

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 9th June, 2011

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Corr (Chairman);
Aldermen Humphrey and Rodgers;
Councillors Austin, Haire, Hargey, Hendron, Kyle, Kelly,
Mallon, McCabe, McKee, McNamee, Mac Giolla Mhín,
A. Newton, O'Neill, Robinson and Thompson.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors McVeigh and Mullan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd May.

New Committee

The Chairman (Councillor Corr) welcomed the new Members of the Council to the first meeting of the Committee following the Local Government Elections.

Draft Parks and Leisure Department Plan 2011/2012

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to present Members with the proposed 2011/12 departmental plan for approval by committee.

The departmental plan is one of the key ways in which Members manage the delivery of the committee's priorities. The plan is closely linked to the financial estimates (i.e. the budget for the year ahead) which were considered on 7 January of this year by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee alongside key actions for 2011/12 for each department. These were subsequently agreed by council at its meeting in February.

Since then, chief officers have been finalising their departmental plans based on these approved estimates and actions.

The plans, once approved, also provide the Director with the delegated authority to deliver the key actions that they contain subject to regular monitoring and reporting to committee.

2. Key Issues

The appended plan for the Parks and Leisure Department sets out:

- the key achievements from 2010/11
- key departmental actions in 2011/12
- the department's key performance indicators for 2011/12
- financial information relating to the estimates for 2011/12.

The plan enables committee to performance manage the key work of the department. It should also assist managers and officers in the department to make decisions and allocate resources in line with the agreed objectives and activities.

The plan is based on the estimates and high level objectives set by the previous committee. However all plans will be reviewed with committees in October/November to ensure that they remain relevant for the new committee and to inform the committee's consideration of plans for 2011/12, in line with the financial planning process.

3.0 Resource Implications

None.

4.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are none at this stage.

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to agree the draft Parks and Leisure departmental plan 2011/12.

6.0 Decision Tracking

A six monthly update report will be provided to Members in October 2011.

7.0 Key to Abbreviations

None.

8.0 Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Draft Parks and Leisure Departmental Plan 2011/12.”

Following discussion, the Committee approved the Parks and Leisure Departmental Plan 2011/2012. A copy of the principal sections of the Plan, with the exception of a number of diagrams, is set out hereunder:

“1.0 Introduction

The Parks and Leisure Department manages many of the Council’s major assets including leisure centres, parks, open spaces, cemeteries and the region’s only crematorium.

Leisure Services is responsible for our 10 leisure centres sports development and a range of community based sports and activity programmes. The Parks and Cemeteries Service manages over 140 sites including over 50 parks, 75 playgrounds, Belfast Zoo, Malone House and Belfast Castle.

The Department plays a crucial role in delivering the Council’s health and wellbeing objectives and is currently developing a strategic approach to achieving an ‘Active Belfast’ in partnership with the Belfast Health Development Unit and other stakeholders. The Department will also assume responsibility for the Connswater Community Greenway and currently owns and manages much of the parks and open space along the greenway.

Forthcoming Parks and Leisure developments also include a new playing pitch strategy, a review of the provision for burials and cremations, and a renewed strategic focus on community access to outdoor activities in community gardens and allotments. In the next year the Department will continue its internal change management programme to improve service delivery in a modern Parks and Leisure environment.

2.0 Background

The corporate plan embodies what the council intends to achieve. It sets out Members' ambitions for the city and their commitment to improving the quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in and visits the city. It is based upon an assessment of need in the city, the views of residents on what the council's priorities should be and a commitment to strong political and executive leadership.

Whilst the corporate plan focuses on issues which cut across council departments it also reflects the importance of the quality of the vital services that are provided on a daily basis.

2.3 The corporate value creation map (VCM) is a performance management framework which is used to implement the corporate planning process and encourage services to work together across the council to improve quality of life and the different elements that contribute to this aim.

2.4 This departmental plan describes how the Parks and Leisure Department's purpose, vision, values, objectives, activities and KPIs for the year 2011/12 complement those outlined in the corporate plan. This plan is the basis for management of the Department by Committee and senior management. It highlights the alignment and linkages between departmental activities and the corporate plan.

2.5 The Council's Scheme of Delegation (Part 2, Section 2.6) gives authority to the Director to 'implement those actions, initiatives and events which are planned for the relevant forthcoming year provided that the Departmental Plan has been approved by Committee prior to any decision being taken.' For the 2011-12 period, the Director of Parks and Leisure intends to use this authority to implement all the activities outlined in section 7 (Pg 17-21) and as well as any additional related activities. In particular the Director intends to use delegated authority to;-

- (i) implement those actions derived from the improvement programme;
 - (ii) authorise unforeseen or reactive events in any parks or leisure facility;
 - (iii) engage any relevant consultancy expertise required to deliver the actions outlined in Section 7 of the plan subject to adherence to the Council's procurement protocols and the necessary budgetary allocation having been made;
 - (iv) set nominal entrance fees or charges or waive fees for the Department's activities or events in those cases where an appropriate case has been made – e.g summer schemes and interface programmes.
 - (v) approve charitable collections and fund raising activities of partner organisations who contribute to the achievement of the council's vision and objectives in Parks and Leisure facilities.
- 2.6 Progress update reports will be submitted to the Parks and Leisure Committee quarterly which will be generated from the corporate performance management system - CorVu.

3.0 Purpose, vision and values

3.1 Our department's purpose is:

To work with people across Belfast and its neighbourhoods to create an active, healthy and vibrant city.

The work of the department is reflected in the VCM below, which clearly reflects how we contribute to the objectives of the council:

3.2 Our vision is:

The *people* in Belfast will be active and healthy and everyone will use leisure, parks and open space facilities across the city. They will participate in local events and play an active part in community life.

We will have pride in our work and be passionate about our purpose. The city and its neighbourhoods will be attractive and vibrant *places* to live in, work in and visit. We will continue to engage with local people and partners to make sure that people are offered the best possible facilities and services in a safe environment.

We will protect the natural environment of Belfast and educate people on the importance of a green city. With our partners, we will work hard to connect the city and integrate our services. The range and quality of our facilities and services will be accessible and valued by citizens and visitors alike. Those who use our services and participate in programmes and events will be very satisfied with their experience.

We will be flexible and efficient. We will prioritise community involvement, customer focus and value for money. We will strive to understand the city and identify innovative *possibilities* and creative solutions to deliver excellent services.

We are about people, places and possibilities.

3.3 The council’s values are central to the way in which we work. As a council, we will:

- **Focus on the needs of customers, have a ‘can-do’ attitude, be problem solvers;**
- **Provide value for money and improve services;**
- **Work together;**
- **Respect each other, be fair, promote equality and good relations;**
- **Act sustainably;**
- **Ensure the highest standards of health and safety; and**
- **Value our employees.**

3.4 We fully subscribe to the council’s values and in particular we will adhere to the values outlined below. These values will underpin everything we do:

We are proud, passionate and professional:

<u>Values</u>	<u>What we mean</u>
<u>Proud</u>	<p>Having pride in our work, the city and our environment.</p> <p>Being open and transparent and developing trust by doing what we promise.</p> <p>Having a ‘can do’ attitude and being empowered to deliver.</p>

<u>Values</u>	<u>What we mean</u>
<u>Passionate</u>	Being positive, active and helpful in working things out. Celebrating success and promoting our achievements. Treating each other with respect and dignity.
<u>Professional</u>	Learning and developing as employees. Being willing to accept responsibility for our work and performance. Communicating openly about expectations and decisions taken.

4.0 Strategic themes

4.1 The corporate VCM defines six strategic themes. These were chosen as priorities for the council in the context of a wider analysis of need in the city, the views of the public, and the statutory and strategic challenges and opportunities that are likely to impact on the council over the next three years. The themes are:

- *City leadership – strong, fair, together*
- *better opportunity for success across the city*
- *Better care for Belfast's environment*
- *Better support for people and communities*
- *Better services – listening and delivering*
- *Better value for money – a can-do, accountable, efficient council*

4.2 The last of these themes underpins all of the council's work, and is further defined by the following strategic elements within the VCM:

- Corporate human resource management
- Corporate financial planning
- Corporate information management
- Corporate planning and performance
- Corporate communication and engagement
- Corporate assets
- Corporate governance and risk

5.0 Changes in internal and external environment

The Parks and Leisure department is one of the largest departments within the council and will experience significant internal and external changes in 2011/12. We have developed a flexible and adaptable approach to manage the ongoing changes. A summary of the key changes in the year ahead are outlined below:

5.1 *Internal changes*

The financial environment

- Increasing pressure on current budget allocation
- Need to improve links between financial and business planning
- Improving efficiency and value for money (VFM)
- Need to maximise commercial income set against the external environment
- Succession planning, voluntary redundancy (VR) and associated costs
- Recommendations from the Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiencies
- working group and the Organisation Development panel.

Strategic focus

- Increasing focus on a strategic approach to service delivery, for example through the emerging Active Belfast and Open Spaces, Pitches, and Allotments and Community Gardens strategies
- Further developments in thematic working
- Progress in strategic partnership working, delivering projects on an inter-departmental basis and with the Belfast Health Development Unit
- Support the Manager and Officer Development programme ensuring that it is fit for purpose and transferable to departmental needs and requirements

Departmental improvement and structural change

- Managing change and influencing behavioural and cultural change
- Keeping staff, management and trade unions informed, involved and engaged
- Maintaining service delivery following VR
- Re-organising operational management and planning processes to include new and expanding areas of responsibility for example the Connswater Community Greenway and the North Foreshore
- Increased community and customer focus brought about through the departmental improvement programme

Election year

- Recent changes to council membership and the results of local government elections will impact on the composition of the council going forward. We will work closely with new members and support the Council Member Development programme

5.2 External changes

The financial environment

- The ever-tightening financial environment including limited capital investments
- Focus on public spending and providing VFM and efficient services
- Growing expectations among citizens and visitors

Strategic focus

- Improvements in strategic partnership working, such as the education sector, the Public Health Agency, sports governing bodies and the Community and Voluntary sector

Increased Central government focus on health and wellbeing

- Central government policy focus on promoting active, healthy lifestyles and tackling obesity

6.0 Departmental structure and assets

6.1 The Parks and Leisure department is one of five departments which together with the Chief Executive's Department, make up the structure of the Council. The various departments are shown in Figure 3 below.

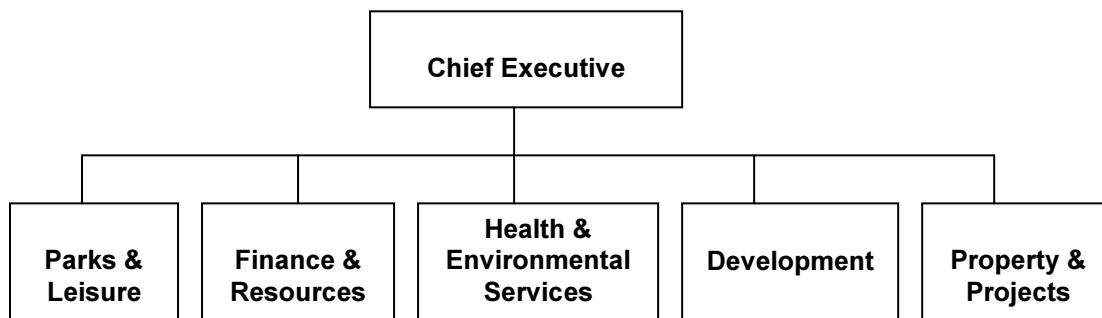
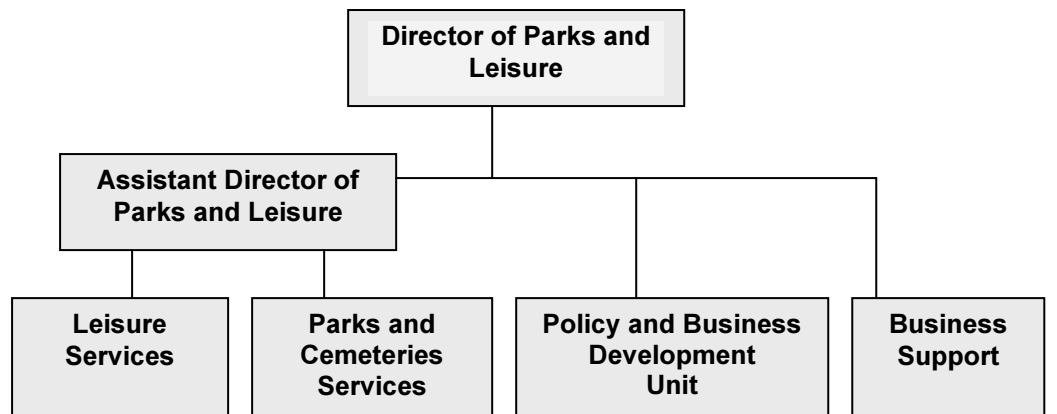


Figure 3: Council structures

The Parks and Leisure department is responsible for approximately 20% of the council's annual expenditure. The department is responsible for parks and leisure centre provision, leisure and sports development, conservation, landscaping, Malone House and Belfast Castle, crematorium and cemetery services, Belfast Zoological Gardens, events and extensive partnership working.

The department employs 813 staff, or 636.49 FTEs (full time equivalent, as many staff are part-time or casual employees). The organisation chart on Figure 4 is the high level outline of the structure operating within the department:



- Provision of 10 leisure centres across the city -promoting participation for all; and shared space and access for all -providing value for money
- Leisure and sports development

- 48 parks and open spaces
- 74 playgrounds
- 135 sports pitches (including grass and synthetic)
- 12 bowling pavilions
- 1 golf course
- 3 working cemeteries and the region's only crematorium
- Belfast Zoological Gardens
- Belfast Castle and Malone House
- 1 international rose garden
- 1 adventure playground
- The city's street trees and woodland areas
- Biodiversity and countryside access

- Policy development and implementation
- Strategy development and implementation
- Performance management
- Departmental planning
- Project and programme management
- Consultation and engagement
- Communications marketing and sponsorship
- Business and service development reviews
- Research, data and best practice
- Information intelligence & knowledge transfer

- Business support management
- Procure to pay co-ordination
- Budgetary Control
- Information management/ systems administration
- Income generation
- Employee relations guidance
- Staffing matters
- Attendance management
- Workforce development
- Administration

Figure 4: Departmental Structure

- 6.2 Our departmental assets are spread across the city and the majority of our staff are based in outlying areas either in our leisure centres, parks, pavilions, depots, and open spaces i.e. Malone House, Belfast Castle, crematorium and cemetery services and Belfast Zoological Gardens. A map of current Parks and Leisure assets are shown below in Figure 5.

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Figure 5: Departmental assets

7.0 Key achievements 2010/11

Set against a background of ongoing change and increasing pressure on financial resources, the department has made significant progress on a number of activities in the last year. Among other achievements, the department has:

7.1 City leadership

Key achievements

- Successfully delivered the Peace III funded Cultural Diversity in Sport programme, in partnership with Belfast Community Sport Development Network (BCSDN)
- Developed draft Playing Pitches strategy and commenced consultation
- Secured capital funding for enhancing playing pitches and the Mary Peters track
- Successfully delivered the Peace III funded Cultural Diversity in Sport project 'Our SPACE' programme
- Continued working with Members and partners to develop an agreed approach to the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy.

7.2 Better care for Belfast's environment

Key achievements

- Successfully implemented green flag management practices in our parks
- Delivered the Watch this Space environmental education programme, engaging almost 700 primary school children

- Took part in over 90 international breeding programmes for endangered animals
- Completed the first round funding application for the development of the Tropical Ravine and Botanic Gardens
- Contributed to corporate environmental and recycling initiatives
- Implemented year four of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan

7.3 Better opportunities for success across the city

Key achievements

- Aligned departmental policy with regeneration and development priorities in the city
- Ensured ongoing success in the development of heritage trails
- Belfast Zoological Gardens recorded its highest ever monthly visitor numbers in August 2010, with over 70,000 visitors having a 'zooper' day during this month
- Commenced review of the business model for Belfast Zoological Gardens
- Contributed to the council's strategic approach to integrated tourism
- We had 180,000 visitors to Belfast Castle and Malone House and hosted over 1000 events and functions

7.4 Better support for people and communities

Key achievements

- Began construction on the Peace III funded Bridges Urban Sports Park
- Funded 26 organisations through the parks events small grant scheme, helping to deliver events for over 38,000 attendees across 23 of our parks
- Commenced a review of the Support for Sport scheme
- Funded 138 local clubs and 23 different sports a total of £189,233 through the Support for Sport grant scheme
- Successfully delivered the Safer Neighbourhood Antisocial Behaviour programme
- Developed a youth participation initiative entitled 'People in Parks' as part of the wider approach to reducing antisocial behaviour in hotspot areas

- Funded, facilitated and organised a varied range of indoor and outdoor events and programmes, such as the primary schools cross-country, parks family fun days and health open days in leisure centres
- A total number of 14,938 participants registered for the summer scheme programme across all Leisure Centres an increase of 9% from last year
- Developed an Active Belfast Consortium Business Plan 2010/15 and commenced associated actions
- Provided free Boost membership for 200 people living in areas of high deprivation
- Received 1400 referrals for our Healthwise scheme; an increase of 40% on 2009
- Held 300 fitness classes a week at our 10 leisure centres
- Delivered an 'Active Belfast' conference, attended by 180 people
- Established the 'Are you fit for it?' personal development through sport programme
- Participated in the Active Communities programme with partners
- Developed Coach Education programme, including a comprehensive training programme
- Designed and built three Peace III funded community gardens at Lenadoon, Glenbank and Suffolk and participated in associated conferences

7.5 Better services

Key achievements

- Developed a departmental customer improvement plan
- Provided for 1056 burials and 2731 cremations
- Successfully achieved Green Flag Award accreditation in two of our parks (Musgrave Park (achieved) and Cavehill Country Park (retained)) and applied for accreditation for Falls Park, Ormeau Park, Roselawn Cemetery, Botanic Gardens and Barnett Demesne
- Completed planning applications for Dunville and Woodvale development programmes with full planning approval pending
- Continued to play a key role in the development of the Connswater Community Greenway and assumed management and maintenance role
- Launched the online burial records search facility

7.6 Better value for money

Key achievements

Human Resources

- Implemented the attendance policy and introduced training for relevant staff across the department
- Rolled out a consistent PDP approach across the department
- Completed the review of business support, parks and leisure services
- Provided a leadership development course for managers

Finance

- Reviewed fees and charges identifying income opportunities
- Completed a review of the financial management processes and improved the provision and timeliness of information to budget holders
- Contributed to the corporate review of fees and charges

Information Management

- Upgraded the TLMS system
- Completed an audit of HR and finance information, as part of a wider departmental information audit.
- Developed an electronic events database to record, analyse and evaluate departmental events and programmes

Policy, Planning and Performance

- Developed, collated, monitored and reviewed a suite of departmental KPIs
- Successfully managed, monitored and reviewed the departmental and business planning approach

Communication and Engagement

- A communications plan was developed and implemented for communication on the departmental improvement programme and a staff newsletter was developed to support this
- Undertaken a departmental review of marketing and communications

Assets

- Implemented and trained relevant staff on the gateway process for capital projects
- Contributed to the development of the council's asset management plan

Governance and Risk

- Reviewed the department's business continuity plans
- Developed a departmental incident reporting protocol
- Commissioned an audit of overtime and agency compliance and justification by the Council's Audit, Governance and Risk Service.

8.0 Key actions for 2011/12

The department's key actions have been defined against the background of the VCM. Each key activity has a relationship with one or more of the themes described in the departmental VCM.

8.1 City leadership

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about *partnering and leading*. The Parks and Leisure Department takes a strategic lead role on behalf of the Council in working with other partners and agencies to deliver an active, healthy and vibrant city.

Key actions

- Agree the next steps in the development of the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces (ABOS) strategy and commence delivery of year one actions
- Deliver year one actions in the pitches strategy
- Develop and deliver a robust plan for the development of cemetery and crematorium provision in Belfast
- Work in partnership to develop strategic capital enhancement and programming projects including:
 - Upgrading and regenerating Mary Peters Track in order to facilitate the 2013 police and fire fighter games
 - Sourcing funding for the re-development of the Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens and the Floral Hall in Belfast Zoological Gardens
 - Develop strategic relationships with schools re recreational facilities

- Make arrangements for the management and maintenance of phase one of the Connswater Community Greenway
- Complete the Dunville and Woodvale park development programme and commence development works subject to agreement on funding

8.2 Better care for Belfast's environment

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about *protecting and linking* the city through its parks, open spaces and leisure centres. Throughout the year we will be committed to delivering a sustainable approach to service provision, contributing to a cleaner, greener and healthier environment.

Key actions

- Complete a Green Flag standard site assessment across the department's parks and open spaces
- Apply for the Green Flag Award for three additional sites
- Carry out a review of departmental environmental management processes
- Protect, promote and enhance the existing asset portfolio and integrate with capital enhancement project

8.3 Better opportunities for success across the city

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about *physical* regeneration in local neighbourhoods and the department playing a key role in the local economy. The department will continue to develop ways of using our facilities and open spaces; to enrich the city's cultural, tourism and heritage offering.

Key actions

- Develop an annual programme and plan of parks and leisure focused citywide events
- Improve parks and open spaces by developing with local communities and partners local area programmes linked to capital enhancement projects at Connswater Community Greenway, Dunville Park and Woodvale Park
- Contribute to the delivery of the Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism

8.4 Better support for people and communities

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about *participation* and *lifestyles*. The Department will continue to provide programmes and services to make people feel safer and encourage people to lead healthier and more active lifestyles.

Key actions

- To work with other Council Departments to develop an integrated approach to neighbourhood working to maximise the impact of existing and emerging neighbourhood and community development work
- Develop a plan to facilitate the delivery a range of programmes and activities with local communities
- Develop and deliver the Safer Neighbourhood Antisocial Behaviour plan and Programme
- Deliver and evaluate the Presence in Parks pilot
- Deliver phase two of the People in Parks initiative with Challenge Youth
- Deliver improvements in dog services and dog control in our parks
- Together with the Belfast Health Development unit and other partners develop an Active Belfast Partnership to develop and deliver year one actions for a more active Belfast
- Develop programmes to increase participation in connection with 2012 Olympics to maximise the Olympic legacy
- Complete and launch the new Urban Sports Park and deliver associated sports development activities
- Agree and implement an allotment and community garden strategy together with the Belfast Health Development Unit and the Public Health Agency (PHA)
- Deliver a range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities including; Parent and toddler swim classes, Make a splash swim programme, Summer schemes, Healthwise exercise referral scheme, Cardiac rehabilitation (Phase 4) programme, Work for health, Health for life scheme, Activ8 programme, Healthy families, Watch this space programme, Toddler to teenager programme and programmes for seniors and women.

8.5 Better services

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about delivering a proficient service and listening to our customers. The Department will continue to deliver service improvement right across the department.

Key actions

- Improve the customer experience at Parks and Leisure venues by:
 - Developing and implementing a customer improvement plan
 - Implementing further service improvement pilots and programmes
 - Through operational reviews identifying and delivering improvements and efficiencies in our services
- Agree and implement the revised business model for Belfast Zoological Gardens
- Review, agree and implement a new business model for Malone House and Belfast Castle
- Continue to work with partners to develop and implement an improved model of community engagement to co-produce outcomes in the city's neighbourhoods
- In partnership with the PHA and BHDU develop a shared community gardens and allotments vision and strategy for Belfast. Improve service provision and support for allotments and community gardens across the city

8.6 Better value for money

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about reviewing and improving our *processes* and creating a *learning* organisation. The Department will continue to invest and support our people by improving employee capacity and capabilities.

Key actions

Human Resources

- Ensure compliance and review effectiveness of corporate HR strategies, policies and procedures including attendance policy, vacancy control and health and safety

- Roll out consistent PDP process and participate in the process of obtaining corporate IIP

Finance

- Adhere to corporate processes and development of financial planning, management and control and review effectiveness
- Secure and manage funding from external sources for major initiatives, including Peace III (i.e. Belfast peace plan phase 2), DSD (BRO) and the Heritage Lottery Funding (i.e. Heritage grants, parks for people)

Information Management

- Implement and review corporate information management systems, including clockwise, TLMS, CorVu, Klikview and SRM
- Review and improve the use of IT systems in the department including Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) of current processes

Policy, Planning and Performance

- Manage, monitor and review the departmental planning approach and improve the link between financial estimates and business plans
- Hold quarterly DMT performance meetings with senior managers to monitor and review departmental priorities and financial management

Communication and Engagement

- Develop and deliver the departmental marketing and communications strategy to best promote the work of the department

Assets

- Ensure that recommendations from the asset management strategy are implemented and contribute to the development of the council's asset management plan

Governance and Risk

- Complete and monitor the departmental risk register and risk management plans and integrate into business planning process

9.0 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2011/ 12

The following departmental KPIs will be used to measure and monitor departmental progress and success:

The department has developed the following set of KPIs for collection, monitoring and reporting (via the performance management system - CorVu) throughout the 2011/12 financial year. Where applicable and available target data has been provided quarterly and annually. Baseline data is still to be established for some of the KPIs outlined below.

The indicators outlined below will be monitored quarterly by the DMT and will be reported on a quarterly basis to Chief Officer Management Team (COMT) and the Parks and Leisure Committee.

9.1 Better Care for Belfast's Environment

	Annual Target
• No. of parks and green spaces to attain green flag accreditation	3
• Tonnage of green waste recycled	TBC*
• Energy consumption expressed in gigajoules per hour per sq metre (Parks and Leisure Department)	TBC*

9.2 Better Opportunities for Success across the city

	Annual Target
• No. of visitors to the zoo	300,000

9.3 Better Support for People and Communities

	Annual Target
• No. of leisure centre members	TBC*
• % of users who use leisure centres twice + per week	TBC*
• Programme participation levels (outreach and health)	TBC*
• No. of people who use/ visit our indoor and outdoor leisure facilities	TBC*
• Participation levels at events	TBC*
• No. of reported ASB incidents	TBC*

9.4 Better Services

	Annual Target
• Hectares of parks and open spaces with green flag accreditation per resident	TBC*
• % residents that live within 1000m of green flag rated parks	TBC*
• Number of complaints received - All	TBC*
• % complaints that met response target - All	TBC*

9.5 Better Value for Money

Human Resources	Annual Target
• Average number of working days per employee lost due to absence (measured against agreed targets)	TBC*
• Variance between actual direct employee costs and budget	0
• Variance between actual Staff Number and agreed establishment	0

Financial Planning	Annual Target
• % Variance between net expenditure and budget	+1 / -3%
• % Variance between planned net expenditure and forecasted net expenditure	+1 / -3%
• % Variation between forecast outturn at period 6 and actual outturn at period 12	+ 1 / -1%
• % Non compliance of Goods Received Notes (GRNs) after invoicing	TBC*
• % Non compliance of Purchase Orders raised on time	TBC*
• Total net cost per user (indoor)	TBC*
• Total net cost per user (outdoor leisure)	TBC*
• Total net cost per user (Belfast zoo)	TBC*
• Ratio of income to expenditure (Rate of recovery) (Parks and Leisure Department)	1: 0.28
• Total net cost per ratepayer	£93.60
Corporate Policy, Planning & Performance	Annual Target
• % PIs with valid data collected and reported upon	85%
• % PIs on target	TBC *

(*Target to be confirmed)

10.0 Financial Information

The Parks and Leisure Department manages 20% of the council's annual budget, totalling a budgeted net expenditure of £22,940,266. Employee costs account for 65% of this expenditure.

Main Items of Estimated Expenditure 2011/12

	<u>Net Expenditure</u> <u>2010/11</u>	<u>Estimated Net</u> <u>Expenditure</u> <u>2011/12</u>
Leisure	8,287,520	8,193,619
Parks and Cemeteries	11,916,101	12,381,227
Parks and Leisure Directorate	2,097,253	2,365,420
Total	22,300,874	22,940,266

11.0 Monitoring and review arrangements

The council has introduced an integrated performance management system - CorVu that enables regular, up-to-date reporting to be undertaken at corporate, departmental and service level.

A number of KPIs and projects have been identified as corporately significant and are contained in the corporate plan. They will be reported on a quarterly basis to COMT to ensure ongoing management of the key priorities.

The Director of Parks and Leisure has the responsibility of monitoring, reporting and reviewing the progress of KPIs and projects within the departmental plan to the Parks and Leisure Committee (quarterly), Chief Officers' Management Team (COMT) (quarterly) and the Departmental Management Team (DMT) (weekly).

12.0 Committee membership

The Parks and Leisure Committee is responsible for the key decision-making and direction of the department."

Financial Reporting 2010/2011 - Quarter 4

(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.

The style and layout reflect much of the discussion and feedback arising from the members’ financial training at the end of September 2010. As we previously advised the committee, we will continue to develop the style and contents of the reports in liaison with members.

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

2. Key issues

Current financial position 2010/11

The year end financial position as at quarter 4 for Parks and Leisure Committee is an over-spend of some £0.187m, or 0.8% of budget (quarter 3: under-spend of £0.15m), against a forecast end of year over-spend of some £0.09m, or 0.4% of budget

The reasons for this over-spend continue from quarter 3 as follows:

- An overall employee budget over-spend (2% at quarter 4) 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.
- Utility costs in relation to water charges for both Parks and Leisure are over budget, Parks by £250k mainly in relation to the collapse of the borehole at the Zoo which required them to link into NI Water's supply. As reported previously we have disputed bills with Northern Ireland Water, and we have now received the refunds we were pursuing.
- Although income from events, outdoor leisure and the crematorium is up on budget, nevertheless income from services within the department is generally under pressure, with income down in leisure centres, the Zoo, 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.

The department will continue to monitor the variance between actual and budgeted expenditure during 2011/12.

The financial reporting pack contains more detail on both the overall council position and the financial performance in each of the Services within the Department.

3. **Resource Implications**

There is a year end over-spend of £0.18m or 0.8% in comparison to a forecast over-spend of some £0.1m or 0.4%.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

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

6. Decision Tracking

N/A.

7. Key to Abbreviations

None.”

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

Playing Pitches Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

The committee has been engaged in an ongoing process to develop a playing pitches strategy and as part of this a number of reports have been considered by committee. The most recent consideration was at the meeting of the committee on 14 April 2011. At this meeting Members noted the progress to date and agreed that final recommendations would be reported to the committee at its June meeting.

The aim of the draft playing pitches strategy is: *To contribute to improved health and wellbeing in Belfast by enabling adequate outdoor sports facilities and, working with partners, seek to maximise the provision and use of safe, accessible and quality outdoor leisure facilities.*

The draft strategy has three high level objectives which are supported by a number of sub-objectives. These are:

Objective 1 – Capital investment

To deliver and, working in partnership, enable a programme of capital development, enhancement and maintenance investments which address identified deficiencies and protect existing playing pitch provision.

Objective 2 – Management

To implement and monitor a range of management options with community and statutory partners, so as to maximise people’s participation in team sports activity.

Objective 3 – Sports development

Working in partnership to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise people’s participation in team sports activity. This will include under-represented groups, such as females and those with disabilities.

The first phase of the public consultation commenced on 10 January and closed on 4 March 2011 and the findings of this were presented to Members at a special committee on 21 March 2011.

As a result of the meetings to date the following has been agreed that:

- the strategy would cover a 10 year period;
- the strategy would promote partnership working;
- capital investment in the first three years of the strategy would primarily be in council owned sites;
- delivery in years 1-3 would be a combination approach of:
 - new pitches and pitch upgrades including ancillary provisions;
 - investment in changing provision;
 - cricket square installation/upgrade;
 - small scale investment in educational facilities to secure an increased community access to educational sites.
- a revised prioritisation matrix for investment decisions regarding potential sites.

At the special meeting of the committee on 21 March 2011 Members expressed concerns that:

- the Cliftonville playing fields had not been included in the list of viable sites for phase 1 investment; and
- it appeared that insufficient consideration had been given to the development of cricket and junior and ladies football provision.

An update on the work that had commenced to address these concerns, particularly with regard to Cliftonville playing fields and junior football provision was provided to the committee at the April meeting. It was agreed that final recommendations be made to the June meeting of the committee.

2 Key Issues

Prioritisation – pitches

Thirty-one council owned sites were considered for potential investment for new pitch provision. These were assessed using the revised prioritisation matrix also taking into account deliverability issues. This created the following short list of sites for 3G hybrid pitch provision:

- Woodlands
- Cherryvale
- Falls Park
- Ormeau Park
- Boucher Road playing fields
- North Link playing fields

The last four sites on this list achieved the same score in the prioritisation matrix but are listed in rank order for deliverability. The GAA has proposed a partnership approach to the development of the Woodlands and Cherryvale sites which enhanced their scoring. If selected for development detailed negotiations will be held with GAA to firm up these proposals.

Cliftonville playing fields was not on the original prioritisation list because the previous arrangement agreed by the council with the Bunscoil Bhean Mhadagain school which tied pitch development to the sale of the site for the school development introduced issues around deliverability in phase 1 of the pitch investment programme. Since this was first raised by the committee in March a number of meetings have been held with the interested parties.

The current confirmed position is:

- The Department of Education is unable to confirm a date for the school development.
- In light of this both the school and the GAA clubs are content to revise their agreement to enable the pitch and school to proceed as separate developments.
- The GAA has proposed entering into a partnership agreement for the development of a 3G pitch at this facility given the lack of GAA provision in North Belfast. As with Woodlands and Cherryvale this would require detailed negotiations with GAA.

- The site will only accommodate one full size GAA pitch to allow room for the future school development.
- Given the above and using the prioritisation matrix the Cliftonville playing fields site would be the third highest scoring site after Woodlands and Cherryvale.

Therefore it is proposed that the following five sites are selected for development in phase 1:

- Woodlands
- Cherryvale
- Cliftonville playing fields
- Falls Park
- Ormeau Park

Cricket pitches

The draft strategy provides for the installation of cricket squares at two sites. Subject to committee agreement it is proposed that an additional cricket square be installed at the City of Belfast playing fields and that the current cricket square at Blanchflower be upgraded. This would bring the total number of cricket squares that the council provides up to five; three at City of Belfast playing fields and one each at Blanchflower and Grove playing fields (two of which are synthetic wickets).

Changing Facilities

Investment in changing facilities is also planned for phase 1 implementation. It was originally anticipated that four sites be selected (at an estimate of approx £300k each) however given the anticipated partnership funding and the lower costs likely to be associated with the Cliftonville development it is now proposed that this be increased to five sites.

The criteria outlined in the prioritisation matrix are not appropriate when applied to the investment decisions required for changing facilities. Instead this list is based on information regarding conditions at existing changing facilities given the intention to provide adequate changing at any new pitch site.

The following sites are proposed for changing facility investment in phase 1:

- Ballysillan – new facility
- Waterworks (Westland) – new facility
- Musgrave Park – new facility
- Dixon Park – upgrade
- Victoria – upgrade

Juvenile provision

Members will be aware that queries have been raised around the provision that is currently being made for juveniles, in particular junior soccer, and whether it was meeting the need across the city.

Officers have undertaken an exercise to determine the practice in other local authorities and of the five contacted only two had any dedicated junior association football pitches but they did not assess that they provided enough to meet all the demand in the area. All the councils contacted used cones and portable nets on full size pitches for junior games across all the sporting codes.

One of the councils contacted has an arrangement with a local primary school to use their pitch on Saturday mornings (free of charge) to run 7 and 9 a side leagues and are also planning on building five-a-side astro turf cages which could also be used for junior games.

There is recognition that the demand for junior association football is growing and that there is a move towards 7 and 9 a side games for underage players. A paper produced by the Football Association (FA) 'Small Sided Football, Good Practice Guide 2010/11' states that:

'Small sided football also has a growing role in supporting the introduction to football within school environments. Facility and playing field restrictions mean... that small sided football can be a useful ally to support a teacher's football delivery...'

An analysis of current usage shows that 6 youth association football leagues that have a total of 394 teams and are allocated a total of 66 pitches across the city on Saturday mornings for their matches. A total of 5 pitches are used on Sundays for junior football. The teams that make up the junior football leagues range in age from under 10s up to under 18s.

The council currently provides some dedicated junior pitches and will continue to examine the potential to convert underused full size pitches into junior size pitches. It is also proposed that officers meet with the IFA to discuss the provision of junior facilities and to develop a programme of joint working to plan for junior provision in line with best practice. Officers will also hold discussions with other providers of junior facilities including schools and organisations such as the Boys Brigade.

Action Plans

Action plans have now been developed for each of the three objectives within the strategy.

A key aim under objective 1 in the strategy is to work with education partners (schools, higher and further education) to deliver increased access to their outdoor leisure facilities. Initial discussions have been held with education providers which indicated a willingness to engage with the council to mutual benefit. This work will be taken forward in conjunction with the Director of Property and Projects. However within the combination approach to investment in pitch facilities it was agreed to invest up to £750,000 in education facilities mainly to provide floodlighting to secure greater community access to educational pitch provision. It is therefore proposed that officers, together with the Finance and Resources Department, develop a process to invite applications from educational facilities for this purpose.

Review of Facility Management Agreements (FMAs)

With regard to the future of FMAs, the department has commenced a review of the FMAs that currently exist for pitches and as part of this a full root and branch review will be undertaken, which will involve consultation with clubs and Members and the development of a revised policy and procedure around pitch bookings. A report outlining the detail of the review and the associated findings will be brought to the Committee in the autumn.

Next Steps

Subject to committee and council approval of the capital investment proposals the next stage in the process is the second phase of public consultation. This will focus on the local impact of the development of sites as agreed by council. The consultation will be for a 12 week period and it is proposed that this take place from Monday 25th July to Friday 14th October (pending agreement on pitches sites).

Members agreed at the special meeting in December 2010 that the public consultation exercise will involve a series of meetings with key stakeholders and users and that these will be independently facilitated and to ensure maximum participation these will be held in September. The consultation papers will also be available to download from the website and information on the second phase of the consultation will be sent out to all those people on our mailing list.

Following the second phase of the public consultation a report outlining the key findings from it will be brought back to Members for consideration and discussion. The revised draft strategy will also be brought to the Members for approval.

In the interim work with the Director of Property and Projects will commence to design and cost in detail the proposals. Negotiations with GAA will also be undertaken to firm up the partnership proposals.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

£10 million has been allocated in the capital programme for the implementation of the playing pitches strategy in the period 2011-2014

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

Policy Arc Ltd has been appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy. Their feedback is that the process to date is in line with the statutory guidance. They continue to offer advice and feedback to the council throughout the consultation and EQIA process.

5 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

(i) agree that the following five sites are prioritised for development in phase 1:

- Cherryvale playing fields
- Woodlands playing fields
- Cliftonville playing fields
- Falls Park
- Ormeau Park

(ii) agree that the following changing facilities are upgraded in phase 1:

- Ballysillan – new facility
- Waterworks (Westland) – new facility
- Musgrave Park – new facility
- Dixon Park – upgrade
- Victoria – upgrade

(iii) agree that officers meet with the IFA to discuss a programme of joint working around junior association football based around best practice;

(iv) agree to develop a process to invite applications for enhancement to educational facilities to secure greater community access; and

(v) note the action plans.

6 Decision Tracking

A report detailing the findings of the second phase of the consultation and the final revised strategy will be brought to committee in November 2011 by the Director of Parks and Leisure.

7 Key to Abbreviations

GAA: Gaelic Athletic Association
IFA: Irish Football Association
DENI: Department of Education Northern Ireland
EQIA: Equality Impact Assessment”

Proposal (A)

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor Thompson,

That the Committee agrees that twenty percent of the budget in the capital programme for the implementation of the playing pitches strategy be allocated towards Junior sports provision.

On a vote by show of hands eight Members voted for proposal (A) and ten against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Proposal (B)

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Robinson,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the matter until its meeting scheduled to be held on 11th August to enable site visits to various locations to be undertaken.

On a vote by show of hands eight Members voted for proposal (B) and ten against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Proposal (C)

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Kyle,

That the Dixon Park Playing Fields and Victoria Park sites be removed from Phase 1 of the programme associated with the upgrade of changing facilities to enable those Members of the Committee representing the East of the City to undertake a site visit to those facilities and the Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park in order to consider the prioritisation of those sites within Phase 1 of the programme.

On a vote by show of hands ten Members voted for proposal (C) and eight against and it was accordingly declared carried.

A discussion ensued, during which several Members expressed the view that the site visit which had been agreed earlier in the meeting should be held as soon as possible to enable a decision in relation to the prioritisation of the refurbishment of changing facilities to be taken by the Council at its meeting on 4th July. Accordingly, the Democratic Services Officer undertook to arrange the site visits as a matter of urgency.

In addition, several Members expressed disappointment in relation to the lack of response from the Department of Education regarding the plans for the development of the Bunscoil Bhean Mhadagain.

Proposal (D)

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Hargey,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report, subject to the omission of the Dixon Park Playing Fields and the Victoria Park from Phase 1 of the programme in connection with the upgrade of changing facilities.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for proposal (D) and eight against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed:

- (i) that the following five sites be prioritised for development during Phase I of the programme:
 - Cherryvale Playing Fields
 - Woodvale Playing Fields
 - Cliftonville Playing Fields
 - Falls Park
 - Ormeau Park;
- (ii) that the following three changing facilities be upgraded during Phase I of the programme:
 - Ballysillan – new facility
 - Waterworks (Westland) – new facility
 - Musgrave Park – new facility;
- (iii) that the Dixon Park Playing Fields and Victoria Park sites be removed from Phase I of the programme associated with the upgrade of changing facilities to enable those Members of the Committee representing the East of the City to undertake site visits to those facilities and the Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park in order to consider the prioritisation of those sites within Phase I of the programme;
- (iv) that officers meet with the Irish Football Association to discuss a programme of joint working around junior association football based around best practice;
- (v) that officers develop a process for the invitation of applications for enhancement to educational facilities to secure greater community access;
- (vi) that letters be forwarded to the Ministers with responsibility for the Departments of Education and Culture, Arts and Leisure seeking meetings regarding the Pitches Strategy; and
- (vii) to note the action plans.

Parks and Leisure Improvement Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information”

The Parks and Leisure improvement programme is focused on building capacity and delivering better services and better outcomes for communities in Belfast. This is being achieved through:

1. reviewing management arrangements and operational efficiency;
2. bringing the Parks and Leisure functions of the department together to integrate community development and to work more closely in planning and service delivery.

The programme currently has a number of work streams; Parks Improvement, Leisure Services Improvement, Review of Business Support, and a Marketing and Communications Review. Given the scale of the reviews the following phased approach to streamlining management arrangements and achieving operational efficiency has been adopted :

Phase I

- Agreement and implementation of the Parks Management operational structural tier; and
- Agreement and implementation of Parks and Leisure Business Support management tier.

Phase II

- Operational review of Parks and Leisure Business Support including the leisure centre business support staff;
- Parks operational review to include: the review of the role of Team Leaders or “Parks Supervisors”; review of boundaries and numbers of staff; development of processes; quality monitoring; and implementation of systems.
- Operational review of the Outdoor Leisure function

- Development of a Parks Community Resource (i.e. Community Park Warden);
- Review of the estates function including Belfast Castle and Malone House (this will include the exploration of a coordinated estates/commercial function across the Parks and Cemeteries Service);
- Review of the Development function of Parks and Leisure
- Review of Bereavement Services.

Phase III

- Review of the management strand within Leisure Services; and
- Review of the operational strand in Leisure Services
- Review of operation at Roselawn Crematorium
- Review of Marketing and Communications
- Review of operation at Belfast Zoo

2.0 Key Issues

Progress to Date

Phase I

- Phase 1 was completed in January 2010 with agreed management side and trade union positions on the way forward. Proposals have been implemented with the establishment within existing resource of City Park Managers, Community Park Managers and Outreach Managers.

Phase II

- A review of Bereavement services was completed in conjunction with the review of management arrangements and operational efficiency for Parks. Recommendations have been implemented.

- A review of parks operational boundaries was completed which included more efficient deployment of staff and use of equipment. Work on reviewing the staffing allocation in each parks operational area is continuing with a focus on the roles of ROSPA and driver/gardeners. Recommendations for a Parks operative role will be brought to committee in August 2011.
- Recommendations from the review of the development strand of the Parks operation were made to committee in June 2010 with proposed further work to be done on the post of Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager. The post has been developed and re-designated as Departmental Portfolio Manager. The review of Landscape Planning and Development Unit is nearing completion and will be reported to August 2011 committee. The proposed review of the Departmental Development Strand is continuing and it is expected that outcomes will be reported in October 2011.

Work on reviewing and defining roles and responsibilities for the Parks operation is well progressed. The development of a Community Park Supervisor post has been completed and the roles of Community Park Warden and Community Park Safety Warden are in development through the Presence in Parks pilot. As planned two additional Community Park Safety Wardens have been appointed from the existing Park Rangers however there was a lack of take up from existing gardening staff for the role of Community Park Wardens. The pilot is proceeding with the existing Park Ranger resource and the role of Community Park Warden is being revisited. A further update on Presence in Parks will be brought to the August 2011 committee.

- The operational efficiency review of Parks is continuing with the implementation of a plan of improvements to reduce overtime and agency costs.
- The Green Flag standard has been adopted and a framework has been developed to improve all parks and open spaces in the city. Five new submissions were made for the standard in January 2011 and assessments are taking place in June 2011 with results to be announced mid July. The submissions were for Botanic Gardens, Ormeau Park, Falls Park, Barnett's Demesne and Roselawn Cemetery. Cavehill Country Park and Musgrave Park have already achieved Green Flag status and Musgrave Park is being reassessed in June 2011.

- Phase I of the review of Business Support has been completed and implemented. The second stage of Phase II of the review of business support will examine the provision of business support within leisure centres. A Pilot Review in three leisure centres (Grove Well Being Centre, Shankill LC and Andersonstown LC) will be completed by end of June 2011. This will identify any areas where there may be additional capacity in business support which could then be utilised across other areas of the department will be identified.
- The review of the Estates function has commenced and will examine opportunities for increasing income across the Parks estate.
- Communication and engagement has been an ongoing priority delivered through staff briefings, the production of a newsletter, staff representation on task forces and reference panels and frequent engagement with trade unions.

Phase III

- The review of Leisure Management arrangements has been completed and a new structure agreed by committee in January 2011. Work is ongoing with staff and Trade Unions to refine job descriptions and move to implementation of new roles.
- An operational efficiency review of the Leisure function has commenced with particular emphasis on overtime and agency costs.
- A review of the crematorium operation has taken place with recommendations made to Committee in April 2011 to improve the service by extending openings hours and increasing staff. The recommendations will be implemented by September 2011.
- The review of marketing and communications in the department is nearing completion and proposals for change are at the consultation stage. It is envisaged that proposals will be brought to the August 2011 committee.
- An operational review of Belfast Zoo will commence in August 2011.

3.0 Resource Implications

Financial

Summary of savings to date:

Phase I

Deletion of 7 posts including 2 business support posts with a net saving of £217,685 per year.

Deletion of Parks and Cemeteries Senior Manager and Leisure Manager posts and the creation of an Assistant Director post resulting in a net saving of £50,797 after an initial payback period of 1.6 years.

Phase II

Deletion of 2 posts with the creation of a new Open Spaces and Active Living Coordinator and Quality Manager giving a net saving of £43,018 after a payback period of 2.13 years

Increased capacity at Roselawn Crematorium cost £100,000 but it is anticipated that this will be paid for in year one and allow for future growth in income.

Phase III

After covering costs of reviewed posts and payback of 1.71 years deletion of 3 Leisure management posts with a saving of £140,485 and deletion of one temporary Leisure Centre Manager post saving £51,664.

Human Resources

Throughout the Parks and Leisure Improvement programme extensive consultation has been ongoing with stakeholders and trade unions. Consultation with the Trade Unions continues on a bi-weekly basis with engagement from all the main trade unions.

Asset and Other Implications

None

4.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

5.0 Recommendations

Committee is asked to note the progress of the Parks and Leisure Improvement programme

6.0 Decision Tracking

Responsible Officer – Assistant Director, Parks and Leisure.

Further report to be presented to August 2011 meeting.”

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

Safer Neighbourhoods Anti-social Behaviour Programme - People in Parks Update

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report which had been submitted in relation to the progress which had been achieved in respect of the Council's Safer Neighbourhoods Anti-social Behaviour Programme.

Future Options for Displaying Cemeteries Records Online

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

In October 2010 committee approved a phased approach to making cemeteries records available on-line. Phase 1 was to make basic information accessible to the public as soon as possible. Phase 2 was to examine the potential of providing additional information on-line and the possibility of charging for the service and Phase 3 was to explore the historical value of extending cemeteries records to other cemeteries in the city such as Milltown.

Phase 1 was completed in January 2011 providing a free internet service to the public for retrieval of burial records. The burial search has proved to be very successful with it being the most visited section of the council website for the month of March. Visitors to the site were in the region of 1,000 per day during the first month although this has now dropped to approx 450 per day. Many of the visitors are new visitors to the council website and have originated from 21 different countries outside of the UK and Ireland with USA, Canada and Australia bringing the highest rate of traffic.

An on-line feedback form was used to establish what people thought about the site and also to gain insight in to what other information would be useful.

The feedback concluded that 99% would recommend the burial search service and 87% thought it was good or excellent. Most of the additional comments were expressing thanks or congratulations on an excellent resource.

The following requests were the most popular requests for

- additional information:
- Details of who else is in the grave - 59%
- Image of the Burial record – 32%
- Location/Map – 21%
- Occupation – 20%
- Cause of Death – 8%.

Phase 2 will take on board the above feedback and provide an improved free search facility by plot number and provide details on who is in the grave. The improvements will also offer the facility to view and print images of the burial records, giving access to cause of death and occupation details where available. This information is available as a result of significant investment by the council to preserve the public record through digitisation of cemeteries' records. It is proposed that this additional service is available at a charge to the public.

The introduction of the search facility has increased public interest and increased demand for searches which has created significant additional work for the cemeteries office staff and staff at each of the cemeteries. For example, the time taken searching for specific name(s), can vary between ten minutes and two hours depending on the complexity of the search and the information provided at the outset. The queries also include staff members being asked to physically locate and show the grave to the applicant.

As a result of this additional work a new charge for staff time is also being suggested. The charge would be in line with other councils in Northern Ireland.

2 Key Issues

Phase 2 Proposals

Phase 2 will include the need to redact or edit information before publication to comply with data protection legislation as follows:

- Update of the existing on-line search to show all deceased buried within each grave plot
- All images prior to 1946 will be made available with no redaction
- For images after 1946 the following fields will be redacted

- grave owner
 - grant number
 - grant date
 - applicant signature.
- There will be a separate exercise of checking the hand written notes on each record. It is estimated that this will take one person two months. Any details regarding the grave owner will be redacted individually. It is estimated this could take one person up to two years to complete depending on the number of records requiring adjustment.

Phase 2 will be implemented in stages, with non redacted images made available first and the redacted images being made available in batches of 10 years as completed.

Charging for access to images on-line

There are two charging options which could be considered; purchase of credits or a monthly/yearly subscription. Research has shown that the most common charging method is through the purchase of credits.

It is recommended that a charging mechanism is implemented as a trial for 6/12 months based on the model used by Manchester City Council.

If the trial is successful then consideration should be given to the introduction of an option for payment by subscription fee. While a subscription fee may discourage some users it would be beneficial to offer as a second type of charging for historical/genealogical organisations and it could provide an up front income.

Manchester City Council's charging model involves payment for a number of searches:

- 4 credits for £12
- 10 credits for £25
- 25 credits for £50.

The option of purchasing 2 credits for £6 could also be considered.

The proposal to charge is supported by consultation with on-line users of the current site. Thirty two percent of the people who completed the on-line feedback form said they would like to see the image. There is however no guarantee that all of these people would be prepared to pay.

Manchester City Council generates in the region of £1,000 to £1,200 per month income and whilst there is no doubt that there is great interest in Irish genealogy it is not possible to estimate what income might be generated from this service.

It is recommended that a charging mechanism is implemented as a trial for six months followed by a review. During the pilot feedback will be sought from users to inform the review. If the trial is successful then committee can consider making the service permanent and introducing the option of payment by subscription fee.

Charging for staff time

The creation of the on-line burial search has been very popular, generated positive feedback and compliments and increased the number of visitors to the cemeteries. However it has also created significant additional work for the cemeteries office staff and staff at each of the cemeteries. This is through an increase in the volume of phone calls, emails and visitors to cemeteries looking for additional information and in particular details of the burial record.

A benchmarking exercise shows that other Northern Ireland councils charge a fee between £16 and £37 per search with one council charging £37.10 for residents and £77.25 for non residents.

To cover the additional costs not currently included in the revenue estimates it is recommended that a charge is introduced for detailed or multiple searches by staff in the cemetery office and at each of the cemeteries.

It is therefore proposed that a fee of £15 per search be implemented as a trial for six months and reviewed in line with the on-line records pilot.

Time Scale

It is proposed that development of the first stage of phase 2 to enhance the information available on-line is completed by September 2011 and that charging for images and staff searches starts from this point. A review will be carried out in May 2012 with findings and recommendations being reported to Committee in June 2012.

Legal Advice

Legal Services were consulted about the proposed developments and recommendations with regard to Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

Phase 2 will be delivered using internal resources in ISB and the cemeteries office.

Redaction software will be procured at a cost of approx £8,000 which is within current budgets.

Human Resources

ISB Project Team and staff from Cemeteries office

Asset and Other Implications

None.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

5 Recommendations

Committee is asked to approve the recommendation that Phase 2 is implemented and the proposed charging structure introduced.

6 Decision Tracking

A progress report will be made to committee in December 2011.

7 Key to Abbreviations

ISB – Information Services Belfast”

The Committee granted the approvals sought.

Disposal of Human Tissue

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th April, it had considered a report in relation to the implications for the 2011/2012 Parks and Leisure revenue budget of the revised burial and cremation charges which had been agreed by Members during February, 2011. At that meeting, a Member had raised an issue in respect of the burial of retained human tissue.

The Director advised the Members that this had related to a recent case when, at the request of the coroner, a sample of human tissue had been held back from burial. Thereafter, the deceased's widow had been charged an additional fee to reopen the grave for the subsequent burial of that tissue. The view had been expressed that the additional charge had been unfair and that sensitivity and discretion should be exercised in such cases. It had been suggested therefore that authority be delegated to the Director of Parks and Leisure to waive additional grave opening fees where he considered that the circumstances would warrant such a decision.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Parks and Leisure be delegated authority to waive such fees in those circumstances.

Fields in Trust - Queen Elizabeth II Challenge

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th February, it had been informed that the National Playing Fields Association, Fields in Trust, had launched the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge, an officially endorsed initiative aimed at marking the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London 2012 Olympics. It was pointed out that the programme aimed also to protect playing fields in communities throughout the United Kingdom and to ensure access to outdoor sport, play and recreation areas for future generations. At that meeting, the Committee had authorised the Director of Parks and Leisure to seek nominations from the various Party Groupings in relation to those sites which could be eligible to participate in the Initiative.

Accordingly, the Director reported that the following nominations had been received in this regard:

- Orangefield Playing Fields
- Ormeau Park
- Barnett's Demesne
- Lagan Meadows
- Connswater Community Greenway
- Blythefield Park

In addition, the Council's Legal Services Section had considered each site in terms of ownership, title, restrictions and the conditions which would be applied, details of which had been provided for the information of the Members.

The Director reported that the organisation had requested that the submission of potential sites be forwarded as soon as possible and, based on legal considerations, it appeared that without the need for lengthy investigative work only two sites were deemed suitable, namely the Orangefield Playing Fields and Lagan Meadows sites.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree that the Orangefield Playing Fields and Lagan Meadows sites be submitted to the Fields in Trust for consideration as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Challenge.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Tropical Ravine Heritage Grant Application

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

- 1.1** A first round application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on 16 February 2011 for a Heritage Grant to fund a project in Botanic Gardens focusing on the restoration of the Tropical Ravine, with associated programming in line with HLF's objectives.
- 1.2** The application was for a grant of £3,912,800 towards a total project cost of £5,217,072, requiring a partnership contribution for the balance (£1,304,272) to be made from the capital programme, subject to progression through the gates review process.
- 1.3** In addition, the submission requested a development grant of £156,500 to fund preparation of the second round (final) application – a process for which HLF allows a maximum of two years, during which comprehensive consultation, design and planning would take place.
- 1.4** The first round application was prepared with specialist assistance from Hall Black Douglas and Purcell Millar Tritton architects, and in consultation with the Ulster Museum, Queen's University Belfast, the Lyric Theatre, the Friends of Botanic Gardens, and local schools.
- 1.5** In summary, the application proposed the following:
- Capital works including:**
- Provision of a new roofing system incorporating a lantern ridge with gallery slung beneath to allow staff access and viewing area;
 - Restoration/replacement of walkways and windows, restoration of brickwork detailing, internal landscaping, water features and theatrical lighting arrangements;
 - New boiler and heating systems and new environmental controls eating and humidity;
 - Development of access and user space, including an extension to provide new space for interpretation and visitor groups and enhance connectivity to Ulster Museum, and low level access to the Ravine with a lift to walkway level;

- Improvements to physical linkages with other areas of the gardens and the surrounding institutions, including immediate hard landscaping, paths, paving, seating, lighting, signage, and refurbishment of existing shrubberies;
- Development of the plant collection, including replacement and replant of specimens, as necessary; and

1.6 Programming activities including:

- Development of knowledge and expertise on the plant collection through research and recording, including comprehensive cataloguing and preparation of a policy and strategy for development of the collection;
- Development of knowledge on the history of the Tropical Ravine through linkages with a range of external sources;
- Development of a programme of training and education for staff and volunteers working in the Ravine;
- Development of appropriate interpretive material to meet a range of user needs including, public, educational, scientific, and specific user groups, for example including sensory facilities for sight and hearing-impaired visitors; and
- Development of a five year programme of activities including partnership activities with the surrounding institutions, such as shared interpretation and scheduled visits to the Ravine aligned with the Ulster Museum's education programme, use of the Ravine as a theatrical outreach venue, development of a volunteering programme for tours, and programming of evening events showcasing recreation of the historic interior lighting effects.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1** Heritage Grant applications for more than £1,000,000 are determined every two months by the HLF Trustees (rather than by Regional Committee), thus competing at the national level for available funds. The Ravine application was considered by the Trustees at their meeting on 24 May 2011. On 25 May, HLF advised officers that the Trustees had decided not to pass the application at this stage but would be prepared to consider a re-submission following appropriate revisions to the application.

- 2.2 It should be noted that re-submission is regularly required in the case of larger applications, and should not necessarily be viewed negatively. Officers will be working to ensure revisions are made with the aim of re-submitting as soon as possible.
- 2.3 From HLF's initial comments, the principal aspects to be addressed include, in summary, the following:
- Third party confirmation of the importance of the plant collection in the Ravine;
 - Further assurance on the long term maintenance of the building and the collection;
 - A clearer focus on the core elements of the project; and
 - Better demonstration of value for money.
- 2.4 A meeting between officers and HLF has been arranged for 6th June 2011, when it is expected that more detailed feedback will be provided. However, it is anticipated that the council may be required to do the following in advance of re-submission:
- Reduce the value of grant requested through an increased partnership contribution (subject to council approval) and/or reduction in the scope of the proposed project; and
 - Undertake full economic appraisal of the proposed project (it was originally expected that this would take place following a first round pass).
- 2.5 Should the re-submitted first round application be successful, it is expected that second round development would take place over the following 18 months, for submission around the end of 2012. During this period, key activities would include the following:
- Progression of the Gates Review process;
 - Progression of a listing query with NIEA;
 - Preparation of design work to RIBA Stage D;
 - Development of an Integrated Conservation Management Plan;
 - Audience development planning and development of an Interpretive Plan;
 - Detailed research including heritage and technical botanical aspects of the plant collection and the history of the Ravine;
 - Stakeholder consultation on proposals;

- Agreement and scoping of partnership programming;
- Training needs analysis and development of a training plan;
- Detailed costing and financial planning; and
- Communication planning.

If the second round application is successful, it is expected that project delivery would begin around mid 2013, with completion of capital works over the following 24 months and delivery of programming activities thereafter.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

It is likely that economic appraisal will be required at an estimated cost of £10,000.

3.2 Human Resources

There will be no additional human resources required at this stage.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are no implications at this stage. However, should the application progress, Equality and Good Relations factors will be taken into account in the development of the project.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the update provided; and
- (ii) Authorise officers to undertake the next steps as advised by HLF on 6 June 2011, including economic appraisal to support the application.

6 Decision Tracking

December 2011 Committee – progress on/outcome of the first round Heritage Grant application re-submission.

7 Key to Abbreviations

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund
RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects
NIEA – Northern Ireland Environment Agency.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Proposed Electricity Wayleave at Ormeau Park

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th October, it had agreed to grant a 99 year lease in relation to a small portion of land at the Ormeau Park to Northern Ireland Water for the capital sum of £500. The Director stated that the purpose of the lease was to facilitate the construction, operation and maintenance of equipment which aimed to improve the quality of any storm overflow waters entering the River Lagan. However, in order to facilitate the operation of equipment on the leased land, Northern Ireland Water required the provision of electricity and, in accordance with normal practice, Northern Ireland Electricity now wished to enter into a Wayleave Agreement with the Council in order to install an underground cable to service the site.

Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Committee grant authority to enter into a Wayleave Agreement with Northern Ireland Electricity on the normal terms, including provision for the removal or re-siting of the cable at its own expense, should the Council wish to develop the site and the payment of a minimal fee of £2.10 per annum.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Surrender of Lease at Dunville Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 14 April 2011 and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 15 April 2011 have agreed to commit to the refurbishment of Dunville Park. This project is being jointly funded by the council and DRD.**
- 1.2 Springfield Charitable Association (a registered charity) occupies the former Elderly Men’s Centre, on a site of approximately 0.1 acres, at Dunville Park, on a 25 year lease dated 1 January 1995. Due to the impending redevelopment of Dunville Park, council officers have been in discussions with Springfield Charitable Association regarding the potential surrender of the lease in order to facilitate the proposed redevelopment of the park for the benefit of the local area.**
- 1.3 The original rent under the lease was £700 per annum and because the building was in poor condition at that time, the association was required to expend the sum of at least £66,000 in upgrading and refurbishing the building within two years of commencement of the lease. The rent was subject to review every five years and use of the building was originally restricted to a day centre for elderly persons.**

By a deed of variation dated 8 May 2001 the use of the building was widened to allow use as a 'community activity centre'. The association currently pays the rent of £700 p.a. as set out in the lease although following settlement of rent reviews effective 1/1/99, 1/1/04 and 1/1/09 revised rents of £800p.a; £900 p.a and £1040 p.a. have been agreed.

- 1.4 Officers have sought to agree a surrender value with the association and, in conjunction with the association, have agreed to offset this against back rents. As a result of discussions the association has now agreed surrender of the lease for a net sum of £8079 payable by the council to the association. Surrender of the existing 25 year lease (which would otherwise expire in 2019) secures the site for the proposed redevelopment of Dunville Park for the benefit of the local area.
- 1.5 Springfield Charitable Association has a number of properties in the Falls area and is keen to maintain their presence. As part of the discussions on the potential surrender of the Dunville Park lease they have asked that the council consider granting them a 25 year lease on alternative council premises in the locality. Officers are conscious that a number of hurdles would need to be overcome in order to allow the council to enter into new arrangements with the association and these include:
- (a) consideration of the nature of the proposed use;
 - (b) the identification and availability of an appropriate site/accommodation, taking account of planning, environmental and socio economic issues;
 - (c) the capital and revenue costs to the council and/or the association from any such arrangement; and
 - (d) issues in relation to obtaining 'best price' and/or marketing of the relevant property in accordance with Section 96 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Springfield Charitable Association has agreed to surrender the lease at Dunville Park to facilitate the council's redevelopment of the park. The surrender is entirely voluntary and the association would be legally entitled to continue with the existing lease until it expires in 2019.

- 2.2 The council has considered contingency proposals for redevelopment of Dunville Park while retaining the association's building within the park, but considered the arrangements would be much less satisfactory and that surrender of the lease, and demolition of the existing structure, brings a much better outcome for the park.
- 2.3 The association has agreed to surrender their existing 25 year lease for the net sum of £8079.
- 2.4 Officers will have further discussions with the association on a without prejudice basis regarding the provision of an alternative site/accommodation from the council. However, their agreement to surrender of their existing lease is not conditional upon the council providing them with an alternative site.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Modest net expenditure by the council (dependent on date of surrender) but likely in the region of £8,000 to secure surrender of lease to allow planned redevelopment of Dunville Park as previously approved by committee.

3.2 Human Resources

Legal Services and Estate Management Unit resource in finalising terms of proposed deed of surrender and any subsequent discussions regarding alternative accommodation.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

Surrender of the existing 25 year lease (which would otherwise expire in 2019) secures the site for the proposed redevelopment of Dunville Park for the benefit of the local area. Surrender of the lease and vacation of the site to be achieved prior to commencement of the redevelopment contract. Any subsequent discussions with Springfield Charitable Association to be without prejudice to the council's ability to provide the association with an alternative site/accommodation on a 25 year lease.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are no known good relations or equality issues to report at this time.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Committee is recommended to approve the immediate surrender of a lease dated 1 January 1995 by Springfield Charitable Association on the basis of the terms outlined in this report subject to completion of an appropriate deed of surrender to be prepared by Legal Services and the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and 60.

6 Decision Tracking

- 6.1 Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with the Director of Property and Projects regarding bringing the outcome from this committee before the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at the earliest opportunity.

7 Key to Abbreviations

- 7.1 The association – Springfield Charitable Association”

The Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the report.

**Carville Group - Temporary Compound
at Annadale Embankment**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Following a decision by the Parks and Leisure Committee on 15 May 2008, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 14 November 2008, approved the grant of a temporary licence to Carvill Group for an area of 1.21 acres at Annadale Embankment. The licence restricted use of the land to use as a contractor’s compound in connection with the development of 216 apartments and underground car parking on Carvill’s adjoining land. The licence was granted subject to the inclusion of certain legal protection for the council’s position as the owner of land adjoining the apartment development. Among other things the licence also provided for reinstatement of the council’s land in accordance with an agreed landscape plan.
- 1.2 Carvill Group has now completed four out of the intended five apartment blocks which make up the development. Although the overall pace of development has slowed as a result of the relative weakness of the property market, it is understood that work on the fifth and final block was due to commence soon, however as Carvill Group are now in administration there remains some uncertainty regarding this.

1.3 To facilitate the development of the final apartment block while at the same time reducing their financial obligations under the existing licence agreement, Carvill Group had sought a re-negotiation of the physical extent of the land held on licence from the council. The attached map shows (shaded yellow) the land included in the existing licence agreement. The area Carvill's wished to retain is shown outlined red.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Reduction of the area let on licence to Carvill Group (now in administration) would facilitate the construction of the final part of the proposed apartment development while reducing the financial commitment to the council in terms of licence fee (currently £30,000 per annum). A revised apportioned licence fee of £2750 had been agreed with valuers acting for Carvill Group. Advice from Legal Services suggests the retention of the revised area of land by Carvill Group could best be achieved by way of a variation of the existing licence agreement. This would keep in place many of the legal protections incorporated in the existing arrangements but allow the council to take over maintenance of much of the site (subject to safeguards in relation to minor outstanding reinstatement issues).

2.2 Carvill Group also wished to retain advertising boards and a number of flag poles on the area shaded yellow on the map and a licence fee of £1500 per annum has been negotiated with Carvill Group's valuer for retention of these items. Carvill Group will be solely responsible for the management of these structures although the council will retain the right to seek their removal at any stage.

2.3 The combined agreed apportioned licence fee (£2750 per annum) for the reduced land area, plus the licence fee (£1500) for the advertising boards and flagpoles would have reduced Carvill Group's financial commitment from £30,000 per annum to a total of £4250 per annum. Carvill Group were seeking a reduction to the revised fees with effect from August 2010. There has been considerable delay on the part of Carvill Group's representatives in reaching agreement to the revised licence fees.

2.4 The main issue from Carvill Group's perspective was the timing of the implementation of the revised arrangements. The council were originally approached by Carvill Group in early August 2010 seeking a reduction in the area held on licence. However it has taken some time to obtain

agreement with Carvill Group on a range of issues and obtain confirmation from them of the date from which they wish the revised arrangements to operate from.

- 2.5 Members may be aware that Carvill Group is now in administration. The licence fee under the present arrangements has been paid up to and including September 2010 and the present level of arrears accumulated since then stands at £20,000. Back-dating of the adjusted fee until 1 August 2010 would result in the council owing Carvill Group approximately £2000. We have however taken the view that a financially neutral arrangement in relation to back-dating may be most appropriate to the prevailing financial circumstances.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The revised licence fee will provide a small income to the council but will also be of operational/financial benefit to Carvill Group's administrators. The council may apply the revised arrangements from a variety of dates. However applying the revised arrangements from 1 September 2010 (the last month in which full payment was made) would result in the council owing Carvill Group £44 (i.e. basically neutral for both parties).

3.2 Human Resources

No additional Human Resources required.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

The legal safeguards incorporated in the existing licence agreement to protect the council's interest in this property asset, will be retained in respect of the entirety of the council's land for the duration of any further occupation by Carvill Group. Any variation of the terms of the existing licence agreement will also cover any outstanding reinstatement issues. Legal Services advice is that Members will be acting within their powers in commencing the revised arrangements from 1 September 2011. In view of the current administration of the Carvill Group, Legal Services will be required to provide further advice regarding the legal entity with which the council will enter into the proposed deed of variation.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are no known good relations or equality issues associated with this matter.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Committee is recommended to approve a variation of the current licence agreement between the council and Carvill Group to reduce the area held on licence to that outlined red on the map and the total licence fee payable under the licence to £4250 per annum with effect from 1 September 2010 and consent to extension of the time period covered by the licence agreement for a period of up to two years, subject to agreement on detailed terms, by the Estates Manager, and incorporation of same within a suitable legal agreement to be drawn up by Legal Services.**

6 Decision Tracking

- 6.1 Director of Parks and Leisure to refer to ensure implementation of revised arrangements within two months of Council decision.**

7 Key to Abbreviations

- 7.1 None.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Whiterock Leisure Centre - Main Hall Repairs

The Committee noted that the Whiterock Leisure Centre was required to close during the period from 15th till 31st August in order to undertake essential maintenance. The Director pointed out that those repairs had been highlighted as a priority requirement as part of the building conditions survey four year plan. In addition, remedial works had been identified as a priority for the main hall area in connection with the construction of two one wall handball courts. He pointed out that the proposed works would follow at the conclusion of the Whiterock Leisure Centre Summer Scheme and prior to the commencement of the autumn programme which was deemed to be the most appropriate time.

Summer Scheme 2011

The Committee was reminded that each year summer schemes were organised at the Council's Leisure Centres during July and August. The Council's Community Services Section offered grant funding to the voluntary community sector to support summer scheme activity programmes, subject to established qualifying criteria.

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the Leisure Services Section had provided quality play, recreation and sporting opportunities for the children of Belfast over the summer holiday period and, in recent years, the free use of swimming pools had been available to those community groups which had been in receipt of summer scheme funding from Community Services, subject to availability.

Free entrance to the Zoo and Adventurous Playground had been offered also to children, particularly in Leisure Centre Summer Schemes. Concessionary entrance fees to the Zoo and free entrance to the Adventurous Playground before noon were offered to community groups in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from Community Services.

An amount of £93,400 had been allocated within the revenue budget for 2011/2012 to support Summer Schemes in Leisure Centres, with an anticipated £40,000 projected income to be received from participants. Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Committee grant approval for:

- (i) free swimming and concessionary entrance fees to the Belfast Zoo during July and August for community group schemes which were in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from the Community Services Section;
- (ii) free entrance to the Belfast Zoo during July and August for children participating in the Council's Summer Scheme; and
- (iii) free entrance to the Adventurous Playground during July and August for children participating in the Scheme and free entrance before noon for community group schemes which were in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from Community Services Section, subject to availability.

The Committee granted the approvals sought.

Summer Intervention Programme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th April, it had granted authority to the Parks Department to support summer intervention activities throughout the City which were being funded by the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister and administered through the Council's Good Relations Unit. The Director reported that, in addition to that scheme, there was now further work ongoing across the Council to develop programmes which could help relieve heightened community tensions over the summer period. He pointed out that, by supporting summer intervention activities, it was likely that the Council would be required to be involved in either leading in the delivery of organised programmes or supporting community-led programmes. This might require the opening of council-owned sites and leisure centres which, the Committee had agreed previously, could be closed on certain key dates. Accordingly, he requested that the Committee grant him delegated authority to:

- (i) authorise officers to engage in further inter-departmental discussions on the development of either community-led or Council-led programmes or activities over the Summer period; and
- (ii) open any park and/or leisure site/venue, or part thereof, where appropriate, in order to accommodate organised programmes or activities during the holiday period.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Draft Rural White Paper Action Plan Consultation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 In March 2011, the Council received an invitation from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to respond to their draft Rural White Paper Action Plan consultation. DARD is seeking responses by Monday 13th June 2011.

1.2 It was agreed that the Parks and Leisure Department would coordinate preparation of a response on behalf of the Council. The Policy and Business Development Unit has prepared a draft response following a request for input from relevant officers across the Council.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The purpose of the consultation is to seek views from the public and other interested parties on the contents of the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan. Full details of the consultation are available in the consultation section of DARD’s website www.dardni.gov.uk

2.2 Respondents are required to complete a questionnaire which asks for views on the following areas:

- The vision for rural areas and associated key policy priorities as set out in the white paper**
- How realistic and meaningful the proposed actions are and their effectiveness**
- What the key challenges or priorities for rural areas over the next five years are**
- What further measures should be included**
- Which other issues the white paper should focus on**
- What are the mains strengths and weaknesses of the white paper**
- How should its success be measured.**

Overall the council's response highlights that we believe that the main strengths of the document are that it is inspirational, takes a thematic approach and is cross departmental but that it lacks detail around the proposed actions and how they will be delivered to achieve its vision. Our response states that in principle with the actions that are set out in the document and in question 5 we give detailed views around the actions relating to the increase in rural tourism opportunities and increased sustainable recreational use of the countryside.

- 2.3 Subject to approval by Committee, it is proposed that the final response is submitted to DARD by 13th June with the proviso that this is subject to full Council approval at its meeting in July.

3 **Resource Implications**

- 3.1 **Financial**
None required.

- 3.2 **Human Resources**
None required.

- 3.3 **Asset and Other Implications**
None at this stage.

4 **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

- 4.1 There are no equality and good relations implications.

5 **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to approve the draft consultation response subject to any comments provided.

6 **Decision Tracking**

- 6.1 The Policy and Business Development Officer will submit the response with any agreed amendments to DARD by 13th June 2011

7 **Key to Abbreviations**

- 7.1 DARD – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development”

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the following comments be submitted as the Council's official response to the Department of Agricultural and Rural Development:

**"Draft Rural White Paper
Action Plan – Response Form**

Note that responses to the consultation should arrive with DARD not later than close of play on Monday 13th June 2011

1. *The consultation document sets out a vision for rural areas and associated key policy priorities.*

- (a) *Do you think the vision for rural areas reflects how you would wish to see the future of rural area? Please comment as appropriate.*

Whilst Belfast City Council predominately covers an urban area, it also includes some rural areas such as the Belfast Hills and facilities in outlying areas such as Roselawn Cemetery, Beechvale Farm and the City of Belfast Playing Fields, and although we operate in an urban environment the importance of the rural fringe cannot be underestimated in terms of tourist potential and providing recreational facilities for the citizens of the city. In principle we support the vision for rural areas that is laid out in the paper although we feel that it is aspirational and needs detail around how it will be achieved.

- (b) *Do you think there are other policy priorities which should be included? If so, please specify which and explain why.*

We feel that the policy priorities listed are comprehensive and there are no others that we would add.

- (c) *Do you think any of the policy priorities should be omitted? If so, please specify which and explain why.*

We believe that all the policy priorities included are important and we do not believe that any of them should be omitted.

2. *The draft Rural White Paper Action Plan sets out the actions to which Departments have committed. Please consider how realistic and meaningful the proposed actions are and comment on how effective you think they will be in contributing to:*

- (a) *The development of more sustainable rural economies*

Belfast City Council agrees in principle with all the actions that are set out in the document. However we believe that the actions are high level and that more detail is required to allow us to determine their impact and their effectiveness in contributing to the development of more sustainable *rural economies*.

(b) *The development of more sustainable rural communities*

Belfast City Council agrees in principle with all the actions that are set out in the document. However we believe that the actions are high level and that more detail is required to allow us to determine their impact and their effectiveness in contributing to the development of more sustainable *rural communities*.

(c) *The development of a more sustainable rural environment*

Belfast City Council agrees in principle with all the actions that are set out in the document. However we believe that the actions are high level and that more detail is required to allow us to determine their impact and their effectiveness in contributing to the development of a more sustainable *rural environment*.

3. *Please consider what you think are the key challenges or priorities for rural areas over the next five years?*

(a) *Please give details of what you consider to be the key challenges/priorities for rural areas and provide reasons why.*

As a predominately urban area Belfast City Council do not believe that it is appropriate that we detail what we consider to be the key challenges/priorities for rural areas across Northern Ireland. For those areas that are rural within the Belfast City Council area we consider the key challenges/priorities to be the protection and prompting of our natural heritage and the protection of biodiversity and our meeting of targets under EU directives around this.

(b) *Please comment on the extent to which you think the proposed actions set out in the Rural White Paper Action Plan will help address these key challenges/priorities?*

Due to the lack of detail around the proposed actions we do not feel that we are in a position to comment on the extent to which the proposed actions will help address these key challenges/priorities.

4. *What further measures do you think should be included in the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan to help address these key challenges/priorities?*

While we welcome actions that will reduce bureaucracy we are concerned that the actions do not take account of the new EU targets around biodiversity that have to be in place by 2020 or the 2050 vision. We feel that measures need to be put in place to ensure that we do not fail to meet targets under EU directives resulting in heavy fines or other measures.

5. *Do you think that the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan needs to focus more on particular issues? If so, please indicate which issues you think it should focus more on and give reasons for your views.*

The particular issues that we think the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan needs to focus more on are an increase in rural tourism opportunities and increased sustainable recreational use of the countryside. We have the following views around actions 82 and 83.

The only piece of legislation in Northern Ireland that relates to access to the countryside is the Access to the Countryside (NI) order 1983. Under this order the Council have a duty to assert rights of ways and this is currently carried out through the countryside officer. However, whilst the legislation imposes a duty on Councils to assert, protect, keep open and free from obstruction rights of way, it doesn't actually empower the Council to enter another person's land to do this. We would also suggest that the legislation may need to be revisited with a view to making it more user friendly for the landowners and look at issues such as removing liability from them to encourage them to promote access.

Whilst we encourage access to the countryside this need to be balanced against the protection of sites which have sensitive habitats or are designated for their nature conservation or historical interest. In some instances access to certain sites may not be feasible or desirable or only low levels of access may be appropriate. We would also suggest that management systems be put in place to combat the dangers of spreading invasive species through public use and ensure that usage is sustainable and monitored.

We would also suggest that inland waterways are considered as a key element in the development of rural tourism. Canals and water recreation can play a key role in the development of tourism especially boating, walking, jogging and cycling.

Canals can also provide economic hubs in rural situations - note the success of Lock 3 café and similar examples can be found in the Republic of Ireland along the Shannon Erne Waterway. Many of the small towns along this course have benefited economically from tourism.

Finally we would recommend that DCAL are also involved in the delivery of these actions.

6. *What do you think are the main strengths of the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan?*

Belfast City Council thinks that the main strengths of the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan are that it is aspirational, takes a thematic approach and is cross departmental.

7. *What do you think are the main weaknesses of the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan?*

Belfast City Council thinks that the main weakness of the draft Rural White Paper Action Plan is its lack of detail around the proposed actions and how they will be delivered to achieve the vision.

8. *How should the success of the Rural White Paper Action Plan be measured?*

We believe that in its current format it would be difficult to measure the success of the Rural White Paper Action Plan and that the proposed actions need to be more detailed and include measurable targets.”

Procurement of Supplies and Services

The Director of Parks and Leisure sought and was granted authority to instigate tendering exercises in relation to the undernoted items:

<u>Tender</u>	<u>Potential Annual Cost/Revenue</u>
Bleacher seating at the Shankill Leisure Centre	Potentially £30,000, as an one-off purchase
Provision of a climbing wall coaching facility at Belfast Indoor Tennis Arena	£20,000 per annum – for a period of two years
Provision of a medical referee service for cemeteries	£18,000 per annum – for a period of two years

<u>Tender</u>	<u>Potential Annual Cost/Revenue</u>
Supply and delivery of uniforms for Parks and Leisure staff	£30,000 per annum – for a period of three years
Supply and delivery of play equipment for various playground sites	Annual budget of £640,000 (annual costs will depend upon an agreed programme of work) – for a period of two years
Supply and delivery of trees	£70,000 per annum – for a period of two years
Provision of goods for resale in Belfast Zoo Souvenir Shop	£190,000 per annum – for a period of two years
Maintenance and servicing of hanging baskets and floral displays	£44,000 per annum – for a period of two years
Catering franchise at various Parks and Leisure sites	Income generation potentially £20,000 per annum – for a period of two years

The Committee noted that all tenders would be evaluated on both cost and quality and that contracts would be awarded to the most economically advantageous tenders submitted.

Charity Abseiling Event on Cave Hill

The Director reported that a request had been received from Opportunity Youth to use the Cave Hill for a charity fundraising event on a Saturday during the period from 3rd till 17th September. He pointed out that the Cave Hill had been chosen for its unique location and marketing potential, specifically McArt's Fort which would be the area where the proposed event would take place. In addition, the organisation wished to promote it as a first ever abseil on the Cave Hill. Consideration had been given to the health and safety implications and environmental issues surrounding the proposed event.

The Director stated that the main concern associated with the proposals was the possible disturbance of nesting birds around the cliff faces of the Cave Hill. The area had also been identified as a key nesting area for peregrine falcons and kestrels. The last successful breeding period had taken place during 1999 and the event organisers had given assurances that a survey would be carried out in the weeks running up to the event and, should birds be found to be nesting within the vicinity of the proposed abseil, the event would be delayed until advice had been received from the Raptor Study Group, which were the experts on birds of prey. The Director stated also that the events organisers would be required to undertake a risk assessment and to ensure that all health and safety requirements were met.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee grant authority for the charity abseiling event to be held on the Cave Hill, subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with the Director of Parks and Leisure and on the condition that:

- (i) the event organisers resolved all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- (ii) an appropriate legal agreement being prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive;
- (iii) the event organisers meeting all statutory requirements including entertainment licensing; and
- (iv) the event organiser ensuring all health and safety requirements are met to the Council's satisfaction, including risk assessments, safe systems of work and equipment inspection information.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Féile an Phobail

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from the organisers of Féile an Phobail for the use of the Andersonstown Leisure Centre, the Dunville Park, the Falls Park and the City Cemetery during the period from 31st July till 8th August as venues for the West Belfast Festival.

The Members were reminded that on previous occasions Council venues had been available for the holding of various events associated with the Festival. The Director pointed out that the proposed events at the Andersonstown Leisure Centre would require the use of the main hall and various rooms from 2nd till 8th August, including set up and clearance days.

The event in Dunville Park and Falls Park would be similar to last year and would include:

- Dunville Park - 31st July, carnival parade through the park
- Falls Park - 4th August, Teddy Bears picnic
- Falls Park - 6th August, Filipino culture festival
- Falls Park - 7th August, Féile family entertainment day in the park, music and family entertainment, including a display from the Wild Geese parachutists.

Events in the City Cemetery would include guided historical tours which would be charged appropriately by the tour provider. Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Committee:

- (i) grant permission for Féile an Phobail to use the Dunville and Falls Parks in connection with the above-mentioned programme;
- (ii) approve the application to hire facilities at the Andersonstown Leisure Centre during the period from 2nd till 8th August, including set up and clearance days; and
- (iii) authorise the use of the City Cemetery for guided historical tours which would be charged for appropriately by the tour provider.

The Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the organisers liaising with the Council's Health and Environmental Services Department and compliance with the Council's policies and statutory requirements.

Private Coaching in Leisure Centres

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

In 2006 the council agreed to implement a pricing policy which changed how private coaching services were operated and charged within Belfast City Council leisure centres. The actions in summary were:

- **Private coaching was permitted subject to centre programming and casual user demand**
- **All coaches were to register with a host centre showing liability insurance and qualifications, POCVA check also required (not Council staff)**
- **Signed confirmation of the coach responsibility for all Inland Revenue demands.**
- **Coaches to pay full activity price (no discounts)**
- **Customers to pay activity price and are eligible for appropriate BOOST discounts**
- **Coaches to pay £4 for each individual client under instruction and £2 per client for groups of 5 or more.**
- **Council officers engaging in private coaching must pay the same sessions and client fees as listed and must seek their line manager's approval, scale 6 and above must seek approval from head of service.**

It was estimated that this would increase centre income and centre foot fall.

A review of this policy took place in 2010 with the following findings:

- Accurate auditing of client user numbers was found to be difficult.
- The IT system did not distinguish individual coaches and resulted in retrospective analysis and auditing of payments being ineffective.
- A pilot audit, at one facility, during February 2010 discovered that incorrect levels of payment had been submitted resulting in an income deficit of £104. The outstanding finance was ultimately paid however the exercise highlighted an area for improvement.

The recommendation therefore is to adopt a new charging policy for all private coaching. This, it is intended, will provide more concise management information and will be administered in a similar manner to the Boost membership system. It will also remove on – site payments by private coaches and will ensure that accurate auditing is achievable.

2 Key Issues

The following are the key issues of the recommended change to the charging policy. There has been an extensive consultation process with Leisure Centre Managers, Leisure Development staff and the Leisure Operations Manager. A working group was established and the recommendations are as follows:

- The coach consents to the Council carrying out an appropriate POCVA check. The coach must pay a registration fee of £100 to register under the scheme. Existing council employees who have passed the POCVA check will pay a reduced fee of £65. The council reserves the right to review access NI checks on an annual basis
- The coach shall pay the council £100 per month by way of direct debit
- Following a 30 day notice the coach may ‘freeze’ the direct debit, twice in any 12 month period.

- A session will be of a 40 min duration max
- Coaching sessions within the Swimming pool area will be for a maximum of 2 clients in any one session
- For coaching sessions (within the Swimming Pool area) with 3 or more clients (up to a maximum of 6 clients) a swimming lane must be booked and paid for in advance. The council cannot guarantee availability and the accommodation of any such request will be subject to operational demand.
- Session fees will again apply to the client
- Coaches will not pay session fees
- Should the recommendations be accepted, existing private coaches will not be required to pay a re-joining fee. They will however be required to sign and adhere to the terms and conditions of the new contract.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

There are in excess of 25 coaches who are currently undertaking private coaching in Belfast City Council leisure facilities. A monthly income of £2500 and an annual income of £30,000 will be generated if current personnel transfer on to the new contract. The singular monthly price of £100 is more competitive than equivalent offers within the private sector and further marketing opportunities may be realised in this respect.

Human Resources

There are no adverse human resource issues as all income will be collected through a direct debit process. This will have a positive impact upon front line reception personnel and will result in more concise management information being readily available.

Other Implications

n/a

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

5 **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the amendments as detailed above are adopted.

6 **Decision Tracking**

N/A

7 **Key to Abbreviations**

POCVA – Protection of children and vulnerable adults.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

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

The Committee noted a schedule of Support for Sport applications in relation to small development grants and hospitality applications 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 Council's Modern.gov website.

Chairman