

Parks and Leisure Committee

Monday, 13th December, 2010

SPECIAL MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor O'Reilly (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Stalford); and
Councillors Adamson, Corr, Hartley, Mallon, Maskey,
Mac Giolla Mhín, McCabe, McCarthy, McVeigh and
G. Robinson.
- In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mr. C. Quigley, Town Solicitor;
Ms. C. Wilson, Policy and Business Development Unit; and
Miss L. Hillick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Kyle, L. Patterson, J. Rodgers and Stoker.

Draft Playing Pitch Provision Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

Members are aware that an ongoing process has been taking place to develop a Playing Pitches Strategy and that reports were brought to Committee in December 2009 and June 2010.

The report to Committee in December 2009 outlined the findings from the Strategic Leisure assessment of supply and demand for:

- **association football (soccer);**
- **Gaelic sports (football and hurling);**
- **camogie;**
- **cricket;**
- **rugby union; and**
- **hockey.**

The report to Committee in June 2010 outlined further developments in the process and party group briefings were held in August 2010 to gain Members views on the developing strategy and prioritisation framework. The main points of discussion were:

- The value of outdoor leisure provision in delivering a number of Council corporate objectives, including improved health and well-being;
- The need to address the deficiencies in provision for some sporting codes, e.g. Gaelic sports and cricket;
- Provide a robust indication of cost for proposed options with a prioritisation framework for investment to address the deficiencies in provision;
- Develop partnerships with the education sector, governing bodies and other providers to ensure adequate provision is provided across the city and community access issues are addressed;
- That any strategy is equality proofed and addresses the issue of under-represented groups such as women and people with disabilities.

Further party group briefings have been held in the first two weeks of December to seek Members' views on the draft strategy, in advance of the special meeting of the Committee.

2. Key Issues

The objectives for the overall strategy are as follows:

Objective 1 – Capital development and enhancement

To prioritise and deliver a programme of capital development and enhancement investments to address identified deficiencies and to protect and enhance existing provision.

Objective 2 – Management

To implement and monitor a range of management options, working in partnership with community and statutory providers, so as to maximise the participation of people in sports team activity.

Objective 3 – Sports development

To develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise the participation of people in sports team activity, including under-represented groups such as females and those with disabilities; connectivity and shared space; and supporting new teams.

It has been agreed that this strategy will be over a 10-year timeframe.

A copy of the draft play pitches strategy is attached as appendix 1. A verbal summary on the strategy will be provided at the Committee meeting.

Issues for consideration

There are a number of issues which Members may wish to consider specifically:

City wide approach (5.4)

For the purposes of the final assessment, it was agreed with elected Members that provision levels would be on the basis of a city-wide assessment. This is due in part to different perceptions of the geographical boundaries within the city as well as the catchment radius of 5 miles, or 20 minute travel time for synthetic turf pitches. This is recommended by the Fields in Trust good practice guide 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play', considered to be the leading authority on issues related to outdoor leisure provision.

Further analysis of the equality impacts will be undertaken in respect of the catchment areas for each of the proposed sites, as part of the prioritisation process. This will allow the Council to identify any site-specific mitigating actions and incorporate this into the new strategy.

Baseline Assessment (9.2)

It is agreed that the baseline assessment is a sufficiently robust baseline on which to initiate the strategy. It is our intention to further substantiate the figures in 2 years (rather than the recommended 5 years) through an improved performance management framework.

Approach (9.2)

A multi-layered approach is proposed – investment; management; programming – which will ensure that the Council provides and supports the provision of high-quality, accessible, well-planned outdoor provision. This includes capital investment in new pitches and improving the quality of existing facilities.

Timeframe (9.3)

Given the scale of investment and the timescales for design, permissions and delivery, it is proposed that this strategy is over a 10-year time period. This is in line with the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy, currently in draft.

Partnership (9.4)

In line with the advice from the consultants, it is proposed that this strategy looks at the totality of provision with secured community access rather than just Council-owned. We will work vigorously with our partners across different sectors to protect and enhance playing pitch provision in the city, and within agreed travelling distances, beyond the Council's current boundaries.

Setting priorities for phase 1 (9.5)

It is therefore proposed that in phase 1 (Years 1-3), the Council will prioritise capital works in its own facilities but will be proactive in securing feasible partnership opportunities for medium and longer term investments.

Discussions with the education sector (9.6/7)

It is a priority to improve community access to education facilities. Meetings are ongoing with the education sector including the Department of Education, Belfast Education and Library Board and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

Mix of capital investment (10.10)

A proposed mix of investment is outlined for phase 1 and includes a combination of delivering new 2 pitches with ancillary facilities (part-funded); a series of upgrades (pitches and changing) and lower cost options (floodlighting and cricket squares). This option presents the maximum benefit to the Council and its partners, and reduces a number of the risks

Funding strategy (10.12)

It is necessary to develop a complete management and funding framework for this strategy which maximises the income, facilitates partnership working as well as ensuring provision is made for repairs and renewals. Work is ongoing with officers from Finance and Resources in this regard.

Short list (10.14 and Appendix 2)

An initial short-list of Council owned sites has been made on the basis that there is either potential for new hybrid 3-G provision (Score 2) or replacement provision (Score 1). It is recommended that those sites which are too small, have planning restrictions or where the topography is prohibitive will not proceed to the full prioritisation stage.

The short-list in appendix 1 (31 sites) will now be scored on the basis of the matrix outlined below.

Capital prioritisation matrix (10.16)

The matrix has been developed in alignment with the sub-objectives under Objective 1 and the Council's existing capital prioritisation framework. It proposes a numerical assessment based on a number of criteria which is subsequently weighted. Each investment decision – both Council-owned and partner opportunities – will be assessed using the assessment criteria.

A proposed weighted score has also been included, denoting the Council's priority for each criterion. When the weighting is agreed, locations will be assessed against the matrix. The proposed weightings are:

Need (25)
Proximity (10)
External Funding (25)
Partnership (10)
Intensification of use (20)
Reputational Risk (10)

Following the scoring, a narrative on the risks, costs and benefits on each site will be developed. Each narrative will also include detail on the equality and good relations impacts of each investment location and mitigating actions required.

Next Steps

The next stage in the process is to undertake public consultation on the draft strategy. It is anticipated that the public consultation will be carried out from 10 January to 4 March 2011 to obtain the views of users and key stakeholders. A detailed timeline is attached as appendix 2.

It is proposed that this public consultation exercise will involve a series of meetings with key stakeholders and users and that this is independently facilitated. The draft strategy will also be available to download from the website.

It is proposed that an independent consultant be appointed to facilitate the consultation process and add rigour to the process. The anticipated total cost of this extensive consultation process is up to £10,000. This will include the printing of the draft strategy, venue hire, light refreshments and the fees for an independent facilitator.

It is proposed that Party Group Briefings be carried out in March 2011 to obtain Members' views on the feedback from public consultation and that a final draft strategy be brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee in April 2011.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

Public consultation – it is estimated that this will be in the region of £10,000.

Human Resources

No additional human resources known at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage although the implementation of the strategy may have implications on the number and type of playing pitches provided by the council.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

Denise Wheatley has been appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy. Officers have furnished her with a copy of the full Strategic Leisure report, committee papers and the draft of the strategy. Her initial feedback is that the process to date is in line with the statutory guidance. She will continue to offer advice and feedback to the Council throughout the consultation and EQIA process.

It is recommended that a second public consultation is undertaken when the prioritisation process has been carried out and specific sites are identified. This consultation will take place when the final draft strategy has gained Council approval.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to;
comment on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy;
agree that public consultation is undertaken on the draft strategy and that a budget of £10,000 is allocated to this; and
agree that Party Group Briefings are held in March 2011 to obtain Members feedback on the findings of the public consultation and the final draft strategy.

6. **Decision Tracking**

Subject to Council approval the Policy and Business Development Officer will commence the process for public consultation in January 2011 and the Director of Parks and Leisure will bring the final draft playing pitches strategy to April 2011 Committee.

7. **Key to Abbreviations**

EQIA: Equality Impact Assessment

8. **Documents Attached**

**Appendix 1: Draft Playing Pitches Strategy
Appendix 2: Consultation Timeline.”**

Arising from discussion, it was highlighted that the quality of existing pitches needed to be addressed and that the rolling maintenance programme should be detailed within the Strategy. Accordingly, the Director agreed to add that to the draft which would be issued for public consultation. In addition, the Director pointed out that the consultation time line which had been circulated to the Members was a draft outline and would be amended to take into account those decisions which had been made regarding locations and further consultation requirements.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Maskey,
Seconded by Councillor Hartley,

That the weightings in respect of the assessment criteria contained within the draft Strategy be amended as follows:

Need	35%
Proximity	10%
External Funding	20%
Partnership	10%
Intensification of use	15%
Reputational risk	10%

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

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- (i) that the draft Strategy be released for public consultation;
- (ii) that a budget of £10,000 be allocated for that purpose;
- (iii) that Party Group briefings be held following the public consultation in order to discuss the feedback on the findings of the public consultation and final draft Strategy; and
- (iv) that a question be included in the consultation document asking consultees for their opinion in respect of the weightings which have been allocated to the assessment criteria.

In addition, the Committee noted that a copy of the draft Strategy was available on the Modern.gov website.

Chairman