

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 15th September, 2011

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

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

Also attended: Councillors Keenan and McCarthy.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks
and Leisure; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Austin, Hargey, Mallon and McCabe.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

Commencement Time of Future Meetings

The Chairman advised the Committee that a Member had requested that the Committee give consideration to a later commencement time for future meetings.

The Committee agreed that the item be placed on the agenda for its meeting scheduled to be held on 13th October.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 1, 2011/2012

(Mrs. 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 on 18th 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 and forecast financial position 2011/2012

The current performance in quarter one of the Parks and Leisure department shows a - 3.6% variance against the year to date budget; i.e.; an under spend of £191k.

There are a number of key reasons for the under spend within the department as follows: The direct employee budget is showing a 5% overspend at quarter one. Committee will be aware of the ongoing service reviews within the Department and recommendations will be provided to committee over the next number of months to finalise the structures. An action plan to address issues regarding overtime and agency usage is currently being implemented.

Playground refurbishment is £147k under spent against budget at quarter one however the implementation plan for the refurbishment has been updated to have the majority of this expenditure in the final two quarters of the year.

The borehole at the Zoo has finally been re-connected which means that the water supply at the zoo can be fully provided for without a requirement to connect to the mains supply. However £38k of expenditure over budget has already be spent in this area.

£42k of grant income from the Public Health Authority which was not budgeted for has also been received in this quarter for the community gardens and allotments project.

Income from fees and charges at Malone house is down £21k against budget and Belfast Castle £57K. Both sites are currently working on promotional campaigns, aimed at addressing this.

Shop sales are up £35k in the first quarter due to a busy Easter at the Zoo. The budgeted income and expenditure was adjusted to reflect more realistic trading figures in comparison to last year. Zoo income is also up £158k against the expected income year to date due to increased visitor numbers.

Income from Fees & Charges for Parks and Open Spaces is up by 15% or £75k due to price increases not reflected in budgets and increased usage. Income from Belfast in Bloom has been received this quarter which relates to both quarter one and two.

The department will continue to monitor the variance between actual and budgeted expenditure/income during quarter 2

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 to date under-spend of £0.19m and a forecast over-spend of some £0.2m or 0.8% by year end.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None.

5. Recommendations

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

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

Departmental Plan - Key Performance Indicator Targets

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th June, it had approved the draft Departmental Plan 2011/2012. However, at that time annual targets had yet to be agreed for 19 out of the 29 key performance indicators included in the plan. Following discussion with officers from the Performance Team in the Finance and Resources Department, annual targets had now been set for 14 of those performance indicators and were being applied through departmental and corporate performance management procedures. A copy of those targets is set out below:

“KPI	Annual Target
Tonnage of green waste recycled	149 tonnes
Number of leisure centre members	65,000
Percentage of users who use leisure centres more than twice per week	12.5%
Programme participation levels (outreach and health)	185,070
Participation levels at events	62,163
Number of reported ASB incidents	745
Square metres of parks and open spaces with green flag accreditation per resident	32.35
Percentage of residents that live within 1000m of green flag rated parks	30%
Percentage of complaints that met response target	100%
Average number of working days per employee lost due to absence	12.37
Total net cost per user (indoor)	£4.78
Total net cost per user (outdoor leisure)	£2.58
Total net cost per user (Belfast zoo)	£6.60
Percentage of Performance Indicators on target	70%”

In addition, the following explanations had been provided for the 5 key performance indicators which remained without targets:

- *Energy consumption expressed in kilojoules per hour per square metre and number of people who use/visit our indoor and outdoor leisure facilities* - it was proposed that a base line was established from the total 2011/2012 data in each of those areas, in order to allow target-setting in 2012/2013 onwards;

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- *Number of complaints received* – it had been agreed at a corporate level that, because departments were limited in their ability to control complaints, a target should not be set in that area; and
- *Percentage of non-compliance of Goods Received Notes after invoicing, and Percentage of non-compliance Of Purchase Orders raised on time* – those key performance indicators were based on corporate and centrally-compiled data, and consideration of target-setting was ongoing at a centralised level.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

World Police and Fire Games 2013

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Background Information

Members will be aware that in August 2013 the World Police and Fire Games are coming to Northern Ireland. The Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Northern Ireland Prison Service will host approximately 10,000 law enforcement officers and fire fighters from around the world who will compete in a wide variety of sporting events.

In September 2007 the council agreed to be one of the key stakeholders for the World Police and Fire Games (WPFG). The council committed £400,000 as part of the £7m budget for the games. A special purpose vehicle company has been formed to deliver the games and the council is represented on the board of this company by two Elected Members, presently Alderman William Humphrey and Councillor Pat McCarthy.

At the meeting of council on 1 September 2011, Members debated two issues regarding the preparation for the games:

- 1. the council’s approach to the application process to have facilities included as venues for the 2013 games; and**
- 2. the timetable for the upgrade of the Mary Peters track.**

The chairman agreed that a report would be submitted to the meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee on 15 September 2011.

2. Key Issues

Venue selection process

The process for venue selection being undertaken by the World Police and Fire Games company was commenced by Sport NI with a letter dated 29 June 2010 to the Chief Executive. This required applications to be submitted to Sport NI by 4pm on 29 July 2010. This letter was passed to the Director of Parks and Leisure for action.

As this was over the July recess it was not possible to present the request or the department's response to committee.

Sport NI outlined a three stage approach to venue selection:

- Stage 1: applications
- Stage 2: quality assessment and prioritisation
- Stage 3: quality commercial assessment.

Interested venue operators were required to complete an online expression of interest form for each sport they wanted to host at their venue.

Sport NI indicated that they would accept applications from:

- Established venues that met the requirements of the World Police and Fire Games.
- Venues in the process of refurbishment or that had plans in place for refurbishment prior to the games.
- New venues that would be completed and commissioned prior to the games.

Sport NI indicated that priority would be given to venues that are nearest geographically to the games village but in exceptional circumstances where there is not a suitable venue within Belfast for a particular sport or there is an exceptional venue outside Belfast other venues would be considered. The guidance notes from Sport NI for the selection of events are attached.

The list of 23 parks and leisure council venues which were submitted for consideration has been circulated. In addition the City Hall, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall were also put forward.

It is understood that a provisional list of venues was considered by the WPFG board at its last meeting and that seven council venues including the City Hall, Waterfront Hall and the Ulster Hall, Shankill Leisure Centre, Boucher Road Playing Fields, Musgrave Pavilion and Cavehill Country Park are currently on that list. However it should be noted that of the twenty-eight venues currently on the provisional list a total of twenty one are in Belfast. This includes facilities at Stormont Estate, Queens Playing Fields, Newforge and the Odyssey Arena. The board is about to enter stage three of the selection process which involves a further quality and commercial assessment. This will be completed before agreement is reached on the final list of venues.

Mary Peters Track

The Mary Peters Track was submitted to Sport NI as part of the selection process as a potential venue for track and field as well as a number of events. It currently does not feature on the provisional list of venues as, at the time of initial assessment, the track did not meet the minimum standards required by the WPFG in that it was only a six lane rather than an eight lane track.

At the special meeting of council on 9th February 2011 it was agreed to include the development of the Mary Peters track as part of the council's capital programme. An economic appraisal was commissioned and the Parks and Leisure Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at their meetings on 14th and 15th April respectively agreed to develop the option for the facility recommended by the economic appraisal, ie to provide a new 8 lane IAAF specification track with a spectator stand and associated works. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also approved the invitation to tender and award of contracts to the most economically advantageous tender received and agreed applications be made to the raising of a loan of £3m to cover the council's anticipated project expenditure.

The project will be delivered by the council's Project Management Unit in conjunction with the Parks and Leisure Department under the direction of the Director of Property and Projects. Work is well underway on project delivery with a design team having been appointed and the planning application being made during September. Allowing significant contingency time within the project plan it is anticipated that the latest date for completion of the works will be February 2013 which is well in advance of the games which take place during August 2013.

After the Council's decision in February 2011 the Director of Parks and Leisure wrote to the Chairman of the WPFGB Board asking the board to reconsider the Mary Peters track as the venue for the track and field at the 2013 games. The board is currently considering the council's request.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

The redevelopment of the Mary Peters facility will cost in the region of £3m to be funded from the council's capital programme.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications.

Asset and other implications

The development of the Mary Peters track to a standard suitable for international events will make the facility the best available for the 2013 games. It will also enhance the city's ability to attract national and local athletic events and will assist in the development of athletics in the city.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note that the decision making process for venues to be used for the WPFGB has not yet been completed by the WPFGB Board; that the council submitted 26 venues for consideration; that the provisional list of venues contains 21 venues in Belfast, including 7 council owned facilities; and that the council has written to the Board following its decision to upgrade the Mary Peters' Track to IAAF standard, requesting the Board to include the upgraded Track in its final consideration of potential venues.

6 **Decision Tracking**

A further update will be provided to Committee by the Director of Parks and Leisure following confirmation of the selected venues.

7 **Key to abbreviations**

IAAF International Association Athletics
WPFGB World Police and Fire Games."

During discussion, the Director clarified the current position in relation to the upgrade of the Mary Peters Track and accepted that more coordination was required between the various Council Departments in relation to providing information to the Members who represented the Council on the World Police and Fire Games 2013.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that monthly updates on the upgrade of the Mary Peters Track be provided to the Committee.

Incident at the Grove Wellbeing Centre

The Committee noted the contents of the report in relation to an incident which had occurred at the Grove Wellbeing Centre on 11th August.

City of Belfast Golf Course

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in January 2010 it received a report relating to the need to erect fencing adjacent to the first hole at the City of Belfast Golf Course to prevent the encroachment of golf balls onto nearby residential properties. At the time the Committee was asked to authorise a one off payment of £40,000, to the Golf Club Committee to erect the fencing. The Committee agreed not to provide a one off payment to the Club in connection with the installation of the ball stop net and also agreed that a report in relation to the operation and possible future use of the facility be submitted for its consideration in due course.**
- 1.2 Members are reminded that the matter of the future of the golf course was considered at a Special Meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee in January 2011 and again in August 2011 and it has been agreed to enter into a long term management arrangement with the Club for a period of up to 21 years. It was also that provision would be made to keep under review in the medium term the issue of development potential for the site.**
- 1.3 At the meeting in January 2011 the issue of the fencing was raised and it was noted that a separate report would be brought to the Committee; at the time the Club had stated that it would contribute 50% of the cost of the fencing. This matter had been deferred to enable the issue of the future of the facility to be clarified.**

1.4 A report was due to be brought to Committee in September 2011 to seek to address the ongoing problem. However, the issue has been escalated recently. The Council has now received a solicitor's letter, on behalf of a minor, who resides in a property adjacent to the Golf Course. The letter points out that the activities at the Golf Course continue to present a risk to the minor as a result of golf balls egressing from the facility and landing at the minor's present address and garden area. The letter refers to incidents on 11 May 2011 and 5 August 2011. The letter states that in addition to the risk of personal injury; it constitutes a nuisance in respect of the child's ability to have a quiet and peaceable enjoyment at his family home location; it further states that the risk interferes with the child's Article 2 and Article 8 rights under the Human Rights Act.

1.5 The Solicitor has asked that:

1. An undertaking for the appropriate location within the Golf Course from which the risk emanates be immediately closed down in order that the risk can be removed in the interim;
2. Works be immediately undertaken for the purposes of remedy of the situation; and
3. The appropriate area from which the risk emanates remain closed off until appropriate works have been completed;

1.6 The letter concludes that the Solicitor has been instructed to make an appropriate application at Court level for the purposes of obtaining a Civil Injunction against the Council for the purposes of providing for the safety and well being of the minor.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The key issue for the Committee to note is the potential for a Civil Injunction to be awarded against the Council which will result in the closure of the 1st hole at the City of Belfast Golf course until such times as the requirements outlined above have been satisfied.

- 2.2 Following discussions with Legal Services a response has been issued to the Solicitor's acting on behalf of the minor and have set out our proposals to them. We have stated that we are proposing that a ball-stop net be erected at the boundary of the golf course. This net will be at a significant height. In order to facilitate its installation NIE will have to carry out works to electricity cables in the area. It is estimated that the NIE works will take around 6-8 weeks and the erection of the netting 2-3 weeks.
- 2.3 Pending completion of these works we have proposed to have the first hole shortened which would eliminate the use of drivers, fairway woods and long irons. In addition the tee box will be re-orientated. This should stop balls from straying in the manner complained of.
- 2.4 We have stated that with the implementation of these measures there is no need to close the hole. We have given an undertaking that we intend to have the effectiveness of these interim measures monitored with the matter reviewed again if necessary
- 2.5 There has been no further contact from the Solicitor at this time.
- 2.6 Failure to undertake the works will we believe result in an Injunction to close the 1st hole. Whilst we believe that this situation can be endured for a short time, discussions with the Club have concluded that the viability of the facility would be severely compromised should the situation continue beyond the short term.
- 2.7 The Committee will also note that there is no provision in the estimates for such works to be carried out.
- 2.8 Should the works be carried out it will be necessary for contractors to take possession for a portion of council land and that in this case will be necessary to have an appropriate legal agreement in place.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The cost of the works is estimated to be in the region of £40,000. The Club has agreed to meet the total cost of the works at this time to facilitate the speedy resolution of the problem. However, they have pointed out that the money to be used had been set aside to pay for the construction of the new club house and has asked that the Council agree to make provision for 50% of the fencing within its estimates at a future date to enable the Club House to be constructed as intended.

3.2 Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

The undertaking of the proposed work will significantly reduce the risk of straying golf balls.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 None

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that:

1. The Committee note the report;
2. Agree to undertake the measures as set out in paragraphs 2.2 – 2.4 above;
3. Agree to make provision to meet 50% of the cost of the works within the 2012/13 financial year - estimated at £20,000.
4. Agree that Officers enter into an appropriate legal agreement with the necessary contractors in relation to the carrying out of any works in relation to the erection of the fencing.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Grove Wellbeing Centre - Bowling Area Usage

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to the vacant bowling area at the Grove Wellbeing Centre to enable the local Councillors in the area to be consulted on its future use.

Watch this Space - Educational Programme

The Director of Parks and Leisure submitted for the Committees' consideration the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- i. outline how the ‘Watch This Space’ (WTS) programme is currently being delivered; and
- ii. present for Members’ review and agreement the proposed revisions and development of the programme which will be the basis of a forthcoming tender process.

1.2 The history of the WTS Education programme is as follows:

- it was originally set up in 2007 in Shankill and Falls Parks where antisocial behaviour was prevalent and with the aim of linking ownership of parks amongst young people through an education programme. Victoria Park was also included as the programme developed.
- In January 2010 Members agreed to extend the programme in terms of the 'Saturday clubs' to the south of the city at Ormeau Park.
- A full evaluation report on the programme was presented at the March 2011 meeting of the Committee and it was agreed that Ulster Wildlife Trust would continue to run the education programme to March 2012 whilst a revised education programme was scoped and a tendering exercise undertaken.
- In March 2011 Members also requested a further update be brought back on the development of the education programme's objectives and content - which are contained within this report.

1.3 An officer working group was established to consider:

- the existing programme;
- its evaluation by Sustainable NI and the council's requirements;
- an overview of other council education approaches and programmes in particular Waste management's involvement with the Eco schools programme; and
- consideration of external education programmes.
- In light of all of the above, officers have been developing the future programme's purpose and identifying the priority objectives for the future parks related education programme.

1.4 Management of the existing programme

Two review meetings with the current programme provider have taken place and a meeting this month will confirm the arrangements for the programme until March 2012 to ensure that opportunities for participation are available across the whole city for the schools programme, community group activities and public events.

As agreed by Members in January 2010 there is a city wide coverage available through Saturday clubs in each operational area with Ormeau park established over the past year as the venue for the Saturday club in the South of the city.

The current provider is presently reviewing the format of the schools programme to enable opportunity to be offered in areas where historically no schools provision was targeted (south of the city) without adding to the total cost of the programme. An individual mail out to schools in the South offering single taster sessions has been requested by officers to extend the opportunity across the city for the schools programme. The type of participation activity in the past year for the programme.

The tender process for the new education programme will include a city wide approach as a pre requisite for future delivery.

1.5 Future programme development

The officer working group has been developing the broad direction of the future education programme which will roll out from April 2012 onwards. The key headlines from this are:

- The purpose of the future programme will be to establish our parks as a resource for outdoor learning.
- The new programme will encourage greater use of park sites for outdoor learning; in short parks are outdoor classrooms. There will be flexibility built into format and delivery of the programme where schools and educational organisations can choose how they can use parks as a learning resource either through supervised or self-managed visits.
- Schools will also be able to identify which age range or stage in curriculum development they wish to target.
- The future programme is being directly linked to the content of the schools curriculum (Education Order 2007) and the priority areas the programme will support are 'Environment and Society (The World Around Us)'; 'Science and Technology' and 'Physical Education'. 'Learning for Life and Work' is also an area in the curriculum that can benefit from visits and learning in our parks.

- The three elements of the future programme are:
 1. A co-ordinated education programme which has a dedicated resource primarily for supervised educational visits from schools, community activities or events across the city
 2. A quality resource bank will be developed to support self managed educational visits to parks by education providers – schools; community groups; youth clubs; sports groups etc. (unsupervised learning).
 3. Capacity building opportunities to be developed to sustain the learning and develop ways in which parks are used effectively for all ages and sectors for outdoor learning.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Future delivery approach

The working group shared the view that the council should in principle be able to deliver the education programme for itself, however it was also agreed that a period of time to up-skill in line with the ongoing departmental improvement programme would be required in the medium term. The planned tender period (of 1 year with an ability to extend the contract up to 3 years) would provide adequate time to invest in the training and capacity building for the council to be the primary delivery agent for the programme in the future. The availability of staff resources within the department to deliver the programme would also have to be assessed.

2.2 Integration of the programme with council business

The proposed project team would continue to integrate the education programme with the ongoing outreach and developmental work taking place across the department. The ongoing management of the programme is an item for consideration within the department's development review.

2.3 Consultation and engagement

The revision of the education programme has been an internal exercise to date. Following committee the project team will engage with educational facilitators, specifically teachers in order that they can inform and be involved in the ongoing development of the revised education programme.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Development of interactive resources may require support from other departments and may impact internal budgets

3.2 Human Resources

Internal training investment may be required for parks staff with a remit for facilitating educational visits in parks and this is linked to the overall departmental improvement programme. Need to look at the staffing resources available to deliver the programme if that approach is taken.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

None – greater usage numbers may show a decrease in net cost per user.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 None.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Committee approve the future direction for the revised educational programme outlined in the report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Facility Management Agreement - Termination of Agreement

The Committee was reminded that, on its meeting on 11th August, it had noted a report in relation to annual evaluation of Facility Management Agreements which had set out the current position in terms of compliance for the financial year ended March, 2011. The Assistant Director had reported that the club which held the existing facilities for the Dixon Park Playing Fields had failed to provide its financial returns and more recent usage figures. As a consequence, a notice of termination letter had been issued by Legal Services. It had been reported also that the club was working to meet the stipulated requirements within the dictated time frame approved by Legal Services. The previous report had stated that any issues of non-compliance would be addressed through the appropriate channels and might result in the termination of the Facilities Management Agreement for the Dixon Park Playing Fields following advice from Legal Services and authority from the Committee. Council officers had been in communication with the club and had made all reasonable attempts over many months to resolve the situation.

The Committee was advised that the key issue was the non submission of annual accounts by the local football club as required under Clause 14.1 of the Facility Management Agreement. Since 5th July 2010, the Council had issued a number of demands requesting submission of its accounts. The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure had met with a representative of the club on 14th June, 2011 to discuss the need to provide the accounts and the club had been informed of the possible termination if those were not forthcoming. On 19th July, 2011 the Legal Services had written to the club to once more request the accounts and had warned that failure to comply would result in a termination letter being issued and the club being required to vacate the Dixon Park Playing Fields. To date the club had not provided the required accounts.

Accordingly, it was recommended that, on the basis that the club was in breach of the Facility Management Agreement at the Dixon Park Playing Fields, that steps be taken to terminate the agreement in accordance with Clause 18(i) of the aforementioned Agreement.

The Committee adopted the recommendation but agreed that the club be given until the date of the Council meeting scheduled to be held on 3rd October to submit properly constituted accounts.

Ormeau Park - Floral Display Request

The Committee agreed that a request which had been received from the Ballynafeigh Orange Hall Management Committee for a floral display in Ormeau Park in the summer of 2012 to mark the 125th anniversary of the Ballynafeigh Orange Hall and Reading Room be referred, in the first instance, to the Centenaries Working Group.

Strangford Avenue New Playing Fields – Joint Unionist Centenary Committee

The Committee agreed to refer to the Centenaries Working Group a request which had been received from the Joint Unionist Centenary Committee to use the Strangford Avenue Playing Fields to hold a parade in May, 2012 to commemorate the Centenary of the Balmoral Review.

City Cemetery - Damage to War Memorial

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the damage which had occurred to the World War Memorials in the City Cemetery. The Committee noted also that the Cemetery Manager would be meeting in due course with representatives of the War Graves Commission to examine options to reduce the risk of further damage to those monuments and other war memorials.

Belfast Zoological Gardens

Mountain Tea House

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update in relation to the replacement of the Mountain Tea House at the Belfast Zoological Gardens and agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) be authorised to attend an event to mark the reopening of the facility.

Recent Successes and Operational Review

The Committee was advised that in the current financial year the Belfast Zoological Gardens had been successful in achieving three significant and relevant industry awards which recognised the Zoo's role as a leading visitor attraction in Northern Ireland:

- In May 2011, the Zoo had won the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Tourism Awards for the 'Visitor Inspired' category;
- In June 2011, the Zoo topped the poll for UTV's Ultimate Ulster Programme by being voted as 'The best place to spend a day with the children'; and
- Also in June, 2011, the Zoo's website, Facebook and Twitter had won the best use of social media by a tourist attraction category, the first ever Northern Ireland Social Media Awards.

While those were significant achievements and demonstrated improvements which the Zoo has made in recent years, there was now a need to examine the Zoo's business model to improve how it operated and to develop a business model for the future. A review of the management of the Zoo had been completed in June, 2011 by FGS McClure Waters which highlighted a number of issues which should be addressed, including the need for a long term business strategy, the need to develop an income generation plan to support its strategy and a review of its resources and structure. In this regard, work would commence to develop a strategic plan for the Zoo whilst an operational review was being undertaken by the Councils' Organisational Development Unit. Some of the key issues which the operational review would cover would include:

- Management/leadership responsibility for future development of the Zoo
- Strategic development and business planning
- The delivery of park services within the Zoo
- The role of the education unit
- Income generation
- The customer experience
- Levels of overtime and agency staff, and
- Working practices

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and commended staff of the Zoo on the three awards which had been achieved to date.

Westfield Health British Transplant Games, Belfast 2011

The Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Members that correspondence had been received from the Transplant Games Team Manager which had provided an update on the tremendous performance of athletes from Northern Ireland at the recent Westfield Health British Transplant Games, Belfast 2011. The team representing the Belfast Regional Transplant Unit had fielded a total of 67 athletes from all over Northern Ireland – 52 adults and 15 children – all of whom had received life saving organ transplants.

It was pointed out that the Council had granted free Boost membership and the use of its leisure facilities to Transplant Sport NI athletes in the past and the Team Manager had indicated that access to the leisure centres had undoubtedly related to the recent success, which had resulted in at least 22 of the Northern Ireland athletes being selected to represent the United Kingdom at the World Transplant Games in Durban in 2013. Accordingly, he had requested that the Council consider allowing the membership to continue on an annual basis between February and August each year in order to allow athletes to be provided with the best preparation for future games.

The Director reported that the costs associated with granting 58 adults and 15 under 15 free Boost memberships for a 7 month period annually would be £14,869 in potential lost income.

The Committee approved the request for free leisure centre use for the Northern Ireland Transplant athletes for the period from February til August each year, renewable on an annual basis.

Refurbishment of Dunville and Woodvale Parks – Quarterly Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the progress which had been achieved regarding the refurbishment of the Dunville and Woodvale Parks.

Cavehill - Community Archaeological Dig

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Belfast Hills Partnership to hold an event on the Cavehill for the purpose of carrying out an archaeological dig at Ballygahagan Cashel between 17th and 26th October, 2011.

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure reported that during that time local schools and community groups would be invited to the event to have a 'hands-on' experience of a small dig and to survey the Cashel by measuring and drawing its features. An open day for the general public would also be undertaken. Following that a report on the findings would be produced, together with graphics which would be summarised on an interpretative panel to be erected on the site. The basic archaeological investigation was designed to engage and connect communities, particularly children, with their joint heritage. The unique experience would spark a greater interest in Belfast's rich heritage and the importance of the Cavehill Country Park.

She explained that the Belfast Hills Partnership was about to embark on a landscape partnership scheme, which had a strong heritage theme, encouraging people to learn more about the past history of the hills, and therefore, wanted to look after them for future generations. That fitted in with the Partnership's aim to look after the hills, wildlife and people, which in turn would add value to the Cavehill Country Park. The proposal was important as it would be the first heritage event in its new landscape partnership scheme and would assist in raising the profile of the work it hoped to undertake throughout the scheme. It provided also a means to bring various people together in a joint interest as well as enabling the Partnership to work more closely with the Council, therefore raising both profiles positively.

The Belfast Hills Partnership would be responsible for all public liability and other insurances associated with the dig. There would be minimum disturbances to park users. It was proposed that two trenches, approximately 0.6 metres wide by 2 metres long, would be excavated to allow large groups of children and others to be divided into teams. Access would be gained from the car park at the Hightown Road. The dig would be carried out by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Built Heritage and the Queen's University of Belfast Field Centre on behalf of the Partnership. All relevant permissions had been obtained. The Cavehill Conservation Group had been consulted and would like a briefing and input as the dig was taking place. The site would be secured each evening using temporary fencing and the reinstatement of the grounds would be carried out by the Partnership on 27th and 28th October.

The Committee granted permission for the archaeological dig at the Cavehill Country Park on the terms outlined, subject to the event organisers meeting all statutory and legal requirements.

Family Festival at Falls Park

The Committee was advised that the Inclusive Neighbourhood Project had commenced in March, 2009 following approval of funding from the Peace III Programme which was managed on behalf of the Special European Programmes Body by the Community Relations Council/Pobal Consortium. A partnership between Corrymeela and the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers had been developed to foster the integration process between the host community and the growing refugee community in Northern Ireland by creating opportunities for the development of positive relationships and good relations.

The Director explained that the overall aim of the project was to bring about a real change in attitude and create understanding, within both the host and the refugee community, of the issues and fears associated with living in a post-conflict society, whether as someone who had lived through the conflict or as someone who had recently arrived. In facilitating that attitudinal change, the project intended to create a firm platform upon which a shared neighbourhood could be built, imbedded with the principles of Equity, Diversity and Interdependence.

He advised the Members that the Inclusive Neighbourhood Project had submitted a proposal to use the Falls Park as a location to provide an opportunity for refugee community groups to engage with local community groups to provide a better understanding of each other's cultures. The event was scheduled to take place on 25th September and he provided details of the event schedule. Entry to the festival would be free of charge as would all activities. The event organisers would be required to resolve all operational, statutory and reinstatement issues to the Council's satisfaction. Accordingly it was recommended that the Committee grant authority for the holding of the event on the condition that:

- the event organisers resolve all operational to the Council's satisfaction;
- an appropriate legal agreement, to be prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive, be completed;

- the event organisers meet all statutory requirements, including entertainment licensing; and
- the event organisers ensure that all health and safety requirements were met to the Council's satisfaction, including risk assessment.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Drumglass Park - Festival

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

South Belfast Partnership Board has been successful in securing funding to host another arts festival in Drumglass Park. The events are scheduled to take place on 8 October 2011.

The positive impacts and achievements from the first Drumglass Art Festival in 2009 included:

- **The festival provided an opportunity for all of South Belfast's varied neighbourhoods and communities of interest to come together and engage with local traders from the Lisburn Road – an area of South Belfast with good public open space that has the potential to make a greater contribution to the economic progress of the city as a whole.**
- **The artists and the audience were given the opportunity to come into contact with a wide range of mediums including live music, an arts exhibition, fashion showcase and food and drink supplied by local businesses.**
- **Local traders benefited from the increased footfall and economic benefits.**
- **Arts and crafts entrepreneurs who are often marginalised from enterprise opportunities were given the opportunity to trade at a low cost venue, with 20 stalls, 4 for students, drawn from various areas in N. Ireland.**
- **The event created a shared space by bringing communities together from across Belfast to attend the festival.**
- **The atmosphere at the event was child friendly and it also had an appeal of being non-commercial which promoted this open space in a very positive way to approximately 1,400 people.**

The 2011 Arts Festival on 8th October 2011 will build upon the success of the previous festivals and will include visual exhibits, food market, circus performers and a range of live performances. It is intended that the festival will raise the profile of the arts and music scene in South Belfast, whilst bringing economic benefits to the community and surrounding businesses, thus meeting a number of the South Belfast Partnership Board's strategic objectives set out in their Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). It is hoped that the festival will stimulate local interest in the arts and encourage a new audience at community and business level in the area, especially for families and young people.

The proposed festival forms part of a wider programme of arts and cultural development activities, including an Amateur Arts Competition, in conjunction with Belfast Media Group, and a community art programme that seeks to stimulate buy-in to the festival and art competition through a series of workshops aimed at promoting access and involvement in the arts in some of the most deprived communities of South Belfast. Entries to the art competition will be displayed and judged during the proposed festival and will subsequently be toured around several galleries in Belfast. In addition a piece of art has been commissioned to enhance the Lisburn Road by covering dereliction at the junction with Tate's Avenue. This will be unveiled during the festival.

2 Key Issues

South Belfast Partnership Board have informed officers that they will endeavour to ensure the festival does not cause a nuisance, annoyance or inconvenience to local residents. This has been demonstrated through the three previous festivals in the Crescent Park and Drumglass Park in 2009.

1. South Belfast Partnership Board will employ a security firm to provide adequate security cover for the marquee and during the festival.
2. The events and activities will be suitable for the targeted family audience.
3. A range of art work from an Art Competition in the South Belfast area, currently running in South Belfast News, will be on display.
4. It is proposed that the marquee will be erected in Drumglass Park on Friday 7th October and will be taken down on Sunday 9th October 2011.
5. Entry to the festival will be free of charge as will all the activities.

6. South Belfast Partnership Board and the Licensee will enforce a strict bar policy ensuring that patrons are limited to the amount of alcoholic that can be consumed. South Belfast Partnership Board has also stated that only beer, wine and soft drinks will be sold.
7. This application will be supported by an events plan and the event organisers will be required to resolve all operational, statutory and reinstatement issues to the council's satisfaction.
8. As before the Council and South Belfast Partnership Board will enter into an appropriate agreement based on advice from the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

South Belfast Partnership Board has received significant funding for the festival and it is anticipated that all costs will be met through this funding. The council is asked to provide the venues for free.

Human Resources

It is not anticipated at this time that there will be additional Human Resource implications for the council other than officer time.

4 Good Relations and Equality Implications

None.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that committee grant authority for the initiatives including the sale of food and alcohol subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with the Director of Parks and Leisure and on condition that:

1. the event organisers resolve all operational issues to the council's satisfaction;
2. an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive is completed;
3. the event organisers meet all statutory requirements including entertainment licensing; and
4. the event organisers ensure that all health and safety requirements are met to the council's satisfaction."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

High Hedges Fee Legislation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 In December 2009, the Department of the Environment (DoENI) launched a consultation on the draft High Hedges Bill. A council response, to which the Parks and Leisure Department contributed, was prepared by Health and Environmental Services, and approved by the Health and Environmental Services Committee at its February 2010 meeting.

1.2 A High Hedges Bill was introduced in the NI Assembly on 26th April 2010 and the Bill received Royal Assent on 3rd May 2011 becoming the *High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011* – to be made operational once subordinate legislation is in place.

1.3 The Act will provide a means of redress for people who are suffering because of a high hedge on a neighbour's land acting as a barrier to light, and will provide district councils with certain powers to deal with complaints about high hedges.

1.4 DoENI proposes the following subordinate legislation in order to make the High Hedges Act operational:

- The *(Draft) High Hedges (Fee) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011*, and
- The *(Draft) High Hedges (Fee Transfer) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011*.

1.5 The regulations will, in summary:

- (i) allow councils discretion to charge a fee for investigating high hedge complaints, and
- (ii) facilitate the transfer of the charge to ‘hedge owners’, meaning that hedge owners will bear the costs of investigation in cases where hedges are found to be a problem and a remedial notice takes effect.

2 Key Issues

2.1 DoE NI is currently undertaking a public consultation on the proposed subordinate legislation, outlined above. The consultation documents are provided at Appendix 1.

- 2.2 With regard to the *(Draft) High Hedges (Fee) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011*, the consultation seeks views on the 'maximum' complaint fee that councils can charge for dealing with a high hedge complaint. With regard to the *(Draft) High Hedges (Fee Transfer) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011*, it seeks views on the mechanism of the 'fee-transfer' from the complainant to the 'hedge owner'. The consultation also seeks views on impact assessments carried out by DoENI with respect to its proposals, in particular a partial Regulatory Impact Assessment.

In summary, the consultation asks for responses to four questions:

1. What should the maximum level of fee be?
2. Do you agree that the fee should transfer to the 'hedge owner' when remedial notice takes effect?
3. What circumstances should the Department prescribe for a refund of the 'transferred fee'?
4. Are there any other comments which you would like to make on the proposals?

- 2.3 Our consultation response will primarily be based on the response given by the Northern Ireland Chief Environmental Health Officers Group and from consultation with colleagues across the Council for approval by Members.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

DoENI's proposals mean that councils would charge complainants a fee (in order to cover the costs of dealing with the complaint, and to deter frivolous or malicious complaints). DoENI indicates that the amount would be likely to be close to the average currently charged in England and Wales, i.e. £320-£360 however 2 out of 8 Local Authorities we recently consulted with, in England and Wales offered a reduction in fees for people on certain types of means tested benefits, ranging from a 50% reduction to a £60 reduction in fee.

- 3.2 A complainant would have any fee refunded if a remedial notice issued by a council took effect. At this point, the council may charge a fee to the 'hedge owner' to recover the refunded fee.

- 3.3 DoENI indicates that councils will face a cost of administering the fee transfer mechanism, estimated at around £50 per case however DoENI expects that this will be covered by the fee charged to complainants (above).
- 3.4 On average the Parks and Leisure Department receives 3 to 4 complaints concerning nuisance hedges every week from members of the public however based on information received from local authorities in England and Wales, they would process on average only 5 'formal' complaints per year. That said, a DoENI scoping consultation has estimated that there could be a backlog of 800 high hedge problem cases which will be required to be determined by district councils in the first 2 to 3 years that the legislation is in operation.
- 3.5 In the interim, officers will undertake work to confirm the resource implications of the new regulations.

3.6 Human Resources

It is likely that, in order to discharge its new responsibilities, the Department will require additional resources. It is expected that activities directly associated with the regulations (such as travel, inspection, report writing and administration) will result in an increase in workload. Prior to the regulations becoming operational, time will be needed to establish the extent of any increase, and how it will be addressed.

It is expected that there will be a need to train all officers involved in carrying out duties under the regulations. In its indicative timetable for delivery of the legislation, DoENI plans to finalise a range of guidance for councils and the public, and undertake training of council officials by mid-March 2012.

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 4.1 In the consultation documents, DoENI states that it has undertaken an equality impact screening of the regulations, and has concluded that "there is no adverse impact for any of the nine categories listed under Section 75". This has also been confirmed internally through consultation.

DoENI also considers that its proposals are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) note the contents of this report; and
- (ii) approve submission of a final consultation response to DoENI, subject to any comments provided, by the deadline of 20 September. This would be with the proviso that the response is subject to full Council approval

HIGH HEDGE FEE LEGISLATION – Consultation Response

The Department is unable to consider any views submitted anonymously. We would therefore be grateful if the following details could be completed.

***Name** **Belfast City Council**

***To enable responses to be analysed please indicate which category you fall into:**

Hedge Owner	
Complainant	
Council	Belfast City Council Parks & Leisure Department
Other (Please specify)	

Address: **Belfast City Council
Parks and Leisure Department
Adelaide Exchange
24 – 26 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GD**

Telephone No: **(028) 9032 0202**

Email address: mchaffiea@belfastcity.gov.uk

LIST OF CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Q1 – What should be the maximum level of fee? Why?

Local government is facing a number of new burdens in a time of economic pressure and the principle of full cost recovery for any request for service is seen as desirable. To maintain simplicity in charging schemes the concept of a maximum fee that would discourage frivolous complaints whilst not discouraging justified complaints would appear reasonable.

A maximum fee of £350 would appear appropriate. This is calculated on the basis of 12 – 13 hours of staff resource, two statutory charges (@ £25 each + admin) and further administration in the transfer/refund of fees. The process in Northern Ireland will be more complex than in England and Wales where Wales have set £320 as the maximum fee and fees in England varied widely around an apparent mean.

The provision in Section 3(1)(b) that allows councils discretion to waive the fee or determine other fees up to the prescribed maximum is supported.

Q2 – Do you agree that the fee should transfer to the ‘hedge owner’ when the remedial notice takes effect? Please give your reasons.

The principle that the ‘polluter pays’ has been long adopted as a principle. The existence of this legislation will provide an incentive to any hedge owner to ensure their hedges do not cause nuisance to their neighbours. Where that duty is neglected despite the existence of the legislation and despite reasonable attempts by the complainant to resolve the matter by negotiation, it is entirely appropriate that the hedge owner should bear the costs incurred.

There are some reservations about fee transfer in practice. For the fee to transfer Section 4 (3) has to apply in that the fee is first paid by the complainant, a remedial notice is issued by the council and the remedial notice takes effect after a period of at least 28 days. However where a notice is issued following investigation by local government, the owner may remove the hedge before the notice takes effect. In that situation the council will have incurred costs in investigation and issue of the notice, but the costs cannot be passed to the ‘polluter’, leaving the complainant to bear whatever costs are seen as appropriate. It is recommended that the fee should transfer to the hedge owner upon issue of the notice with appropriate safeguards for refund should appeal be successful.

In cases where a complaint is quickly settled and at minimal cost to the local authority, the discretion to refund all or part of the fee provided under Section 4 (2) (b) would be appropriate.

Q3 – What circumstances should the Department prescribe for a refund of the ‘transferred fee’?

Although Section 4 (5) (c) allows for regulations to be made for the refund of ‘transferred fees’, unless the fee transfer comes into effect (as recommended above) on service of the notice rather than when the notice comes into effect and could therefore be overturned on appeal, there would not appear to be a reason for refund of a transferred fee.

Q4 – Are there any other comments which you would like to make on the proposals contained in this consultation document?

It is noted that a council may waive charges, or charge a complainant a reduced fee in accordance with adopted policy, but may then transfer a fee of an amount up to the prescribed maximum to cover costs. This may be the correct course of action where the council wishes to take note of complainants’ own circumstances, but is likely to create dissent if the possibility is not made clear to hedge owners.

Outside the scope of the legislation there appears to be merit in instituting informal advisory processes (with appropriate fees as determined by the council) that commence before a formal complaint procedure is initiated. This may filter out those situations in which no formal action will be possible and thereby eliminate unnecessary administration issues for councils and complainants.

If notice is to be served on, or sent to, every owner and every occupier of the neighbouring land, (section 3.(4).b), that duty cannot be fulfilled unless the council has the ability to require information from an owner or occupier as to the names and addresses of those having an interest in the land. As an example of necessary powers, GB legislation contains provision for local authorities to serve a Requisition for Information under S.16 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 prior to service of statutory notice in such cases. This power is not apparently available in Northern Ireland and the absence may frustrate the purposes of a council seeking to enforce the High Hedges Act.

A media awareness campaign to educate owners and landlords, including social landlords such as NIHE and Housing Associations of this new legislation and of obligations there under would appear indicated.

Charges for works carried out in default (S.12) may be recovered as a statutory charge, but there is no specific provision for recovery of transferred fees. Is it intended that this should be recovered as a civil charge?

A concern for councils in relation to this (and all enforcement) is the limitation in costs awarded to councils in Magistrate Court cases as laid out in Schedule 1 of the Magistrates' Courts (Costs in Criminal Cases) Rules (Northern Ireland) 1988 which limit costs to an amount not exceeding £75. Excess costs can therefore be a major burden for councils and cannot be recovered within the charging regime described in this consultation.

The legislation should make it clear that any fees charged under this section shall constitute a statutory charge. The primary legislation only refers to expenses and the remedial notice itself going on the Statutory Charges register.

It should be an offence not to pay any fees charged under the legislation."

The Committee approved the foregoing comments as the Council's response to the consultation document.

Cavehill Paths - Rural Development Programme

The Director of Parks and Leisure submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in August 2010 it was informed that an application had been submitted to the Rural Development Programme for funding to promote access and recreation within the Belfast Hills. The purpose of this report is to update Members' on the current position.

The current position is that the council in partnership with BHP, UWT and NT has submitted applications in August 2010. These applications related to Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013, Axis 3 – Improving the quality of life in rural areas and diversifying the rural economy; one application has been made under the sub heading Axis 3.3, Encouragement of Tourism Activities, and the other under Axis 3.6, Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage.

The application submitted under Axis 3.3, Encouragement of Tourism Activities was submitted in April 2011 for approximately £250,000 is currently being considered. Belfast City Council will benefit from £65,000 of this:

- Create a new pedestrian path to be constructed through the quarry area which will link the Estate Trail to the Cave Hill Trail. Currently this is a well used desire line for visitors to the site wishing to reduce the time and distance of their walk. A new pedestrian path incorporating steps in some of the steeper gradients would allow for easier movement throughout the site and prevent erosion.
- Develop a new path through Ligoniel Park. This will create a new walking route linking Ligoniel Dams, Ligoniel Park and Cave Hill Country Park and provide a quality walk through sections of Belfast Hills.
- Develop the sport of orienteering within Cave Hill Country Park (CHCP) by creating new routes.
- Erect data counters to establish user numbers for CHCP.

The application submitted under Axis 3.6, Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage, has been successful and approximately £56,000 has been awarded. Belfast City Council will benefit from £34,000 of this.

- £30,000 will upgrade the pedestrian path from McArt's Fort down to the cattle grid on the eastern side of the Cave Hill. This is the final stretch of pathway which will complete a continuous network from Belfast Castle around the Estate Trail to the summit of Cave Hill. With the increasing number of tourists and visitors to the site, a new single track would guide walkers to the summit, prevent erosion and enhance the area.
- £4,000 has been set aside to create heritage interpretation panels; these will be located at Ballyhagan fort and Carrs Glen.

Members should note that these projects are included in the Cave Hill Country Park Action Plan 2007-2011 and would contribute to achievement of the 2010-2011 plan, specifically with respect to contributing to the protection and promotion of Belfast Hills and Lagan Valley Regional Park, and maintaining the path infrastructure within our parks and open spaces.

2 Key Issues

The key issues for the Committee to note are:

1. The application under Axis 3.3 is under consideration, with a decision expected in the autumn 2011;
2. The application under Axis 3.6 has been successful and as a result the Council will be able to upgrade the path network and erect interpretation panels within its estate;
3. To draw down the funds the council is required to enter into a deed of dedication with DARD/RDP which will require the Council to retain the land for which grant aid has been sought for a period of 10 years; with associated management costs and a potential claw back clause should the Council default on the agreement;
4. In advance of the deed of dedication DARD/RDP require that the Council enter into a Development Management agreement as the vehicle for the delivery of the deed of dedication upon practical completion of the works.
5. Although the works are being funded externally owing to their nature they are considered to be capital and should be included within the capital programme and subject to the Gates Review process;
6. The Committee will be required to make recommendation to Strategic Policy and Resources for inclusion in the capital programme.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

This scheme is on the capital programme subject to the receipt of grant funding.

It is anticipated that the maintenance liability will be minimal and the paths will be included as part of the ongoing inspection regime. The budget for maintaining the area exists within current revenue estimates.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications.

Asset and Other Implications

Completion of these projects would build linkages across the hills and attract greater numbers of visitors to the area. Interpretive signage will provide information on the wealth of history attributed to the area.

4. Equality Implications

There are no equality implications.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Note the content of the reports;
2. Agree that the council enter a deed of dedication for a period of 10 years through an appropriate development agreement in line with the requirements of DARD/RDP subject to approval to same from Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and 60;
3. Agree to recommend to Strategic Policy and Resources that the schemes be included on the Council's capital programme."

Conservation Volunteers - Big Green Weekend

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) is a charity which was set up in 1959, and has a successful history of environmental conservation volunteering throughout the UK and around the world. Conservation Volunteers is the Northern Ireland operating name for BTCV.
- 1.2 Conservation Volunteers are the leading environmental volunteering charity with 28 years of experience of working with people across NI each year to enhance and protect our natural environment. To date they have worked with over 21,000 people in the region. The head office is in Belfast where they deliver a busy timetable of Conservation Action Team tasks, Environmentally Active Citizens and Green Gym projects. With Belfast City Council being a major land owner they have worked in partnership with the Council on a number of projects in recent years.
- 1.3 Their most significant project is the Ballysillan Community Garden and Allotment project, engaging people in North Belfast who have experienced long term health and social disadvantage in regular practical tasks for personal, community and environmental benefits. They also work on small projects in Ormeau Park completing seasonal projects with the Saturday Green Gym Project, Victoria and Orangefield Parks, and Cregagh Glen through the Connswater Project. In 2008 their Conservation Action Team completed access repair, drainage improvement and a native planting project on a section of Cavehill.

- 1.4 Conservation Volunteers have requested the use of Ormeau Park for a Big Green Weekend event in Belfast. The Big Green Weekend, 21st - 23rd October, is a new event which encompasses BTCV Green Hero Awards, showcases their UK and international work and provides a platform to engage with new people and raise funds. The letter of request is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.5 The weekend kicks off with the Annual Green Hero Awards, RBS Bishopsgate London. On Saturday and Sunday there will be 9 UK volunteering events in key locations (London, Chester, Manchester, Kent, Belfast, Edinburgh, Essex, Leeds, Hull) and 9 European volunteering events (Greece, France, Romania, Holland, Italy, Estonia, Bulgaria, Iceland, Germany) celebrating 'all things green'.
- 1.6 Green Hero Awards are the annual UK wide awards recognising outstanding contribution made by individuals and groups across 7 categories. This year Conservation Volunteers are delighted that the Ballysillan Community Garden and Allotment Project has won the Partnership of the Year Award. This award recognises the contribution of Belfast City Council, Ballysillan Allotment Holders, Salvation Army and Belfast Conservation Volunteers Team in getting this project off the ground, overcoming a number of hurdles to make it a success in just 18 months. Working together this partnership has established a valuable community resource within the heart of North Belfast.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Big Green Weekend Belfast Event - Ormeau Park, Sunday 23 October, 12 - 3pm will comprise:
- a family fun day with a combination of volunteering opportunities (identified in partnership with the Park manager), environmental education activities, information stands and product stalls.
 - a bulb planting activity offering people a taster of what's involved with environmental volunteering, helping them to connect with their local park and green space.
 - the event will help to continue building relationships with Belfast City Council as Conservation Volunteers plan to use this as the first of a series of volunteering events in our City parks offering follow-up opportunities over the next 6 months to help sustain interest.

- a number of external organisations who have a link to environmental issues and sustainable living will be involved in the event including DOE Rethink Waste providing composting at home demo and prizes, cycle skills and bike safety for kids, Conservation Volunteers Allotment holders with their local organic produce, Healthy Eating Model Health Trust Dietetic Services, local produce cooking demo from Avoca Head Chef and TidyNI recycling demonstration.
- the event will be free to enter with a number of stalls selling related products for fundraising purposes, e.g. window, nesting and herb boxes. These stalls will also have an interactive element where Conservation Volunteers will have prepared templates which people can pay to make their own, seed harvest workshops and environmental education activities for children.
- this application will be supported by an event plan and will be subject to the organisers working with council officers and meeting all statutory and legal requirements
- organisers will also be required to reinstate all council property to its original state after use.

2.2 There are a number of important Green Hero dates over the next two months.

- Friday 30 September - BTCV media team will be at Ballysillan to film the project. This will be edited to a 3-5 minute clip to bring the project to life at the National Awards, linked into BTCV's website, blog and facebook, and available to partner organisations for their use.
- Friday 7 October - 3.00 - 4.30pm. Conservation Volunteers Annual Awards at Clandeboye Estate. Every year BTCV recognise the commitment and training achievements of volunteers across Northern Ireland, as well as presenting their Green Hero Awards.
- Friday 21 October - BTCV National Green Hero Awards, RBS Bishopsgate London. All National winners attend this celebration.

Conservation volunteers would be delighted if the Committee Chair or their nominees were available to attend the above events.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The cost of attendance at the events would be in the region of £400 and is provided for in revenue budgets.

3.2 Human Resources

There are likely to be some additional staffing and planning implications which should be able to be accommodated through our normal event management process.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

Organisers will reinstate Council property to its original state after use.

4. Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 The partnership working and planned events raises the profile of environmental volunteering in local green spaces. It is especially aimed at families and will build partnerships to ensure these opportunities are sustained and are as accessible as possible.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is asked to note the request from the Conservation Volunteers and grant approval subject to:

- final agreement on the specifics of the event with Parks management
- an event management plan for all activities planned including health and safety requirements;
- an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive.

The Committee is asked to note the key dates outlined in September and October 2011 and agree that the Committee Chair and Director or their nominees attend as appropriate.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**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 in accordance with the authority delegated to him.

A copy of this schedule was available on the Council's Modern.gov website.