

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 9th February, 2012

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Corr (Chairman);
Aldermen Humphrey and Rodgers;
Councillors Austin, Cunningham, Haire, Hargey,
Hendron, Kelly, Kyle, Mallon, McCabe, McKee,
McNamee, Mac Giolla Mhín, Mullan, 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;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. P. Scarborough, Chief Executive's Support Officer.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 12th, 17th and 23rd January 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 February, subject to that portion of the minute under the heading "Scale of Charges for Parks and Leisure Facilities 2012/2013" insofar as it related to the Belfast Zoo being referred back to the Committee for further consideration. Furthermore, under the heading "Fields in Trust Challenge", at the request of Councillor Robinson, the Council agreed that the Friends of Orangefield Park be included in future discussions around the nature of events to celebrate the Park's dedication.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Scale of Charges for Parks and Leisure Facilities 2012/2013

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

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd January, it had agreed to defer, to a Briefing Session, consideration of a number of outstanding issues in relation to the proposed Scale of Charges for Parks and Leisure facilities for 2012/2013. Accordingly, the Committee considered the undernoted report and a revised Scale of Charges:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 At the special Parks and Leisure Committee on 23rd January 2012 the committee agreed to defer consideration of a standard concessionary rate to be applied across all Parks and Leisure facilities, subject to further discussion and consideration of a council-wide position on concessionary rates.
- 1.2 The committee adopted the recommendations within the proposed scale of charges for Belfast Castle and Malone House.
- 1.3 The council at its meeting on 1st February 2012 agreed that the portion of the minute regarding the scale of charges insofar as it relates to the Belfast Zoo be referred back to committee for further consideration.
- 1.4 The committee adopted the proposed scale of charges in relation to the use of pitches, outdoor bowling, facilities management agreements, cricket, events and the proposed charges in connection with the new legislation in respect of high hedges.
- 1.5 The committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposed scale of charges for burials and cremations to enable further discussion at a committee briefing to be held in advance of its next scheduled meeting.
- 1.6 The committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposed scale of charges for indoor leisure to enable further discussion at the aforementioned committee briefing and noted that further options would be provided by the department to inform that discussion.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Information will be presented at the committee briefing setting out the options for concessions, the scale of charges for cremations and burials and the scale of charges for indoor leisure.

The proposals previously presented at the committee meetings on 12th, 17th and 23rd of January that relate to these areas reproduced below.

2.2 Concessionary Discounts

The concessionary rates applied by the council have been reviewed and it has been confirmed that the current situation on concessions within the organisation are a child rate applies to 16 and under and a senior rate applies to over 60s. The only other parts of the organisation other than Parks and Leisure that apply these rates are the Waterfront and Ulster Halls. However these are subject to the approval of the promoter depending on the event being promoted.

The review of fees and charges within the department has highlighted the variety of concessions within the different activities in the department that range from 20% to 70% discount. It is proposed that a concessionary rate of approximately 50% of the full rate will be applied across all activities in relation to over 60s, those on means tested benefits, students and children. Members should note that this would remove all other concessionary memberships including Means Tested Benefits (MTB) membership

2.3 Belfast Zoo

A benchmarking exercise was carried out with other zoos in the UK and Ireland. The results show that Belfast is the cheapest zoo for adult admissions and that currently it does not charge over 60s while all other zoos apply a 10-25% average discount to this group. The proposal is to increase the summer adult admission to £10 (a £1.10 increase) and the winter admission to £8 (a £0.65 increase) and have a concession price of £5 and £4 respectively. This concession would include the over 60s. Family tickets within Belfast were also the lowest at £24.50 summer/£20 winter while others charged from £36-£50. It is proposed to increase a family ticket to £27 summer/£21.50 winter. This still represents a 10% increase on the individual price.

An additional option Members could consider is extending free entry to the Zoo for seniors before 11am as is currently in place in leisure.

2.4 Cemeteries/Crematorium

Party group briefings took place in December 2011 in relation to the development of the cemetery and crematorium. During those briefings proposals were discussed regarding the charges for burials and cremations. Therefore it is proposed that all historic charges in relation to double and treble fees be replaced by resident and non-resident charges. A reduced charge will still apply to Castlereagh Borough Council residents of one quarter of the difference between a resident and non resident. The administration fee applied to Castlereagh is currently being reviewed as it has been the same for a number of years.

It is proposed that for burials a 5% increase is levied for both residents and non-residents. Following discussions at the Party Group briefings most groups agreed that an increase in crematorium charges for Belfast residents was appropriate and therefore it is proposed to increase cremation by £50 for Belfast residents. A 10% increase is to be levied on non-residents for cremations as already agreed by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting in February 2011. It is proposed that other charges will rise in line with inflation and ancillary charges will be charged in relation to the direct costs i.e. memorialisation, urns, foundations and the use of the organist and the same charge will apply to residents and non residents.

2.5 Indoor Leisure

At the committee meeting in December 2011 the framework for the review of the Boost Discount Scheme within Leisure Services was agreed. The emphasis of the framework is to promote membership rather than casual use and the charges reflect that membership provides better value for money. There will no longer be a joining fee and if you pay a year's membership you can get a discounted annual price (i.e. you pay for 10 months only). There would be one fully inclusive membership scheme at a price of £25 per month instead of two schemes (Max Boost) at £37.80 cash or £32.55 direct debit and (Big Boost) £21 currently in place. There would also be one concessionary scheme instead of the current four. The concession has been set at 50% discount for all activities except for classes and the fitness suite which are used most by casual users. The rate is 60% discount for these activities to ensure the rates are kept competitive. The concession rates of £12 per month apply to:

- 16s and under
- students in full time education

- over 60s - entitled to free use for access before 11am Monday to Friday. Concession price applies after this
- Means Tested Benefit charge applies at all times and is available to recipients of the following benefits and their dependent children 16 and under or in full time education: income support, job seekers allowance income based, tax credits (accompanied by health charges exemption certificate), housing benefit, pension credit, training for success scheme, asylum seekers.

Family memberships will be replaced by family sessions to promote the use of the facilities and more sessions will be made available. Family Sessions are for a family group for a maximum of five people, with no more than two adults for non-book able activities only. Currently family sessions run for only 2-3 hours per day mainly at the weekend and are for swimming. The new scheme will increase the availability of these sessions and will include access to the gym.

Legacy memberships will no longer exist and work is ongoing to move these onto the more favourable rate in the current scheme.

The new management structure within leisure will help to support the promotion of the service with the introduction of participation officers who will deliver a programme of activities and promotions to increase participation and retain existing members.

A loyalty scheme is also proposed to promote usage of the centres. The proposal is that for a casual user they will get their 10TH visit free. For a monthly paying member who has 160 visits over a 12 month period they will receive 1 months free access (13th month free). The department is continuing to develop the concept of a loyalty card and would propose that there will be further promotions that will include other activities such as visiting the zoo.

Consultation sessions with users and non users regarding these proposed changes were undertaken within leisure centres and local shopping centres using the questionnaire attached.

3 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are no equality implications in agreeing the 2012/13 scale of charges. The outcome of any current or proposed reviews, which may impact on the scale of charges, will however be subject to equality screening.

4 Resource Implications

4.1 Financial

Currently the impact of the economic downturn is affecting a number of the services and it is hoped that reviewing how we charge our customers will generate additional income either through increased participation, new services or the retention of existing users. The review has considered the impact of reductions in fees and there will be a financial impact if participation does not increase. However this will be addressed with an extensive marketing campaign to increase membership and to include incentives to retain members including a loyalty card.

4.2 Human Resources

There are no additional human resource requirements in relation to implementation of the proposed scale of charges.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that committee adopts the scale of charges for 2012/13, as detailed in the attached appendices, for implementation in April 2012.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the following:

Concessionary Discounts Across the Department

The Committee agreed that a concessionary rate of approximately 50 per cent of the full rate be applied across all activities within the Parks and Leisure Facilities in relation to those over sixty years of age, those on means tested benefits, students and children and noted that all other concessionary memberships, including means tested benefits membership, would be removed.

Belfast Zoo

After discussion, during which it was agreed that a family unit would consist of up to five people with a maximum of two adults, it was

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

That the Committee rejects the proposed increases in summer and winter adult admission charges and family tickets as outlined within the report.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the summer adult admission and the winter adult admission fees be increased to £10 and £8 respectively, and that the cost of a family ticket be increased to £27 in the summer and £21.50 in the winter.

The Committee agreed also to adopt the remaining scale of charges relating to the Zoo as set out in the appendix to the report, a copy of which was made available on the Council's modern.gov website.

The Committee noted that a report would be submitted in due course regarding the operational efficiency of the Zoo, which would include an analysis of the running costs, together with an outline of future options for improvement and possible funding sources in view of the fact that the Zoo operated as a regional facility.

Cemeteries and Crematorium

After discussion, it was

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

That the Committee rejects the proposed increases in burial and cremation charges as outlined within the report.

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

Burial Charges

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to increase burial charges by 5 per cent for both Belfast residents and non-Belfast residents.

Cremation Charges

It was,

Moved by Councillor Hendron,
Seconded by Councillor Robinson,

That the Committee agrees to increase cremation charges by 25 per cent for Belfast residents only.

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

The Committee noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting providing information on the number of requests which had been received to book a double time period within the Crematorium, together with options for future charging proposals for this purpose. The Committee agreed that all historic charges in relation to the payment by Castlereagh residents of double fees and of treble fees for all other cremations would be replaced by Belfast resident and non-Belfast resident charges.

In addition, the Committee agreed to adopt the remaining scale of charges for burial and cremation as set out in the appendix to the report, a copy of which was made available on the Council's modern.gov website.

Indoor Leisure

After discussion, during which the Committee agreed that one fully inclusive membership scheme be applied at a cost of £25 per month, it was

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

That the Committee rejects the proposed increase in the indoor leisure concession rate.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that only one indoor leisure concessionary scheme be operated, as opposed to four as was the case currently, and to apply a 50 per cent discount to all activities, excluding classes and the use of the fitness suite, to which a 60 per cent concessionary rate would apply.

The Committee agreed also to adopt the remaining scale of charges as set out in the appendix to the report, a copy of which was made available on the Council's modern.gov website.

Playing Pitches Strategy - Equality Impact Assessment

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

"1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members are aware of the recently developed playing pitches strategy and that as part of this a number of reports have been considered by committee. At its meeting on 9th June 2011 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.*

It was further agreed at the Council meeting on 4th June 2011:

‘That the decision under the heading “Playing Pitches Strategy” be amended to provide that the Dixon Park Playing Fields and Victoria Park sites be included in Phase 1 of the programme associated with the upgrade of changing facilities.’

2. **Key Issues**

2.1 **Public Consultation**

Members will also be aware that the second phase of public consultation took place from 25 July to 14 October 2011. This phase of consultation focused on the local impact of the development of pitches to inform the EQIA and sought views on the action plans for years 1-3 of the Playing Pitches Strategy.

2.2 The second phase of consultation included an online questionnaire, a series of independently facilitated public meetings combined with meetings with key groups including the council's Section 75 Forum, the Youth Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

2.3 Invitations were sent out to 222 sporting clubs, societies and organisations informing them of the events. Information was also sent to the secretaries of soccer leagues and the Antrim County Board asking them to circulate it to their members. Public notices were also placed in local newspapers and on the notice boards of council facilities including leisure and community centres. Although in the end there was not a significant attendance at any of the public sessions there was a good input from those in attendance and a number of relevant issues discussed.

2.4 A total of five completed questionnaires were returned at the end of the phase 2 consultation period; one from an individual, one from a GAA club and three from governing bodies (GAA, association football and rugby union). The responses and the feedback from the public meetings were considered as part of the final EQIA report.

2.5 **Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)**

Section 5 of the report outlines the key findings and includes a table (p25) which provides an assessment of impacts against each of the section 75 categories.

2.6 The EQIA has suggested that there is potential for people in a number of the Section 75 groups to be differentially affected by the strategy and associated action plans. This is on the basis that they may have less opportunity to benefit from the provision of new and upgraded facilities. The groups identified include:

- People from a Protestant community background;
- Black and Minority Ethnic people, Eastern European migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
- Children and young people;
- Older people;
- Single parents;
- Women and girls;
- People with disabilities;
- People with dependants (including carers and those with dependent children).

2.7 The investment priorities have been established as a result of applying the prioritisation matrix in the strategy which was the subject of extensive consultation last year.

2.8 The EQIA found that any differential impacts caused by the selection of sites (principally to people from a Protestant community background) are justified in that the highest deficiencies/needs identified by Strategic Leisure were in respect of Gaelic sports.

2.9 The EQIA outlines mitigating actions under the following three areas:

Sports development

An important element of the Action Plans is the development of a new sports development programme which will specially address the under-representation of certain Section 75 groups in team sports activity, including older people, women and girls, people with disabilities and people with dependants. The programme will include targets for increased participation by these groups.

Junior pitches

The lack of facilities across the city for small sided (or junior) games which directly affects a range of under-represented groups was highlighted. The EQIA states that as a mitigating action we intend to continue to examine the potential to convert underused full sized pitches into junior sized pitches and in relation to association football to develop a programme of joint working with the Irish Football Association.

Members will be aware that the Committee has already agreed *'that officers meet with the Irish Football Association to discuss a programme of joint working around junior association football based around best practice'*. Officers are currently exploring various options around junior provision and will continue to work with a range of partners including the IFA on this issue. It is proposed that an additional action on junior provision is included in the action plan already agreed by the Committee.

2.10 Wider Initiatives

The EQIA emphasises that it is important to view the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans in the context of a wide range of initiatives currently being taken by the Council to benefit people in particular Section 75 groups. These include programmes aimed at children, young people and older people.

- 2.11 One of the actions within the Management sub-objective of the strategy is to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches. As part of this we will monitor the equality impacts of the investment decisions. During the consultation the Irish Football Association (IFA) offered to share the findings of its own monitoring programmes with the Council and to assist in facilitating wider consultation and monitoring. Officers will work not just with the IFA but with all the governing bodies, clubs and other organisations to share monitoring information and ensure that vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups are able to contribute to the ongoing development of the strategy and action plans.

2.12 Final strategy

The draft playing pitches strategy has been updated to reflect the feedback received from the public consultation exercises and the Members' decision to change the weighting in the prioritisation matrix. It has also been "proofed" to ensure that it meets the Plain English guidelines (a copy of this is attached at Appendix 2).

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 will have implications on the number and type of playing pitches provided by the council.

4. Equality and Good Relations Implications

Policy Arc Ltd was appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy which has been subject to an EQIA. The full EQIA is attached at Appendix 1.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked:

- (i) to note the findings of the EQIA; and
- (ii) to agree the proposed additional actions relating to the provision of junior facilities included in the final strategy and action plans.”

During discussion, a number of concerns were raised in relation to the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment particularly regarding the mitigating actions therein, in that some Members felt that they were inadequately addressed to deal with certain differential impacts identified.

The Director reminded the Committee that the Equality Impact Assessment indicated that any differential impacts were justified by the previous evidence-based work regarding deficiencies and need in the City.

He pointed out also that the investment priorities for the first phase of the Strategy had been agreed by the application of the prioritisation matrix as set out within the document, which had been amended following extensive consultation undertaken during 2011.

After further discussion in relation to the implications to the Council arising from the implementation of the Pitches Strategy, it was

Moved by Councillor Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor Thompson,

That, in light of the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment, the Committee rejects the Assessment and agrees that it be referred to the Council’s Legal Services Section for an opinion to be provided as to whether money could be spent against the Pitches Strategy.

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

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor O'Neill,
Seconded by Councillor Mallon,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations as set out within the report.

On a vote by show of hands, eleven Members voted for the proposal and eight against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Improvement Agenda - Phase 2: Review of Business Support

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

The purpose of the report is to update the Parks and Leisure Committee on phase two of the review of the department's business support function including the provision of business support in leisure centres and to set out recommendations for approval.

At the Parks and Leisure Committee on 16th September 2010 approval was given for an assessment of the business support requirement within leisure centres. It was agreed that a three month pilot would assess the support requirements in leisure regarding receptionist, clerical and business assistant duties, including membership management, key performance and management information and the linkages with business support in the centre of the department.

Phase one of the business support review highlighted a need for administrative support to park managers to enable them to deliver the key requirements of their role effectively.

2. **Key Issues**

Current Situation

There are currently ten leisure centres within Belfast City Council and all have a business assistant except Falls and Ozone which currently have temporary arrangements and Loughside which currently shares its business support with another centre. There are one or two clerk/WPOs depending on the size and staffing numbers within each centre.

The business assistant supports business delivery within each centre and delivers on the key processes such as payroll, management reporting, reception management, membership management, customer accountability and care. However there have been inconsistencies within this role and different levels of service provision within individual leisure centres.

Out of the nine business assistant posts four are filled on a secondment basis or through acting up arrangements. These have been predominately recruited from the designation below i.e. clerk/WPOs. In turn the vacant clerk/WPO posts are being filled by agency staff. This mode of operation creates uncertainty, a lack of stability and creates a potential for inconsistencies in service provision.

Key Findings

Analysis of the pilot has concluded that:

A business assistant is required within each leisure centre to support management and ensure business delivery. The role of clerical staff was found to be required to provide support and cover (at the appropriate level) for the business assistant to ensure continuity of service.

The bookings function within the centre was successfully carried out by the business assistants at the pilot sites. This is clearly an administrative role and has clear links with other responsibilities within the business assistant's role i.e. debt and customer management.

There is also a requirement within the service to provide administrative bookings support for the outdoor leisure function, which will provide a more consistent and effective approach to pitch bookings, lodgements and bank reconciliations. This administration is currently being carried out by two temporary outdoor leisure officers and is under review. It is felt that this duty could move to the business assistants and free up the outdoor leisure officers to manage facility management agreements and events. A separate report will be presented to committee on this issue.

The current job description is outdated and needs to reflect other corporate initiatives such as the introduction of the central transaction unit and other system changes.

The current established reporting arrangement has the business assistant reporting through to the leisure centre assistant manager. However in reality this post reports directly to the manager and this has been the case for a number of years.

During phase one of the review there was a recommendation for 2 additional clerks within central business support however these were subject to completion of the operational review of business support within leisure. Phase two has concluded that there is a requirement for these posts and has identified how they can provide support to other areas within the department such as; Park Managers, Leisure Development and Cemetery Administration. Phase one also recommended a post of messenger for the department rather than the existing arrangement which relates to parks operations only. The job description for this post is currently being developed and revised practices will now allow for a departmental resource.

Recommendations

1. The duties and responsibilities of the business assistant need to be updated and realigned to meet the increasing demands placed upon the centres. This will ensure they are positioned to embrace additional functions and provide improved customer services (eg sale of fuel stamps) and continue to demonstrate value for money.
2. The two temporary business assistants should be made permanent to enable the effective running of their designated centres. There is a requirement to have a clerical post at each of the centres to ensure continuity of key administrative tasks e.g. wages, memberships.
3. It has been determined that the centres that currently have two clerks will utilise the additional capacity by providing administrative support across the whole department. In the first instance this will focus on administrative support for the parks management.
4. It is proposed that the Ozone will assume responsibility for all outdoor leisure bookings. A separate report will be presented to committee at a future meeting on the findings of the wider review of outdoor leisure.
5. The structural reporting line from the business assistant to the centre manager should be formalised to reflect the long standing operational practices, as well as recognition of the working relationship with the finance team in central business support.

6. The two clerks and the messenger that were agreed as part of phase one of the review should now be recruited.
7. In order to ensure stability and provide a more consistent service there is a need to normalise the structure and fill the business assistant posts and subsequently clerk/WPOs on a permanent basis. There are 4.5 posts currently being filled by agency staff. If these recommendations are approved it will remove the need for the reliance on and the financial premium associated with the use of agency staff.
8. The budgets in relation to the existing temporary staff are appropriately realigned to reflect the permanent establishment structure being recommended.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial Implications

The net cost of implementing the proposed changes is zero. However due to the fact that the existing temporary posts are funded from agency budgets and not staffing budgets permission is required to realign the budget accordingly. This will confirm the permanent establishment as per the business need.

Human Resources

There are minimal human resource implications. However all affected staff will be required to sign up to a revised business assistant job description. The affected post holders will be subject to the council's categorisation procedure and will be asked to sign and agree the new job descriptions prior to implementation. It should be noted that all staff and trade unions have been fully consulted throughout the process and no objections have been raised to date. Recruitment of vacant posts will be in line with normal council vacancy control procedures.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to agree the recommendations contained within this report."

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and adopted the recommendations within the report.

Crematorium and Cemetery Provision

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

"1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 Over the last number of years officers have been working on a phased approach to cemetery and crematorium development in the city based on an analysis of data gathered, trend information and the development of a plan to meet current and future service requirements.

1.2 As part of the approach a process has been undertaken in an effort to identify a site for development of a new cemetery with the shortlisted options at Nutts Corner and Lisleen both being subsequently discounted. The committee has also agreed to develop options for additional cremation provision in the city.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Potential Site at Dundrod for cemetery development

Members will be aware of the ongoing project to select a site for a new cemetery for Belfast and that a site at Dundrod was identified following a council run expression of interest exercise as part of expanding the search for suitable lands. Following a site visit on 31 January 2011 Members agreed that initial tests should be undertaken at the site to determine its potential suitability for development as a cemetery.

2.2 A site visit for Members who were not on the committee at the time of the previous visit has been organised for 13th February, 2012.

2.3 The initial site tests have now been completed and these indicate that the site could potentially be developed as a cemetery, but that further, more detailed hydro-geological tests (tier 2 tests) would be required to ensure suitability and to obtain planning consent. This process would take approximately 12 months to complete.

- 2.4 Officers have written to the representative of the landowner to inform him of the findings and to request a meeting in order to discuss options for going forward. This meeting will also be attended by representatives from Legal Services and Estates who are keen to verify ownership boundaries and “title” of the site in question.
- 2.5 Following agreement the next steps in the process would be to undertake a planning assessment of the site to identify any other issues that could potentially impact on the ability to get planning and other consents for the site as a cemetery.
- 2.6 Once the meeting with the landowners’ representatives has taken place and the planning assessment completed a report will be presented to committee on the options on how to proceed. Both Estates and Legal Services opinions will inform this report.
- 2.7 New Provision for Cremation
- Members will also be aware that officers have been exploring options for the provision of additional cremation facilities. A meeting was hosted by the Chief Executive in December 2011 of the relevant officers from the neighbouring councils to discuss cemetery and crematorium provision in their areas and the possibility of exploring a sub-regional approach to future provision.
- 2.8 Following this meeting Newtownabbey Borough Council has confirmed that they are proposing to commence investigations into the development of a crematorium at a site on the Doagh Road. They have written to the council asking for confirmation of its interest in contributing to the development of such an approach.
- 2.9 Members may also be aware that the DOE Minister recently granted outline planning approval for a new crematorium on the Lisburn Road in Moira. In addition at the beginning of January a planning application was submitted for a new crematorium in Omagh.
- 2.10 Given the changing circumstances it is proposed that committee agree to commission jointly with Newtownabbey Borough Council a feasibility study on the development of a sub regional approach to the development of a new crematorium with particular emphasis on the site identified in the Newtownabbey area. This study will include an analysis of the potential impact of the recent announcements on crematorium provision.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

There is provision of £13.9m in the council's capital programme for new cemetery provision for Belfast City Council. The proposed cost of the feasibility study will be approximately £20k.

3.2 Human Resources

There are no human resource implications at this stage.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage although the final phases of the project will inevitably increase the council's land ownership and associated liabilities.

4. Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 There are currently no equality or good relation implications however this will continue to be reviewed as the project is developed.

5. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (i) agree that officers proceed with discussions regarding the Dundrod site and present a report on options to a future meeting of the committee; and**
- (ii) agree to work with Newtownabbey Borough Council on developing a feasibility study on a sub-regional approach to crematorium facilities."**

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report and agreed to the provision of funding towards a feasibility study of up to a maximum of 50 per cent of the total cost.

Growing Communities Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to:

- (i) update Members on the progress of the development of the “Growing Communities” strategy for Belfast and seek an opportunity for a committee briefing or workshop on the subject in March;
- (ii) present a draft process for consideration on how allotments should be allocated;
- (iii) present proposed sites for the possible development of four new community gardens across the city in line with the decision of this committee in November 2011 (allocation of corporate underspend);
- (iv) seek authority for the granting of interim financial support to the Council’s existing Community Gardens for the period from April-June 2012, pending the implementation of an agreed longer-term approach in line with the emerging strategy’s recommendations.

1.2 The Emerging “Growing Communities” Strategy

Since late September 2011 the department, with assistance from its partner organisations, the Public Health Agency and Belfast Healthy Cities, has been developing a ‘Growing Communities’ strategy for Belfast. It is anticipated that following the conclusion of the final steering group meeting in March 2012 and a period of consultation the strategy will be available for consideration by the Parks and Leisure Committee.

- 1.3 The wider health and wellbeing benefits of ‘growing your own’ are well documented. The ‘Growing Communities’ strategy is just one of a number of projects from across Northern Ireland being used to demonstrate how Health Equity in All Policy (HEIAP) works in practice by using it to help align the strategy with the Council’s wider remit to improve the quality of life for all its citizens.

- 1.4 In December 2011 Sustainable Northern Ireland completed a baseline study for the council of ‘Grow your Own’ provision within Belfast. The purpose of this study and report is to enable the council to amend if necessary current operational practices and to apply the recommendations of this study to the development of a ‘Growing Communities’ strategy for Belfast.

- 1.5 A steering group made up of over 40 representatives from the private, community and voluntary and statutory sectors has met for monthly workshops since September 2011. Officers are now using the outputs of these workshops to draft sections of the strategy.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Belfast City Council has a long history of allotment provision and currently provides 207 allotments across four locations in Belfast: Annadale, Belmont, Blythefield and Ballysillan. However, demand for allotments in the Belfast council area continually outweighs supply. In April 2012 new allotments (co-funded by the Public Health Agency) will open at Musgrave Park, Belfast and soil testing and survey activity is ongoing in relation to the development of new allotments at Falls Park, Belfast.

To date the allocation of allotments has been adhoc and inconsistent, with differing approaches being taken at different sites. This has led to confusion for people on the waiting list. In light of the emerging strategy and the imminent availability of new allotments for the public, the following draft process is being proposed as the Council's approach to allotment allocation.

2.2 Proposed Allotment Allocation Process

A suggested procedure for the allocation of ALL council allotments including those at new locations is as follows:

1. In the first instance allotment plots will be allocated to *Belfast residents* only as detailed on the waiting list for each location.
2. Secondly it is proposed that all non-Belfast residents on existing allotment waiting lists will be contacted in writing by the department to advise that the council cannot consider applications for allotments from non-Belfast residents and therefore they are being removed from the waiting list. In future no requests from non-residents will be accepted.
3. Thirdly, it is proposed that remaining Belfast residents on all of the waiting lists are sent a letter asking them to confirm both that they wish to remain on the waiting list and whether or not they would consider an alternative location from those sites that are already in existence and

those that are currently being developed. Following receipt of replies by the date specified it is proposed that all waiting lists are amalgamated and that a single master allotment waiting list is compiled and managed centrally within the department. Those residents who have been on waiting lists for a specific site will retain their position for this site until a plot becomes available. If they accept a plot at their alternate location they will lose this position.

4. If a resident makes a new application for an allotment at one of our 4 existing sites or the 2 that are currently being developed they will be added to the master list. No new applications will be accepted from the date of committee approval until after the closing date for receipt of replies from those currently on the waiting list.
5. If the council develops a new allotment site in the first instance those people on the waiting list will be contacted to ascertain their interest in taking a plot at this site before new names are added to the master list for this site.

2.3 Four New Community Gardens (allocation of corporate under-spend)

In recent years our four community gardens have been funded under Priority 1.1 of the European Unions' Peace III programme, as part of the Belfast local action plan. We also have received valuable support from external funders such as the Public Health Agency in the development of Community Gardens. To date it is the council's experience that community gardening has a positive impact on local communities as well as delivering wider health, wellbeing, environmental, economic and social benefits for those involved.

- 2.4 To further support the development of community gardens and subject to the approval of proposed sites by Members, the council has agreed that a total of £200k from the corporate under utilised funds should be invested in the development of Community Garden projects across the City (agreed at the November meeting of the Committee).

- 2.5 Using data from the baseline study for the strategy plus local knowledge from the parks managers and outreach managers in the department, a long list of potential sites for investment in community gardens has been developed for review and consideration by committee. In addition, officers have developed draft criteria and scoring matrix, also for review, in order to inform the committee of how the process will work. The sites proposed were as follows:

<u>Site Name</u>	<u>Area</u>
Victoria Park	East
Avoniel Leisure Centre	East
Elmgrove	East
Orangefield Park	East
Knocknagoney	East
Taughmonagh	South
Wedderburn	South
Benmore	South
Finlay Park	North
Hammer CS	North
Grosvenor	West
Falls Park	West

The proposed matrix has been developed specifically for use in the prioritization of sites for using the £200K immediately and it is not proposed that these criteria would also apply to any future matrix or approach developed for the strategy. This is due to the fact that there are a number of criteria of particular relevance with regard to the allocation of these funds, ie,

- that the site is council owned;
- that the site is ready for development; and
- that there are no other funds immediately available to complete the development.

- 2.6 An application of the matrix, weightings and criteria as proposed would suggest the following sites for development (the top score in each area N, S, E and W):

<u>Geographical Area</u>	<u>Proposed Community Garden development options</u>
North Belfast	Finlay Park
South Belfast	Wedderburn Park
East Belfast	Knocknagoney (CS)
West Belfast	Falls Park Grosvenor

2.7 Interim Financial Support for Facilitation at Existing Community Gardens

The council's existing community gardens were mostly funded through Peace III but require ongoing community engagement, "grow-your-own" facilitation and both horticultural and "in-kind" support from the council. In practice a number of partners are involved in providing this support through a range of mechanisms, eg, funded either directly to the organisation (GROW at Waterworks community garden) or through a partner agreement with Conservation Volunteers NI (Ballysillan, Musgrave).

- 2.8** A longer term approach will be developed in line with the "Growing Communities" strategy in which the council will seek (a) suitable contract partner(s) to help deliver facilitation across the city's community gardens. In the meantime it is proposed that each existing community garden be provided some assistance on an interim basis. This would allow the communities involved to prepare for the forthcoming growing season.

Based on an assessment of facilitation time needed (4 hours per week, per garden over 12 weeks) a sum of £2000 per garden (x7 = £14,000) is suggested. These funds would be allocated to the partner currently managing the facilitation work in the gardens; - GROW; CVNI and Larne Lough Nurseries.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

Proposed allocation for community garden development to be allocated from the corporate under spend in line with the decision of the November committee (£200K); £14,000 for community garden facilitation to come from the 2011-12 departmental budget.

Human Resources

It is our ambition that existing gardeners will be involved in the planned facilitation work in the gardens over the next number of months, with a view to expanding departmental expertise in this area.

Asset and other Implications

This report refers to 2 emerging community gardens (Grove and Musgrave) and 4 new sites, all of which will enhance existing council assets and will inevitably require ongoing input, oversight and maintenance by the council.

4. Equality and good relations implications

The processes proposed in this report will be subject to the council's existing equality screening process.

5. Recommendations

That the Committee agrees to:

1. Note the content of the baseline study completed by Sustainable NI;
2. Agree the process for allocation of allotments;
3. Review, comment and agree the proposed matrix, criteria, weightings and sites for the establishment of 4 new community gardens; and
4. Agree that interim financial support, totalling £14,000 can be allocated to existing partners for facilitation work in existing community gardens for the forthcoming growing season (subject to appropriate legal agreements being in place)."

After a lengthy discussion, during which the Director of Parks and Leisure undertook to examine the possibility of flexibility in spend across the four areas of the City and to seek clarification on any legal implications arising from the removal of any non-Belfast residents from the waiting list for proposed allotment allocation, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report and agreed that current non-Belfast residents who held allotment plots would not be affected by the proposals.

Antisocial Behaviour Programme Quarterly Update

(Mr. P. Murray, Antisocial Behaviour Co-Ordinator, attended in connection with this item.)

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

“1. Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to:

- report an overview of antisocial behaviour by electoral area; and
- update Committee on the recent work of the Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator in Parks and Leisure and the key areas of focus and expenditure at present.

2. Key Issues

The antisocial behaviour programme contributes to the achievement of the departmental vision of providing quality parks, open spaces and leisure environments that people value and use. In particular, it will enable the delivery of the departmental objective regarding the provision of programmes and services to make people feel safer.

In line with the departmental plan, the objectives of the antisocial behaviour programme are:

- enhance the environment around Parks and Leisure facilities;
- develop education initiatives involving creative or supportive interventions to model acceptable behaviour around Parks and Leisure facilities;
- define enforcement as a deterrent against infraction of bye-laws and legislation; and
- develop sustainable interagency and inter-departmental networks and leading a partnership approach to reducing antisocial behaviour.

The Antisocial Behaviour Coordinator prioritises action and expenditure by collating evidence gathered through antisocial behaviour incident reports. This information is used to inform a coordinated partnership response, drawing on council resources, the support of local community resources, PSNI and the Community Safety Partnership (see Appendix 1 Summary of Interventions).

The evidence available in December 2011 indicates that there is an upward trend in antisocial behaviour in parks in Oldpark, Castle and Court and electoral areas. The increase in antisocial behaviour incident reports in these areas can in part be attributed to the development of improved reporting and recording systems which will be introduced across the city between April – October 2012. Although this will result in a rise in incidents throughout 2012-13, the data collected will provide a much more accurate picture of the type of antisocial behaviour in each area.

Increase in incidents

During April - December 2011, there has been an increase in the total number of antisocial behaviour reports in comparison to April - December 2010. The incident count rose from 546 to 567. This increase is reflected in reported antisocial behaviour incidents in Woodvale, Waterworks, Cavehill and Ballysillan Parks. The park locations with rising levels of antisocial behaviour will be the focus of more intensive interventions to reduce antisocial behaviour in the next six months.

Falls Park and City Cemetery, Ormeau and Orangefield have experienced much less antisocial behaviour in comparison to the previous year while in Alexandra and Botanic the levels of antisocial behaviour are approximately the same. There is a continuing downward trend in these park locations.

The downward trend can be attributed to a number of factors:

- A seasonal winter trend, where there is less inappropriate use of parks and leisure facilities.
- The success of joint operations involving community networks, the council and PSNI to challenge youths drinking in Falls Park and City Cemetery.
- There were a series of mobile CCTV van operations within Ormeau, Orangefield and Botanic parks following a number of serious incidents during the spring and summer.

- An increase in resources from the department and antisocial behaviour programme supporting community led events at Alexandra, Falls and Orangefield parks.
- The park rangers have been working closely with PSNI to challenge drinkers in Ormeau, Orangefield and Botanic parks.

There is a changing shift in incident reports across the city during the last twelve months: parks with most incidents in April – December 2010 in comparison to April – December 2011.

The main antisocial behaviour issues that have been recorded are:

- Unauthorised use of council facilities: generally describes drinking after the park closes.
- Property damage: indicates fire setting or damage from vehicle tyres.
- ASB Other: Generally describes drinking and fire setting
- Youths causing annoyance.
- Under age drinking.
- Theft: the majority of theft occurred in the Ozone.
- Misuse of Vehicles: Motor cycles or scramblers travelling through the park.

Communications to the Public

Members had previously requested that details of resources invested in responding to antisocial behaviour or vandalism should be made available. Two separate communications initiatives are under development. One will link the cost of repair to reports of damage and ASB and the other will focus on a park or playground and report the cost of repairing damage in that area to the local community.

Alongside the actions that have been implemented (see Appendix 1 Summary of interventions) or are being planned across the city, the antisocial behaviour programme resources will also focus on reducing the types of antisocial behaviour found in these areas during the remainder of the financial year and a year end report will be presented in June 2012.

3. **Resource Implications**

The development of the programme will be facilitated through the agreed antisocial behaviour budget 2011-12 which is approximately £250,000.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

Much of the antisocial behaviour programme work spans activities related to reducing interface tensions and bringing youth together to take part in positive programmes and activities. All of the programme work is in line with the council's equality and good relations policies and procedures.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of this update report.

Appendix 1

Summary of interventions September to December 2011

There have been a series of successful actions implemented throughout the period of September to December 2011. Parks operations are separated into three distinct areas: North, East and South/West. The details of thematic interventions within these areas include:

North Belfast

Environment

- Marrowbone fence installation, removal of a gate and extensive reduction of shrubbery throughout park to increase line of sight through the park.

Education

- Grove WBC and Grove PF: Support for Midnight Soccer programme in Lower North Belfast in response to residents concerns about the increase in antisocial behaviour at weekends.

Enforcement

- Grove WBC and Grove PF: Working alongside the PSNI and Community representatives to divert youths from antisocial behaviour in the area.
- Cavehill CCTV: improvements were made to this resource to ensure privacy to residents while providing excellent quality images around the Innisfayle Park gates.

East Belfast

Environment

- Orangefield fence: Drinkers were lighting fires around the bowling pavilion; the fence was placed to deter this activity.
- Knocknagoney Park: extensive pruning of trees behind the community centre to reduce likelihood of fly tipping.

Education

- Knocknagoney: a leaflet circulated by PSNI was to residents with information on reporting fly tipping and guidance on bulky waste collections.

Enforcement

- Mobile CCTV Van patrols in September through out Ormeau, Orangefield, Botanic and Belmont Parks.
- Knocknagoney: Joint BCC and PSNI preparation of a leaflet to deter fly tipping.

South and West Belfast

Environment

- Wedderburn Park fence: following a request from the local community and PSNI, a fence was erected to prevent youths accessing the park through a resident's hedge.

Education

- Falls Park support for schools programme
- Falls Park support for art project with Gael Art
- Northlink Park support for Christmas celebration

Enforcement

- Falls park Halloween joint operations: Community members, Youth workers, local school Teachers, PSNI and Park Staff worked together to divert hundreds of youths (intent on drinking) away from the park.

All areas

Interagency and Interdepartmental networks

The antisocial behaviour programme coordinator has been engaged in a range of internal and external partnerships.

- Area based partnership meetings used to identify and monitor antisocial behaviour and co-ordinate interventions around parks and leisure facilities.
- Joint working with Community safety fora, Antisocial behaviour Officers, and Environmental Health Service Wardens are improving our ability to effectively respond to antisocial behaviour.
- Participation in the internal officers groups such as the Antisocial behaviour Liaison Officers group and the Bonfire internal officers group has provided support to effectively respond to a wide range of incidents, improve the effective “one council” approach and ensure safer park events throughout the city.
- Development of a new antisocial behaviour reporting system which will connect amount of damage reported with the cost of repair. This system will be developed within the Parks Warden Pilot due to commence in April 2012.”

After discussion, during which the role played by some community groups in achieving a downward trend in antisocial behaviour activity in some park locations was recognised, the Committee noted the report. The Committee noted also that information would be submitted to a future meeting setting out the options and the financial implications for the use of mobile Closed Circuit Television Camera operations.

Grove Wellbeing Centre – Bowling Area Usage

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

The Grove Wellbeing Centre opened during May 2008 and an area originally designated for 10 pin bowling has been vacant since that time. The area is at the rear of the facility and measures 355 square feet.

Presently the area is unused and despite a 6 lane bowling area being part of an initial design the opportunity existed to reassess available options for this element of the facility. Parks and Leisure committee therefore authorised the undertaking of an economic appraisal for the use of the space in order that recommendations could be forwarded.

The results of the economic appraisal were presented to the Parks and Leisure Committee on 15th September 2011. Initially a long list of twenty three options were considered for suitability and ultimately short listed to four suggestions for further consideration. Officers informed the committee that option 2, a dedicated martial arts facility was recommended as the preferred option for development. At this meeting 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.

2.0 Key Issues

A meeting was held on 28th October 2011 and the six local North Belfast councillors were invited to attend. In preparation for this meeting officers asked for some additional research to be undertaken to provide greater assurance that martial arts use is appropriate for the Grove Well Being Centre.

Key stakeholders consulted with included:

- Sport Northern Ireland;
- Various Martial Arts Governing Bodies;
- North Belfast Councillors
- Staff at the Grove Well Being Centre

At the meeting of North Belfast Councillors agreement was reached for officers to develop and bring back to the Parks and Leisure Committee the dual proposal of martial arts provision on the ground floor and community usage in multi purpose room 2.

The discussion at the meeting about community use was specifically about the displaced youth club which was demolished to make way for the new Grove Wellbeing Centre and the promise that the youth club could relocate, free of charge to the new centre.

The centre has confirmed, from 1st April 2012 that they can accommodate community use and specifically the displaced youth club in multipurpose room 2 in the centre for 3 evenings per week (Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) from 7.00-9.00 p.m. totalling 6 hours per week.

Officers have taken on board the comments from elected Members and developed the proposals further and associated costs are outlined in the next section.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

There is currently provision of £250k in the capital programme in relation to this scheme. This money was included in the original capital budget for the overall Grove Wellbeing Centre scheme and therefore must be spent on the Centre.

It is anticipated that costs would be as follows:

M&E	£130,000
Internal works i.e painting, Lighting, flooring, creation of new storage cupboards, partition and access works	£50,000
Spectator seating	£5,000
Mats and equipment	£40,000
Equipment for youth club and community use	£10,000
Total approx	£235,000

Loss of income (based upon 2011/12 scale of charges) as a result of free community use = £38 per hour, so potential loss of £10,944 per year, based on 48 weeks usage.

Human Resources

An adhoc leisure attendant presence would be required for this option and this could be met from within existing resources.

Asset and Other Implications

N/A

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

There are no equality or good relations implications.

5. **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to:

1. Agree to proceed with the option of a dedicated martial arts facility on the ground floor and community use in multipurpose room 2 of the Grove Wellbeing Centre and recommend the decision to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
2. Agree that, subject to Strategic Policy and Resources approval, a tender process can commence with a view to implementation during early 2012.
3. Agree to free use for the displaced youth club, up to a maximum of 9 hours per week.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Mary Peters' Trust Funding Request

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

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

In the last number of years the Parks and Leisure Committee has approved a contribution of £5,000 to the Mary Peters Trust. The Trust assesses sporting need and provides small grants to individual sports people to assist them in achieving excellence in sport.

Advice from the Legal Services Manager has indicated that as a general rule district councils do not have any legal power to contribute to the funds of charitable organisations. The only exception to that general rule being where an application for financial assistance is made under criteria which the council has in place in relation to the incurring of expenditure for special purposes under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 section 37 (previously known as 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972).

The Act permits the council to make any payment for any purpose which in its opinion is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to:

- a) the council;
- b) the district or any part of its district; or
- c) the inhabitants of its district of any part of its district.

The amount of money available under Section 37 is subject to an annual cap and in determining whether any payment should be made the council must ask whether the benefit would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

2 Key Issues

- The Mary Peters Trust has made a request to the council for a financial contribution to the work of the trust for 2011/12 financial year.
- Should the committee be minded to make a contribution to the trust, given its charitable status, the contribution would have to be made under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
- An assessment of the request against the criteria agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee in 2004 has indicated that the request would bring a direct benefit to the inhabitants of Belfast.
- It is proposed that a contribution of £5,000 be made to the Mary Peters Trust under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011. If agreed it is considered that the benefit obtained will be commensurate with the payment made.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

The proposed £5,000 can be accommodated from the Section 37 budget.

Human Resources

There are no human resource implications.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

4. Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

5. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider whether to make a contribution of £5,000 in the 2011/12 financial year to the Mary Peters Trust and resolve that the expenditure be approved under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, it being the opinion of the committee that the expenditure would bring direct benefits to the inhabitants of the district and that the direct benefits would be commensurate with the payment made.”

Accordingly, it was

Resolved – That expenditure in the sum of £5,000 to the Mary Peters’ Trust be approved under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and bring direct benefit to, the District and inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Request for the Use of the Boucher Road Playing Fields

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from MCD Productions to use the playing fields at the Boucher Road for two concerts on 21st and 22nd August or 22nd and 23rd August, 2012.

The Committee noted that the promoter would be required to provide a bond of intent which would be retained in the event of cancellation and to cover the costs of ground reinstatement which would also be subject to a bond.

Accordingly, the Committee granted authority for the Vital Festival event to be held at the Boucher Road Playing Fields on a date in August to be confirmed, subject to:

- (i) the event organisers resolving all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- (ii) the completion of an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor;
- (iii) the event organisers meeting all statutory requirements including entertainment licensing; and
- (iv) a fee of £20,000 per day being levied for the use of the site.

**ESCR Knowledge Research Project –
“Walkability” Model for the City**

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

“1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek committee support to become a research partner in a knowledge exchange project which has been developed by Queens University Belfast (QUB) in conjunction with a number of other partners in Belfast and across Northern Ireland. Our proposed contribution would be £10,000 plus officer time ‘in-kind’.

1.2 The project aims to maximise the policy impact of research already undertaken on “walkability”, by extending the applicability of developed policy tools to a variety of public bodies and further dissemination to potential practice-users in order to increase the evidence base for interventions in the built environment aimed at promoting physical activity.

2. Key Issues

In June last year the department signalled its interest in being a partner in the project and provided a letter of support for the application, pending formal committee approval.

The ESRC has reviewed the application from QUB and made an offer of funding for the project to go ahead.

This project aims to maximise the policy impact of research already undertaken on walkability, particularly the development of a *Real Walkability Network*, which has initially been generated as part of the PARC project based on a study area of the Connswater Community Greenway in East Belfast (on which the committee has previously received a presentation).

This project aims to extend the applicability of the developed policy tools to cover the two main cities of Northern Ireland; Belfast and Derry, so that the model then covers 37% of the population and some of the most deprived communities in the region. The project will disseminate the use of this model to practitioners in order to increase the evidence base for interventions in the built environment aimed at promoting physical activity.

The value of the project is reflected in the large number of public bodies that have been willing to become partners, including Belfast and Derry city councils, the Department of Regional Development, the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, the Public Health Agency and Belfast Healthy Cities, as well as cities in England who have provided match funding and in kind support of over £88,000. The project will run for 12 months and employ two research assistants to help undertake the following three separate work packages:

- **Work Package 1: model consolidation and validation (months 1-5).** This work package will involve the appointment, training and placement of 2 research assistants to be based in Belfast and Derry city councils respectively, during which time they will consolidate and extend the model developed for East Belfast so that it has operational coverage of the entire 2 local authority areas.
- **Work Package 2: project integration and sustainability (months 6-10).** This stage will involve a process of integrating the walkability models and other elements of spatial analysis into the existing physical activity-related programmes of the partner organisations to improve their effectiveness, efficiency and accuracy. This stage of the project will also involve developing the capacity of project partners to ensure the sustainability of the place-specific walkability models.

- **Work Package 3: knowledge dissemination and engagement with wider practitioner communities (months 11-12).** This stage will involve an evaluation and a report of the benefits, costs and opportunities arising from the operational deployment of walkability models and their integration with other central and local government responsibilities and initiatives.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Provision has been made within the departmental estimates for 2012-13 for the £10,000 financial contribution.

3.2 Human Resources

The indirect 'in-kind' contribution for this research project is estimated to be in the region of £5,000 and would come from the officer time within the Policy and Business Development team in Parks and Leisure. The research assistant would be based within the Parks and Leisure team in Adelaide Exchange.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

None.

4. Equality and good relations implications

All recruitment and development will be conducted by QUB in line with the public body's obligations in the area of equality and good relations.

5. Recommendations

Members are asked to support the council's involvement in this knowledge exchange research project and to approve the financial contribution of £10,000 to the project in addition to the in-kind officer support to the development of the project."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Request for the Use of the Botanic Gardens

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that a request had been received from PLM Promotions to hold a musical entertainment event including the sale of food, to an audience of between five thousand and seven thousand people, on the Great Lawn at the Botanic Gardens on 23rd June.

The Committee noted that the promoter would be required to provide a bond of intent which would be retained in the event of cancellation and to cover the costs of ground reinstatement which would also be subject to a bond.

Accordingly, the Committee granted authority for the holding of a musical entertainment event including the sale of food, on the Great Lawn at the Botanic Gardens on 23rd June, subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with the Director of Parks and Leisure, and to:

- (i) the event organisers resolving all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- (ii) the completion of an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor; and
- (iii) the event organisers meeting all statutory requirements including entertainment licensing.

Parks Events Small Grants Scheme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

Members are reminded that at its meeting on 13th October 2011, approval was given to support the grant scheme for groups wishing to stage events in parks during the summer of 2012. It was agreed by committee, subject to approval through the estimates process for the 2012/13 revenue budget, to increase the fund from £60,000 to £100,000 and that the maximum grant per group would be £2,250. Committee also agreed that officers would examine the criteria and structure of the grant award process and report back with recommendation for approval.

Information on the grant scheme was advertised accordingly and the closing date for entries set at 12th January 2012.

2. **Key Issues**

The grants scheme has been reviewed by officers and the key changes are outlined below:

- The applications to date were assessed according to the current criteria. It is recommended that of the 19 applications, 18 met the criteria for an award to be made. Full details of the applications received and the recommendations for grant awards are presented in Appendix 2.
- A Community Parks Outreach Manager will contact the club that was not successful in receiving an award to help them identify other options for their proposed event.
- Due to the low number of applications received it is proposed that the scheme is changed from the current annual call for funding applications to a monthly assessment running from February to September. This would operate in a similar way to the Support for Sport scheme with a monthly report to committee outlining the applications and awards.
- The criteria have been modified slightly to put more emphasis on community involvement in our parks and open spaces and to recognise alignment to other council schemes such as Summer Intervention schemes. The revised criteria are attached at Appendix 3.
- The application process has been modified to allow groups more flexibility in finalising their event expenditure plan as circumstances undoubtedly change in the period from application to the event taking place.
- It is proposed that Community Parks Outreach Managers in each area play a more significant role in working with clubs and groups to avail of the fund. Information on the scheme will also be advertised and the Community Parks Outreach Managers will work to ensure that communities across the city are aware of this funding opportunity and are encouraged to apply.

- Successful groups will receive 50% of the grant funding before the event takes place subject to the return of a signed 'letter of offer' and the remaining balance will be paid on the successful completion of the event and submission of the correct supporting documentation. This will assist groups who have limited funds to stage events as previously groups received the grant funding after the successful completion of the event on the production of the correct documentation.
- Officers will continue to review the scheme and any further recommendations to improve the scheme will be brought back to the October 2012 committee for consideration and approval.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

£100,000 was allocated in the revenue estimates to cover this scheme.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications.

Asset and Other Implications

The running of community events increases use of the parks creating a sense of ownership and contributing to health and well being.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee agree:

- that the groups listed in Appendix 2 are awarded grants accordingly to organise events in parks during 2012
- that the scheme is changed to work in a similar way to the Support for Sport scheme with a monthly report to committee from February to September.
- to the modified criteria outlined at Appendix 3.

Appendix 1

Criteria for Parks Events Small Grants Scheme 2012

Applications will be assessed according to a number of criteria. To be successful, an application DOES NOT have to score highly on all criteria, some inevitably will be more relevant to an event than others.

1. Environmental benefit

Does the event provide benefit to the local environment within the park or open space: for example, through a litter clean up, bulb or tree planting, habitat management (this would have to be done according to the park management plan).

	Points
No environmental benefit	0
Immediate or temporary benefit e.g. litter clean up as part of event (not just tidying up afterwards), temporary art	50
Medium or long term environmental benefit e.g. tree/bulb planting, habitat management	100

2. Educational benefit

Does the event provide some educational benefit to those attending: for example, information on a relevant issue, a theme or message that will help to change attitudes, links to the school curriculum, etc

	Points
No educational benefit	0
Some educational benefit e.g. definite message or theme, as opposed to say just a 'fun' day	50
High educational benefit e.g. links to curriculum, changing attitudes	100

3. Health benefit

Does the event provide a health benefit to those attending; for example, activities that encourage exercise, walking, children's games (sporting competitions are not covered by this grant fund).

	Points
No tangible health benefit	0
Some health benefit, e.g. walking, children's active games – but not just a bouncy castle	50
Event with health as main theme or thrust	100

4. Community benefit

Does the event benefit the local community around the park or open space: for example, does it help to encourage a sense of ownership by the local community, provide opportunities for cross community activity, etc.

	Points
No tangible benefit to surrounding community	0
Benefit to surrounding community, helping to create ownership of park	50
Event with good relations as a theme	100

5. Additional points for

Additional points will be awarded for events that make use of the fabric of the park in the event which help promote aspects of it. For example, an event that used the paths of a park for a guided walk or included activities based around an historical or natural feature in the park would score more highly than an event which simply took place in marquees and made no reference to anything within the park itself to promote it.

Using the fabric of the park as an integral part of event, rather than just an event staged in a park **50 points**

One of the aims of the scheme is to encourage events in some of the local and district parks, and so scoring is biased towards these parks and away from parks such as Botanic Gardens, Ormeau Park and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.

Using a local or district park or playing field site **50 points.**

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Appendix 2 List of Applications and Proposed Grants 2012
can be viewed on Mod.gov Item 17 Appendix 2

Appendix 3

Proposed Criteria for Parks Events Small Grants Scheme 2012

Introduction

Community Park Outreach Managers will work with you to ensure that you get the best from our local parks and open spaces. They will help you identify and develop new possibilities and opportunities to use council sites. We are about People, Places and Possibilities.

Applications will be assessed according to a number of criteria. To be successful, an application DOES NOT have to score highly on all criteria, some inevitably will be more relevant to an event than others.

1. Community benefit

Does the event benefit the local community around the park or open space: for example, does it help to encourage a sense of ownership by the local community, provide opportunities for cross community activity and does it complement other council schemes such as Summer Interventions, etc.

	Points
No tangible benefit to surrounding community	0
Alignment to other council schemes, eg Summer Interventions	
Benefit to surrounding community, helping to create ownership of park	50
Event with good relations as a theme	100

2. Health benefit

Does the event provide a health benefit to those attending; for example, activities that encourage exercise, walking, children's games (sporting competitions are not covered by this grant fund).

	Points
No tangible health benefit	0
Some health benefit, e.g. walking, children's active games – but not just a bouncy castle	50
Event with health as main theme or thrust	100

3. *Environmental benefit*

Does the event provide benefit to the local environment within the park or open space: for example, through a litter clean up, bulb or tree planting, habitat management (this would have to be done according to the park management plan).

	Points
No environmental benefit	0
Immediate or temporary benefit e.g. litter clean up as part of event (not just tidying up afterwards), temporary art	50
Medium or long term environmental benefit e.g. tree/bulb planting, habitat management	100

2. *Educational benefit*

Does the event provide some educational benefit to those attending: for example, information on a relevant issue, a theme or message that will help to change attitudes, links to the school curriculum, etc

	Points
No educational benefit	0
Some educational benefit e.g. definite message or theme, as opposed to say just a 'fun' day	50
High educational benefit e.g. links to curriculum, changing attitudes	100

Additional points will be awarded for events that make use of the fabric of the park in the event which help promote aspects of it. For example, an event that used the paths of a park for a guided walk or included activities based around an historical or natural feature in the park would score more highly than an event which simply took place in marquees and made no reference to anything within the park itself to promote it.

Using the fabric of the park as an integral part of event, rather than just an event staged in a park **50 points**

One of the aims of the scheme is to encourage events in some of the local and district parks, and so scoring is biased towards these parks and away from parks such as Botanic Gardens, Ormeau Park and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.

Using a local or district park or playing field site **50 points"**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Shore Road Playing Fields –
Community Capital Programme**

The Committee was reminded that, during 2011, it had received several reports regarding applications made by organisations and sporting clubs for funding through the Sport NI Community Capital Programme, for example, the development of a mountain bike trail at the Barnett Demesne and the upgrading of grass pitches to third generation surfaces at the Hammer Open Space and the Marrowbone Millennium Park.

The Committee was further reminded that it had previously granted authority to enter into appropriate agreements with Sport NI and the respective organisations in relation to satisfying the security of tenure requirements of Sport NI and that the Council had agreed to make a financial contribution to support the three projects, up to a maximum of £375,000.

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that a request had been received from representatives of Grove United Football Club to provide the necessary security of tenure required to draw down funding from Sport NI estimated to be in the region of £245,000. Whilst the application was still at a preliminary stage with, as yet, no design detail or planning approval, the Club had provided an outline proposal to upgrade the pitch, erect ball stop fencing, install floodlighting and construct permanent changing facilities.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that officers would continue to meet with Club representatives and Sport NI as the process moved forward.

Use of Council Sites for Managed Fly-posting

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

“1. Relevant Background Information

As part of the council's efficiency programme departments have been seeking more innovative ways to maximise their income which has included examining the potential for additional revenue from installing advertising hoardings on council owned sites.

Following an initial procurement exercise CBS (Outdoor Advertising) were appointed by the council to undertake a review of all council sites and advise on the suitability of each site in terms of advertising potential; likelihood of obtaining planning; potential income return and form of advertising and advertising strategy. In response to the ongoing problem of illegal flyposting an internal working group (chaired by Sam Skimin, and attended by Estates, Development, Corporate Communications and Legal Services) was set up to develop proposals for managed fly poster sites in the city. CBS Advertising was also asked, as part of their wider review on advertising, to advise on the suitability of any sites as managed fly posting sites. The schedule of Parks and Leisure sites is listed at Appendix 1.

In other cities legal fly posting schemes are operated by companies who specialise specifically in this on behalf of councils. These companies design, build, install and maintain the advertising sites across the city using a variety of formats – cylinder drums, boards, lamp post columns.

This report is to advise committee of the Parks and Leisure sites on the schedule of council properties that have been deemed eligible for consideration for this purpose.

2. **Key Issues**

Further work will be undertaken to assess the suitability of sites on the boundaries of the Parks and Leisure facilities listed.

The Health and Environmental Services Committee will consider the approach to managed fly posting sites at its March meeting.

The Director of Property and Projects will be progressing the wider project regarding advertising on council properties to report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. A further report will be brought to Parks and Leisure Committee in due course to consider Parks and Leisure sites with potential to be considered for this initiative.

3. **Resource Implications**

None at this stage.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

None.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to note the report.

Appendix 1

Potential Fly Posting Sites

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Dept</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Street</u>	<u>BT Postcode</u>
40b	Parks and Leisure	Ormeau Park	212	Ormeau Road	7
14c	Parks and Leisure	Stranmillis Car Park Open Space	198	Stranmillis Road	9
25b	Parks and Leisure	Albertbridge Road Raised Planters	2	Ravenhill Road	5
4a	Parks and Leisure	Cathedral Gardens Open Space	97	Donegall Street	1
4c	Parks and Leisure	King William Park	2	Lisburn Road	9
11c	Parks and Leisure	Musgrave Park	22	Stockmans Lane	9
12c	Parks and Leisure	Botanic Gardens	2	Stranmillis Road	9
13a	Parks and Leisure	Jubilee Gardens	77	Victoria Street	1
13b	Parks and Leisure	Holylands Open Space	0	Cadogan Street	7
3c	Parks and Leisure	Drumglass Park	352	Lisburn Road	9

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Request for a Charity Abseil on Cave Hill

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from Activities Northern Ireland to hold a charity abseiling fund-raising event at the Cave Hill in May. The Director reported that the main issue of concern was the possible disturbance of nesting birds around the cliff faces of the Cave Hill. Previously, the Cave Hill had been a key nesting area for peregrine falcons and kestrels. However, the organisers had provided assurances that a survey would be carried out in the weeks leading up to the event and that the results of that survey would be made available to Council officers. If birds were found to be nesting in the vicinity of the proposed abseil, the event would be delayed until advice was received from the Raptor Study Group and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Furthermore, Activities Northern Ireland would be required to undertake a risk assessment and to ensure that all health and safety requirements were met to the satisfaction of the Council.

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

- (i) met all operational and health and safety requirements to the Council's satisfaction, including an event management plan, risk assessments, safe systems of work and equipment inspection information; and
- (ii) ensured that the necessary bird surveys were carried out prior to the event taking place.

Translink Ulster in Bloom – Roses in Towns Trophy 2012

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that a request had been received for the Lord Mayor, or his nominee, to attend a Translink Ulster in Bloom award ceremony in mid March, 2012, on a date and at a venue to be confirmed. Ulster in Bloom aimed to improve and enhance the environment in Northern Ireland through the imaginative use of trees, shrubs, flowers and landscaping. The competition also recognised projects that deal with litter, graffiti, vandalism, dog fouling, conservation and recycling. She advised that the event was being organised by the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and sponsored by Translink, that the Council had participated in the event for over twenty years and had previously donated a trophy annually to the local authority which provided the best display of roses. This year it had been agreed with NILGA that a perpetual trophy would be presented by the Council and that it would, therefore, be presented annually thereafter.

Accordingly, the Committee granted authority for the attendance of the Lord Mayor, or his nominee, at the event and approved the purchase of a suitable perpetual trophy at a cost not to exceed £250.00.

Northern Ireland Railways Access to Stewart Street Playground

The Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that a request had been received from the Northern Ireland Railways Company Limited for the Council to provide access for plant and personnel over the Stewart Street Playground for a period of approximately two weeks in mid February, 2012 in order to facilitate urgent repairs to the fence which separated the playground from the adjoining railway line. The access would be required for night time working between the hours of 12.00 midnight and 6.00 a.m., and the site would be cleared each morning following the night time working, therefore, there would be no disruption to the use of the playground during the normal park opening hours.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the granting of a licence agreement to the Northern Ireland Railways Company Limited, subject to the completion of appropriate terms which would be compiled by the Council's Estates Manager.

Proposed Northern Ireland Electricity Wayleave at City of Belfast Golf Course

The Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that a request had been received from Northern Ireland Electricity to alter the arrangements in relation to a short length of cable which was currently located overhead and which would be replaced by the installation of approximately a one metre long cable underground across Council land at the City of Belfast Golf Course.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the installation of an underground cable by Northern Ireland Electricity Limited, subject to the completion of an appropriate wayleave agreement.

Consultation on the Alien and Locally Absent Species in Aquaculture Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

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

"1. Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 In December 2011 the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) commenced a 12 week public consultation on the Alien and Locally Absent Species in Aquaculture Regulations (NI) 2012.**

- 1.2 This is a consultation on the proposal for implementing council regulation (EC) No 708/2007, as amended, concerning use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture. Most of the provisions of the council regulation are obligatory and member states must therefore adopt them. However there are some measures in respect of which individual governments can determine how they are to be implemented within the framework of the regulation and it is on these measures that DARD is consulting, as part of the process of determining its final policy.
- 1.3 The aim of the regulation is to ensure that there is an adequate protection of aquatic habitats from the risks associated with the use of alien and locally absent species in aquaculture whilst contributing to the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry. It does this by providing for a system of permits and environmental risk assessment where necessary.
- 1.4 The regulations do not apply to the keeping of ornamental aquatic animals or plants in pet-shops, garden centres, contained garden ponds or aquaria which comply with the provisions of the Commission Decision 2006/656/EC [laying down the animal health conditions and certification requirements for imports of fish for ornamental purposes].

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 In summary, the consultation asks for responses to 6 questions:
- Consultation response 1: You are invited to note the scope of the Regulation and to comment on the Department's proposed policy in relation to Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7.
 - Consultation response 2: Comments are sought on the proposal to have DARD designated as the competent authority for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Regulation and the possibility of also having the Loughs Agency designated as the competent authority for the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.
 - Consultation response 3: Comments are sought on (i) whether or not an advisory committee should be established and (ii) if so, who should be represented on such a committee?

- **Consultation response 4: Comments are sought on (i) the option of allowing the competent authority to decide whether an independent body should undertake environmental risk assessments and (ii) on who should bear the costs.**
 - **Consultation response 5: Comments are sought on whether or not applications and risk assessments for marine organisms should be referred to ICES prior to the issuing of an opinion by the advisory committee.**
 - **Consultation response 6: Comments are sought on the proposal that any costs associated with the development or implementation of a contingency plan should be borne by the person to whom the permit was granted.**
- 2.2** Following consideration by relevant officers across the council, a response has been completed in draft form for approval by Members.
- 2.3** In summary the draft response welcomes the introduction of these regulations and the protection that implementation will give to our aquatic habitats and native species. It suggests that DARD should be designated as the competent authority and that advisory committee should be established but that it should have wider representation than that proposed.
- 2.4** Subject to approval by council, it is proposed that the final response is submitted to DARD by 13th March 2012.
- 3** **Resource Implications**
- 3.1** **Financial**
- None required at present
- 3.2** **Human Resources**
- None required at present
- 3.3** **Asset and Other Implications**
- None at this stage.

4. Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 In the consultation documents, DARD states that it has undertaken an equality impact screening of the regulations, and has concluded that the proposed measures will not have any adverse impact for any of the nine categories listed under Section 75.

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 DARD, subject to any comments or amendment provided by the committee, by the deadline of 13 March 2012.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Mary Peters Track - Monthly Progress Report

The Committee noted the contents of a report on the current progress with the refurbishment of the Mary Peters Track and delegated authority to the Director of Parks and Leisure, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to undertake a tender process to seek, receive and evaluate, in line with predetermined criteria, and to accept the most economically advantageous received in respect of elements of the management of the facility on its completion.

Sport Matters - Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009 – 2019

The Committee noted the contents of a report which had been submitted by the Director of Parks and Leisure in connection with correspondence which had been received from the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure in respect of Sport Matters, a Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009 – 2019.

Support for Sport Development Grants

The Committee noted a schedule of Support for Sport applications in relation to development grants which had been approved by the Director of Parks and Leisure in accordance with the authority delegated to him.

Chairman