

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 15th March, 2012

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks
and Leisure;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. P. Scarborough, Chief Executive's Support Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor O'Neill.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th February 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 March.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding agenda item 11, viz., 'King William Park Closure and Art Project', Councillor Haire indicated that he was Belfast County Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, but pointed out that there existed no associated pecuniary or material conflict within the report.

Financial Reporting – Quarter 3 2011 - 12

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant background information

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

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

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

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

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

2. Key issues

Current and forecast financial position 2011/12

The current performance in quarter three of the Parks and Leisure department is a 3.5% variance against the year to date budget; i.e.; an under spend of £584k.

There are a number of key reasons for this position:

The direct employee budget is showing a 1% overspend at quarter three which is a reduction from the position in quarter 2. Committee will be aware of the ongoing service reviews within the Department and recommendations will be provided to committee over the next number of months to finalise the structures. Measures regarding overtime and agency staff are currently being implemented to curtail the increase.

The borehole at the Zoo has finally been re-connected which means that the water supply at the zoo can be fully provided without a requirement to connect to the mains supply.

However £82k of expenditure over budget has already be spent in this area.

Playground refurbishment is £150k under spent against budget at quarter three and the resurfacing of paths is under by £70k however there are agreed programmes of work in these areas which will be completed by year end.

Grounds Maintenance budgets in Parks are reporting an under spend of £800k which is linked to delays in programmes of work however some of these will not be completed by year end.

The budget for compensation claims is overspent by £56k in Leisure and £187k in Parks and Cemeteries. Most of this relates to historical claims. However the reporting and inspection processes have been improved.

Income from Grants has been received by Leisure Development. Applications were speculative in nature and were therefore the income was not budgeted for. Expenditure against these projects and others has not yet been incurred. Income from Leisure Centres continues to feel the impact of the economic climate and is currently 2.9% or £74k below target. Promotions over the Christmas and New Year period have taken place to help address this and increase memberships which may improve this situation by year end.

Income from fees and charges at Malone house is down £25k against budget and Belfast Castle £13K. This represents an improvement on the quarter two position. Both sites are currently running promotional campaigns particularly around weddings which may help to improve this by year end.

Zoo income is down £155k against the expected income year to date as a result of a reduction in visitor numbers and poor weather over the summer. Income from the shop is also down however expenditure on stock for the shop has not reduced to balance this and management are currently addressing this issue.

Income from Fees & Charges for Parks and Open Spaces is up by 10.9% or £136k due to price increases not reflected in budgets and increased usage.

Income from Cremations is up by (7%) £53k on budget however burials is down by £25k or 5% against budget.

Directorate support is currently under spent due to delays in filling budgeted posts and the timing of marketing and promotions activities however this should be reduced by year end.

The department will continue to monitor the variance between actual and budgeted expenditure/income during quarter 4.

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

3. **Resource Implications**

There is a year to date under-spend of £0.5m and a forecast under-spend of some £0.2m or 1% by year end.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

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

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

Review of Rents and Allocation of Parks Houses

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

The Business Support Manager reported that the rents payable on Parks Properties had been revised with effect from 1st April, 2012. The properties were allocated to employees and, because of the link to employment, the Tenancy Agreements provided less protection for occupiers than equivalent Housing Executive or private rented sector lettings. In addition, the occupiers were required to undertake a range of responsibilities specific to the properties outside of normal working hours.

The revised rents had been calculated using the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Rents Points Scheme for houses with similar facilities and had been adjusted by the Estates Management Unit to take account of factors such as location, access to the surrounding environment, the condition of the dwelling, security of tenure and additional responsibilities.

She pointed out that, during the two-year period since the last review, Housing Executive rents had risen by approximately 10.6% and that, whilst the proposed

rents were broadly consistent with that level of increase, allowances had been applied to each house in the terms indicated above. Accordingly, she recommended that the undernoted revised weekly rents be approved by the Committee, notified to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 46 (viii) (n), and applied with effect from the first month following ratification of revised rents by the Council. Furthermore, she recommended that approval be granted retrospectively to the allocation of the property at 2a Stranmillis Road to Ms. A. Haveron.

Address	Existing Weekly Rent	Proposed Weekly Rent	Equivalent Monthly Proposed Rent including Rates
743 Upper Newtownards Road	£48	£48	£276
511 Falls Road	£53	£56	£327
62 Antrim Road	£74	£78	£456
125 Ballygowan Road	£40	£45	£253
2a Stranmillis Road	£60	£60	£339
2 Park Road, Mallusk	£55	£55	£291

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Departmental Improvement Programme - Update
on the Review of Leisure Management Arrangements**

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

"1 Relevant Background Information

The strategic review of leisure highlighted the need to examine the cost of leisure provision and to challenge us to use resources more effectively to engage our communities in healthy activities.

A review of management arrangements including roles and responsibilities and an expression of interest for voluntary redundancy (VR) were considered to be priorities in the first phase of the leisure improvement programme. Outcomes from this first stage were presented to committee in January 2011 in the form of a management side position on a Leisure Services management structure. This included the rationale for allowing three members of staff to be released through VR.

The committee agreed to adopt the proposed organisational structure subject to agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and approved the recommendation for the deletion of four management posts and release of three

staff through voluntary redundancy. This was supported at the Strategic Policy and Resources committee in January 2011. Committee agreed to proceed with the implementation of the proposed organisational structure in February 2011.

During the past year an extensive consultation exercise has been undertaken following Committee's approval of the draft structure. The new management included a new Leisure Area Manager, merging the Assistant Manager and Recreation Officer role into a new Duty Manager post and deleting the Tennis Development Manager post.

The roles of Leisure Area Manager and Duty Manager would be generic to allow for dedicated staff to work across the areas of operations (facilities) and participation (outreach). This is a critical element of the new roles and responsibilities and will provide greater flexibility to enable Leisure Services to meet the needs of the community and deliver on the vision of an Active Belfast.

2 Key Issues

A number of working groups were established to agree how the new management arrangements would be effectively implemented and to identify any issues that were required to be resolved. In addition a monthly trade union steering group (and subsequent implementation sub-group) were established to obtain an 'agreed position' regarding job roles, job descriptions and flexible working arrangements which cumulated in new job descriptions being agreed in February 2012.

Implementation of the new management arrangements will now continue anticipating that staff will be in post from July 2012.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

The Duty Manager post job description has been agreed and evaluated at SO2.

The financial implications are as those agreed by Committee in January 2011 regarding the releasing of the three staff members on voluntary redundancy. Approximate costs were agreed by committee and were within the agreed payback period. The final position is now set out below for your information and meets the appropriate payback target.

Cost

VR costs for three members of staff: £244,541
20 Scale 6 posts to 20 SO2 posts £161,360
Total costs: £405,901

Savings

Deletion of 3 posts (1xPO3 and 2xSO2) : £140,485
Deletion of 1 temporary Leisure Centre Manager Post: £51,664
Total savings; £192,149

Overall cost £213,752

Payback Period 2.11 – This is in line with the corporate target of 3.25

Human Resources

Normal HR policies and procedures will be applied in conducting all changes. Consultation with management, Trade Union representatives and staff has been ongoing throughout this review and an agreed management and staff position has been established.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

There are no equality implications.

5 Recommendations

Committee is asked to note the updated position regarding the implementation of the Leisure management arrangements which includes:

- Introduction of a new Leisure Area Manager post which will incorporate former Leisure Centre Managers who now have responsibility for the management of a number of centres;
- Introduction of a new Duty Manager post which incorporates the former Assistant Manager and Recreation Officer posts;
- Deletion of the Tennis Development Manager post.”

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and acknowledged the work which had been undertaken thus far.

Development of a Boxing Strategy for Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that at its meeting in January 2012 the Committee agreed to:

Support the development of a boxing strategy for the city. It was also agreed that a further report will be brought to committee providing the proposed approach for the development of the strategy.

Following the Committee’s approval for the development of a boxing strategy for the city, officers have been working to progress the project.

This reports outlines progress to date and the approach proposed for the development of the strategy.

2. Key Issues

Progress to date

Officers have held initial meetings with representatives from Co Antrim Boxing, Ulster Boxing Council (UBC), Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) and the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA). All of these organisations have agreed to work in partnership with the Council in the development of a boxing strategy for the city.

A wider meeting was held on the 28th February in City Hall to which all the boxing clubs in Belfast were invited. The purpose of this meeting was to outline the proposed approach and to get feedback from the clubs on it.

Proposed approach

Officers have drafted an approach to the development of a boxing strategy for the city.

The first stage of the approach will be the establishment of a steering group to oversee the development of the strategy. This group will be chaired by the Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure and will consist of representatives from the Council, SNI, UBC, IABA and Co Antrim Boxing Board. Our partner organisations on the steering group will be responsible for informing their members of progress and

feeding back their views. Wider meetings of all the boxing clubs will also be held at key stages to inform them of progress and obtain their feedback.

Following the establishment of the steering group a baseline assessment will be undertaken. As part of this process a questionnaire will be developed and sent out to all boxing clubs in the Belfast City Council area and those that are on the periphery. The results will be analysed to provide us with an assessment of need and a clear picture of the current situation with boxing in the city.

Following presentation of the findings to the Parks and Leisure Committee a draft strategy will developed based on the findings from the baseline assessment. This will include a:

- strategic context
- assessment of need
- options for going forward.

Action plans will also be developed under the following 3 themes:

- management/governance
- sports development
- capital investment.

Following agreement of the draft strategy and action plan by the Parks and Leisure Committee a 12 week period of public consultation will take place.

Ongoing equality screening will take place throughout the development of the strategy.

Next steps

A questionnaire is has been drafted and will be circulated to all clubs in order to gather the information for the baseline assessment – this will also be sent to those clubs that are on the periphery of the Council boundary. The closing date for return of completed questionnaire is Friday 6th April 2012. Officers will assist clubs in completing the questionnaire when requested and we will work with our partners to ensure the highest possible response rate. The findings will be collated and analysed and brought back to the June committee meeting.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

At this stage no financial resources attached to the development of the strategy and resources to cover meetings etc are included within the department's development budget.

Human Resources

Officer time is likely to be dedicated to providing assistance to clubs in order to get the best possible information in order to inform the baseline study.

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

The development of the strategy will be subject to ongoing equality screening.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- (i) note progress to date; and
- (ii) agree the proposed approach to the development of a boxing strategy for the city as outlined."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Boxing Ring Proposal

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure informed the Committee that a proposal had been received from the Belfast Boxing Ring seeking support for the erection of a number of statues to acknowledge the valuable contribution which boxing had made to the City. The Belfast Boxing Ring had been established in 2010 with the aim of celebrating the rich and diverse history of boxing in the City and its initial focus was on the erection of a statue at the Cathedral Gardens which would commemorate Rinty Monaghan.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to receive, at a future meeting, a presentation from representatives of the Belfast Boxing Ring.

Midnight Soccer Programme

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

"1. Relevant Background Information

The Midnight Soccer intervention programme, which was funded by council and the Department of Justice, was provided from July – September 2011.

The initiative was primarily operated between the hours of 2000-2300, and was facilitated during Tuesday/Wednesday and Friday evenings at five locations:

- Avoniel Leisure Centre
- Ballysillan Leisure Centre
- Olympia Leisure Centre
- Whiterock Leisure Centre
- Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG).

Average weekly attendances for both age groups were recorded as follows:

- Avoniel: 75
- Ballysillan: 105
- Olympia: 45 (limited pitch availability)
- LORAG: 75
- Whiterock: 85.

Evaluation of the programme involved surveying 104 participants on 19 August 2011. The resulting surveys indicated that some 77% of participants identified that if the programme had not been commissioned they would have either been consuming alcohol (27%) taking narcotics (18%) or walking the streets (32%). 96% of young people advised that they had enjoyed the initiative and the optimum ages ranges were 16-17 (55%) and 14-15 (37%).

The original objective of the project was to create a diversionary activity in order to help reduce traditionally higher levels of antisocial behaviour within Belfast during the summer months. In addition the expansion of community and voluntary sector linkages was identified as a mutual benefit to operating the project. The mix of participants included clubs, youth groups and street teams with coaching being provided by paid and voluntary community workers in addition to professional coaching personnel.

2. **Key issues/events**

At the Parks and Leisure Committee on 10 November 2011 Councillors agreed that Officers would submit a report on the possibility of the Shore Road area being included within the Midnight Soccer Programme. Initial investigations have noted that Loughside Leisure Centre would not be suitable for usage during the summer months due to scheduled seasonal pitch maintenance. Exploratory talks will be held with Crusaders FC in order to assess if a joint venture can be achieved on the Shore road area.

It is proposed that in addition to retaining the host venues from 2011 that the scheme is expanded in 2012 to include:

A suitable venue identified within the Shore Road area.
Parallel activities to target young females.

The host venues were originally identified in order to maximise the potential geographical coverage of the initiative throughout Belfast. The venues were also able to provide modern 3G / Astroturf pitches and critically had floodlighting provision.

It costs approximately £3,500 per venue to run an 8 week midnight soccer programme, with total costs for 2011 being met from funding of £6,900.00 from the Department of Justice and the remainder was from the Parks & Leisure budget.

The Midnight Street Soccer Company were employed to manage the coaching, refereeing, registration, and evaluation of the 2011 initiative, due to their expertise, staff and community links and an ability to organise and promote the project. It is proposed that, in line with procurement protocols, council seeks expressions of interest to provide coaching and administrative services for the initiative during 2012.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

Cost per venue, including midnight soccer programme and parallel activities for females are estimated to be £3,500 per site. The total expenditure is estimated at £21,000 and will be funded from within existing budgets.

Human Resources

The Leisure Manager (Participation) will co-ordinate the programme development and will liaise with, Leisure Development, Community Safety, Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator and the appointed Management company.

Asset and Other Implications

Facilities will be utilised during periods of low usage and times of closure.

4. Equality and Good Relations Implications

This is a cross community scheme which contributed positively to good relations in the city.

5. Recommendations

That Committee approves the provision of a Midnight Soccer initiative during the summer of 2012 and that the coaching and administrative provision is undertaken by a suitably appointed provider.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

High Hedges Act - Implementation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

A High Hedges Bill was introduced in the Northern Ireland Assembly on the 26 April 2010 and the Bill received Royal Assent on the 3 May 2011 becoming the High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

In summary the Act will provide a means of redress for people who are suffering loss of amenity because of a high hedge on a neighbour’s land acting as a barrier to light, and will provide district councils with certain powers to deal with complaints about high hedges. The legislation will allow councils to charge a fee for complaints and to transfer this charge to ‘hedge owners’ when a remedial notice takes effect.

Members are reminded that in September 2011 the Parks and Leisure Committee approved submission of the final consultation response to DoE NI setting out the Council’s preferred fee of £350.00 which covers the cost of investigating and processing a complaint.

2. Key Issues

High Hedges Act – the process

The High Hedges process is defined in four stages:

Stage 1

- On receipt of an informal enquiry from a member of the public concerning a nuisance hedge, the Council in the first instance will offer some factual information by way of a letter and an information pack.
- Running in parallel to this a separate letter will be sent to the hedge owner advising them of their neighbour's enquiry. Both parties will have an opportunity at this early stage to resolve the matter between them to their mutual satisfaction avoiding the need to go down the formal route.
- However if the complainant is committed to pursuing a complaint through the Council they will be required to pay the complaint fee of £350.00 and complete a detailed complaint form showing evidence of how they have tried to resolve the matter with their neighbour since the legislation came into effect.
- The complaint form will only be progressed if everything asked for by the Council has been provided i.e. the correct complaint fee and all required evidence.
- The complainant will receive a letter from the Council confirming receipt of the complaint and the hedge owner will also receive a copy of the complaint form. Both parties will then be allowed a ten working day 'cooling off' period, which will give ample opportunity to resolve the matter between them.
- If the complaint can be successfully resolved between the two parties and the official complaint withdrawn, the complainant will receive a refund from the Council for £262.50 (75%) of the original fee. The 25% will be retained to cover the Council's administration costs to that point.

Stage 2

- However if both parties are still not in agreement, the complaint can continue to stage 2 and a notification of complaint letter will be sent to the hedge owner inviting them to submit any comments and additional information which the Council will need to be aware of.

For example:

- o Tree Preservation Orders
- o Conservation area
- o Planning conditions
- o Ecological or Heritage significance
- o Covenants.

Following this, a detailed site visit will be undertaken by the High Hedges officer who will gather together all the evidence required to make a final decision.

Stages 3 and 4

- At stage 3 the High Hedges officer will recommend whether or not a 'remedial' notice is required to rectify the problem which will move the process into its final stage - stage 4.
- At this stage in the process the Council will write to all parties informing them of their decision. The hedge owner will have a right of appeal to the Northern Ireland Valuation Tribunal. At the end of any appeals process or if the hedge owner decides not to appeal the remedial action, it is at this point that the full £350.00 fee is then refunded to the complainant and the fee will then be transferred to the hedge owner.
- Remedial action will be required to be undertaken within a set period of time (unless otherwise stipulated). If the hedge owner fails to comply with the remedial notice in the timeframe set out by the Council, the matter will then be referred to Legal Services for the appropriate enforcement action.

Delegation of Authority

It is proposed that the Committee authorise the Director of Parks and Leisure to enforce the provisions of the High hedges Act (NI) 2011 under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

If in agreement committee is also asked to authorise the Director of Parks and Leisure to carry out a series of functions associated with performing the Council's statutory role under the High Hedges legislation. These are:

- Enforcing all Regulations or Acts made and remedial notices under the High Hedges Act (NI) 2011
- Issuing and serving remedial notices

- Exercising all powers in relation to the High Hedges Act (NI) 2011
- In conjunction with Legal Services, instituting legal proceedings and making legal applications on behalf of Belfast City Council
- Authorising individual officers for the purpose of exercising any statutory power under the High Hedges Act (NI) 2011.

3. **Resource Implications**

The High Hedge fee will cover the costs associated with administering this new legislation.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

DoENI have undertaken an equality impact screening of the High Hedges Bill and the High Hedges fee regulations concluding that 'there is no adverse impact for any of the nine categories listed under Section 75'.

The High Hedges legislation has recently been presented to the Council's equality consultative forum and it was suggested that the High Hedge process is reviewed after a 12 month period.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and:

- Grant delegated authority to the Director of Parks and Leisure to exercise all powers relating to the High Hedges Act (NI) 2011 and to carry out the associated functions listed above.
- Agree to review the High Hedges process after a 12 month period."

After discussion, during which the Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure answered a number of questions put by Members in respect of the application of the legislation and the initial mediation stage, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Cavehill Country Park - Community Survey

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

"1. Relevant Background Information

In October 2011 Millward Brown was commissioned to conduct a community engagement exercise on behalf of Belfast City Council, following a number of reports of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity acted upon residents neighbouring the Cavehill Country Park. The purpose of this survey was to establish clear and robust data which would contribute to making the park a more pleasurable and safer space for park users and the local community.

The conclusion of the report states: It is clearly evident from the survey that antisocial behaviour is an issue in Cavehill Country Park and the surrounding area.

This committee report will highlight the recommendations emerging from the community consultation exercise and illustrate the various actions that have been implemented or proposals to be implemented.

2. Key Issues

The Executive Summary of the Cavehill Community Engagement Survey Report makes the following recommendations:

Issues in the local area

The majority of all incidences focus around groups of youths drinking and/or taking drugs in the park or near to residents' houses, general public drunkenness and rowdiness, and acts of vandalism.

- The PSNI and council should target these types of anti-social behaviour. There are opportunities to target youths through schools, youth clubs and social media to educate and inform of the impacts and consequences associated with anti-social behaviour.
- There are also opportunities to target off-licences and taxi drivers to try and prevent the alcohol from getting into the hands of under-age drinkers.

- More council and police presence at key times such as late night weekends and school holidays would be welcome. There is also an opportunity to put strategies in place to combat the known peak times such as St Patrick's Day, July holidays and end of school term.

Reporting anti-social behaviour

There are clear issues regarding the reporting of anti-social behaviour in the area. Residents and park users are utilising a number of different channels and there is often uncertainty about who to contact and who is responsible. Another issue is that in many cases residents and park users are not reporting instances of anti-social behaviour at all.

- There is a clear opportunity for the council and PSNI to put in place clear processes and procedures regarding informing residents about how they should report incidences of anti-social behaviour and what they can expect in terms of follow up.
- There is an opportunity to promote a specialist ASB hotline or website for the area to ensure all reported incidents are logged, tracked and followed up.
- The council and PSNI need to ensure that all residents are informed about the importance of reporting all incidences of anti-social behaviour. Only incidents that are reported can be investigated and only if all incidences are reported can they be sure that sufficient resources are issued to deal with the problems.

Communication and engagement with the local community

Residents, park users and stakeholders all demonstrated a willingness to engage and work together going forward. The residents do not feel included in the council's attempts to address anti-social behaviour issues in the area. Stakeholders also acknowledge that more could be done to engage with local residents in tackling anti-social behaviour.

- There is a clear opportunity to get input from residents and provide a forum for their suggestions on how to tackle anti-social behaviour. By making themselves more available and more accessible, council staff will reap the benefits of working even more closely with residents to tackle the issues. One of the key gripes for

- residents is the lack of follow up; a quick phone call or face to face chat with a concerned resident can improve satisfaction.
- Another opportunity is to inform residents and park users about the processes and procedures in place to deal with under-age drinking or those caught committing anti-social acts. The stakeholders alluded to the complexities of the by-laws and the current policy on underage drinking (i.e. to confiscate alcohol and issue warnings) and the process of dealing with repeat offenders. Educating the residents will improve their understanding as to why seemingly frivolous issues are not always clear cut.

Steps already taken to tackle anti-social behaviour

There was a clear lack of awareness amongst both residents and park users regarding the entire range of steps and initiatives that have been introduced by BCC to tackle the anti-social behaviour issue.

- There is an opportunity to educate and inform residents and park users as to all the measures that have already been taken and also of any future initiatives.
- There is also an opportunity to inform residents and park users about the success of the initiatives and provide them with statistics about how much alcohol has been confiscated or inform them about educating youths through schools or youth schemes etc.

Tackling anti social-behaviour moving forward

There was a clear understanding that resources are limited; however there remains a strong demand for an increased council and PSNI presence especially during late weekend hours when incidences are most likely to occur.

- There may be an opportunity to reallocate some resources to ensure coverage at some of the key times over the problem times. A possibility could be to ensure some of the Park Rangers are on call over the weekend and holiday periods when anti-social behaviour tends to peak in the area.
- Locking the gates at Innisfayle Park was clearly not a feasible solution for the clear majority of residents, park users or stakeholders.

- In all likelihood locking the gates would create more trouble for residents as youths may begin to access the park through their property. The risks to public safety if the police or rescue services could not get immediate access in an emergency situation were also clearly highlighted. There was however an opportunity to demonstrate to residents the usefulness and effectiveness of the improved CCTV system which is now in place.
- There is a clear willingness and need for a more joined up approach to tackle anti-social behaviour in the area, while it was also accepted that any one measure or initiative is unlikely to work on its own.
- There is a clear opportunity for the council to engage with residents, park users, the police, local politicians, community leaders and relevant stakeholders such as the Cavehill Conservation Group to work together via meetings, forums and the sharing of knowledge and resources to try and tackle the problems caused by anti-social behaviour.

Departmental response to the survey's recommendations

The executive summary within the Millward Brown report suggests a number of actions which respond to the concerns raised by Residents, Park Users and Stakeholders. Many of the suggested actions are already being implemented through the Departmental Improvement programme, interdepartmental working arrangements or the Safer Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour programme.

The following initiatives and projects are already in place or will shortly be implemented in response to the Millward Brown recommendations:

- **The Park Warden Pilot (Presence in Parks):** This pilot will improve the Parks and Leisure Departments ability to educate Park users and enforce the byelaws across all of Belfast's Parks
- **Promotion of the Parks Warden Pilot:** The communications plan to support public awareness of this work will be implemented between April – October 2012

- The development of a Parks and Leisure Customer relations system (CRM system): The Parks and Leisure Department have developed an ASB recording and reporting system which will support Park Wardens to respond directly to reports of ASB.
- Interdepartmental working arrangements: The joint working arrangements between the Health and Environmental Services Department and the Parks and Leisure Department will continue to develop to enable more effective joint patrols to reduce alcohol consumption in designated areas.
- Support for the Cavehill Conservation group: this group has been recognised as the Friends group for Cavehill Country Park and through further consultation and negotiation could provide a reference point for residents to report or receive information regarding antisocial behaviour.
- Development of an annual Cavehill Residents Engagement forum: to support further communication between stakeholders, residents, park users, PSNI and BCC.

3. **Resource Implications**

Resources for implementing the recommendations will be facilitated through the Departmental Improvement Programme and the agreed Antisocial Behaviour Programme budget 2012-13.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

All of the interventions and operations proposed in this report will be developed be in line with existing policies and procedures

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and Members are asked to approve the action plan to meet the needs identified through the survey.”

Table 1: Millward Brown recommendations and BCC response **Appendix 2**

Item	Millward Brown Recommendation	BCC Action	Additional comments or Further improvements
2.2	PSNI and BCC should work with youths to educate and inform of the impacts and consequences associated with antisocial behaviour.	The Park Warden Pilot will support staff to educate the public and enforce the byelaws.	Links can be made with schools and youth clubs in the area in partnership with the PSNI
2.3	PSNI and BCC should target off-licences and taxi drivers to try and prevent the alcohol from getting into the hands of underage drinkers.	Through existing interdepartmental working arrangements, the Community Safety Partnership approaches Off licensees to highlight the impact of underage drinking.	Request that this work is extended to Taxi companies in the area.
2.4	More BCC and PSNI presence at peak times such as late night weekends and school holidays.	The Park Warden Pilot will develop stronger links with PSNI in order to develop our partnership approach to patrolling the park at peak times.	This work will be limited to available resources.
2.6	BCC and PSNI need processes and procedures informing residents about how they should report incidences of antisocial behaviour and what follow up they can expect.	The promotion of the Parks Warden Pilot will inform residents across Belfast about the process of reporting ASB and the BCC response.	
2.7	Promote a specialist ASB hotline or website to ensure all reported incidents are logged, tracked and followed up.	The Parks and Leisure Customer relationship system specifically for recording reports of ASB will go online in April 2012.	
2.8	BCC and PSNI need to ensure that all residents are informed about the importance of reporting all incidences of anti-social behaviour.	The Promotion of the Parks Warden Pilot will emphasise the importance of reporting ASB to the PSNI and BCC.	

Item	Millward Brown Recommendation	BCC Action	Additional comments or Further improvements
2.10	Provide a forum for residents to voice their suggestions on how to tackle antisocial behaviour.	The Cavehill Conservation group are recognised as a 'Friends' group. Residents could potentially connect with this existing group.	Although the Cavehill Conservation group were involved in the Millward Brown survey, further consultation would be required before publicising this response.
2.11	Inform residents and park users about the processes and procedures in place to deal with under-age drinking or those caught committing antisocial acts.	Information about this element could be disseminated through the Cavehill Conservation group.	Further support could be given to the Cavehill Conservation group to facilitate this recommendation.
2.13	Educate and inform residents and park users about any future initiatives and all the measures that have already been taken.	Quarterly updates on evening, weekend and public holiday PSNI and BCC operations could be fed into the Cavehill Conservation group for dissemination to residents.	Further support could be given to the Cavehill Conservation group to facilitate this recommendation.
2.14	Inform residents and park users about the success of initiatives. Provide statistics on how much alcohol has been confiscated or inform them about educating the youths through schools or youth schemes.	Again the PSNI and BCC could work with the Cavehill Conservation group to communicate the outcome of PSNI and BCC joint operations in Cavehill Country Park	
2.16	Reallocate resources to ensure coverage at some of the key times over the problem times, for example could the Park Rangers be on call over weekend and holiday periods when antisocial behaviour peaks	The Park Warden Pilot will develop the Parks and Leisure departments ability to resource patrols and enforcement operations however these interventions will be limited by available resources.	In parallel to the development of the Customer relationship system, an out of hours ASB hotline will support residents to report ASB whenever it occurs. If BCC can evidence that a serious issue is taking place at late hours then we will seek approval to respond with the support of the PSNI.

Item	Millward Brown Recommendation	BCC Action	Additional comments or Further improvements
2.17	Locking the gates would create more trouble for residents. Demonstrate the usefulness and effectiveness of the improved CCTV system which is now in place.	BCC could work with the Cavehill Conservation group to invite residents to a demonstration of the CCTV camera.	
2.18	Engage with residents, park users, the police, local politicians, community leaders and relevant stakeholders such as the Cavehill Conservation Group to work together via meetings, forums and the sharing of knowledge and resources to try and sort out the problems caused by antisocial behaviour.	An annual forum could be developed in conjunction with all the stakeholders, residents and Park users to share information about the various interventions or operations and to measure the success of the partnership between the residents, Park users, PSNI, BCC and stakeholders in regard to making the park safer .	

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure answered a number of questions put by Members in relation to the possibility of extending the initiative to other Parks and Leisure facilities and the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Joint Unionist Centenary Committee Event –
Ormeau Park, Saturday, 19th May 2012**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee and to seek authority for elements of the event which have not been previously considered by the Parks and Leisure Committee.

The Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meetings in September and November considered a request from the Joint Unionist Centenary Committee (UCC) for the use of Ormeau Park for an event to mark the centenary of the Balmoral review on Saturday, 19th May, 2012.

The proposed request and location were also discussed at the meeting of the Council’s Historic Centenaries Working Group

on 17th October and at a Special meeting of the same group on Wednesday, 25th October, when representatives of the UCC were in attendance.

In November the Committee agreed to the use of Ormeau Park for the event, in line with the recommendation of the Historic Centenaries Working Group as follows:-

'that:

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

...and subject to a number of further conditions (the first two of which have been in place for some years in relation to the Bonfire Management Programme):

- That there are no displays of paramilitary emblems or regalia
- That no national flags or symbols are burnt or defaced
- That all the requirements of the Council's Events Plan are fully complied with.

The Committee report in November also made reference to the JUCC intentions to have a 'Cultural Village' of tented workshops and displays in the park with activities including music, dancing etc. and that the JUCC might want to extend the fairground and cultural village element to the Friday night if possible. This element was not explicitly referred to in the report's recommendation and was not considered by Committee at the meeting. The UCC have now confirmed this to be the case and are asking the Committee to consider this request.

2 Key Issues

The JUCC has emphasised that this is intended to be an alcohol-free event and they would seek assistance from the police and Parks staff in the management of the event; all stall holders, caterers and traders at the event would be certified in the usual manner. The UCC proposed that parking for essential parade traffic, including some vintage vehicles, would be at the Ozone site and they would organise their own event marshals on site.

The event management plan is under development and the following groups and organisations are involved:-

- G-Force – Event Management Plan and
- Ambutran – Event Risk Assessment and First Aid provision
- Eventsec – Stewarding and crowd control
- AVK Catering – Food vendor management

Internal / external event advisory assistance

- PSNI
- North and West Belfast Parades Forum
- Park and Leisure Department
- Health and Environmental Services Department
- Legal Services Department

As planning for the event develops, details on a number of the proposed elements of the event are being considered in order to make the event flow well, to avoid congestion and to ensure that it is successful and safe. These details represent some slight change to the original proposal discussed at Committee and it was felt therefore that a further update report would be helpful to clarify the position. The changes are as follows:-

- The use of the Ozone site is more extensive than originally discussed – it is proposed that the centre be closed to normal business, but used as a site for activities on the day and also provide restroom facilities
- It is proposed that the amusements and tented village would be in the Ozone grounds, rather than the Ormeau Park and that the parade would enter the site through the wider access at the Ozone rather than the pedestrian access from the Ravenhill Road end (for safety reasons)

The UCC has stressed from the outset that this should be an open, non-contentious, welcoming community event in which all elements of the local community could participate positively and have committed to keeping all interested parties, including the police and Parades Commission, informed of ongoing developments.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

There is likely to be some loss of income associated with the closure of the Ozone centre on this date – this is estimated to be approximately £2000 based on income in the previous three years.

Human Resources

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

Asset and Other Implications

Depending on scale of event and weather, some repair to Ormeau Park terrain may be required.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

This request has previously been discussed and approved by the Council's Historic Centenaries Working Group, which reports to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, to co-ordinate its work in this area. The Working Group has agreed that the forthcoming *Decade of Centenaries, 2012-2022*, provides an opportunity for the Council to contribute to a better understanding of the past and to promote respect for the complexity of our shared history.

The Centenaries Working Group has already discussed a programme of events for the first period in the Decade, 2012-2014, and has recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Centenary of the Signing of the Covenant should be one of the first major events to be marked, with the commissioning of an exhibition in the City Hall plus a number of individual events.

All of the proposals currently under consideration within the programme would have positive implications in terms of the promotion of equality and good relations, if undertaken in an inclusive manner.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Parks and Leisure Committee note the update report and agree that:-

- The Ozone centre be closed for normal business on the Friday evening and Saturday, but used for associated activities;
- The Ozone site be used for the tented village and amusements both on Friday 18th and Saturday, 19th May 2012; and
- The Ozone entrance be used for arrival of parade at the site rather than the pedestrian access on the Ravenhill Road.”

After a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Mullan,

That the Committee agrees to refer the request to the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group for further consideration.

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

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Newton,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

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

King William Park Closure and Art Project

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

“1. Relevant Background Information

King William Park is situated at the junction between Lisburn Road, Bradbury Place and University Road. This small neighbourhood park has become the focus of a series of meetings between PSNI, BCC, Belfast County Orange Lodge and Community representatives from Sandy Row and Donegall Pass.

In recent years, during the band parades on 12 July, crowds gathering at the railings of the park and using the park for antisocial activities have displaced young families from the local neighbourhood. Local families gathered at the park in the past because it provided a safe vantage point for children.

PSNI and Community representatives have now requested that the park is closed during the 12 July celebrations and hoarding is placed around the boundaries due to the crowds gathering and behaving inappropriately at King William Park.

2. Key Issues

King William Park is a focal point for the band parades passing through Belfast on 12 July. Thousands gather to watch the parades throughout Shaftsbury Square, Bradbury place and Lower Lisburn Road. As the crowds swell, the passage of bands becomes restricted and a choke point forms at the end of King William Park.

The profile of the crowds that gather at King William Park has been described, generally, as boisterous, adult males who are visiting the area for the day. These crowds have been reported to be climbing on the rails of the park, using the rails as a vantage point to watch the parades, using the park as a toilet and behaving in a manner which limits local residents and families' access to and enjoyment of the parades.

Community representatives from Donegall Pass and Sandy Row have been working together to ensure that the two neighbouring communities enjoy the parades. They have requested that the park is closed during the celebrations on 12 July. They have also requested support to place hoarding and art work around the park to restrict boisterous crowds climbing on rails.

The hoarding would restrict crowds hanging off the railings and restrict access to the park. The PSNI will also have officers stationed at the gates of the park. These actions are intended to reduce inappropriate behaviour. Community representatives have also suggested that the hoarding could feature an arts project, led by young people from the area. The art work would create a more attractive backdrop than bare hoarding and the designs would celebrate the traditions and culture associated with the parades on 12 July in the Sandy Row and Donegall Pass areas.

Engaging the young people from Sandy Row and Donegall Pass in an arts project celebrating the traditions and culture associated with the parades on 12 July, will reinforce positive ownership of this event and reduce the influence of the boisterous crowds.

3. **Resource Implications**

The estimated cost of provision of hoardings and art work is in the region of £10,000. Provision has been made for this within the Parks and Leisure Safer Neighbourhoods and Antisocial Behaviour budget.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

The request to close King William Park on 12 July and place art work around the park is intended to reduce tensions and bringing communities 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 approve the closure of King William Park on 12 July 2012 and the provision of hoarding as requested around the boundary of the King William Park for a number of days before and after 12 July 2012 to be agreed with the local community."

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations

Strategic Cemetery and Crematorium Development

The Committee noted the contents of a report which had been submitted by the Director of Parks and Leisure in connection with an update on the phased approach to cemetery and crematorium development in the City and noted further that a report, which would outline the next steps in the process, would be submitted to a future meeting.

**Sports 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 the Council's contribution to the achievement of the twenty six targets in respect of Sport Matters, a Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009 – 2019.

**Balmoral Show – Car parking at the Strangford Avenue
and the Boucher Road Playing Fields**

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society for the use of the Strangford Avenue and the Boucher Road Playing Fields for car parking purposes from 14th May till 19th May in connection with the Balmoral Show.

The Committee noted that, if permission was granted, it would be necessary to close the sites to accommodate the park and ride. Therefore, it would be necessary to inform the Gaelic Athletic Association and Association Football Clubs affected and to make every effort to relocate them where possible.

The Director recommended that the Society be granted the use of the facilities as requested and that a charge of £12,140 plus VAT be levied. In addition, he recommended that approval be granted, subject to satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of Parks and Leisure and on the condition that:

- (i) the event organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- (ii) an appropriate agreement be prepared by the Council's Legal Services Section; and
- (iii) the event organisers meet all statutory requirements.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Request for the use of the Lower Botanic
Gardens - Polo in the City**

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 seek Committee approval for the free use of Botanic Lower for a charity fundraiser 'Polo in the City' event in August 2012 by Mencap NI.

The first-ever Polo In The City event took place in August 2011 when more than 600 people enjoyed a day of sport and entertainment on Stranmillis Embankment in the lower Botanic Gardens.

The event in 2011 was run by and in aid of Mencap in Northern Ireland and raised almost £10,000 for the charity. All the money raised by the charity is spent supporting both children and adults with a learning disability living here in N.I

The event secured a high level of brand sponsorship and involvement from Charles Hurst, Veuve Clicquot, House of Fraser, CBS Astor Buller, AirCore and Walker Communications and received high media coverage.

2 **Key Issues**

This event brings together sporting enthusiasts, Mencap supporters and groups of friends from all across the city and provides a platform for a new sport (Polo) to be enjoyed in the heart of Belfast city.

The 2012 event will take place on 25 August from 2 pm-12pm and the organisers are aiming to sell 1000 tickets for this year's event. The build for the event (marquees) would need to start from Tuesday 21 August and the deconstruct would take place on Sunday 26 August. The exact finishing time of the event will be determined by the requirements to the entertainments licence.

There will be approximately 20 horses at the event, accompanied by the teams (this will require a small holding area).

Sponsorship has already been secured from a range of interested businesses.

Mencap have confirmed that they will undertake to do the following in order to make the event as safe and successful as possible;-

- employ a security firm (EventSec) to provide security cover during the build stage and during the event
- employ a waste management company to ensure the grounds are kept clean throughout the event and that clear up is complete by 12 noon on Sunday 26 August
- ensure that the local residents are informed about the event one month prior to the event and that on the day the event will not cause a nuisance or be inconvenient to those residents

Entry for the event is proposed to be set at £65.00 and tickets will be on sale from 1st March 2012 (subject to Council approval) and they hope to attract a bigger audience this year (1000 people).

In addition Mencap NI wish to sell alcohol from the start of the event at 2pm and have committed that the bar supplier (Drinksology) would ensure the enforcement of a strict bar policy ensuring that the amount of alcohol to patrons is limited and served in plastic bottles/glasses.

Mencap NI propose that the event will run from 2pm-12.00 midnight, subject to the requisite approval being obtained for both entertainments and licensing.

Officers are also planning to organise a free family fun day in the park in conjunction with Friends of Botanic and Mencap NI, to take place around the date of this planned event.

It is anticipated that damage to the grass areas will occur during the event from the marquees and the polo matches. A legal agreement and a bond of £10,000 will guarantee that the site is suitably reinstated at the organisers expense. Mencap NI will ensure that the cost of the ground repair is paid in full to Belfast City Council prior to the event so it can commence on Sunday 26 August.

This event is in line with both Council objectives around economic development and Parks and Leisure departmental objectives in terms of animating the city's parks and increasing community activities and access to the parks.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

This request is for free use of the site as the event is for charity fundraising and the organisers have agreed to carry the cost of reinstatement of the grounds as outlined above at section 2.9.

Human Resources

Some additional human resources were required to facilitate these requests – all managed within the current resources.

Asset and Other Implications

As outlined above at section 2.9.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are no known equality or good relations implications in relation to this request.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee grant approval for the free use of Lower Botanic Gardens for the Polo in the City event on condition that:

- 1. The event organisers liaise with the Council's Health and Environmental Services Department and ensure that all health and safety requirements are met to the Council's satisfaction including an event management plan and risk assessments.**
- 2. Resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction.**
- 3. Pay the stipulated bond.**
- 4. Complete an appropriate legal agreement and meet all statutory requirements including entertainment licensing."**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Request for use of the Andersonstown Leisure Centre by Gort Na Mona Historical and Cultural Society

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from Gort Na Mona Historical and Cultural Society seeking permission to hold an event on Sunday, 8th April, 2012 at the Andersonstown Leisure Centre. The Society was a group based in the Upper Springfield area of the City which carried out research and sought to tell the history of the area and the people who resided there. The Society had held similar successful events at the Andersonstown Leisure Centre in 2010 and 2011.

The application had indicated that the event would be for an Irish folk music evening including bar facilities. The Society had undertaken to provide the following information in support of its application:

- a formal letter of application;
- safety statement;
- risk assessments;
- public liability insurance;
- an occasional licence; and
- a list of security staff and registration numbers.

The fee charged to Gort Na Mona Historical and Cultural Society would be in line with the Council's charging policy and would include staff costs for out of normal opening hours use.

The Committee approved the application by the Society to hire the facilities at the Andersonstown Leisure Centre on Sunday, 8th April, 2012 and agreed that bar facilities be provided at the event, subject to the Society providing an occasional licence and complying with all Council policies and statutory requirements.

**50th Anniversary in 2014 of the Inauguration of the
City of Belfast Rose Trials and the Formation
of the Rose Society of Northern Ireland**

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

"1. Relevant Background Information

In 1964 Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park was chosen as the venue for the City Of Belfast International Rose Garden. The first roses were planted and the Rose Society of Northern Ireland (RSNI) was formed.

2014 will be the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the City of Belfast Rose Trials and the formation of the RSNI. Since its formation back in 1964 the RSNI has worked in close partnership with Belfast City Council to create one of the outstanding rose gardens in the world. This was recognised by the World Federation of Rose Societies in 2000 when Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park was awarded the Plaque of Merit.

2. Key Issues

The RSNI is planning a number of events in 2014 to celebrate its 50th anniversary and is asking for support from Belfast City Council. A letter from the RSNI listing their proposals for functions and events is attached.

The key issue for the Committee is whether it wishes to provide support for the RSNI in 2014. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the RSNI and the inauguration of the City of Belfast Rose Trials the Society is asking for support from Belfast City Council with the following:

- A luncheon in the City Hall for approximately 120 people on Tuesday 4 March 2014
- Accommodation in the City Hall for 120 delegates to attend a proposed seminar being organised by the RSNI on Wednesday 23 July 2014. To assist with the cost of providing the seminar it is intended to charge delegates a fee of approximately £25 and to seek assistance from the Royal Horticultural Society.

- A finger buffet for 120 people at the seminar on Wednesday 23 July 2014, plus tea, coffee and biscuits for same at the end of the seminar.
- A plaque to be laid in the Dickson Patio in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, engraved with information on the founding of the rose garden, to commemorate the 50th anniversary.
- Production of a 20 page brochure on the rose garden, past and present.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

The estimated costs for providing support for the RSNI are as follows:

- a luncheon on Tuesday 4 March 2014 would be in the order of £3,800
- a finger buffet and tea, coffee and biscuits on Wednesday 23 July 2014 would be in the order of £2,060.
- an engraved plaque would be in the order of £250
- a colour brochure, 2,000 copies, would be in the order of £700

Total cost: £6,810

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications

Asset and other implications

Providing support to the RSNI will help to continue the long standing partnership between Belfast City Council and the Rose Society of Northern Ireland.

4. Equality and good relations implications

None.

5. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree to the provision of support to the RSNI as outlined in the report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the use of the City Hall.

Titanic Floral Display

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In recognition of the significance of 2012 as the centenary of the Titanic, Parks and Leisure Department Landscape architects have designed a permanent Titanic Garden in the grounds of City Hall.

As part of the centenary celebrations it is proposed to provide a second ‘show garden’ of a temporary nature that can be transported and set up throughout the City where required, for example, Spring Flower show, Rose Week, Autumn Flower show, Titanic building, etc.

The proposed floral display will contribute to a City wide programme of events commemorating this famous ‘Belfast built’ ship and will showcase the work of the Parks and Leisure department.

Key Issues

Parks and Leisure Landscape Planning and Development Unit have designed a Titanic floral display. The theme of the design is ‘And the music played on’ and will include a display of flowers and plants designed to commemorate the lives of those who died on the Titanic 100 years ago.

It is proposed that a quartet of musicians dressed in appropriate evening wear will play a variety of songs originally played by the quartet of musicians on board the Titanic on that fateful night.

A seating area will be provided within the marquee at each event allowing people to relax and enjoy the garden. Information boards will be located within the marquee providing facts and relevant information about the Titanic, the design of the garden and the use of plants.

The Council’s Property Maintenance section have agreed to build the structure and Parks and Leisure gardening staff will provide the horticultural expertise required to design and install the plants and flowers and maintain the display. The garden is designed so that it can be erected and dismantled quickly and stored ready for the next event.

Over 65% of the plants will be 'recycled' and used repeatedly over different display dates.

Resource Implications

Financial

Initial costs are estimated at £8,100 which includes

- construction of structure,
- Initial purchase of plants.

The refresh of plants for 3 additional displays would cost in the region of £1,200. The costs have been provided for in revenue budgets.

Human Resources

It is not anticipated at this time that there will be additional Human Resource implications for the Council other than officer time and some staff costs relating to building and maintaining the display garden.

Recommendations

Committee is asked to support this initiative to provide up to 4 displays of the commemorative garden throughout the City."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Request to Rename Lower Oldpark Community Park (Alloa Street)

The Director of Parks and Leisure informed the Committee that a request had been received from the Lower Oldpark Community Association seeking permission to re-name the Lower Oldpark Community Park at Alloa Street. He reported that the Association wished to re-name the park in honour of John Hewitt, a renowned poet and local art historian who had been born in a house which had been located on the current site of the park. The Association had obtained 207 signatures of support for the proposed name change. He further reported that the request met the criteria in the re-naming policy which had been agreed by Committee at its meeting in August, 2008, and that the Association had undertaken an exercise to determine the level of support in the local community.

The Committee agreed to approve the request from the Lower Oldpark Community Association to re-name the Lower Oldpark Community Park as the John Hewitt Park and noted that, in this instance, further community consultation was not required.

Suffolk Football Club

The Director of Parks and Leisure informed the Committee that a request had been received from the Suffolk Football Club to re-name the Suffolk Playing Fields and for a specific unique postal address to be provided which would enable the Club to receive correspondence to carry out its business and to connect services to the temporary changing rooms which it was to provide at the site. He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in April, 2011, it had agreed to a seven year management agreement with the Club in relation to one of the pitches and that in October, 2011 it had granted approval to the Club for the erection of temporary changing facilities on the site. He informed the Committee that, as owners of the site, the Council would apply to Building Control for a postal address. He further reported that the request from the Suffolk Football Club to re-name the playing fields to Suffolk Park met the criteria in the re-naming policy which had been agreed by Committee at its meeting in August, 2008.

The Committee agreed that the request from the Suffolk Football Club to re-name the Suffolk Playing Fields to Suffolk Park met the criteria of the Council's policy and that the Club could now carry out the necessary consultation on the proposed name change.

Suffolk Football Club Wayleave Request

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

At its meeting on 13th October, 2011 Committee approved the installation of modular changing facilities and a separate meeting room by Suffolk Football Club on the Council's site at Suffolk Playing Fields. The land on which the facilities are to be installed, and the buildings themselves, will be incorporated within a proposed 7 year Facilities Management Agreement with Suffolk Football Club, previously approved by Committee on 14 April 2011.

At the October 2011 Committee a number of related issues were considered, with the Departmental Portfolio Manager to bring a further report to Committee in due course. In accordance with this, the following information and further authorities are presented for consideration.

- (i) Suffolk Football Club have now obtained Planning Permission for the proposed changing accommodation and meeting rooms. There is no condition in the Planning Approval which time-limits the duration of the Permission except that it must be commenced with 5 years.**

- (ii) NIE Ltd have two separate Easements across the Council's land at Suffolk Playing fields. One of these is for a Right of Way across the land upon which the modular buildings are to be installed. The other is for an underground cable which runs under the playing surface of the refurbished pitch. Agreement has been obtained from NIE Ltd to vary the arrangements in relation to both Easements and in particular to re-direct the Right of Way along an alternative route within the Suffolk Playing Fields. The proposed revised arrangements with NIE are to be given legal effect through an appropriate form of legal agreement to be approved by the Town Solicitor
- (iii) Subject to Suffolk Football Club reaching agreement with NIE, NIE may also seek a further Wayleave Agreement with the Council to allow the installation of a mains electricity supply to the Club's proposed modular buildings. If such a separate reply can be provided by NIE the associated NIE will seek a Wayleave Agreement with the Council.
- (iv) Proposals have been made by Suffolk Football Club for the installation of mains water and sewerage pipes across the car parking area (outside the proposed Facilities Management area) and then through the Facilities Management area to the proposed modular buildings.

2 Key Issues

An appropriate legal arrangement, to be approved by the Town Solicitor, is required to facilitate changes to the existing Grant of Easement as required to facilitate the proposed new Right of Way.

An appropriate legal arrangement, to be approved by the Town Solicitor, will be drawn up to facilitate changes to the existing Grant of Easement as required to facilitate the proposed revised underground cable route. It should be noted this does not involve any physical alteration of the position of the cables but simply rectifies the map previously submitted by NIE Ltd.

It is understood the approximate location of a proposed new Wayleave Agreement with NIE Ltd, to serve the modular buildings, will be run from Carnanmore Park across the car park area to connect to a meter point within the Facilities Management area.

The proposed installation of water and sewerage services to serve the proposed modular buildings are to be installed on land which is presently (and will remain) in Council ownership and thus a wayleave arrangement is not required. However as installation of these services will not be carried out by the Council's contractor, but instead will be carried out by Suffolk Football Club's contractor, the Council should enter into a Licence Agreement with the Club to cover insurance responsibilities, reinstatement and other responsibilities of the parties.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

No financial implications for the Council.

Human Resources

Existing Legal Services, Estates Management Unit and Parks and Leisure human resources required to deliver the legal agreements referred to in this report.

Asset and Other Implications

The proposed arrangements flow from the decision of the Parks and Leisure Committee of 13 October 2011 to authorise installation of modular buildings by Suffolk Football Club.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

No known equality or good relations issues associated with the proposals contained in this report.

5 Recommendations

Committee is recommended to note that Planning Permission for the proposed modular buildings has been granted and contains no restrictions which would limit the length of time the modular buildings are retained on the site. Committee is further recommended to approve:

- (i) the amendments to the two existing Easement Agreements with NIE Ltd, as outlined in this report;
- (ii) the grant of a further Wayleave Agreement to NIE (if required); and

- (iii) the grant of a Licence Agreement to Suffolk Football Club to allow installation of water and sewerage services to the proposed modular buildings at Suffolk Playing Fields, all subject to notification to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46(a) and 60.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Council response to the Consultation on a Ten Year
Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland**

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:

- Inform Members of the recent consultation exercise for the draft ten year outdoor recreation action plan which forms part of the implementation of ‘Sport Matter’; and
- Seek retrospective approval for the draft officer response which was submitted on 24th February, 2012 subject to committee amendment and approval.

A steering group led by Sport Northern Ireland has been drafting a new 10 year Outdoor Recreation Action Plan. The draft action plan will supersede Northern Ireland’s first Countryside Recreation Strategy which was launched in 1998.

The steering group is seeking opinion on the draft vision, aims, themes and actions within the action plan and intend that it will also *‘fit into a range of other government strategies and corporate plans, as the issue of outdoor recreation is both broad and cross cutting.’*

‘Outdoor Recreation’ is defined as non motorized sporting and recreational activities that take place in the natural environment and that generally do not require a dedicated pitch or building. In Belfast this would be the urban countryside of the Belfast hills etc along with the sea way around the Titanic quarter and along the North and eastern shores.

The draft vision in the action plan is *'to continue to develop, manage and promote a dynamic culture of sustainable outdoor recreation in NI'*.

Appendix 3 is the draft written response which has been submitted in order to make a return within the timeframe allocated. The Department is aware that this may be amended by the Committee.

2. Key Issues

Officers felt it was important to provide a comprehensive response to the consultation as outdoor recreation provides an opportunity to be active mainly through free activities in public spaces. In the current economic climate it could be considered to be a primary affordable pathway to promote an Active Belfast and provide opportunities to address health and wellbeing for citizens.

In general officers felt that the document contained the necessary requirements to support existing outdoor recreation however also thought that it could go further in its ambition, reflecting the tone and commitment of the Council's Investment Programme and emerging partnerships developed to help get people more active in the city, notably outdoors.

In summary the action plan needs to be more benefits-driven e.g. it should outline how people can be well, more active and how employment and revenue opportunities could be developed within the current economic climate whilst improving environmental sustainability;

The officer response also outlines that Council involvement in the steering group or wider engagement could be strengthened or formalised to ensure connectivity with emerging partnership approaches such as the Active Belfast Partnership etc.

The draft response also highlights that there is a need for issues specific to Belfast to be achieved in a revision of the 'Access to the Countryside' (NI) Order 1983 in terms of taking into account the 'urban countryside' and issues around the urban fringe.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

None.

Human Resources

None.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

No implications anticipated.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to;-

- (i) Note the contents of the report; and
- (ii) Approve the draft officer response subject to any additional comments or amendments committee would like to add.

Appendix 3

**Belfast City Council's Response to the
Draft 10 year Outdoor Recreation Action Plan**

1. Do you believe that the vision and aims capture the expressed wish to further develop outdoor recreation opportunities in Northern Ireland?

Vision

The Council agrees with the vision outlined in the draft action plan in terms of 'a wish to further develop outdoor recreation'. The Council believes this could be stated more strongly and would suggest that the following key statements are reinforced in the final version of the vision:

- Include a clear reference to the value/ benefits of outdoor recreation as it may be more meaningful to the wider public;

- Show greater aspiration that 'the Outdoors' is positioned as a key pathway to improve people's wellbeing and provides greater opportunities for an active community;
- Reinforce the quality of the natural resources readily available to deliver the vision.

Aims

The aims highlight the main areas to be contained within an Outdoor recreation action plan however further refinement of the following aims are suggested:

- The second aim on the list may benefit from becoming 2 separate aims, the first focusing one on sustainable access and infrastructure and the second on participation and use;
- The first aim and the last aim are very similar and could possibly be summarised collectively as: 'People understand, enjoy and accept ownership towards the outdoors building a shared ownership towards respecting the natural environment available'.

The Council seeks clarity on whether the definition of outdoor recreation is sufficient for the draft vision and action plan. It appears to incorporate most types of activities but not motorised activities which are a growing type of activity on the river ways in and around Belfast. There is evidence that in other countries/ regions outdoor recreation is determined as both non and motorised activities and would seek confirmation that the exclusion of the motorised activities from this definition does not create duplication or a lack of co-ordination in the overall management of outdoor recreation in the future.

2. What do you believe are the priorities in terms of legislative or policy reviews that need to take place to develop outdoor recreation?

When forming the Council's response it was noted there has been considerable review of the legislative or policy areas to develop outdoor recreation in recent times. The following is the Council's list of priority legislative or policy areas at present:

- Revision of the current 'The Access to the Countryside (NI) Order '1983, taking account the urban countryside and urban fringe issues in relation to recreation;

- Application of anti-social behaviour programme objectives and related duties or powers to ensure a safe outdoors. Successfully managing ongoing issues relating to public rights of way and domestic dwellings (Public access versus ownership rights);
- The Occupiers' Liability (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 revision needs implemented where it involves the landowner opening land access for outdoor recreation and removing liability;
- Re-imburement for reinstatement of land where public access takes place;
- The draft Programme for Government 2011 - 2015 commitment to complete RPA and any future duty of community planning (and the power of wellbeing) may be relevant to the roll out of the outdoor recreation action plan especially as an affordable pathway to enable wellbeing.

3. Can you suggest innovative solutions to these issues and can you give examples from other areas / countries?

The Countryside Recreation Officer often facilitates disputes in relation to access or ownership some of which may be anti social in nature. The development of an intervention protocol to manage such disputes using an interagency approach may be a useful tool for the ongoing management of the countryside and outdoor recreation. The protocol would reflect existing approaches available throughout NI to manage priorities e.g. ASB protocol.

4. What needs to be done to give outdoor recreation a higher priority within the Executive, Departments and Local Authorities?

The suggestions to the vision in question 1 seem a natural first step to communicate the relevance of outdoor recreation across central and local government. The communication of the relevant benefits and direct contribution outdoor recreation makes to education, participation, volunteering, health and wellbeing and shared space as well as enterprise may be a more relevant approach.

A more representative reflection of all of the types of activity which constitute outdoor recreation is required other than 'organised sport'. (e.g. hill walking; orienteering etc)

The following are further steps that could be taken to raise the profile and the priority status of outdoor recreation across government:

- An appealing vision to inspire ownership articulated in the document or launched;
- Consistent implementation of the agreed action plan;
- ‘Outdoor guardians’ created within political representation;
- Reinforce the partnership working in place to connect outdoor recreation representatives with government to co produce services and opportunities; (e.g. CAAN and through Sport NI)
- Marketing of the relevant benefits and contribution of outdoor recreation within the political arena;
- Measure and show the value of outdoor recreation to the government departments and councils e.g. tourism potential; safer communities; health promotion, prevention and intervention etc.

5. What structures or partnerships do you believe are required for the delivery of the vision and its aims?

Any future structures may benefit from formalising the links with other structures in council areas e.g. Belfast Strategic Partnership, Active Belfast Partnership etc

The partnerships that are in place are considered sufficient operationally. They may benefit more with greater co-ordination or signposting to resources or facilities effectively across the region.

Greater clarity of the role of NIEA and support from NIEA to Councils would improve delivery through structures and partnerships.

Greater involvement of landowners and business in future structures or partnerships could also be considered beneficial to positively manage access, public rights of way and overall development of opportunities in ‘the Outdoors’.

6. What are the key issues that you have faced with respect to current funding arrangements?

Current funding arrangements would benefit from a co-ordinated investment approach from government sources. This would enable programmes to be delivered in a more streamlined way and address the risk to delivery from different funders/ government departments rolling out funding with different deadlines. It capitalises on the

Council's existing connection to local communities and neighbourhoods and service delivery expertise.

7. How can the benefits of volunteering be fully realised to developing outdoor recreation?

An effective volunteering policy, plan and framework for outdoor recreation would ensure that all volunteering opportunities, roles and resources are co-ordinated to provide a quality volunteering experience. This would enable employment opportunities, training and development of individuals to be promoted. Links with voluntary groups would also be improved to realise as many opportunities as is feasible, Accredited volunteering schemes would support the quality of the volunteering experience and be an additional incentive to be involved. (E.g. Investors in Volunteering quality standard).

8. What innovative approaches to investment in facilities and programmes could be developed?

There may be potential to explore the following areas:

- Development of sponsorship opportunities;
- Agreed formula where social investment proportionally matches the capital investment or commercial income opportunity available which would complement the Council's neighbourhood agenda and city wide Investment Programme.

9. Are there ways that users and commercial operators can contribute financially towards the 'outdoors'?

There may be potential to explore the following areas:

- A scale of entry charges to sustain the natural environment by user groups/ commercial operators.
- Corporate companies contribute to investing resources (finance or people or equipment etc) into delivering the public need as part of the corporate social responsibility

10. How can a more co-ordinated approach to promoting and marketing outdoor recreation or aspects of it be developed?

Currently most of the marketing is delivered through CAAN and its dedicated website portals (e.g. Outdoors NI). A full illustration of the existing organisations linked to outdoor recreation is included in appendix 2. There is a positive experience from officers of working

with CAAN and the marketing approaches appear to have generated great returns. It may benefit from further investment to drive the message.

11. How can a greater understanding of the importance of taking personal responsibility for the environment be achieved and what can be done to translate this into change?

There may be potential to explore the following areas:

- Greater emphasis on lifelong education and sustainable outdoor recreation;
- Remove/ reduce any financial barrier there may be to promote the message;
- Brand it - making the outdoors more attractive to all;
- Support councils in delivering the message of community owned space

12. Do you think that the Leave No Trace ethic is a solution to this or are other measures required?

'Leave No Trace' is a worldwide model and well accepted. It continues to grow in recognition and may benefit from a formal link with the Eco Schools programme. Also:

- It costs to be part of the 'Leave No Trace' scheme which may act as a barrier to the promotion of a global message;
- The model depends on volunteers therefore links to education establishments and programmes or activities may provide a more consistent approach.

13. What measures and activities could be developed to communicate the values and benefits of Outdoor Recreation within Northern Ireland?

An outdoor charter has potential to promote a shared message with all stakeholders across government. It can be broadened to appeal to the general public through general marketing, volunteering schemes and new activities e.g.

- An ambassador project for young people could be progressed.

- A lifelong approach to engaging people into the value and benefits through the education system may plant the seed for ownership to begin at any age.
- Continued support and profiling of Outdoors NI across all social media.

14. What is required (locations, facilities, services and/or activities) to provide sufficient and sustainable access and facilities for outdoor recreation?

A single co-ordinated strategic approach is sufficient for the development of the outdoor recreation vision across the region rather than individual strategic approaches. It enables greater connectivity of key destinations across the region to meet the needs of users and visitors alike to promote different activities in the best of locations.

The Council is committed to aligning outdoor recreation with all other important policy directions e.g. NI Active travel, NI obesity framework, sustainable development, Active and the draft programme for government. For example promoting active travel where sustainable routes are developed across Belfast and to/ from the city. Public transport improvements to support outdoor recreation across Belfast and to connect Belfast to other key destinations is essential, if we are to capitalise on the day and short stay visitor potential from outdoor pursuits and holidays.

15. How should strategic planning and provision at a regional and local level be developed?

Belfast continues to try to balance the need to preserve open space alongside the need to regenerate the city at the same time. It is committed to an Investment Programme which will help to do this and will leverage central government support to take advantage where possible to meet all of these requirements.

16. What are the current barriers to the development of facilities?

The opportunities in outdoor recreation can equally present as barriers where a consistently applied vision is not in place. It can lead to a lack of resources being secured or people not being outdoors and active or access, ownership and community safety of outdoor recreation being affected. The balance of interests in the development of outdoor recreation and its impact on the natural resource may also present as a barrier.

17. What gaps are there in terms of research into outdoor recreation or key areas where further information is required?

A consistent and co-ordinated approach to researching access and usage and related to the direct benefits of outdoor recreation is required.

18. Are you aware of mechanisms that could bring a more strategic overview to capturing information?

There are a number of emerging models that could be evidenced including the Council/ Queens University Belfast Walkability model, SOPARC Connswater Community Greenway and HEAP cycling model.

19. Have you any additional comments about key issues and challenges or the actions and activities required for the development of the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan?

None.”

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.

Consultation - Draft Biodiversity Duty Guidelines

The Committee considered the undernoted report

“1 Relevant Background Information

The Department of Environment Northern Ireland (DoENI) has circulated its draft Biodiversity Duty Guidelines and has invited comments from the Council. A copy of the draft guidelines is attached as Appendix 1.

The comments received from this initial consultation phase will be used in the development of guidance for all public bodies to enable them to fulfil their Biodiversity Duty under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. This duty requires every public body in exercising any of its functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity.

2 Key Issues

Following consideration by relevant officers across the Council, a response has been completed in draft form for approval by Members. This is provided at Appendix 2.

In summary the draft response welcomes the introduction of these draft guidelines and believes it is a useful starting point in the development of clear and concise guidance for public bodies. The draft response provides the Council's overarching comments and officers have requested a meeting with DoENI to discuss the issues in more detail.

The draft response also highlights that the guidance is considered to be central government focused and it was felt should include a chapter that is specific to Local Government and that the case studies used should also include some that are more relevant to local authorities. It is also suggested that Local Biodiversity Action Plans should be given more prominence in the guidance.

Subject to approval by Council, it is proposed that the final response is submitted to DoENI.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

None required at present

Human Resources

None required at present

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

It is anticipated that DoENI will undertake an equality impact screening of the guidelines before they are finalised.

5 Recommendations

Members are asked to –

- (i) Note the contents of this report; and
- (ii) Approve submission of a final response to DoENI, subject to any comments or amendment provided.

Appendix 1

Duty to conserve biodiversity

1 -

- (1) It is the duty of every public body, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.
- (2) In complying with subsection (1), a public body must in particular have regard to any strategy designated under section 2(1).
- (3) Conserving biodiversity includes—
 - (a) in relation to any species of flora or fauna, restoring or enhancing a population of that species;
 - (b) in relation to any type of habitat, restoring or enhancing the habitat.
- (4) The Department must issue guidance containing recommendations, advice and information for the assistance of public bodies in complying with the duty under subsection (1).
- (5) In this section ‘public body’ means –
 - (a) a Northern Ireland department;
 - (b) a district council;
 - (c) a statutory undertaker within the meaning of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (NI 11);
 - (d) any other body established or constituted under a statutory provision.

The biodiversity strategy

2 -

- (1) The Department must designate one or more strategies for the conservation of biodiversity (whether prepared by the Department or by one or more other persons).
- (2) The Department must publish any strategy so designated.

- (3) A strategy so designated may include different provision for different cases or types of case.
- (4) The Department must –
 - (a) not later than 5 years after the coming into operation of subsection (1), and
 - (b) at least once in every period of 5 years thereafter, publish a report regarding the implementation of any strategy designated under that subsection.

Biodiversity lists

3 –

- (1) The Department must publish a list of the species of flora and fauna and types of habitat which in the Department's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity.
- (2) The Department must –
 - (a) keep under review any list published under this section;
 - (b) make such revisions of any such list as appear to the Department appropriate; and
 - (c) publish any list so revised as soon as reasonably practicable after revising it.
- (3) Without prejudice to section 1(1) and (2), a public body must-
 - (a) take such steps as appear to the body to be reasonably practicable to further the conservation of the species of flora and fauna and types of habitat included in any list published under this section; or
 - (b) promote the taking by others of such steps.
- (4) In this section 'public body' has the same meaning as in section 1.

Appendix 2

Draft Biodiversity Duty Guidelines

Contribution from Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council would like to thank the Department of the Environment for distributing the draft Biodiversity Duty Guidance document. The Council believes this first draft is a useful starting point from which to commence the process in developing clear, concise guidance to enable all public bodies fulfil their Biodiversity Duty under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Belfast City Council (the council) believes that amendments are required to ensure that the guidance document facilitates a consistent approach in delivering the duty across public bodies.

This contribution outlines the council's overarching comments on the structure and content of the document. We would also welcome the opportunity for an officer to meet with officials in the Department to discuss the comments in greater detail.

Overarching Comments

Requirements of the Duty

It is not clear from the document what exactly is expected of Council. Chapter 5, page 16 provides the most detailed information but there is still considerable discussion required in particular on delivery approach and monitoring. It is especially concerning that Local Biodiversity Action Plans have not been included in this section given this is the key delivery mechanism for biodiversity at a local level.

The DEFRA document 'Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty' outlined the following.

In demonstrating that it has fulfilled its Duty to have regard to biodiversity, a local authority is likely to be able to show that it has:

- Identified and taken opportunities to integrate biodiversity considerations into all relevant service areas and functions, and ensured that biodiversity is protected and enhanced in line with current statutory obligations;
- Raised awareness of staff, managers and elected members with regard to biodiversity issues;

- Demonstrated a commitment and contribution to key local biodiversity initiatives, such as Local Biodiversity Action Plans, Regional Records Centres and Local Site systems;
- Demonstrated progress against biodiversity indicators and targets.

Belfast City Council considers that similar text specific to Councils should be included in the guidance.

Scope of the Document

The guidance document is aimed at all public bodies. While this may be useful in terms of consistency of approach, it is also a weakness in so far as:

- This approach has meant the document is very central government focused.
- The functions of public bodies are so wide ranging (from Roads Service to the Department of Education) that it is difficult to be specific and there is scope for misunderstanding of what is required.
- There is a lack of detail over the range of public bodies.

The council suggests the following to overcome some of the above shortfalls:

- The inclusion of a chapter aimed at Local Government which should include Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Detailed appendices for the different types of public bodies would help, while keeping the main text holistic.
- The inclusion of more relevant and Local Government specific case studies.
- The development of a Steering Group consisting of representatives from a range of public bodies including government departments and local authorities to ensure more detailed relevant advice and case studies.

Omissions from the Document

The policy and legislative framework should be clearly outlined. This should include:

- The full text of the legislation (Appendix 1).
- The Northern Ireland and EU biodiversity targets.
- The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy which is the overarching policy framework.

- The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group and its role particularly in relation to reporting on the strategy.

It would also be useful to include examples in relation to global biodiversity and how public bodies can and are impacting upon this.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are a very useful mechanism for biodiversity delivery at a local level. Many councils have embraced this approach and have developed LBAPs. Both councils and the Department of the Environment have invested significantly in the LBAP process. It is consequently disappointing that the LBAP approach has not been more clearly developed in the Guidance.

Biodiversity Implementation Plans

The purpose of Biodiversity Implementation Plans should be defined and how these relate to and differ from LBAPs. It would also be useful to include a few completed examples including examples on the reporting of actions.

Monitoring

The Biodiversity Duty is linked to the NI Biodiversity Strategy and the Department must publish a report regarding the implementation of the strategy at least every 5 years.

It is not clear in the current Draft Guidance document how public bodies will be expected to report on their progress in fulfilling the Duty. There are a number of queries around this:

- How will public bodies' reporting mechanisms inform and feed into reporting on the NI Biodiversity Strategy and national and international biodiversity targets?
- Currently the NI Biodiversity Group are tasked with reporting to the Executive every three years on the NI Biodiversity Strategy. How will the NI Biodiversity Group feed into the reporting process?

In addition who will decide if a public body is complying with the legislation and are there any sanctions if they do not?

It would be useful to outline these processes and data reporting formats and templates at the outset to ensure public bodies will not have to report in a number of formats and are collecting all required information in an agreed format.

Specific Comments

The document is currently too long and the details of the duty are not outlined until page 14. We would suggest that chapter 4 be brought to the beginning of the document and that chapters 1 – 3 are shortened.

The term biodiversity needs to be defined fully, for example there is no mention of genetic variation within species.

Page 14, paragraph 1 - There is reference to the Sustainable Development Strategy but no mention of the NI Biodiversity Strategy which public bodies must take account of as part of the Duty. The Council suggests replacing the Sustainable Development Strategy with the Biodiversity Strategy.

Page 14, paragraph 3 refers twice to 'main' function but the legislation states 'any'. Again on page 17 there is a reference to 'main' functions. Clarity and consistency are required to avoid confusion.

Page 18, paragraph 2 refers to restoring habitats and species after loss. It should be noted that this may not be possible.

There are a number of technical inaccuracies in the document and in parts GB terminology is used such as SSSIs.

Case Studies

The council considers that there should be more up to date and relevant case studies included in the document. A suggested approach is an online portal where more specific and up to date case studies can be uploaded by all public policies. In particular we would like to see the inclusion of case studies on Invasive Alien Species. We would be willing to contribute case studies to such a portal.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairman