

# Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 9th December, 2010

## MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor O'Reilly (Chairman); and  
Councillors Adamson, D. Browne, Corr, Ekin, Hartley,  
Kyle, Maskey, Mac Giolla Mhín, McCarthy, McVeigh,  
L. Patterson, G. 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.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey) and Councillor Mallon.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 11th November 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 December, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Alexandra Park Improvements Programme" which, at the request of Councillor Crozier, was referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

### **Councillors S. Corr and J. McVeigh**

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Councillors S. Corr and J. McVeigh to their first meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee.

### **Alexandra Park Improvements Programme**

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 11th November. An extract of the minute in that regard is set out hereunder:

*"The Committee considered the undernoted report:*

#### **'Purpose of Report**

***The purpose of this report is to obtain Council support for enhancements to Alexandra Park.***

**Relevant Background Information**

*The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 11th June, 2009 it was informed that funding from the Reconciling Communities Through Regeneration (RCTR) programme had been secured in late 2008 and it was agreed that Groundwork NI (GWNl) would work alongside local community representatives and relevant stakeholders in the development of regeneration proposals for Alexandra Park.*

*RCTR is 'a strategic regional programme aimed at improving tolerance and acting as a catalyst for reducing sectarianism and racism. It aims to achieve this by involving local community and statutory agencies in regenerating local areas, which will eliminate or reduce displays of sectarian and racial aggression.'*

*RCTR is scheduled to run from October 2008 to August 2011, and has four key objectives to:*

- develop 'key skills for peace' and create opportunities for inter-group dialogue, cross community relationship building and networking;*
- work strategically with the Peace III clusters;*
- build positive relationships at a local level in order to achieve positive change; and*
- begin to address contested physical space issues with the aim of regenerating physical spaces and removing the physical manifestations of segregation.*

*Key anticipated outputs are:*

- a 'shared space' strategy;*
- networking;*
- development of a skills audit and delivery of training/mentoring; and*
- an 'iconic' environmental improvement.*

***These outputs should lead to the following outcomes:***

- ***communities, service providers and elected representatives working together to encourage integrated actions and promote shared space and shared services;***
- ***communities able to take advantage of future opportunities;***
- ***reduced marginalisation and polarisation;***
- ***reduced levels of sectarianism and racism; and***
- ***enhanced skills and experience.***

***In conveying its consent to GWNI the Council was supporting an engagement process with communities surrounding Alexandra Park, with the aim of improving community relations, building skills and encouraging cross community dialogue around common concerns. The budget for the project includes up to £50k per area for physical regeneration works, which addresses the overall aim of the programme. Within the context of Alexandra Park this would provide an opportunity for some minor investment and regeneration.***

***The RCTR programme in Alexandra Park has, in addition to the involvement of council officers and staff from Groundwork included, the NI Housing Executive, the PSNI, local political representatives, community activists, local schools and residents.***

#### **Current Position**

***Since the project was approved by the Parks and Leisure Committee on 11th June, 2009 GWNI has been working alongside a variety of organisations and representatives from the local community to develop proposals for the park on a cross community basis. While participation has been widely encouraged and sought the main participants have been:***

- ***Parkside, Newington and Castleton Residents Association***
- ***Camberwell Terrace Residents Association***
- ***Residents from Dunmore estate***
- ***Residents from Alexandra Park Avenue***
- ***Friends of Grove Park***

- **North Belfast Community Development Transition Group**
- **Residents from Tigers Bay.**

**A steering group was formed and as part of the process it undertook a survey of the surrounding area. Following an analysis of the survey and following discussion it was agreed that the project should focus on the development of a nature trail around the pond, a fishing stand, a seating area and interpretive panels in the upper section of the park and picnic tables, seating and interpretive panels in the lower section of the park.**

**Landscape proposals have been developed, based on the above design, and meetings have been held with Council Officers, PSNI representatives including the Design out Crime Officer and the Steering Group to consider and agree the proposals and the design layout.**

**A further community consultation exercise was carried out with a series of public meetings held at a variety of locations including Camberwell Court, Holy Family Youth Club, Currie Primary School, Grove bowling pavilion and Mountcollyer Youth Club. While the turnout was disappointing the overwhelming view was one of support for the proposed regeneration plans.**

**At present no funding has been secured for the project. However, an application for £50,000 will be made to the RCTR, in addition, a further application will be submitted to the Alpha Programme for £50,000 to meet the shortfall in the cost, and the total cost is estimated at £100,000.**

**The proposals include:**

- **Upper section of the park:**
  - **Nature trail around the pond including clearing the rubbish and shrubbery, installation of seating and a seating area with interpretive panels on the history and wildlife within the park.**
- **Lower section of the park:**
  - **A picnic area, seating and interpretive panels on the history and wildlife within the park**

**This regeneration project will also compliment the Council's proposed refurbishment of the playground at the Lower Alexandra Park and the potential refurbishment of the Upper Playground at a future date as well as the ongoing management and maintenance.**

### **Key Issues**

*The key issues for the Committee are:*

- *The Committee previously endorsed the concept at its meeting in June 2009;*
- *Proposals have now been worked up as outlined above;*
- *Funding is yet to be secured;*
- *Groundwork is seeking funding from RCTR Programme and the Alpha fund to meet the capital cost of the project, estimated at £100,000;*
- *The Council has been requested to convey its support for the funding applications as outlined;*
- *Groundwork would also seek consent from the Council to undertake the proposed works;*
- *Officers from the Landscape Planning and Development Unit and Parks Area Management have been involved with the Steering Group and are satisfied that the proposals are sensitive to the history and nature of the parks; and will have minimal revenue implications.*

### **Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

*There are no capital or revenue implications for Belfast City Council.*

#### **Human Resources**

*There are no additional human resource implications.*

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

*The project will improve the physical environment of the park, it will enhance biodiversity within the park and it will enhance the community cohesion around the park.*

**Recommendations**

*It is recommended that:*

- 1. The Committee agree to support the funding applications and direct the Director of Parks and Leisure to provide a suitable letter as appropriate; and**
- 2. The Committee convey its consent to the Groundwork NI to undertake the necessary work providing adequate funding has been obtained; the necessary approvals have been obtained; and**
- 3. Groundwork NI and or its agents carry the public liability insurance during the undertaking of the works, subject to an appropriate legal agreement being prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor.'**

*The Committee adopted the recommendations."*

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that he had held discussions with Elected Representatives of the area and Groundwork who had requested that:

- (i) additional door-to-door consultation be undertaken within the Mountcollyer area;
- (ii) meetings be organised with local Elected Representatives in relation to the Programme; and
- (iii) additional attention be given to measures which would prevent anti-social behaviour once the works had been completed.

After discussion, the Committee affirmed its decision of 11th November and agreed that further measures as outlined above be undertaken.

**Parks and Leisure Improvement Programme –  
Presence in Parks Pilot Scheme**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1. Relevant Background Information**

**As part of the Departmental Improvement Programme officers have been examining the role of Parks staff with a view to developing working practices which will provide an improved service and create safer green spaces.**

The report below outlines a proposed 'Presence in Parks' Pilot which will operate for a period of 9 months (Jan 2011 – Sept 2011). The proposed pilot will amalgamate existing ranger and attendant resource into a team of Community Park Wardens and Park Safety Wardens. All of the wardens will be trained to integrate with and support council warden services and the specialist team of Park Safety Wardens. They will be mobile and will respond quickly to reports of antisocial behaviour and be trained and authorised to enforce specific bye-laws in support of existing council wardens and PSNI resources.

2. **Key Issues**

**The 'Presence in Parks' Pilot**

The rationale behind the development of the 'Presence in Parks' pilot is to demonstrate the department's commitment to park users and outside agencies that we will continue to tackle the issue of safety in parks.

The primary strength of the existing Park Ranger Service is the connection they have with the communities in the city. The local knowledge and contacts that the Rangers have developed, will be invaluable in the creation of safer green spaces and the provision of quality services to park users. The 'Presence in Parks' pilot will harness the Rangers local knowledge in order to:

- build feelings of safety within and outside of the park boundaries,
- increase the capacity of the council to adopt a one council approach, and
- effectively combine all the warden resources such as the new Park Wardens, Dog Wardens, Litter Wardens and Community Safety Wardens.

The pilot will introduce two roles, Community Park Warden and Park Safety Warden.

The role of the Community Park Warden will be a development of the role of Park Ranger and Park Attendant. They will be site based across 9 strategic park locations. Duties will be focused on:

- opening and closing the site where they are based and opening and closing smaller satellite locations,
- raising public awareness, delivery of education and provision of quality customer service,

- recording incidents of damage or antisocial behaviour at the site where they are based and at smaller satellite locations, and
- assess possible risks and if needed request the assistance of the Park Safety Wardens or PSNI.

The role of Park Safety Warden will be a development of the role of Park Ranger Team leader. Duties will be focused on:

- responding to reports of antisocial behaviour across the whole city,
- enforcement of bye laws and codes regarding Litter, Dog fouling and Alcohol consumption in parks
- supporting existing council enforcement officers (Litter wardens, Dog fouling Wardens and Community Safety Wardens) and
- provision of supervision to the Community Park Wardens outside core hours (Friday night, Saturday and Sunday).

All of the wardens will be trained and directed to liaise with existing council resources to embed a one council approach in response to the issue of park safety.

If the 'Presence in Parks' Pilot is agreed, the roles of Community Park Warden and Park Safety Warden will be drawn from existing departmental resources

#### **Reporting ASB and Responding to ASB**

The 'Presence in Parks' Pilot provides an opportunity to review and test new operational systems and technology, which will:

- support the new park wardens to record and respond to antisocial behaviour, and
- provide a facility to support the public to report incidents of damage and antisocial behaviour in park areas.

The use of technology will support better collection and analysis of data and it will improve our service standards. The data will be collected by the Community Park Wardens. It will be central to the development of the pilot that ASB incidents are recorded consistently across all park areas and our subsequent actions are reported more accurately to members and the community.



The Park Safety Wardens will respond to all reports, their actions will be recorded and used to feedback to the community, providing a visible and accountable service to the public.

As part of the pilot, work will be undertaken to explore the development of a single contact number for the public to report incidents. Recommendation for this service will be reported to Committee during the pilot.

#### Co-ordination of services

Park Safety Wardens liaise closely with the Community Safety Wardens, Litter Wardens and Dog Fouling Wardens through the Parks ASB Co-ordinator and the Community Park Manager based at Duncrue. Regular briefings will be held at Duncrue which raise issues of safety as they occur and provide opportunity to brief and liaise with the PSNI.

The Community Park Wardens and Park Safety Wardens will work closely with each other combining lock up duties if required. This function will be co-ordinated through regular meetings between Community Park Managers. There is also a role for all Wardens to provide visible staff presence and support during events, assist in the delivery of schools programmes and tours through input from the Parks Outreach Manager.

#### Protocols and Procedures

Community Park Wardens will work closely with Dog Wardens, Litter Wardens, Community Safety Wardens and PSNI. It will be essential to develop working protocols and procedures to define exactly what is expected of the various services and how any joint operation will be managed.

#### Criteria for Assessing Effectiveness of Pilot

Work will be undertaken in January/February 2011 to establish a baseline for the key parks in the pilot measuring antisocial behaviour, usage of parks and level of customer satisfaction. It is envisaged that the same measures will be examined in September/October 2011 to assess the impact of the pilot and to inform future proposals.

**3. Resource Implications**

It is envisaged that the new Community Park Warden resource will be drawn from within the department amalgamating the roles of Park attendant and Ranger positions, if necessary the new roles could be supplemented by the Parks Apprentices.

The role of Park Safety Warden will be drawn from existing Team leader positions.

As the proposed roles can be filled by existing staff, the Enforcement pilot will not require any additional resources.

**Training and Professional Development**

All park wardens will receive the following training:

- Use of technology and recording systems
- Development of Warden role:
  - Litter awareness – educate park users and share information with Cleansing service.
  - Dog Fouling and dog related issues – educate park users and share information with Dog Wardens
  - Drink/Drug Awareness - sharing Information with PSNI and community/voluntary sector.
  - Healthy Living Projects - developing closer links with leisure colleagues.

As the Park Safety Wardens will work closely or in tandem with PSNI and existing council enforcement services, they will receive specialist training to enable enforcement of the following:

- Drinking alcohol in designated places
- Dog fouling
- Litter and fly tipping.

In the long term, support will be required to develop areas such as customer care, basic horticulture, community engagement and partnership building with internal and external agencies.

**4. Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to adopt the pilot and agree the implementation in January 2011 for a period of 9 months.

6. **Decision Tracking**

The 'Presence in Parks' pilot will be evaluated every three months with a final evaluation proposed in November 2011.

7. **Key to Abbreviations**

**ASB: Antisocial Behaviour**  
**PSNI: Police service for Northern Ireland"**

Arising from discussion, several Members stressed the need for communities to be engaged in the pilot process through community groups and forums and that information gathered during the pilot process should be used to inform groups in order to support planning of interventions and activities in communities.

In addition, the role of Community Park Rangers and Park Safety Wardens was discussed. The Head of Parks and Leisure stated that the pilot would test the allocation of staff levels and that the responsibilities of Community Park Rangers would include the same level of enforcement duties as those being undertaken by the current Park Rangers.

After discussion, during which several Members stressed the need for Community Park Rangers and Park Safety Wardens to be given adequate support and equipment to undertake their duties effectively, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the Alexandra Park be included within the Pilot Scheme.

**Active Belfast and Open Spaces - Liverpool Study Visit**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. **Relevant Background Information**

As part of the process of developing the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces (ABOS) strategy, Members requested continued engagement in considering key issues such as targeted provision, partnerships and alternative business models for delivery.

For this purpose, a short study visit was organised to Liverpool, to:

- view alternative models of leisure provision at city and neighbourhood levels;

- engage with practitioners and policy-makers experienced in a parks and leisure modernisation programme;
- consider the challenges and opportunities for future provision in Belfast.

The 3 day study visit included inputs from Liverpool City Council (LCC) elected members, their parks and leisure teams, key external partners and regeneration site visits.

At a follow-up meeting held on 11 November with those who participated on the visit, a number of key themes were highlighted as relevant to the development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy.

## 2. Key Issues

The paper proposes a series of areas to be considered as part of the development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy.

It was recognised that some of the initiatives examined already happen in Belfast, including work with the health sector. There are also differences between Belfast and Liverpool; for example, Belfast has more green space. However, Members were impressed by the overall scale and approach in Liverpool.

The resulting discussion within the Belfast delegation centred on a set of core ideas:

### 1. Visionary leadership and a lateral strategy

The Active City Partnership in Liverpool, sponsored by the Council and the Primary Care Trust, worked across all sectors in the city, identifying multiple opportunities to maximise the city as an active and healthy city. This included the private sector, emphasising the importance of health and well-being in a competitive city.

A lateral strategy stretched across sectors to improve health and well-being, emphasising that money spent on parks and leisure services was saving the health trust money in the longer term. The city's transport strategy was also included, promoting all opportunities for activity.

Liverpool's Active City Partnership also worked with the universities in the city to develop a comprehensive performance management system which demonstrated the social and economic value of using this integrated approach. Likewise, citizens were involved in large-scale targets ('Liverpool's Challenge') and the 'co-production' of health outcomes in the city.

Members have already recognised that partnership working is a core principle for the new ABOS strategy. It is recommended that any proposed Active Belfast Partnership would adopt a lateral approach, similar to that in Liverpool.

As a new partnership develops, it is important to facilitate the continued evolution of the ABOS strategy and its objectives, in order that other organisations have the opportunity to buy into the vision and objectives. It was suggested that this might be facilitated through a large-scale conference to scope all activities and resources related to promoting activity, health and well-being. This would allow the city to assess the baseline of this type of work, identify opportunities for collaboration and pinpoint gaps in the city's provision.

Finally, Liverpool City Council demonstrated bold imagination to restore parks as welcoming and open with a strong architectural vision. The Belfast delegation suggested that such a strong aesthetic vision is incorporated into future regeneration projects commissioned by the Parks and Leisure Committee.

## **2. More people, more active, more often**

Liverpool dedicates a considerable amount of its resources to those who are sedentary and most at risk of ill-health from non-participation in any form of activity. It then uses a series of incentives to sustain participation, including social marketing and monetary rewards (discounts, free passes).

The Belfast delegation is keen to develop a 'language of invitation' which encourages people to get and stay active. Fundamental to this is the centrality of the customer and promoting a broad culture of activity in the city. The Belfast delegation highlighted that the 'customer welcome' is the key to sustaining physical activity, both in our leisure centres but also in non-traditional venues. In Liverpool, leisure centre

staff have generic job profiles which are flexible to enable their deployment to meet the needs of the customer – supplying what, when and where the customer wants it.

A staff task group has been established as part of the improvement programme to examine these issues. Members' comments from the study visit regarding flexible management, working practices and promoting participation have been fed into this group. Officers will bring forward recommendations for Members' consideration next month.

Cross-service working is fundamental to improving quality of life and embedded in the culture of Liverpool City Council. Members recognised the value of our staff and the innovations already undertaken in our services. In order to further encourage this, and in addition to the staff task group described above, they suggested that a cross-departmental staff forum is established. This group would gather, share and implement improvement and collaboration ideas from across the services.

Also, a planning session for the entire Leisure Services in December has been previously agreed by Committee and it is anticipated that this workshop will cover these themes.

Finally, as part of a fundamental review of the Boost scheme, Members also recommended consideration is given to the incentives used to sustain membership. This could include links with the private sector and a rewards scheme in the NI Civil Service.

### **3. Models for delivery**

Liverpool City Council (LCC) sought to achieve complementarity across the city, recognising that the Council was not the sole provider of facilities for physical activity in the city. In order to do this, they had an agreed vision for the provision needed in an area. The Belfast delegation suggests that in order for the Council to fully exploit its neighbourhood assets – including green spaces and community centres – that a similar exercise would be valuable for Belfast. This would also identify areas where we need to build strategic linkages with education and private providers. This would inform future investment and rationalisation decisions as well as minimise duplication.

Preliminary discussions are ongoing with the Development Department to this end and it is anticipated that a set of recommendations will be brought forward in due course. This will be in the context of the Council's forthcoming Asset Management Strategy.

The Belfast delegation also recognised the potential for alternative management models for upcoming asset regeneration projects, such as the Tropical Ravine. It was agreed that models such as community trusts can facilitate different relationships with the private sector to ensure investment in facilities and programmes, particularly important in the current economic climate.

It was also suggested that consideration is given to partnership on assets, similar to the partnership to refurbish the Liverpool City Council-owned park adjacent to the Alder Hey Children's Hospital. This will be regenerated as an extension of the hospital grounds, allowing patients and visitors to boost their sense of well-being in a connected green space. This may have application for the Dunville Park project and discussions should be initiated with the Belfast Trust on this matter.

In summary, it is proposed the next steps are:

- Feed the ideas for initiatives into the existing staff task groups, currently working on various aspects of the new ABOS strategy, including a participation plan;
- Continued development of the Active Belfast Partnership, in line with the Liverpool model, commencing with a large-scale workshop in the City Hall to scope existing programmes and resources available to promote activity in the city;
- Establish a cross-departmental staff forum to identify improvements, efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration in parks and leisure facilities.

Finally, to consider the outputs of the above pieces of work, it is proposed that a further Members' workshop is organised in February 2011 for members of the Parks and Leisure Committee.

3. **Resource Implications**

**Financial**

Up to £2,000 towards the costs of a workshop, to be held in City Hall in early 2011. Provision for both of these items been made within revenue budgets.

**Human Resources**

Officer time to participate in staff task group and staff forum.

**Assets**

Committee has already given authority (10 January 2010) for the closure of leisure facilities to facilitate a staff workshop. This will happen on 22 December 2010. No other asset implications identified.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None identified at present. The final ABOS Strategy will be consulted upon and screened for equality implications in line with the Council's statutory obligations.

5. **Recommendations**

As outlined above, the Committee is requested to grant authority to the Director to:

- facilitate a large-scale workshop in the City Hall to scope existing programmes and resources available to promote activity in Belfast;
- establish a cross-departmental staff forum to identify improvements, efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration in parks and leisure facilities; and
- organise a Members' workshop for Committee in February 2011.

6. **Key to Abbreviations**

**ABOS Strategy – Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy”**

After discussion, the Committee granted the authorities sought.



**Financial Reporting 2010/2011 - Quarter 2**

(Ms. J. Wilson, Business Support Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant background information**

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed at on 18 June 2010 that:

- the council would produce financial reporting packs for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and each Standing Committee on a quarterly basis
- the Budget and Transformation Panel would also receive monthly financial updates if there were any significant issues to report.

The reporting pack contains a summary dashboard of the financial indicators and an executive summary explaining the financial performance of Parks and Leisure Committee in the context of the financial performance of the overall council. It also provides a more detailed explanation of each of the relevant indicators covering the year to date and the year end forecast position.

As we previously advised the committee, we will continue to develop the style and contents of the reports in liaison with members. In particular, the members' financial training at the end of September 2010 provided a good opportunity for discussion and feedback on the reports. It is therefore intended to make some amendments to style and layout for the quarter 3 financial reports.

Central finance and our departmental management team have worked together to develop the information within this financial reporting pack.

**2. Key issues**

***Current and forecast financial position 2010/11***

The current year to date financial position as at quarter 2 for Parks and Leisure Committee is an over-spend of some £0.2m, or 2% of budget (quarter one: £0.2m), with a forecast end of year over-spend of some £0.19m, or 0.9% of budget (quarter 1: £0.3m). The reasons for this over-spend relate to:

1. An overall employee budget over-spend at quarter two. As reported last quarter, operational reviews are underway within the department and recommendations will be presented to committee over the next number of months to finalise structures and methods of working to help reduce the need for agency and overtime. The reduction from quarter one in the forecast end-of-year over-spend takes account of the impact of these operational reviews.
2. Utility costs in both Parks and Leisure are over budget. As reported last quarter, we have disputed bills, specifically for water charges. We can now report that Northern Ireland Water has confirmed that a refund of £45k will be made and this has been reflected in the year end forecast.
3. Income from services within the department is under pressure. Income from fees and charges is down at leisure centres, the Zoo, especially in shop sales, Belfast Castle and Malone House. Managers are reviewing the uptake of their services and generating options to retain customers and promote their services to new customers to improve this situation.

However it should be noted that income from events and Belfast in Bloom, cemeteries and crematorium is up 8% on budget.

The financial reporting, a copy of which had been circulated, pack contains more detail on both the overall council position and the financial performance in each of the Services within the Department.

It should be emphasised that the end of the financial year is still several months away and that there are significant uncertainties which could impact on the forecast. Nevertheless, a half-year forecast is helpful to members in making financial decisions for the remainder of 2010/11 and to inform the 2011/12 rates setting exercise.

3. **Resource Implications**

There is a year to date overspend of £0.2m and a forecast overspend of some £0.2m or 1% by year end. This reflects the half year position regarding the employee budgets and the operational reviews that are on-going. As set out in the attached report actions are being taken to reduce this overspend.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

**Members are recommended to note the above report and associated financial reporting pack.”**

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Cemeteries and Crematorium Charges**

(Ms. J. Wilson, Business Support Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee agreed to defer for a period of one month consideration of a report in relation to the charges associated with the Council's Bereavement Services provision.

**Letting of Parks Dwellings**

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the rents payable on Parks Dwellings had been revised with effect from May, 2010 and had been based on equivalent Housing Executive rents for houses with similar facilities. In addition, rents had been adjusted by the Estates Management Unit to take account of such factors as location, the condition of the dwelling and the fact that they had been offered to Council employees only, under agreements which could be terminated at short notice.

The Director pointed out that the occupiers had to undertake certain security duties in relation to adjoining Council properties and that there were currently three houses available to let within the Parks and Leisure Department. Accordingly, an advertisement seeking expressions of interest had been circulated throughout the Council during September. The criteria had stipulated that applicants must be permanent employees and had to be bound by a tenancy agreement which was linked to their employment with the Council. In addition, certain responsibilities specific to the property, such as opening and closing of gates, reporting incidents of anti-social behaviour to the Police and some minor maintenance of the gardens had to be undertaken.

He reported that a number of staff had applied for the tenancy of vacant properties at 125 Ballygowan Road, 2 Park Road and 743 Upper Newtownards Road, which had become vacant due to the previous tenants leaving the Council. A process of random selection had been carried out on 18th October 2010 and all interested parties had been invited to view that process. The Director advised the Committee that the proposed revised rent would provide the Department with approximately £7,500 per annum of rental income. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree that, subject to the completion of appropriate tenancy agreements, the three vacant Parks properties be allocated as follows:

- (i) 743 Upper Newtownards Road (Dundonald Cemetery) to Mr. R. Martin;
- (ii) 125 Ballygowan Road (Roselawn Gate Lodge) to Ms. M. Brehart; and
- (iii) 2 Park Road (City of Belfast Playing Fields) to Mr. D. Butler

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

#### **Bridges Urban Sports Park**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report regarding the progress which had been achieved in relation to the development of an Outdoor Urban Sports Facility, which was located between Little Patrick Street and Corporation Street. It was anticipated that construction would commence during December, 2010 and that the Park would be operational approximately 20 weeks after the start of construction. The project was funded by the Council, the Brighter Belfast Landfill Tax Credits Scheme and the Special European Union Programmes Body.

#### **City of Belfast Golf Club**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report in relation to the existing Facilities Management Agreement at the City of Belfast Golf Club and agreed that a special meeting be held in order to consider the future of the facility.

#### **Gate Lodge at City Cemetery**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **“Purpose of Report**

**The purpose of this report is to establish a position regarding the future potential development of the Gate Lodge at the City Cemetery.**

##### **Relevant Background Information**

**Committee is being asked to consider the terms of a Development Brief for the rejuvenation of the Council’s Gate Lodge which lies at the edge of the City Cemetery and fronts on to the Whiterock Road opposite Britton’s Parade. The development of the building has been considered and discussed on several occasions. It had also been previously exposed to the market by way of a Development Brief. One of the key elements of the previous Brief was that the project should focus on the historical significance of the City Cemetery and the genealogy of the area.**

**The successful proposal at that time was from the Whiterock/Westrock Residents’ Association. Unfortunately the Association was unable to finalise the arrangement and the former Head of Parks and Cemeteries Services reported this to the former**

Community and Recreation (Parks and Cemeteries Services) Sub-Committee on 28 November 2005. The Sub-Committee at that time also agreed the preparation of an amended Development Brief which would have as its principal objective the restoration of the Gate Lodge in a sensitive manner which respected the nature of the immediate surroundings. While this allowed submission of proposals focussing on the historical significance of the City Cemetery and the genealogy of the area, it allowed for consideration of a wider range of proposals and types of appropriate development.

Following a further interim report to Committee a revised Development Brief was brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Following representations from a Member the Committee determined to refer the matter back to the Parks and Leisure Committee for further consideration.

The attached revised draft Development Brief is now being presented to Members for consideration. This seeks to preserve the flexibility incorporated in the 2008 proposal but leaves the way open for interaction (if required) between the proposed development and the Cemetery. This could include uses which focus on historical and genealogical elements.

#### Key Issues

The issues for Committee to consider are:

- This issue has been under consideration for a significant period of time without significant progress;
- The revised Development Brief aims to address previous concerns regarding restoration of the Gate lodge (Fox's Lodge) while preserving flexibility of potential use so as to attract maximum interest in the property;
- The current difficulties in the property market and a potential squeeze on grant aid make appropriate timing of release of the Development Brief to the market, difficult to judge.

#### Options

The Committee has several options:

Option 1 is to issue a revised development brief in line with appendix 3;  
Option 2 is to amend the draft brief outlined  
Option 3 is to instruct Officers not to issue a brief at this time owing to market conditions; and  
Option 4 is to instruct Officers to have the building de-listed and demolished which would have an associated cost.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

Disposal of the Gate Lodge, on lease, may raise an annual rent or a capital sum. This could generate possible income which would be set by Estates.

#### Human Resources

No need for additional human resources has been identified at this time.

#### Asset and Other Implications

This former dwelling and the immediately adjoining lands are unused by the Council and have fallen into extreme disrepair. The aim of the disposal is to enable the capital investment in the property by outside funders (private and/or public sector). The investment should in turn have a positive social and economic impact upon the surrounding area.

### Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approve the contents of a revised Development Brief and reference to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 46 for further approval prior to future marketing of the property. Further reference to Parks and Leisure Committee and subsequently Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would follow receipt and evaluation of any proposals submitted in response to the Brief.

### **Decision Tracking**

**Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with the Director of Property and Projects to ensure reference to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee within three months of this Committee.”**

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Sport Northern Ireland - Community Capital Programme**

(Councillor J. Rodgers declared an interest in this item in that he was a member of the Board of Sport Northern Ireland and Councillor Maskey declared an interest in that he was a member of the North Queen Street Residents' Association.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

**The Committee will be aware that Sport NI operates a range of programmes and initiatives in line with its vision and strategic objectives to increase participation in sport and physical recreation, to improve sporting performance and to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of sport. Sport NI has recently opened its Community Capital Programme. The anticipated budget will be £1.5m for the period 2011/12. The maximum award will be £245,000, with a small contribution expected from partner organisations.**

**It is anticipated that 6 projects across NI will be awarded grant. A preliminary application is due to be completed by 1 December 2010 and it is anticipated that successful schemes will be announced in March 2011, a ‘call off’ list will be retained for two years, although there is no commitment on the part of Sport NI to fund any project on the ‘call off’ list. If the application is successful additional information will be required by 15th March 2011, this would include. Security of tenure and the necessary statutory approvals, where appropriate.**

**The programme is targeted to support the needs of low capacity applicants and areas of historically low uptake of Sport NI funding. It will also prioritise those organisations and clubs who have not received Sport NI capital funding in the past 10 years.**

**More comprehensive information on this programme and other Sport NI initiatives can be found at [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)**

### Key Issues

Council Officers have received several requests from a community organisation (North Queen St. Residents Association and the Ashton Centre), a sporting club (Shankill United Football Club) and a school (Aquinas Grammar) seeking Council support in respect of their proposed applications under this programme. Protocol requires that Council support requires Committee approval, however, owing to the time scales a preliminary and qualified letter of support from a Council Officer has been provided at this time.

In two instances the requests for support are in respect of Council facilities, at North queen Street and at the Hammer Open Space. In both instances it is anticipated that if successful the applicant will require security of tenure on the site which normally means a 20-25 year lease and it may require some capital funding from BCC to meet the short fall.

In each case it is the view of Officers that these projects will potentially benefit the local community in terms of improved facilities and increased participation levels. However, the committee is asked to note that:

1. the business case has not yet been established;
2. there are no technical drawings at this time;
3. statutory approvals where required have not yet been sought;
4. the estimated cost is not yet known and consequently the potential capital liability to BCC is not known;
5. the future management and revenue implications are not yet known

At this time, the Committee is asked to recognise the potential of the projects and to agree in principle to support them and to authorise Officers to work with the communities and group in support of the applications.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

It is likely that there will be capital and potentially revenue implications, however, these are unknown at this time.

#### Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications at this time other than Officer time.



### **Asset and Other Implications**

If successful these projects would make a positive contribution to the level of sporting and recreational facilities within the local neighbourhood and would support the delivery of improvements in health and well being and community cohesion.

### **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

There are no equality considerations at this time, however, in the production of any business case / sports development plan it would be expected that equality considerations would be taken into account.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Note the preliminary nature of the project;
3. Agree in principle to support the projects subject to further clarification on matters relating to design of the proposal, obtaining the necessary statutory approvals, securing the necessary funding, adequate consideration of future management and revenue issues;
4. Agree that Officers complete a Strategic Outline Case which would be forwarded to the Director of Property and Projects for consideration for inclusion on the Capital Programme;
5. Agree in principle to enter into appropriate arrangement which would provide security of tenure subject to further discussion and clarification and the agreement of Strategic Policy & Resources in line with Standing Orders.

### **Decision Tracking**

**Actions to be completed by the Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Management by April 2011.”**

After discussion, the Committee agreed, in principle, to support the applications which had been submitted by the North Queen Street Residents' Association and the Ashton Centre, the Shankill United Football Club and the Aquinas Grammar School, subject to further information in relation to the proposals presented by the applicants being submitted for its consideration at a future meeting.

### Waterworks Community Garden

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### 1. Relevant Background Information

Committee will recall that in February 2010 it approved a request from an organisation to create a community garden in the Waterworks.

Grow is a non- profit organisation which has a mission to build community partnerships by increasing and enhancing community gardening. Grow works to promote and support all aspects of community food and gardening to improve people's lives by providing a catalyst for neighbourhood and community development and stimulating social interaction.

#### 2. Key Issues

With support from Council officers and with funding from the Peace III programme, Grow successfully established the community garden, recruited participants and sustained participation. This has included support from a part-time community gardener, trained in community development and the Grow co-ordinator.

To date, officers are satisfied that the garden has been well-managed and has further opportunity to develop its links in the local area.

The group are now preparing for next year's growing season and is seeking support from the Council. It has made an application to the Good Relations Partnership for support on the good relations workshops as part of the programme. However, this will not cover running costs, some of the community engagement activity, the sessional costs for the community gardener and some co-ordination costs for Grow.

Committee will be aware that work is ongoing to develop a strategy for allotments and community gardens. This is due to be presented to Committee in March 2011.

In advance of this, it is proposed that interim one-off support is offered to Grow to sustain and further develop the community garden in the Waterworks. Given existing relationships and management arrangements, Grow is in a unique position to offer these services in the Waterworks on the basis of their track record in this particular community garden. Any future support will only be made in the context of the new strategy.

As part of this, it is also recommended that Grow is requested to facilitate some training for Council officers on the principles of community gardening, in order to build the internal capacity for this area of work. Another suggested condition of the financial support is that Grow extends its community reach to work with young people in the area. An appropriate target on this can be negotiated with Grow and Council officers.

Similar to the evaluation and reporting procedures of the Good Relations Partnership, Grow will be asked to demonstrate the impact of the support in an evaluation report and account for the financial support to Committee, following the programme.

### **3. Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

Total: up to £12,000. This is covered in revenue estimates for 2011/12.

- Contribution to running costs (inc. insurance) £1,500
- Contribution to community engagement activities £2,000
- Sessional community garden costs £4,000
- Grow co-ordination costs (inc. Council training workshops) £4,500

Subject to:

- 2 workshop sessions for Council staff on community gardening principles and techniques by October 2011;
- Increased participation by local young people; and
- An evaluation report to be completed by November 2011.

As the aims and objectives of the Waterworks community gardens sit within the overall aims and objectives of the Programming Open Spaces project (funded by Peace III), there is potential that part of these costs can be recouped (up to end June 2011). However, this would be subject to the agreement of the Good Relations Partnership and the funding body SEUPB.

#### Human Resources

Officer time including participation in training workshops.

#### Asset and Other Implications

This project continues to sustain use the area of land in a more proactive and positive matter to improve quality of life for the surrounding community.

#### 4. Equality Implications

None evident. The forthcoming strategy will be assessed in line with standard equality obligations.

#### 5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approve the one-off financial support up to £12,000 to Grow to sustain and expand the Waterworks community garden in 2011, subject to an appropriate legal agreement to be drawn up by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor between Grow and the Council.

#### 6. Decision Tracking

**Officer Responsible: Area Manager, North Area.**  
**All actions to be completed by December 2011."**

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

### Concerts at Lower Botanic 2011

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **1. Relevant Background Information**

The Committee is asked to note that the Council has received a request for the use of Lower Botanic Gardens for a concert in June 2011, with an audience of approximately 20,000 people per day, from Eddie Wray, Director of PLM Promotions, Unit 11, Blaris Industrial Estate, Lisburn.

#### **2. Key Issues**

The key issues for the Committee to note are:

1. The Council wishes to promote the use of its parks and open spaces and where appropriate the use of these facilities for large events and concerts is permitted in line with the agreed events policy.
2. In this instance the Council has received a request for the use of Botanic Gardens on 11 June 2011. The actual date remains to be finalised and there may be need for flexibility for an additional performance possibly on 10 June.
3. The concert promoter is aware of the scale of charges for a concert. i.e. £2 per person for the first 11,000 and £3 for each person thereafter.
4. The concert promoter is aware of the need for the payment of a Bond of Intent which must be completed prior to confirmation that the venue is available
5. The event would be subject to the preparation of an event management plan which would cover all aspects of management including health and safety, access and shall comply with the current Events Policy
6. The promoter will be required to ensure that the genre of the music shall be compatible with the locality prior to final agreement.
7. A legal Agreement will be provided by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor.
8. The Concert promoter will be required to consult with local stakeholders such as Queens University, Lyric Theatre, etc.

**3. Resource Implications**

**Financial**

Bonds of Intent shall be paid to the Council before approval is given. The Scale of Charges shall be applied to the size of audience.

**Human Resources**

There may be overtime required by staff to assist with the management of the proposed event which would need to be met from the fee charged.

**Asset and Other Implications**

The promoter will ensure all minimal impact on Council property and they shall provide a Bond of Reinstatement prior to the event.

**4. Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

None.

**5. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee grant permission to PLM Promotions to hold a concert in Botanic Gardens over two days in June 2011 subject to satisfactory terms, as discussed in this report, 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 is completed; and
- (iii) the event organisers meet all statutory requirements including entertainment licences.

**6. Decision Tracking**

**All actions will be completed by the Area Manager (East) by July 2011."**

Arising from discussion in the matter, the Head of Parks and Leisure reported that prior to the Committee meeting, the promoter had requested also the use of the Ormeau Park during June 2011 in order to stage an event.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the report and agreed to defer consideration of the request which had been received from PLM Promotions in relation to the use of the Ormeau Park to enable further information to be obtained.

**Northern Ireland Schools' Cup –  
Quarter Finals Day**

The Director reported that the Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association had submitted a request to the Council to hold the quarter finals of the Northern Ireland Schools Cup at the Mallusk Playing Fields. It was anticipated that the event would attract approximately six hundred participants, aged between 12 and 18 years, from twenty-five schools across Northern Ireland. The organisation had indicated that, although a definite date had not yet been agreed, it was proposed that the event would take place during the week commencing 24th January, 2011.

He pointed out that this was the first time the quarter finals would be held at the location and it was envisaged that this would enhance and promote cross-community participation and engagement in the sport. He outlined for the information of the Members the media coverage which would be associated with the event and stated that the event organisers had agreed to the completion of an event management plan and to address all relevant issues, including health and safety to the satisfaction of the Council. Each participating school would cover the costs of its transport and sponsorship of the Northern Ireland Schools Cup would cover the cost of referees. The potential revenue to be derived for the Council for the use of the pitches would be approximately £327 and the additional staffing costs of facilitating the event had been estimated at £138. However, the organisers had submitted an application for the free use of both the pitches and ancillary facilities.

The Director stated that, as the event would be held mid-week, there would be no displacement of regular users. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to the holding of the quarter finals of the Schools' Cup and approve the free use of the facilities at the City of Belfast Playing Fields by the Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association, subject to the completion of an appropriate event management plan to the satisfaction of the Council.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Shankill Leisure Centre Pool Repairs**

The Director reported that the swimming pool at the Shankill Leisure Centre was in need of essential maintenance and would be required to close for a period of five days. He pointed out that the Centre was due to be closed for annual staff refresher training on 21st December and it was therefore proposed that, in order to minimise disruption, the Centre be closed for repairs during the period from the 20th till 24th December. He stated that the lead up to Christmas was traditionally a time when Leisure Centres undertook such repairs and it was anticipated that, should the Committee agree to the Centre's closure, the swimming pool would re-open on Wednesday, 29th December. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee approve the closure of the swimming pool at the Shankill Leisure Centre during the period from 20th till 24th December in order to enable essential maintenance to be undertaken.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

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

The Committee noted a Schedule for Sport applications in relation to 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 the Modern.gov website.

Arising from discussion in the matter, the Director sought and was granted authority to organise an Information Day for Members in relation to the Support for Sport Scheme.

Chairman