintain its interest in the site.

On a vote by show of hands eight Members voted for the amendment and six against and it was accordingly declared carried. The amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion with eight Members voting in favour and six against.

Security at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of the Report

To propose revised security arrangements at Wilmont House and the Stables, both located at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.

Relevant Background Information

Concerns have been raised about the associated cost of the proposed CCTV system previously recommended to Committee in 2009 and its possible effectiveness to adequately tackle the main identified risks to Wilmont House and the Stables which are:

- arson through malicious intent or negligence by intruders;
- burglary;
- theft; and
- criminal damage.

The Security Manager has identified other works which are needed and another option for improving the security of these buildings which may be more effective than the proposed CCTV system.

The physical security of the building is currently being improved by minor building works on existing features and improvements to doors and windows. A recent survey at Wilmont House identified that the intruder and fire alarms must be upgraded and the fire alarm extended to include the annex.

Key Issues

The Security Manager has reviewed the risks to the Stables and Wilmont House and identified 3 options for the provision of security at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park:

Option 1. Leave the present on site security arrangements in place i.e. a security officer on duty on site Monday to Friday 1900 – 0700 and 24 hours at weekends. This option is expensive but provides on site cover after grounds staff leave the site to provide an immediate response to any intrusions. The cost is estimated at £46,444 per annum.

Option 2. Remove the security guard and install the proposed CCTV system as recommended by Committee in 2009. This option leaves the building on this relatively isolated site relying on a quick response to alarms as no one will be based on the site at the most vulnerable times.

The capital outlay is expensive, the camera images would be expensive to transmit and the resource for 24 hour monitoring is not available. The initial outlay cost is £103,500 with an estimated maintenance cost of £10,000 per annum.

Option 3. Reduce the manned guarding hours by approximately 45% focusing on a guard being present at higher risk times e.g. in the summer when young people are about in the clear nights. A small local CCTV system at Wilmont House would need to be installed to cover the front and rear doors.

In the summer months from 1 April – 30 September security cover would be provided during the week from 19.00-03.00, on Saturdays 16.00 – 04.00 and Sundays 16.00 – 03.00. In the winter months during the week from 19.00 – 03.00, on Saturdays 16.00 - 03.00 and Sundays 16.00 – 02.00. The cost of the small CCTV improvements recommended are estimated at £8,500 and the security cover would be approximately £25,287 per annum.

Resource Implications

Financial

It has been identified that the fire and intruder alarm system must be upgraded at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park to bring it up to an appropriate standard to protect the Council assets at an estimated cost of £26,000. In addition:

- Option 1 Cost of security staff, full time - £46,444.00 per annum.
- Option 2. Initial costs of security system - £103,500.00
Annual rental cost of fibre link - £10,000.00 per annum.
- Option 3. Initial cost of small CCTV system - £8,000.00
Cost of reduced security staff – £25,287.00 per annum.
Giving an annual saving of £21,157.00.

This would represent an annual saving on security manning of £21,157.00 over the levels proposed in Option 1 and only an additional running cost per annum of £11,157.00

All of the costs listed above exclude VAT. A budget has been allocated to undertake the works as approved by Committee of £95,000 in this financial year.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

Assets

The installation of improved CCTV, intruder and fire alarm systems will provide a safeguard to these isolated buildings.

This option would present a detriment to network performance when transmitting a high volume of images over the corporate network.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to Option 3 reducing the manned guarding hours by approximately 45% focusing on a guard being present at higher risk times and the installation of a small local CCTV system at Wilmont House to cover the front and rear doors.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Northern Ireland Water Service – Lease of Land at Ormeau Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to obtain Committee approval to dispose of small portions of land within Ormeau Park to NI water to facilitate work to improve the quality of the sewage infrastructure and to facilitate future management and maintenance of the structures required.

Relevant Background Information

Northern Ireland Water wish to upgrade the storm overflow plant currently installed underground near the main entrance to Ormeau Park. The purpose of the works is to improve the quality of any storm overflow waters which enter the River Lagan from the sewerage system. The work includes installation of a series of new underground pipes, cables and ducts as well as a substantial underground chamber.

Normally all these works would be carried out under NI Water's statutory powers and there would be no requirement to enter into formal Wayleave or other legal arrangements. In this case the normal approach will apply to all the 'below ground' installations, however there are some elements which will have a long term presence at ground level and above ground. In the case of these elements the Council will lose use of small areas of the Park. Council officers wish to ensure that the visible structures required are adequately maintained by NI Water at this important location close to the 'Listed' gates which form the main entrance to the Park. For these reasons NI Water has agreed to take small portions of land on lease from the Council with the lease stipulating requirements in relation to repair, graffiti removal and decoration.

There has been discussion with NI Water and their consultants to optimise the location of the structures and to minimise their size and visual impact. NI Water has also agreed to carry out agreed landscaping works around the above ground structures. NI Water will carry out all works at their own expense, including installation of an access path and re-surfacing of the main driveway following completion of the installations. The Planting Schedule shows the agreed new planting areas and species of plants which have been agreed with the Park Manager.

During the course of the works NI Water intend to set up a site compound immediately inside the main entrance gates to the Park. Pedestrian access to the Park will be maintained during the course of the works which are anticipated to last for a period of approximately 9 months. Following completion of the works NI Water will require periodic access to maintain their installations. This is likely to involve pedestrian access twice a month. In the unlikely event of out of hours access being required this would be by arrangement with the Park Manager who will remain as keyholder for the site.

Key Issues

It is proposed to lease to NI Water the three small portions of land. On the southern side of the main entrance the land will contain a surface level access cover and surrounding plinth in total measuring 4.2 metres x 1.8 metres. The northern area will house a steel cabinet measuring 3.1 metres x 1.0 metres x 1.58 metres high and surrounding concrete base. The small circular area shows the approximate location of a 4 metre high x 150 mm diameter vent stack which will be located among taller trees. NI Water will be granted a right of way to the steel cabinet via the area shown shaded yellow and will be responsible for construction of a path and its subsequent maintenance.

The lease arrangement agreed with NI Water (subject to Committee approval) would be for 99 years with NI Water paying to the Council a one off capital amount of £500. Use of the land other than for management of Storm Overflows will not be permitted and NI Water would be given the option to terminate the arrangement and reinstate the land should they no longer require the relevant equipment at this location.

Resource Implications

Financial

Modest capital receipt would become payable by NI Water on grant of the lease. All capital costs to be met by NI Water. No additional maintenance costs to the Council are anticipated.

Human Resources

No additional human resources required.

Asset and Other Implications

While ideally the Council would wish to preserve the integrity of this part of Ormeau Park the proposed arrangements minimise the impact of the proposed NI Water scheme which is seen as being in the wider public interest.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agree to the disposal of the portions of land outlined to NI Water, on a 99 year lease for the sum of £500, subject to detailed terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager, Property and Projects Department, a suitable legal agreement to be drawn up by the Town Solicitor and subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and 60.

Key to Abbreviations

NI Water – Northern Ireland Water.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Drumglass Park Storm Sewer

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that Northern Ireland Water was undertaking work to reduce the impact of high rainfall on the City's combined foul and storm sewerage system and, in order to do so, the organisation was working, where possible, to divert storm water away from the combined system.

He advised the Members that the existing sewers at the Drumglass Park discharged water into the combined sewer which continued under the Lisburn Road. In this regard, Northern Ireland Water had proposed to install a new stretch of storm sewer beneath the Park which would go on to link into the existing storm sewer network. He stated that Northern Ireland Water had worked with the Council to agree a preferred route within the Park and, in order to minimise the impact on existing mature trees and to maintain access to the public toilets during the installation works, had agreed also to minimise disruption to park users and to bring plant and machinery on the site by routes which had been agreed by the Park Manager. It was anticipated that the construction of the new sewer would take place during the period from October, 2010 to March, 2011. The works were being carried out under Northern Ireland Water's statutory powers and no wayleave or other legal agreement would be required. The organisation had indicated that it would be responsible solely for security and all third-party liabilities arising from the works, including the full reinstatement of the site.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Hallowe'en Tour

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from Allen Tours Limited to hold thirty-seven ghost tours at the Balmoral Cemetery. The organisation had indicated that it proposed to hold the tours during the period from 16th October till 2nd November, for two tours each night, commencing at 6.30 p.m.

The Director pointed out that officers were keen to support a wide range of events in the Council's Parks and Open Spaces, however, they had identified a number of concerns in respect of this request, namely:

- despite the fact that the organisers had been advertising the tours since August, this was a late request and any decision taken by the Committee would be subject to ratification by Council at its meeting on 1st November, after the event had taken place;
- the Balmoral Graveyard was a functioning cemetery and the event could cause concern for any living relatives and could also attract adverse publicity;
- the location and nature of the site could not cater for large groups, as the paths were narrow, dark and grave surrounds and other obstacles would result in Health and Safety issues which would require to be addressed;
- other tour operators had been informed recently that, due to the short notice of their requests, Committee approval could not be granted for tours to proceed;
- under normal circumstances it would be necessary for such a commercial venture to go through procurement procedures;

- there was a limited timescale for completing appropriate documentation for this event to ensure that it could proceed safely;
- in recent years other tour operators had hosted Hallowe'en tours at Friar's Bush Cemetery, with the Parks Department receiving an income of £1.00 per participant attending; and
- the organisers would have to ensure that the tours did not cause a nuisance or inconvenience to local residents.

Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Committee did not accede to this request.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that no Hallowe'en tours be held within any Council graveyards.

Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion – Licence Agreement

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

At its meeting on 10 December 2009 the Parks and Leisure Committee approved the renewal of a lease on the former Elderly Men's shelter at Ormeau Park, to Marian Hunter, for use as a private sector Playgroup Centre. A 5 year agreement at £2,940 per annum was subsequently drawn up and completed on 18 March 2010. On account of the accumulation of some previous arrears the tenant requested that the new lease provide for monthly rental payments. This was duly done and all payments are currently up to date. All previous arrears were cleared immediately prior to commencement of the new lease.

The above mentioned tenant, Marian Hunter, has recently approached the Council for temporary use of the Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion. Use is envisaged from 8.30am to 1.30pm, three days per week, until the end of March 2011. The need for additional accommodation has arisen due to increased numbers of children seeking places with the playgroup. In addition a nearby church hall which will provide the necessary overflow accommodation is currently undergoing upgrade work to facilitate the playgroup. It is envisaged the church hall will be available for occupation early in the New Year.

Marian Hunter's use will include the Main Club Room and ancillary kitchen facilities plus the Ladies Toilet area. All these areas will be cleared at the end of each session. A small, partly enclosed 'office' area will be used for the storage of equipment at all times during the period of the Licence.

Pedestrian access to the building will be via the route shown shaded blue on the attached map. The gate on Park Road which leads to this area will be opened and closed by Parks staff before commencement and the end of each session.

Given the urgent need of the playgroup the Director of Parks and Leisure has agreed an interim arrangement under delegated authority pending a formal agreement from Committee.

Key Issues

Use of Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion has been requested by a private sector playgroup for three mornings per week for the period up to the end of March 2011. Use is to be regulated by a Licence Agreement and subject to an agreed fee of £110 per week, payable in advance, to include the costs of heating and lighting. The Council's Fire Safety Officer and Insurance Officer are content that the building is adequate for the intended purpose, however responsibility for compliance with all necessary regulations governing child care arrangements will remain the responsibility of the Licensee (Marian Hunter).

Resource Implications

Financial

Modest financial receipt for limited period. No Council expenditure required to make the building suitable for purpose.

Human Resources

No additional human resources required although Parks personnel will be required to open up and close up the building and the access gates from Park Road on the three days per week the building will be used by the Playgroup.

Asset and Other Implications

Regulation of the occupation by way of a Licence Agreement will protect the Council's property asset.

Recommendations

Committee is recommended to approve the grant of a Licence Agreement to Marian Hunter, for use as a Playgroup Centre three mornings per week until the end of March 2011, subject to the payment of a monthly Licence Fee of £110 per week, with detailed terms to be incorporated in a legal agreement to be drawn up by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive and the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and 60.

Decision Tracking

Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with the Director of Property and Projects with a view to obtaining the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in the October 2010 Committee cycle.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation, subject to the Licence Agreement operating no later than 31st March, 2011.

Hire of Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion for Gospel Meetings

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Council has received a request from a Mr Alan Gibson, on behalf of a non-denominational Christian group, who would like to hire the Ormeau Bowling Pavilion each Wednesday evening (7.15pm to 9.15pm) commencing 19 January 2011 to 13 April 2011 (inclusive) for a series of gospel meetings.

Key Issues

The group’s use will include the main hall, reception and toilet areas. Access to the building will be via the pedestrian gate on Park Road which would be opened and closed by Parks staff before commencement and the end of each hire period. The event is anticipated to attract an estimated number of between eighty to one hundred people each week.

The group has requested permission to use a small public address system to accommodate a keyboard piano for music and singing. Mr Gibson has confirmed there would be no charge or fee or collection of money at the gospel meetings. No food or catering is required.

Banners advertising the gospel meetings would not be placed outside or around Council property; however Mr Gibson wishes to hand out invitation cards outside the park.

As with all events, but particularly because of the ‘evening’ element to this event, it is essential that health and safety issues are addressed through the preparation of an event management plan by the event organisers to the satisfaction of Council Officers and the Police Service of NI. The Council’s Fire Safety Officer is content that the building is adequate for the intended purpose. This event is subject to legal license agreement, Public Liability insurance and event management plan including completion of appropriate risk assessments.

In order to meet the obligations set out within Disability Discrimination Act, the side gate into the bowling green area will need to be opened by Parks staff (on request) to facilitate wheelchair users.

There is nothing within current legislation to prevent use of Council premises for religious activity as long as there is no breach of Section 76 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Resource Implications

Financial

There would be a hire charge for the period of hire in line with Council Policy.

Human Resources

Parks staff cover will be required for this event (Park Attendant) involving 3 x hours overtime each Wednesday evening, to open and close up the building and the access gates from the Park Road.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that permission is granted for this subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with the Director of Parks and Leisure and on condition that:

- i. the event organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- ii. an appropriate legal agreement, to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services, is completed;
- iii. the event organisers meet all statutory requirements; and
- iv. an agreement is reached regarding the charge for use of the facility which will cover the Department's costs and the agreed hire charge."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Barnetts Demesne - Request by the
County Grand Lodge of Belfast**

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the County Grand Lodge of Belfast had written to the Council regarding the use of the Barnetts Demesne for its Belfast demonstrations on 12th July, 2011. He reminded the Committee that the Council had granted the use of the site to the County Grand Lodge for the 12th July demonstrations in previous years and, from the Council's perspective, there had been no significant difficulties or problems. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to accede to the request which had been received from the County Grand Lodge to hold its Belfast demonstration at the Barnett Demesne site, subject to the organisation adhering to the Council's conditions and requirements and the completion of an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Hospitality for Parks Events during 2011

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Parks and Leisure Committee for the provision of light refreshments and hospitality in support of a number of Parks based Council events in 2011/2012.

Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that the Parks and Cemeteries Services Section is responsible for organising a number of annual events and award ceremonies during the course of the year. Traditionally the Council has provided hospitality at these events in the form of light refreshments or lunch. The annual events at which we have provided hospitality are:

- **The Spring Fair;**
- **Belfast Parks' Primary Schools' Athletics event;**
- **Belfast Parks Photographic Competition;**
- **Rose Week; and**
- **The City of Belfast Autumn Flower Show.**

Specifically, the hospitality is as follows:

- **Refreshments for the members of the flower show committees, Spring Fair and the City of Belfast autumn flower show who meet with officers several times in the year to discuss and plan for these events;**

- Morning coffee and lunch for members of flower show committees, judges and invited guests during the Spring Fair, Rose Week and the City of Belfast autumn flower show. Many judges are local but several travel from the Republic of Ireland, England and Scotland. For Rose Week there is an international panel of judges invited to judge the International Rose Trials;
- Refreshments for the pupils and teachers of the winning primary schools taking part in the Belfast Parks Primary Schools' Athletics event;
- Refreshments for the winners of the various categories in the Belfast Parks photographic competition and the sponsor of the competition;
- Refreshments for the various photo calls and/or press launches held in connection with the annual programme of events for the Parks and Cemeteries Services Section.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee is whether it wishes to continue to provide light refreshments and hospitality in respect of the above mentioned events. As Members will be aware there is a significant amount of voluntary involvement with these events and without that support and goodwill the continued success of such events could be undermined.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of providing this hospitality is estimated to be in the order of £6,500 and is included in the draft estimates for 2011/12

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications.

Asset and Other Implications

The provision of high profile events and activities helps to promote appreciation of the social value of parks, both locally and internationally.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree to the provision of the hospitality for events in 2011 as outlined above.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Autumn Flower Show –
Contribution to Societies**

The Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that the Taste Northern Ireland Garden Party, formerly known as the Garden Gourmet Event, had been held on 18th and 19th September and had proven to be a success, with approximately 12,500 visitors attending. He stated that the City of Belfast Autumn Flower Show had been an integral part of the event and, in previous years, the Committee had granted a small donation to each of the societies involved in the organisation of the Flower Show in recognition of the assistance which they had provided in respect of the event. He recommended, therefore, that a donation of £100 be made to each of the undernoted organisations:

- Belfast and District Beekeepers' Association
- Belfast Winemakers' Circle
- British Cactus and Succulent Society
- Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland
- Irish Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society
- North of Ireland Dahlia Society
- Northern Ireland Bonsai Society
- Northern Ireland Group of Flower Arrangement Societies
- Northern Ireland Orchid Society
- Northern Ireland Vegetable Association
- Rose Society of Northern Ireland

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Tender for the Provision of a Cleaning Service at the
Belfast Castle and Malone House**

The Director sought and was granted authority to instigate a tendering exercise in relation to the provision of a cleaning service at the Belfast Castle and Malone House for a period of two years, with the option to renew annually up to a further three years. The cost of the provision of the service would be approximately £90,000 per year.

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

**Support for Sport - Small Development
and Hospitality Grants**

The Committee noted a Schedule of Support for Sport applications in relation to the Small Development and Hospitality 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