

# Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 15th November, 2012

## MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCabe (Chairman);  
Aldermen Humphrey and Rodgers;  
Councillors Corr, Garrett, Haire, Hendron,  
Mallon, McKee, Mullan, Ó Donnghaile, O'Neill,  
Thompson and Spence.

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

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Hartley, Kelly, Kyle, McNamee, Mac Giolla Mhín and A. Newton.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 11th October 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 November.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Belfast Boxing Ring**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th March, it had agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from representatives of the Belfast Boxing Ring in relation to its plans for the erection of a number of statues to acknowledge the valuable contribution which boxing had made to the City. Accordingly, former boxers Mr. E. McAuley, Mr. D. Larmour and Mr. N. Sinclair, together with Mr. T. Monaghan, a brother of the late former world champion John "Rinty" Monaghan, representing that group, were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. McAuley informed the Committee that the Belfast Boxing Ring had been established in 2010, with the aim of celebrating the rich and shared history of boxing, both amateur and professional, across communities in the City. He explained that the group was seeking the Council's permission to use some of its parks in order to mark that history. The group's initial objective was to commission a statue to mark the

achievements of “Rinty” Monaghan, which they would, ideally, wish to be located at the Cathedral Gardens at York Street. The statue, a replica of which had been displayed at the meeting, would be approximately ten feet in height and cast in bronze and would, in the view of the Belfast Boxing Ring, prove to be a popular tourist attraction at a key entry point to the City and the Cathedral Quarter. It was hoped that, if approved, the statue would be completed in time to mark the 30th anniversary in 2014 of the boxer’s death.

Mr. McAuley then referred to the Belfast Boxing Ring’s proposals for the erection of a statue in the Dunville Park to celebrate the career of the former world boxing champion John Caldwell, who had died in 2009. He outlined the extent of the discussions which had taken place with the local community and political representative in the Falls area and pointed out that the Park, which was being redeveloped currently, would be an ideal location in which to acknowledge a man who had brought great pride to that area.

Mr. Larmour provided an overview of the tradition of boxing in the Shankill district and informed the Members that the group planned to mark that legacy in some form, possibly within the Woodvale Park. He explained that the Belfast Boxing Ring would, as part of the process, be engaging with local representatives and other interested parties.

In response to Members’ questions, the representatives confirmed that the projects would be funded through contributions from both public bodies and private individuals and that issues such as maintenance and insurance cover would be addressed once approval had been granted.

The representatives thanked the Committee for receiving them and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee agreed, in principle, that it was supportive of the Belfast Boxing Ring’s proposals and noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting providing detailed information on the projects suggested.

### **Support for Sport Development Grants**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meetings on 10th May and 9th August, it had noted that a number of applications for funding under the Support for Sport Small Development Grants Scheme had been deferred to enable further information to be obtained. The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 13th September, it had agreed, due to the high number of applications which had been received, to close the aforementioned Scheme for 2012/2013, with an over-allocation existing of £17,506.

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that three of those applications which had been deferred had, subsequently, been re-submitted and assessed and had been found to meet the requisite criteria. He explained that, based on experience from previous years, clubs did not tend to draw down all of the funding which had been allocated to them, which, for 2012/2013, would leave a potential underspend of approximately £30,000. On that basis, officers were of the view that the awarding of funding to the three clubs concerned would not place the fund in an overspend position.

Accordingly, he had, under the authority delegated to him, approved the allocation of funding of up to a maximum of £1,000 for Bloomfield Bowling Club (Men), Bloomfield Bowling Club (Women) and Basement Spartans Football Club, with the latter organisation being awarded an additional one-off payment of £250 for the purchase of equipment.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Facilities Management Arrangements –  
Draft Proposal for the Future Use of Council Playing Fields**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Relevant Background Information**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to;-**

- (i) remind Committee of the main conclusions from the review of Facility Management Agreements (FMAs);**
- (ii) present a draft Policy in relation to the use of Council playing fields and associated documentation for review and comment;**
- (iii) introduce Phase 1 of a draft Framework for in the form of ‘Agreements for Use’; and**
- (iv) seek Committee authority to take the next steps as outlined in section 2.5.**

**1.2 Members will be aware that a review of Facility Management Agreements began in April 2011, the findings of which were presented at a Members workshop on 19 December 2011.**

**1.3 Prior to this workshop in November 2011, Committee received a request from a sports club for an FMA for a pitch on a multi-pitch, multi code playing fields site, in return for some investment in and around the pitch. This request was deferred on the advice of the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive who advised that a framework and set of criteria should be developed against which all requests coming from sports clubs / organisations could be assessed on a consistent basis.**

**1.4 At the workshop in December 2011 Members clearly acknowledged that the FMA review demonstrated that a fundamental revision was needed going forward and that developing a revised proposal would be a complex issue, the details of which needed further more in-depth consideration.**

- 1.5 Officers continued to work on the development of a consistent approach and scoring criteria against which requests could be assessed and Party Briefings took place from February to April 2011. At these briefings an FMA review paper including a scoring matrix was discussed and the feedback from Members was generally that a consistent approach would be necessary and that the scoring matrix would be a useful tool to assess requests from clubs to the Council on a consistent basis. More details on the findings from the FMA review and the Committee decision trail relating to FMAs has been forwarded to the Committee.

Over the last year the Council context has also changed and this draft policy reflects the environmental and governance changes, the principles of the Investment programme, the Local Investment fund and the evolving area working and project management boards. Throughout the FMA review period Committee has continued to consider individual requests from FMA holders or for new FMAs and there is a growing need for an arrangement which will allow the council the flexibility to react to demand within the city as well as to honour new or emerging commitments made as part of the Community Capital project funding operated by Sport NI or emerging LIF / BIF projects.

This report proposes a way forward for a replacement agreement – an “Agreement for Use”. This is the first phase of an evolving approach looking at how we manage our assets based on the outcomes the Council needs to achieve from the particular asset. At this stage the proposal relates to Parks and leisure grass pitches and pavilions.

## 2.0 Key Issues

- 2.1 Historically the Council has taken a reactive approach to the implementation of partnership agreements which has resulted in there being a variety of types of arrangements in place. Currently these are in the form of FMAs, leases, licence agreements, funding agreements, project management agreements and “out of hours use” agreements – and are agreements for both “service provision”, individual club use and agreements over land (leases).

- 2.2 Scope of the Proposal: Balancing Interests** It is important that any future arrangement between the Council and a sporting organisation or club seeks to maximise the use of the facility (for both partner organisation / club and the local community) as well as providing safeguards around public access. Indeed the purpose of such arrangements is to “add-value” from a Council perspective – either through appropriate physical improvement of the facility OR through engagement in “active” development programmes (in partnership with the Council), which will encourage participation and use of the asset.
- 2.3** The new proposal needs to find a balance between preserving the best interests of public access versus the level of ‘dedicated use’ required by sporting organisations for competitive play.
- 2.4** At present there are 3 “levels of use” of playing pitch sites namely:
- 1. Public Use; - book and pay as you go, through Outdoor leisure bookings line/ system**
  - 2. Dedicated use (club and competition use at amateur, intermediate or international equivalent level) – block-booked at a specific point each year via Leagues**
  - 3. Private use (use by a single club / organisation under an FMA, lease or similar agreement)**
- 2.5** A draft policy entitled ‘Parks and Leisure playing pitches Agreements policy’ is attached, which outlines a framework for a revised type of agreement which will allow the department to develop and improve the use of the pitch assets through partnership working.
- In particular the draft policy proposes a mutually beneficial arrangement [Agreements for Use] which are scoped to accommodate the requirements of the wider sporting community for dedicated use of sites during competitive play periods but with safeguards around public use in part through a sports development plan for the site.
- 2.6 Assessment of requests / applications for new style agreements**
- Where applicants are bringing investment or physical improvement to the asset, the new arrangement will provide a level of “bookings assurance” (dedicated slots booked for their use, but not exclusive use) depending on their competition play requirements and an assessment of their application against draft assessment criteria and weightings as follows:-

- Participation (20);
- Partnership Working (20);
- Demonstration of Social Value through Activity Programming (20);
- Level of site management (10);
- Strategic Fit (10);
- Applicant's governance and management structure (20).

It is proposed that an additional criterion would be applied for applications which include capital investment, which would count for 30% of the overall score for these projects. This would be:-

- Amount of Capital Investment / Affordability for Council

2.7 This approach will replace existing FMA arrangements and will continue to be developed (in conjunction with officers across the Council departments).

It is proposed that the existing Support for Sport funding scheme will be further enhanced and that any future financial support would be provided to those clubs / organisations based on their application and an assessment of it against the draft assessment criteria.

## 2.8 Agreements for Use

"Agreements for Use" will be developed to support the Council's vision of an Active Belfast and to promote better delivery through partnership working. The rationale behind the changes proposed is to specifically ensure that the Council can still provide open space (accessible to all) whilst also making better use of the downtime on playing pitch sites through dedicated sports development plans.

In summary 'Agreements for Use' will:

- be managed through an enhanced Support for Sport grant aid;
- through a publicly advertised application process be open to all sporting clubs with a majority of members residing in Belfast city;

- be available for up to 5 years or as an external funder may require; (further discussions with key funders will be required in order to refine the level of agreements around land entitlement / ownership);
  - Applications will be assessed against the proposed criteria;
  - operate a sliding scale of financial awards and apply the relevant terms and conditions of award (still to be developed);
  - ensure public access is safeguarded;
  - be renewable;
  - include a sports development plan which focuses on wider community involvement in activities onsite;
  - still allow competition play on sites by agreement holders or other teams as organised by the governing body or leagues.
- 2.9 The Council will maintain and replace the physical fabric of the sites including all pitch and pavilion maintenance. All bookings related to them will operate on a first come first serve basis and in agreement with the umbrella leagues/ codes.
- 2.10 The Council will support applicants to apply for grant aid to support sports development plans for its sites and assure competition use as detailed by the governing body or requirements detailed and paid for by the club.
- 2.11 No pitch/pavilion hire fee will be charged for sports development activities outside of the competitive play carried out by the applicant.
- 2.12 Pitch stock
- Agreements for Use are for standard grass pitches only. Where an applicant is seeking to secure a 3/4G pitch on an existing grass pitch site it is proposed that a different business model would be required due to the difference in play-able time and income which could be generated from this type of asset.

### **2.13 Operational requirements to develop and implement the policy**

It has taken 12 months for the concept of 'Agreements for Use' to be developed to this point. The next stage is planning the operational implementation of it which is likely to require a further year. If Members agree the new policy direction the next phase is to operationally plan how it will be best implemented. In the next months officers will need to progress the following areas of work to prepare for implementation;-

- Financial assistance – adapting grant aid and refining the assessment criteria and matrix;
- Managing and monitoring partner arrangements
- Site Management - technical support required
- Access and availability of assets and services – Bookings terms and conditions; schedule of charges; public access safeguards ; site assurance terms etc;
- Integrating maintenance back into Parks and Leisure schedule;
- Finalising and completing the engagement approach;
- A transition plan including a notice to terminate all existing FMA holders

### **2.14 Outline engagement plan**

An engagement plan will be finalised by officers, procured and completed and a Committee update will be provided in March / April 2013. Following the engagement exercise officers will have full and final comment on the draft policy and implementation plan. Engagement will be carried out with sporting codes and leagues along with a wider range of organisations at all levels. There will be initial engagement with existing FMA holders due to the impact the co-ordinated approach has on their circumstance.

### **2.15 Existing FMAs**

Existing FMAs will be served notice of 1 and it is proposed that this notice would be served following Member approval of the proposed next steps. Two current FMAs will continue to run in their current form until the expiry of their existing legal agreement. [Clarendon Playing Fields; October 2015 and Musgrave Playing Fields; September 2029].



Current FMA holders may however apply for an 'Agreement for Use' from the Council as outlined. Additional support will be available to transform existing FMA holders over the next year in preparation for the new approach. It is likely that Members may be approached by interested parties due to the proposed changes in these arrangements however it is proposed there is a transition year with dedicated support for FMA holders to apply to the new grant aid scheme open to the wider sporting community.

### **2.16 Proposed Next Steps**

The critical next steps which officers will be progressing in the next 6 months are:-

- Meaningful and ongoing communication and engagement with all stakeholders;
- Required changes in operational arrangements to support the new policy completed;
- Managing existing FMA and other arrangements to a close and phasing to new approach were suitable;
- Finalising the policy and associated arrangements for implementation in 2013/14 business year.

### **3.0 Resource Implications**

#### **3.1 Financial**

Existing FMA payments will be re-distributed in the form of grant aid for "active" sports development plans. The total figure for this has not yet been defined.

#### **3.2 Human Resources**

Ongoing officer time from a range of officers across the department will be dedicated to implementation and ongoing management in the medium to long term.

Legal services support and advice from Estates and Property / Projects will also be a requirement during the next stage.

#### **3.3 Asset and Other Implications**

Resource is required for the engagement exercise and this is anticipated to form part of an already agreed research services budget.

**4.0 Equality Implications**

4.1 The proposed revised approach will be screened in line with the council's existing equality screening process.

**5.0 Recommendations**

5.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) note the update provided;
- (ii) review and comment on the draft Parks and Leisure playing pitches agreements policy, assessment criteria and associated documentation
- (iii) authorise officers to continue with the next steps as outlined in section 2.16 subject to any amendments proposed and continued progress reports being brought back to Committee at key stages in the process.

**PARKS and LEISURE PLAYING PITCHES**  
**AGREEMENTS POLICY**

**Purpose:**

This policy provides a framework to promote, monitor and evaluate the Parks and Leisure department's commitments through partnership working to develop use of its playing pitch sites.

It provides an outline of how the department will support mutually beneficial partnership arrangements and balances public access with dedicated use e.g. sporting organisations across all playing pitch sites.

The council seeks to promote an Active Belfast supported by assets which are contemporary and fit for purpose and being used to their full potential.

**Policy objectives:**

This policy details how the department will promote, monitor and evaluate its commitments to mutually beneficial partnership working to develop use of its playing pitch sites. The specific objectives are to:

1. Provide a departmental framework for working with sporting organisations and clubs and;

2. Develop the management approach for dedicated use by not for profit sporting organisations of sites while safeguarding public use;
3. Implement 'agreements for use' through enhanced Support for Sport grant aid;
4. Develop site based sports development plans;
5. Provide quality dedicated space for competitive sporting play.

**Context:**

The department currently has three main types of use on playing pitch sites. These are described for the purposes of this policy as:

Category of use	Purpose	Management arrangement	Methods of engagement
Public use	One off activities or matches.	Booking system and terms and conditions	Telephone contact Written contact User meetings
Restricted public use	Competitive play at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amateur,</li> <li>• intermediate or</li> <li>• international</li> <li>• level (as appropriate to the type of sport).</li> </ul> Often block bookings made	Agreements for use	Management boards/ fora League/ code meetings Park manager site meetings Telephone contact Written contact
'Private' use controlled by club or applicant	Private activities e.g. by private members clubs	Lease	Written contact Telephone contact

This policy focuses on those council owned sites where existing and/or future arrangements may result in restrictions being placed on public use and in particular outlines a method for working with sporting organisations and clubs with a view to more appropriately managing the sites falling within Category II on the above table.

Sites which remain open for public use on a first come, first served, basis will continue to be managed through the agreed booking terms and conditions.

Existing sites which are leased to sporting clubs will continue to be controlled by the club and managed in accordance with the terms of the legal arrangements in place.

**Restricted public use:**

For the purpose of this policy 'restricted public use' is defined as any regular play by a sporting organisation booked on an annual basis on a council site. At present it is mainly competitive play which falls into this category and both the definition and the policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the patterns of use.

**Management of restricted public use:**

The arrangements for restricted public use will be managed through a legal agreement entitled 'Agreements for Use'. Agreements for Use operate on a not for profit basis and will be open to any sporting organisation which can meet the eligibility and assessment criteria and where there are sites available to integrate their sports development plan into site management and delivery. Where demand becomes greater than the number of sites available the council may consider joint club/ team partnership arrangements or prioritise allocation according to the assessment scoring received for each proposal.

This policy applies to all grass playing pitches.

Agreements for Use are developed to support the council's vision of an Active Belfast and to lead its delivery through partnership working. It specifically aims to ensure the Council adhere to its statutory responsibilities of providing public open space and it seeks to use the downtime on playing pitch sites through dedicated sports development plans.

**The benefits of working with sporting organisations and clubs:**

Arrangements with external organisations must deliver a mutual benefit for the council and the organisation.

**In general the council will provide:**

- An enhanced Support for Sport grant scheme to support the delivery of sports development plans according to the scale of the project and the site;
- maintenance of each site to a quality standard which covers competition level;
- a fit for purpose booking system to manage bookings for all sites;
- opportunities to renew agreements;
- ongoing training and support opportunities through the council's Clubmark scheme for all sports development plans;
- opportunity for regular engagement with sporting organisations/clubs on the development of provision;
- opportunities to accommodate competition play on sites by agreement holders or other teams as organised by the governing body or leagues;
- replace repair and renew the physical fabric of the sites.

**An external sporting organisation or club entering into an 'agreement for use' will:**

- Provide and complete a sports development plan of activities to improve use of the site in downtime;
- Ensure public access is achievable and safeguarded as part of the sports development plan;
- Man the sites including key holding duties for all activities in the sports development plan or competitive play (subject to specific legal arrangements);
- Prepare the pitches for activities e.g. erect goal nets and corner flags etc
- Adhere to the terms and conditions of funding and the standards of operation of the council;
- Regularly meet with council staff provide and attend relevant training to develop the use and site;

- Use the council's bookings system to reserve the site for all activities and pay the appropriate hire charges to the council

All agreements should ensure there is no advertising at the site without prior permission of the council.

### Eligibility

A sporting organisation/club or consortium of organisations may apply to enter into an Agreement for Use with the council. Business organisations, individuals or statutory organisations are not eligible unless they are a partner in a social enterprise consortium. The terms of this will be set out in the relevant 'Agreement for use'.

A sporting organisation can seek an agreement for use where it proposes to provide:

- enhanced use of a council playing pitch and/ or;
- appropriate capital investment for a council owned asset

All successful applicants must deliver an active sports development programme to meet the needs agreed in the sports development plan. The plan should include a focus on wider community involvement in activities onsite and ongoing public access;

The tenure of the agreements is for up to seven years. Exceptions may be appropriate where the scale of proposed capital investment warrants same.

The policy is designed to be equitable and transparent when developing partnerships and the council will monitor the level of public assets and their availability through its annual stock inspection reports and the performance reports associated with each agreement. Public access is paramount for every agreement for use developed.

### Exclusions

- This policy does not apply to any asset which operates city wide events or activities or is a regional sporting venue;
- Any 3/4g or proposed 3/4g proposals will be subject to scrutiny from a separate business model outside of this policy.

- The existence of an Agreement for Use must not preclude the council from either planning to hold events on the site or from acceding to requests from other organisations who may wish to do so;
- It also excludes the City of Belfast Playing Fields which should remain in direct council control as the public playing pitch hub.

#### Assessing applications

Where an application is for the active development of a playing pitch or site this will be assessed as a grant application using a revised council's Support for Sport grants scheme.

A scoring matrix will be developed around the new assessment criteria and will be applied when considering any requests. If the application is successful the future use of the site will be managed through 'agreements for use' whether at an amateur, intermediate or international level.

An operational procedure will be attached to the policy when the revised grant scheme is completed.

#### Once an agreement is in place:

- partners will have to provide written monthly updates on use from and delivery of the active development plan validated by the site manager;
- Meet the site manager on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing development.
- Attend network meetings as appropriate;
- Complete recommended training provided by the council or a third party to fulfil obligations;

The Outdoor Leisure Unit will verify and manage all use and active development outcomes as a whole.

#### Monitoring and evaluation

- Booking reports provided and analysed on a monthly basis;

- Monthly review meeting on the roll out of the proposal includes the active development plan by the relevant manager and the partner/s.
- An annual review of the performance of social partnerships will be provided to Departmental Management Team (DMT) which is a self evaluation by the partner and an independent report from the relevant manager.
- An independent evaluation on all arrangements to be commissioned by year five;

### **Renewal**

**A renewals process should be initiated by the partner before the sixth month of the final year of the partnership arrangement to allow handover if appropriate or smooth running of an existing partnership.”**

After a lengthy discussion, during which the Director of Parks and Leisure undertook to forward to Members a list of Facilities Management Agreements in place currently, including their date of expiry, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Scale of Charges for Parks and Leisure Services 2013/2014**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1 Relevant Background Information**

**At the special Parks and Leisure Committee meeting on 9th February 2012, the Committee agreed the scale of charges for the department for 2012/13**

**Committee agreed a concessionary rate of approximately 50% of the full rate will be applied across all activities in relation to over 60s, those on means tested benefits, students and children (up to the age of 17) to streamline the scale of charges and make them easier to understand.**

**Committee was reminded of the difficult economic climate and the impact that this is having on our commercially focused services such as the Zoo, Malone House, Belfast Castle and Leisure Services.**

**It was further proposed in reports in June and September 2012 that the Director be given delegated authority to approve a range of measures including promotional offers to increase memberships and discounts for special need schools.**



## 2 Key Issues

### Belfast Castle and Malone House (Appendix 1)

These venues have seen income adversely affected by the economic downturn. The venues regularly benchmark against the local venues and hotels to ensure that their rates are competitive. The corporate market has been impacted significantly from the reduction in internal customers and from across the public sector and in response to this many of the room hire fees have been reduced some by up to a third to stimulate this market

- 2.2 It is proposed to increase charges on the weddings market by between 8-11% as the venues generate approximately 50/35% of their income each year (Belfast Castle/Malone House) in this area. Other promotions will also be put in place during the year to help stimulate usage. Committee is asked to note the use of these venues to all internal departments will be provided at a discount of 50% on normal rates.

### Belfast Zoo (Appendix 2)

It is proposed to :

- Increase admissions by 5% for a summer ticket from £10 to £10.50 Adult; £5 to £5.25 for a concession.
- A winter ticket by 2% from £8 to £8.20 Adult; £4 to £4.10 for a concession.
- A family ticket has been increased by 4% from £27 to £28 in summer and 2% from £21.60 to £22 in winter. This is for up to 2 adults and 3 children and represents a 22% decrease on the individual summer price.

### Cemeteries/Crematorium(Appendix 3)

Extensive briefings took place earlier this year in relation to fees and charges especially with regard to cremations.

A 10% increase on non residents charge was agreed previously by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting in February 2011 for a four year period. It is proposed that the same increase be applied again for 2013/14 for residents i.e. cremation charges to Belfast residents to rise by £50. Other charges will rise in line with inflation which is approximately 3-5% with rounding.

- It is proposed that for burials a 5% increase is levied for both residents and non-residents. Ancillary charges will be charged in relation to the direct costs i.e. memorialisation, urns, foundations and the use of the organist and the same charge will apply to residents and non residents.

**Indoor Leisure (Appendix 4)**

At committee in December 2011 the framework for the review of the Boost Discount Scheme within Leisure Services was agreed. The emphasis of the framework is to promote membership rather than casual use and that charges reflect better value for money. There would also be one concessionary scheme instead of four. The concession has been set at 50% discount for all activities except for classes and the fitness suite which are used most by casual users. The rate is 60% discount for these activities to ensure the rates are kept competitive. The concession rates apply to:

- 17s and under.
- students in full time education
- over 60s - entitled to free use for access before 11am Monday to Friday. Concession price applies after this.
- Means Tested Benefit charge applies at all times and is available to recipients of the following benefits and their dependent children 17 and under or in full time education: income support, job seekers allowance income based, tax credits (accompanied by health charges exemption certificate), housing benefit, pension credit, training for success scheme, asylum seekers.

It is proposed that direct debit memberships are maintained at £25 per month with a concession rate of £12 per month to stay competitive and increase the volume of members. The majority of the remaining prices are increased between 3-5%. An exception is for private coaching which was only introduced last year and incurs a monthly fee of £100 for coaches to use our facilities and charges others for example for swimming lessons. There is a high demand for this service and it is proposed to increase this by 20% to £120 per month.

Holiday sports camps at the Ozone experienced a drop in demand with the removal of a concession rate last year and this charge is being reinstated.

Family Sessions for a family group for a maximum of five people, with no more than two adults for non-book able activities only will continue to be promoted and are currently £6 per family with a proposed increase of 3% bringing it to £6.20. The new scheme has increased the availability of these sessions and includes access to the gym.

It is proposed to put a freeze on hire charges for main halls due to low demand and artificial pitches due to under use at off peak times. An effective participation campaign and the investigation of possible promotions such as at off peak times will help to stimulate the use of these facilities.

The department is continuing to develop the concept of a loyalty card and will bring a report back to committee detailing how it will work once the systems to manage it have been fully developed.

#### **Outdoor Leisure Appendix 5**

##### **Pitches**

Earlier this year substantial benchmarking was undertaken in relation to the cost of pitches within Northern Ireland and committee accepted proposals to increase the costs of pitches books to reflect the environment and the improved standard of pitches being provided. It is proposed that for 2013/14 that an inflationary increase only is provided of 5%.

##### **Outdoor Bowling**

The proposal is to increase the cost of the adult season ticket from £30 to £31.50 with a concession ticket from £15 to £15.80; this includes children and over 60s. All other charges are up by approximately 5%.

##### **Fees linked to FMAs (non pitch bookings)**

Charges are levied by FMA partners for the users of the following sites: COB Golf Course, Mary Peters Track, Orangefield Cycling track and these will be increased in line with inflation of 5%.

##### **Cricket**

It is proposed that the charges associated with Cricket are increased by 5% to cover the costs of maintenance.

##### **Events**

In relation to events the proposal as with 12/13 is to not charge for entry to the Spring/Autumn Fairs as the charges were nominal and the administration around collecting the fees was not cost effective. The proposal is to maintain the charges for trade and society stands at these events as they were reduced last year as there had been a reduced the uptake of these stands. All other activities have increased between 4-5%.

### **High Hedges**

A review is currently underway regarding the first six months operation of the high hedges legislation and to date only one complaint has generated any income for the service. It is proposed that a report will be provided to committee by December to update committee on the service and provide recommendations of how the service will operate going forward. This will included recommending the appropriate charging mechanisms.

### **3 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

There are no equality implications in agreeing the 2013/14 scale of charges. The outcome of any current or proposed loyalty schemes, which may impact on the scale of charges, will however be subject to equality screening.

### **4 Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

(Inflation is currently around 2.5% however for administrative purposes many charges are rounded.)

Currently the impact of the economic downturn is affecting a number of the services and it is hoped that being able to respond with timely promotions will help retain customers and attract new ones. There is an extensive marketing campaign planned to support this approach.

#### **Human Resources**

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

### **5 Recommendations**

It is recommended that committee adopts the scale of charges for 2013/14 as detailed in the attached appendices, for implementation in April 2012.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the following:

### **Belfast Castle and Malone House**

The Committee agreed to adopt the Scale of Charges for 2012/2013 as set out within Appendix 1 of the report.

### **Belfast Zoo**

It was

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

That the Committee agrees that the number of children gaining admittance to the Belfast Zoo on a family ticket be increased from three to five.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to adopt the Scale of Charges for 2013/2014 in relation to the Belfast Zoo, as set out within Appendix 2 of the report.

### **Cemeteries/Crematorium**

It was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,

That the Committee rejects the proposed increases in burial and cremation charges for residents of Belfast for 2013/2014.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to adopt the Scale of Charges for 2013/2014 in relation to burial and cremation, as set out within Appendix 3 of the report.

### **Indoor Leisure**

The Committee agreed to adopt the Scale of Charges for 2013/2014 in relation to Indoor Leisure, as set out within Appendix 4 of the report.

## Outdoor Leisure

It was

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

That the Committee rejects the proposed increase for 2013/2014 in relation to the cost of hire of outdoor pitches.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to adopt the Scale of Charges for 2013/2014 in relation to Outdoor Leisure, as set out within Appendix 5 of the report.

The Committee noted that copies of the appendices, setting out the proposed Scale of Charges for 2013-2014, could be accessed via the Council's Modern.gov website.

## Update on Playing Pitches Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

### **“1. Relevant Background Information**

1.1 Members will be aware that the Playing Pitches strategy, its recommendations and actions plans were agreed by Committee through a number of its meetings over the last year.

1.2 Since then officers across the Council have been working to implement the playing pitches strategy and its associated action plans and Members recently requested more regular updates on ongoing progress.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to outline for Members the progress to date on the different elements of the action plans and to present, for review and approval a change to the maximum and minimum amounts to be awarded under the £750K for Schools fund, which was agreed as a key sub-objective of the Capital Investment strand of the strategy.

### **2. Key Issues**

Within the playing pitches strategy there are three objectives:

- Capital Investment
- Management
- Sport Development

Various activities are taking place under each objective and these include the following:

**Capital Development – 3G pitches and changing facilities**

Planning and discussions around the physical development and specific locations of the new pitches and changing facilities are progressing. We have identified preferred locations within each of these sites.

In August we appointed a design team and work has commenced on the commissioning of the necessary ground surveys to inform construction and they have designed a standard template for a facility with four changing room. The next step is to produce outline drawings for each of the sites and these will be issued for consultation with end users. Following this we will submit applications to the Planning Service and we hope to start this process in the New Year.

The implementation programme and progress reports will be reported to both Parks and Leisure and Strategic Policy and resources Committee as part of the Investment Programme updates.

**Review of Facility Management Arrangements (FMAs)**

A review of FMAs has been ongoing and Members were briefed on the review work to date earlier this year. The proposed future partnership arrangements framework and draft policy is the subject of a separate report to the Committee.

**Sports development activities**

A range of activities are taking place to promote pitch supports among underrepresented groups including females and people with a disability. These include supporting clubs through Clubmark and Support for Sport. Among the grants awarded was one to Belfast Deaf United (association football). Clubs also have an ongoing opportunity to provide their view through the Sports Forum. We are also partnering with governing bodies and Sport NI to host participation events aimed at underrepresented groups including females. We have also run a number of Try it days and Olympic themed events.

**Allocation of £750k fund for school pitches**

Members will be aware that they have previously agreed to the allocation of £750,000, from the total £10million allocation, to a fund for capital enhancements to playing pitches owned by schools.

The purpose of the capital enhancement is to allow greater community access to the pitches, for example the installation of flood lighting to allow the pitch to be used by the local community in the evenings. Any application to the fund would have to demonstrate that the capital enhancement would increase wider community usage of the playing pitch.

At its meeting in August this Committee agreed the draft application process for the £750k for schools. Within this process it was agreed that due to there being a limited amount of money available and based on practice elsewhere, that there would be a minimum award of £25,000 and a maximum award of £75,000. The Council will fund up to 100% of the construction costs, up to a maximum of £75,000, although design costs will not be eligible. Since Members agreed this position, officers have been liaising with partners in BELB to obtain feedback on the proposal and obtain accurate contact information for schools. The feedback from BELB is that whilst they welcome the fund they have suggested that that it is unlikely that the upper threshold proposed will be sufficient for the schools to undertake the actual capital enhancements needed to their pitches. Our partners have also confirmed that there are limited sources of funding available from BELB or the Department of Education. Based on the discussions it is now suggested that schools would need a minimum of £70k and that the maximum should be £150k to cover the costs of doing the capital enhancements we are suggesting such as floodlighting or resurfacing.

The implication of changing the minimum and maximum levels of award to £70,000 and £150,000 is that the number of schools benefiting from the award will decrease to between 5-10 schools. However there is a risk that if we do not increase the limits as suggested we will not get any suitable applications to the fund and therefore will not achieve the outcomes sought from the investment in the schools estate. It is therefore recommended that the minimum level of the award is increased to £70,000 and the maximum level is increased to £150,000.

It is now proposed that the fund opens for applications on the 10 December 2012 and closes on 29 March 2013 and the findings of the assessment of applications will be brought to the May 2013 Committee meeting for a decision on which applications should be approved.

A copy of the revised draft Information and guidance pack for applicants has been forwarded to the Committee.



**Development of a Memorandum of Understanding**

One of the actions within the Playing Pitches Strategy is for the Council to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DENI, BELB and CCMS regarding the opening up and development of recreational facilities at schools for wider public use. Initial discussions have taken place with the education partners and it is proposed that a group is set up with representatives from the Council and the education partners to take forward the development of the MOU.

**3. Resource Implications**

**Financial**

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

**Human Resources**

No additional human resources known at this time.

**Asset and other Implications**

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

**4. Equality and good relations implications**

Policy Arc Ltd was appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy which has been subject to an EQIA. The full EQIA can be downloaded from the Council's website.

**5. Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the update on the work taking place to implement the Playing Pitches Strategy; and
- (ii) agree the minimum and maximum level of grants that will be awarded under the £750k fund for capital enhancements to school pitches be changed to £70,000 and £150,000 respectively."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### Ballysillan Playing Fields

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

Members will recall the presentation that was brought to committee in August 2012 by Councillor Lee Reynolds and the residents of Deerpark Gardens. The presentation outlined several issues of antisocial behaviour which had serious and detrimental effects on their homes and lives. The following report summarises their requests for actions that will reduce the impact of the antisocial behaviour on their homes and lives.

2. Key Issues

The Deerpark residents have consistently reported the following antisocial behaviour issues affecting a number of different areas within the Playing Fields and around the periphery:

- Sectarian attacks
- Use of Quads and Motorbikes
- Substance abuse.

Sectarian Attacks

The Deerpark Residents feel that they have endured a disproportionate number of attacks on their homes in comparison to other properties neighbouring the park and are inclined to believe the root cause is sectarianism. The geography of the area gives the geographic advantage of height for missiles to be thrown from the raised ground of the playing fields into or onto the houses in Deerpark Gardens cul de sac.

The attacks have persisted over many years. This is supported by information from Neighbourhood Officers within the PSNI. Recently the PSNI has reported an increase of sectarian fighting between youths in the park and an increase of missiles thrown into the homes of the Deerpark residents. The primary concern of the residents is the potential for serious or fatal injury and to a lesser extent, damage to property.

Use of Quads and Motorbikes

Residents have also reported the danger and nuisance caused by use of motorised vehicles through the playing fields. The PSNI have stated that they would be very supportive of any actions to reduce this activity.

**Substance abuse and “high risk activity”**

The residents are concerned that the playing fields are currently open to youths to use as a venue for consuming alcohol and drugs. There are a number of open access points which could be used to gain entry at any time and hiding places which are littered with drug paraphernalia. Residents are also noting that youths who use the park at night are engaging in other high risk (sexual) activities.

**Deerpark residents requests**

The residents are requesting that the council formulates a plan and takes action quickly. They have endured the ASB issues for many years and they feel that previous interventions have not worked. Council evidence indicates that the playing fields experience significant ASB, however, what sets the playing fields apart is the serious and consistent reports of sectarian behaviour.

The residents recently met with a council officer and an officer from the PSNI to prioritise a series of specific actions to reduce the ASB noted above. Their requests are as follows:

1. Construct a ‘ball stop’ fence placed at the boundary of the Deerpark properties to prevent missiles being cast into the residents properties.
2. Erect a new fence across the park to facilitate unrestricted access around the rear of Alliance Parade properties but restrict access to the playing fields after closing time.
3. Enhance the gate to the rear of the Iceland building to restrict access from motorised vehicles and youths to the playing fields.
4. Implement a programme of woodland management around specific wooded areas to remove hiding places for youths to drink in.

**Estimated costs**

The approximate cost of the above proposed actions are as follows:

1. Proposed ball stop fence at 120m long x 14m high: £48,000
2. Proposed fence and gate at 100m and 2.8m high: £7000
3. Proposed enhancement to gate: £1000
4. Proposed woodland management: £5700

The residents agreed to prioritise the above actions but also made requests for the following items to be considered should the initial actions prove ineffective:

- Increase the height of boundary fencing
- Install a hanging garden structure to protect Deerpark homes (an example exists on the Newtownards Road)
- Install lighting through the park
- Increase use of CCTV

#### Previous and current interventions

As various issues were previously reported to the council, officers have already implemented a number of interventions around the site:

#### Environmental

- Additional fencing and gates to the rear of Deerpark gardens
- Thinning of woodland areas to increase visibility
- Planting mature trees to deflect missiles
- Enforcement
- Increased joint approach between PSNI and BCC
- Current/Future Environmental interventions
- DSD are replacing fencing around the boundary of the playing fields along Ballysillan Road and Wheatfield Drive
- The boundary hedges around the Bowling pavilion and the Ballysillan Road are being reduced
- Ongoing thinning of woodland areas to increase visibility
- Current/Future Enforcement interventions
- Regular patrols by BCC officers and PSNI officers.
- Current/Future Education interventions
- Engagement activities for young men and women (such as midnight soccer, coaching and fitness or dance programmes) are being initiated in MUGA and leisure facilities across North Belfast and will include Ballysillan Leisure Centre.

### 3. Resource Implications

The costs of implementing the prioritised actions total £61,700 which it is proposed could be drawn from existing departmental resources budgeted for ASB Programme for the year 2012-13. Resources budgeted for Outreach and Participation will support proposed engagement activities.

There will be minimal impact on the future work of the ASB programme in other areas of the city as the ASB programme is designed to respond to parks areas in proportion to reports, evidence and level of risk. There is also resources within the ASB budget available, as the planned interdepartmental Youth Outreach tender was not completed.

These costs are in proportion to reducing the high risks associated with the reported sectarian, criminal and antisocial activities. Based on the available evidence, there are few comparable park areas experiencing such high risk threats to multiple homes in other parts of the city.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

As the intentions behind previous attacks have been identified as being sectarian, officers are working with the Council's Good Relations Unit to ensure that community representatives are kept informed and consulted with throughout the process.

5. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of the report, consider the requests from the Deerpark residents (See 2.2 and 2.4) and approve the resources required to implement the prioritised actions requested (See 2.2 and 2.3)"

After discussion, the Committee acceded to the request from the residents of Deerpark Gardens for measures to be put in place to address ongoing incidents emanating from the Ballysillan Playing Fields and approved the allocation of funding of £61,700, as set out within the report. The Committee agreed also that discussions take place with residents of the Alliance, Deerpark and Glenbryn areas, Elected Members and groups, such as the Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre, regarding the proposed actions.

**Sport Northern Ireland Active Communities Review**

The Committee was advised that Active Communities was a Sport Northern Ireland initiative being delivered from 2010 till 2015 through eleven Council groups, including Belfast. The Director of Parks and Leisure explained that the initiative sought to employ and train a network of full-time and part-time sports coaches and leaders who would deliver activities in community and club settings across Northern Ireland, thereby increasing participation in sport and physical recreation, particularly amongst under-represented groups.

He reported that the initiative had now reached its midway point and that Sport Northern Ireland had sought the views of project partners on its current delivery, potential areas for improvement and any external environmental factors which would, in the future, be likely to have a positive or negative impact on the Active Communities initiative. He provided an overview of the response which had been formulated by those officers

involved in the project and recommended that the following comments be forwarded to Sport Northern Ireland as the Council's response to the review of the Active Communities initiative:

### **COUNCIL RESPONSE**

As part of its review of the Active Communities Programme, Sport NI has asked the Council to contribute to its consultation process, to 'ascertain the views of project partners in relation to Active Communities with a view of influencing future programme development'.

The following points represent the views of key officers who have been involved with the Council's delivery of the programme to date:

#### **Positives**

- § The programme provides an excellent coaching resource for the city;
- § The database used in the programme is an excellent tool for performance management;
- § There has been a high number of participants in the programme in the city (over 10,000 individuals since April 2012);
- § Good support has been provided by Sport NI staff in both setting up and managing the programme; and
- § The programme has provided the Council with the opportunity to work in partnership with a wide range of groups and organisations throughout the city.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- § The overall purpose of the programme needs to be made clear;
- § The overarching framework within which Active Communities is delivered should be reviewed;
- § The intended outcomes of Active Communities (rather than outputs in relation to participation numbers, number of coaches etc) need to be made clear and monitored/evaluated or there needs to be a mechanism by which Sport NI's monitoring/evaluation of the programme considers the contribution of the programme to achieving the Council's intended outcomes for sport and physical activity;
- § The programme needs to focus more on strategic outcomes relating to long term participation in sport/physical activity as opposed to focusing on the involvement of individuals in one-off programmes;
- § There needs to be improved buy-in by sports governing bodies to putting in place participation pathways within

- the city, ensuring that participants in Active Communities taster programmes can feed into local clubs;
- § Sports-specific strategies for those sports involved in the programme in the city need to be produced;
  - § The cost of programme delivery needs to be taken into account going forward; and
  - § Funding is required to appoint more coaches to deliver considerably more activity, in order to build on the success of the programme to date.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Parks and Leisure Improvement Programme –  
Review of Belfast Zoo**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

As part of the Parks and Leisure improvement agenda the Departmental Management Team commissioned FGS McClure Watters to undertake a study of the current business model at Belfast zoo. They presented their report to the Parks and Leisure Management Team in June 2011.

The report examined the zoo’s operating model and highlighted a number of issues that should be addressed including strategic planning, income generation, organisation structure, resources and culture, tourism and marketing.

The report therefore underlined the need for a root and branch operational review of the zoo and consequently the Organisational Development Unit were asked to carry out this review.

Some of the areas identified through initial consultation include:

- Management/leadership responsibility for future development of the Zoo
- Strategic development and business planning
- HR issues
- Inconsistent financial processing and procedure
- Silo culture
- Marketing approach i.e. local versus centralised unit
- Ambiguity over role clarity
- The role of the education unit
- Income generation
- The customer experience
- Increased overtime for staff
- Increased use of agency staff

- Working practices – operational
- Reliance on contractual overtime

## 2 Key Issues

The zoo operational model is split into two sections: the operational and the business strands.

### Operational Strand

There are currently 19 zookeepers on the establishment however over the past 4 years there has been a heavy reliance on the use of agency staff and overtime to supplement these numbers to ensure operational delivery. The role of curator is currently very operationally focused and requires support in order to realise the potential impact and remit of this post. This will be done through the creation of 3 senior working keepers (Sc6). These posts will provide day to day support to the curators in relation to supervising the zookeepers and making day to day operational decisions in relation to zookeeping staff and work.

A team of tractor drivers is in place to support the zoo keeping staff. The review analysis showed that there was potential to combine this role with the stores/procurement function within the zoo. There is also a requirement to establish a senior post within this area to help drive efficiencies through the close monitoring of stock and introducing new working practices and provide effective supervision.

### Business Strand

A recent internal audit of the retail operation within the zoo highlighted a number of areas at risk. The souvenir shop was recently extended however the appropriate staffing arrangements were not put in place resulting in reliance on agency staff being responsible for important financial practices. During the review process the need for permanent staff at both operational and management level became apparent. This will lead to the creation of a “Zoo Crew” post. The role of the Zoo Crew will provide a zoo presence which will help enhance the customer experience at the zoo. The role will be multi faceted and will carry out a range of duties. It is anticipated that this post will carry out litter picking duties at weekends in the busy summer months. This will negate the need for overtime to be paid to grounds maintenance staff who had been previously carrying out this duty. To manage this change the current shop manager and receptionist roles need to be changed to adapt to the new modes of working.



Through research, benchmarking and information gathering the review also highlighted the need for a localised marketing post within the zoo to promote events, respond to every day media enquiries and work with Corporate Communications and the Parks and Leisure support team in relation to longer term marketing strategies.

Currently there is a Business Support Assistant within the structure however the level of responsibility of this post will be increased with the introduction of the Zoo Crew and moving the procurement function to the business strand of the service.

This business strand will be overseen by the creation of a Commercial Support Officer who will have accountability for the finance and human resource aspects of the business strand. It will also assist the zoo Manager in business development activities; in turn this will allow the Manager to focus on the overall strategic direction of the zoo.

### 3 Resource Implications

The following is recommended:

#### To create the following posts:

Commercial Support Officer	PO 4
Business Support Officer	SO 2
Marketing Officer	Sc 6
Senior Working Keepers x 3	Sc 6
Senior Stores Person Tractor Driver	Sc 5
Zoo Crew x 5	Sc1c

#### To delete the following posts:

Business Development Officer	PO 2
Business Support Assistant (Zoo)	Sc 6
Zookeeper	Sc 5
Cleaners x 2	Sc1c

#### To redesignate the following posts:

Shop Manager (Sc 3) – to Shift Supervisor Shop  
Tractor Driver (Sc 3) – Storesperson/Tractordriver  
Receptionist/Souvenir Shop Assistant x 2 (Sc 3) –  
Shift Supervisor Front of House  
Zoo Manager PO5 – updating of duties and responsibilities  
Education Officer SC6 – updating of duties and responsibilities

### **Financial**

The overall financial implications of this review are as follows:

Cost of redesignating posts £14,358  
Cost of creating new posts £255, 858  
Savings from deleting posts £106,447

Total cost £163,769

However, as previously mentioned there has been an ongoing dependency on agency staff at a cost per annum of £213,088. These agency costs have been met from direct employee costs for the past four years and are included in the revenue estimates for 2013/14.

Agency staff will still be used to cover additional casual zoo crew during peak periods and there will be additional on costs to support shift working and weekend enhancements. The net result of the review is cost neutral.

To assure this position agency and overtime spend will be closely monitored following implementation of the review. It should also be noted that the recommendations will contribute to Council's commitment laid out in the investment programme to create job opportunities in particular at basic entry level.

### **Human Resources**

Consultation with staff and trade unions has been ongoing and an agreed position on the recommendations has been realised. Employee Relations have also been consulted with to discuss the proposed changes and to agree the appropriate implementation process. Normal HR policies and procedures will be applied in conducting all changes.

It is acknowledged that all affected postholders will be required to sign and agree amendments to their JDs to take account of changes to roles, responsibilities and reporting lines.

### **Asset and Other Implications**

None

4 **Recommendation**

**Members are asked to approve to creation, deletion and redesignation of the posts detailed above and that the outcomes of the review are implemented within the next 6 months.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendation and noted that a copy of the proposed structure was available on the Modern.gov website.

**Improvement Programme – Park Warden Pilot Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th December, 2010, it had agreed, as part of a Departmental Improvement Programme, to the implementation for a period of nine months, commencing in January, 2011, of a Park Warden Pilot Scheme. The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the scheme had been initiated to develop working practices, provide an improved service and create safer green spaces. The existing Park Ranger service would be enhanced by putting in place a team of Park Wardens who would respond quickly to and record incidents of damage and anti-social behaviour at sites across the City. They would be trained and authorised to enforce specific bye-laws in support of existing Council Wardens and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, open and close the Council facilities where they were based and engage with the public to deliver education awareness and a quality customer service.

She explained that the pilot scheme had been shown to have met its objectives and had established more flexible working practices which would be enhanced with the further development of technology and anti-social behaviour reporting systems. Project outcomes had included the establishment of a programme of job-shadowing with Litter, Dog and Community Safety Wardens in order to share knowledge and develop practice. In addition, a series of workshops had taken place between Council officers and senior officers of the Police Service of Northern Ireland which had created an improved network between Parks Wardens and that Service in terms of responding to reports of damage at Parks, Leisure and Facilities Managed sites. The implementation of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 had provided staff with a valuable opportunity to raise public awareness in relation to dog control and litter and to inform parks users about the Council’s new enforcement powers.

The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure reported further that, given the success of the pilot scheme, it was now proposed that the role of Park Warden become a permanent one. In order to achieve that, the Parks and Leisure Department would work with Park Wardens and Trades Union groups to ensure that a new job description was developed which would meet the additional requirements. She informed the Members that the Health and Environmental Services Committee, at its meeting on 17th September, had agreed to allocate eight Community Safety Wardens and the associated budget to the Parks and Leisure Department. Further consultation would be required on the exact role to be undertaken by Park Wardens within the Department. It was envisaged that the process would be finalised by the end of the current financial year and that the additional operational staff costs would be in the region of £40,000, which would be met from within the Department’s existing budget.

The Committee approved the permanent provision of a Park Warden resource within the Parks and Leisure Department and noted the decision of the Health and Environmental Services Committee of 17th September to allocate eight Community Safety Wardens to the Department.

**Dog Control Orders – Excluding Dogs from Land Order**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2011 strengthens the legislative powers available to district councils to help them deal more effectively with a range of local environmental quality problems, including dog control.

Members are reminded that under Part 5 of the Act, Council’s may create four separate orders to help manage issues associated with dogs in their area. Dog Control Orders can be made in respect of any land in the district council area, subject to certain exemptions, and can relate to the following four matters:

- (a) Dog fouling;
- (b) Requiring dogs to be kept on a lead in designated areas;
- (c) Excluding dogs from designated areas; and
- (d) Limiting the number of dogs a person can be in control of at any one time.

A Dog Control Officer Group was established to consider guidance and develop proposals to implement Dog Control Orders in Belfast. The group is made up of officers from Health and Environmental Services Department, Parks and Leisure Department and Legal Services. As the enacting of dog control orders requires changes to existing practices and procedure, the development of staff capacity and effective communication with the public on the implications of the orders. It was decided to implement the orders in stages.

In February 2012 the Committee further agreed that implementation of actions relating to the new dog control powers would be undertaken on a phased basis and that the initial activity would relate to section (a) of the Dog Control section of the Act (Fouling of Land by Dogs).

At its August 2012 meeting, the Committee adopted a recommendation that a Dog Control order be made in respect of dog fouling. The Fouling of Land by Dogs (Belfast City Council) Order 2012 became operative on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012, replacing the old provisions in respect of dog fouling contained within the Litter (NI) Order 1994.

2. Key Issues

One of the objectives of the Council is to promote responsible dog ownership, not simply through enforcement, but also by undertaking a range of actions. These include educational and awareness raising activities, partnership working with schools, community groups and outside agencies and by officers working across the Council. Therefore the powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act simply provide a useful additional tool to the ongoing work of the Council in seeking to address all dog related issues across the city.

It is now proposed that the Council make a further dog control order to exclude dogs from certain areas in the city. The areas being considered are cemeteries, children's playgrounds and playing fields or pitches.

These areas are the responsibility of the Parks and Leisure Department and will require development of the department's capacity to monitor compliance and to enforce.

The guidance published by the Department of the Environment states that district councils must be able to show that this is a necessary and proportionate response to problems caused by the activities of dogs and those in charge of them.

The Council must also balance the interests of those in charge of dogs against the interests of those affected by the activities of dogs, bearing in mind the need for people, in particular children, to have access to dog-free areas and areas where dogs are kept under strict control, and the need for those in charge of dogs to have access to areas where they can exercise their dogs without undue restriction. Failure to give due consideration to these factors could make any subsequent dog control order vulnerable to challenge in the Courts.

Members are asked to note that an order to limit the number of dogs on a lead has been considered at the Health and Environmental Services Committee meeting on 7th November 2012. That report recommended that the Council make a dog control order limiting the number of dogs a person could take on land to 4. The reasons for limiting that number to 4 was that someone with more than 4 dogs could struggle to be in full control of them, particularly if the dogs were distracted. Five or more dogs being walked by a single person could therefore pose a danger to other people, particularly children or the elderly. Also, there could be practical difficulties associated with cleaning up and managing the retention and subsequent disposal of dog fouling from several animals.

After consideration as to whether it is necessary to designate areas from which dogs should be excluded, the Dog Control Officer Group is proposing that an order be made excluding dogs from cemeteries, children's playgrounds and playing fields or pitches within the Belfast City Council area.

If the Committee adopts the proposal to make a dog control order to exclude dogs from certain designated areas within the city, the draft order will be subject to a public consultation exercise.

3. **Resource Implications**

Work has been ongoing as part of the Park Warden pilot to develop capacity in the department to support the new orders. A separate report on the Park Warden pilot is presented at this committee.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

The proposal will be subject to Equality screening.

5. **Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to approve the proposed approach and to decide whether to make a dog control order excluding dogs from cemeteries, children's playgrounds and playing fields or pitches in the city."

After discussion, the Committee approved the proposed approach in relation to the creation of Dog Control Orders and approved also the making of an Order which would exclude dogs from cemeteries, children's playgrounds and playing fields or pitches within the Belfast City Council area. The Committee noted that the draft Order would be subject to a full public consultation exercise.

**Holding Over of Cremations at the City of Belfast Crematorium**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

Work will begin this month at the City of Belfast Crematorium to replace the existing four cremators with three new ones to include mercury abatement filtration equipment. The entire programme of installation is expected to last until April 2013. Part of the refurbishment work will include the installation of a refrigerated storage unit which can hold up to three coffins. This unit will be used to hold over coffins in the event of the breakdown of one of the cremators, or to follow best practice and carry out the cremation first thing next morning in the event of a small number of cremations being booked in that afternoon.

The practice of holding over cremations is not unlawful and has been followed throughout England, Scotland and Wales for a number of years. At a meeting on 17 June 2011 facilitated by the Ministry of Justice, the subject of crematoria holding over cremations was discussed by representatives of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management, the Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries and the Cremation Society of Great Britain.

At the meeting the majority of stakeholder organisations agreed in principle that the practice of holding over is acceptable in some circumstances, but that there should be a single set of guidelines for it.

Subsequently the stakeholder organisations met and agreed a set of Guiding Principles which has been forwarded to the Committee.

In the 52 year history of the City of Belfast Crematorium there has never been an operational procedure whereby cremations could be held over until the next day. If a break down occurred one of the other three cremators was used, or in periods of low demand a cremator was still used despite the very high cost of preheating, running it on pre-heat idle mode and using it for one cremation. In periods of high demand the staff worked late at night to ensure that all cremations were completed on the day in which they were received from the funeral church. This led to inefficient use of cremators and high overtime costs.

2 Key Issues

The key issue is ensuring proper use of this new operating procedure at the City of Belfast Crematorium which must adhere to the Guiding Principles. By holding over cremations on the afternoons of very low numbers rather than incurring the high operating cost of starting up and running one cremator, or incurring increasing overtime, the cremation can take place first thing next morning. This will reduce the operating costs at the crematorium and lead to efficiency savings.

For example if there is a cremation at 2pm and another one at 5pm, it would be prudent to carry out the cremation of these two coffins on different days rather than run a cremator on pre-heat idle mode after the 2pm cremation is finished for 1-2 hours and start it up again at 5pm. This is not using a cremator in an efficient way. Additionally the cremation could take longer than the staff finishing time of 7.30pm in which case overtime costs would be incurred. The cremator could be shut down after the 2pm cremation is complete and the 5pm coffin placed into the refrigerated storage unit until the next morning – family wishes permitting.

Since 1 October 2012, 33 additional cremation times were introduced meaning that 96 cremation times are now available. The staff are on a shift pattern finishing at 7.30pm. In the rare event of a low number of afternoon cremations being booked, the staff could place the last coffin of the day into the holding over unit and the cremation could be carried out first thing next morning. This would eliminate the need for staff to stay beyond 7.30pm and thereby reduce overtime.

It is our intention to engage with Funeral Directors to make them fully aware of this new operating procedure, the impact on bereaved families and the booking process. The Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager meets monthly with representatives of the National Association of Funeral Directors and the implementation of this procedure will be fully discussed with them. The current Form A Application for Cremation will have to be amended to inform families and give them the opportunity to allow/disallow their loved one's cremation to be held over as per the Guiding Principles.

3 Resource Implications

The cost of the refrigerated storage unit has been incorporated into the cost of the cremator replacement Tender by the Contractor.

By introducing this new procedure best practice will be followed and will lead to a reduction in operating costs of the cremators and staff overtime



4 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

**There are no equality or good relations considerations.**

5 **Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the Committee approves the adoption of the Holding Over Guiding Principles so that this operating practice can be introduced at the City of Belfast Crematorium.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendation and noted that a copy of the Guiding Principles could be accessed via the Council’s Modern.gov website.

**Variations to Facilities Management Agreements**

The Committee was united that, at its meeting on 14th June, it had acceded to a request from Shankill United Football Club to enter into a lease agreement in respect of land at the Hammer Open Space. The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 9th August, it had granted a similar request from the North Belfast Play Forum in relation to a portion of land at the Waterworks Park which was used currently as a Multi-User Games Area. The Director of Parks and Leisure explained that both facilities were operated currently under a Facilities Management Agreement and that the leases had been required to satisfy funding conditions. Since each lease had related only to a portion of land and not its entirety, it had, therefore, been necessary to obtain approval from the Committee to vary the existing Agreements.

In terms of the Hammer Open Space, he reported that the existing Agreement covered the pitch area, including the floodlighting, the changing pavilion and an adjoining building which was used for meetings and post-match refreshments. Under the revised Agreement the pitch area, including the floodlighting, would be leased to Shankill United Football Club. That would necessitate their removal from the current Facilities Management Agreement relating to the Hammer Open Space and a corresponding reduction in the maintenance fee.

He reported further that the existing Facilities Management Agreement relating to the Multi-User Games Area at the Waterworks Park incorporated the pitch area and the adjacent small pavilion and storage area. The North Belfast Play Forum would, in future, lease the pitch area, however, as the pavilion was not suitable for use as a changing facility, the Forum had concluded that it was not in a position to undertake the liability associated with the building in its current state and was content to use it as office accommodation, from which it would co-ordinate the use of the pitch. It would avail also of the storage area. It had been agreed that the Council would continue with its management and maintenance responsibilities in relation to the fencing surrounding the pitch area. However, the floodlight columns were located outside the boundary of the pitch and it was, therefore, proposed that responsibility for them would remain with the Council but the utility costs would be met by the Forum.

After discussion, the Committee approved the variation of the existing Facilities Management Agreements in respect of the North Belfast Play Forum and the Hammer Open Space, as outlined.

### **Suffolk Football Club – Proposed Changing Facilities**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1 Relevant Background Information**

The Committee is reminded that at its meetings in March, April and October 2011 it received reports outlining proposals from Suffolk Football Club to upgrade the existing playing pitch and changing facilities at the site.

Members will recall that the Club had initially sought, and subsequently received, approval from the Council to bring an existing unused pitch, at Suffolk Playing Fields, into use through the provision of new drainage. The Club further proposed to erect a spectator rail and enclose the new pitch with a security fence. It was noted that the pitch would be used by Suffolk Football Club. The Council did not make a financial contribution to the works which were undertaken with support through Alpha funding obtained through Groundwork NI. On the foot of this the Council agreed to enter into a seven year management agreement with the Club in respect of the pitch on the basis that the Club would at its own expense undertake the management and maintenance of the pitch and associated fencing. This work was completed and the pitch is available for use.

In the report in April 2011 it had been reported that the club had aspirations to further develop the site and construct separate changing facilities to service the new pitch. This would allow the club to meet the ground requirements of the Intermediate League and enable its progression to higher league within the Soccer structure.

In October 2011 it was reported that the Club had been presented with an opportunity to acquire two pre-used modular buildings, one of which would provide a changing facility to service the upgraded pitch and the other to function as a meeting room for pre and post match entertainment for travelling teams. The Club was seeking permission to locate temporary changing facilities on the site, adjacent to the pitch and close to the former school site.

In the interim, the club has reconsidered the purchase of the pre-used buildings and owing to their condition and associated cost of restoration decided to consider other options such as the leasing or purchasing of new modular buildings. The matter was considered within the West Area Working Group and although the Group saw merit in the proposal it was one of a number of competing projects for limited Local Investment Funds. The Group agreed that other projects

had a priority for West Belfast but that the Suffolk proposal as it was on a council asset be referred to the Parks and Leisure Committee for a decision on whether it wished to make recommendation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to include in the uncommitted list of the Capital Programme the provision of a two changing room pavilion and associated meeting room.

## 2 Key Issues

There are a number of issues associated with the proposal which the Committee may wish to reflect upon in reaching a position:

1. The Suffolk site has an existing changing pavilion which will require upgrading or replacement in time. However the current proposal is for a separate temporary modular changing pavilion to service the pitch which is currently under a separate 7 year legal agreement with Suffolk FC to enable the club to meet the grounds criteria of the Intermediate League;
2. It would be the intention to include the changing pavilion within the terms of the current seven year lease with Suffolk Football Club.
3. The long term provision of facilities on the Suffolk site need to be considered within the context of a plan for all the provision on the site which might include the BELB school site. This has been given some initial consideration by the West Area Working Group following a visit to the site.

## 3. Resource Implications

### Financial

Without details of the specific requirements regarding level of provision it is not possible to provide definitive costs at this time but a likely estimate of £80,000 to £100,000.

### Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications other than Officer time and the project could potentially be added.

### Asset and Other Implications

Provision of changing accommodation at the site would provide an enhancement of the council asset.

**4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

There are no equality or good relations issues.

**5 Recommendations**

**The Committee is requested to agree to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it include on the Capital Programme list of uncommitted projects the provision of a two room changing pavilion and meeting area at Suffolk Playing Fields.”**

During discussion, a Member referred to the fact that the project had not been recommended for funding by the West Belfast Area Working Group under the Local Investment Fund. She pointed out that it was one of many from across the City which had been unsuccessful in that regard and suggested that there needed to be clarification around the roles of Area Working Groups and Standing Committees.

In response, the Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the West Belfast Area Working Group had agreed that, since the Suffolk Football Club project related to a Council asset and that a Facilities Management Agreement was already in place there, it had been considered more appropriate to deal with the application through the Parks and Leisure Committee.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Mallon,  
Seconded by Councillor Mullan,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the matter to enable clarification to be obtained on the process for referring projects between Area Working Groups and Standing Committees.

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

**Mary Peters Track**

The Director of Parks and Leisure submitted for the Committee's consideration a monthly progress report in relation to the ongoing refurbishment of the Mary Peters Track. He reported that the construction of the new eight lane track had now been completed and that the newly developed field area had been re-seeded, which should enable it to be available early in the 2013 athletics season. Any earlier use of that area would be likely to damage its surface and require additional work which, in turn, could impact upon its availability next year for the World Police and Fire Games. In addition, work on the spectators' stand was continuing and was scheduled to be completed in January, 2013. He added that the existing management agreement between the Council and the Northern Ireland Athletics would be advertised in mid-November and that an evaluation would take place in January, 2013, with the aim of making an appointment shortly thereafter.

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 9th August, it had agreed to the erection of a statue of Dame Mary Peters at the Track, subject to appropriate approval being granted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and costs not exceeding £20,000. He explained that the initial proposal had related to the provision of a bust of Dame Mary. However, following further discussions, it had been agreed that a full body statue should be provided, which would cost an additional £5,000-£10,000. The artist would continue to provide his services at no cost to the Council.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Proposed New Lease, Lease Termination and Re-lettings**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1 Relevant Background Information**

**As part of its Improvement Programme the department has been investigating ways of generating additional income through the leasing of our facilities within the overall parks and leisure estate. The purpose of this report is to propose changes to two parts of the estate in order to provide an improved offering to the tenant or to increase potential tenancy opportunities, one at the Stables in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park and one at Belfast Castle.**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Floor, the Stables – currently leased to Belfast City Marathon**

**Currently the Council has a lease (with provision for extension on a year to year basis) at a rent of £11,000 per annum with Belfast City Marathon. The accommodation contained in the lease forms the first floor office area above the Stables Restaurant at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. In addition to the rent the Council charge out, by way of an annual Service Charge, certain agreed maintenance costs plus a portion of the heating and lighting costs for the building. The Marathon Office also pays the Rates associated with the area they occupy.**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Belfast Castle – currently used as Visitor Centre**

**The second floor of Belfast Castle currently consists of a number of small rooms and offices. A number of these currently house the visitor centre at the castle which has become tired and is not the most accessible for visitors to the Castle and its grounds. There is a potential with some internal works that this space could become serviceable office space to let.**

## 2 Key Issues

There have been ongoing discussions between council officers and the Marathon Office to address some minor issues including storage. Potential alternative accommodation has been identified in an adjoining part of the same building. The alternative accommodation whilst smaller, provides dedicated storage areas which are more appropriate to the Marathon Office from a workplace safety perspective. Provision of the alternative accommodation also requires the re-location of some existing Parks and Cemeteries Services personnel to other accommodation within the same building. This potential relocation would make office space available to re let and is agreeable to all parties involved.

The Marathon Office could terminate their existing lease via a suitable legal mechanism approved by the Town Solicitor.

With regard to the proposed changes at Belfast Castle, the accommodation freed up on the second floor of Belfast Castle could be refurbished to allow offices to be made available for rent. This will be subject to any planning approvals. Both the accommodation vacated by the Marathon Office and the office space within the Castle would be advertised 'to let' through a commercial letting agent. The proposed terms of any letting to be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval prior to completion of any lease.

The Visitor Centre at the Castle would be relocated to the refurbished "Cellar" area in the Castle, which is more accessible for visitors and would facilitate a longer "stay-time" at the site with a likely positive impact on the associated spend which each visitor could make.

## 3 Resource Implications

### Financial

The proposed new lease to Belfast City Marathon Limited could generate income from currently under utilised accommodation at Sir Thomas and lady Dixon Park. The combined rent and service charge figure of £12,000 per annum (made up of a rent of £8,500 per annum and a service charge of £3,500 per annum) provides an appropriate return to the Council and is considered to fulfil the Council's obligations in relation to obtaining 'best price' as contained in Section 96(5) of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

The proposed new income referred to at 3.1 will be offset for a period by the loss of income (£11,000 per annum) from the area presently leased to the Marathon Office. However the small overall reduction in income could be short-term if the vacated portion is re-let.

The rates on the first floor accommodation presently occupied by the Marathon Office will cease for a period of 3 months after vacation (provided there is no residual storage use). Thereafter (only if the property remains unlet) the Council will become liable for vacant rates. The annual rate liability to the Council for this area could be £5,829 per annum. If a letting is secured the new tenant would become liable for the rates. If the property was occupied by the Council (even for storage) it could qualify for small business rate relief and this annual figure would be abated by 20%.

Some estate agency fees and advertising expenses will be incurred in letting both buildings however these would be offset by the potential income generated from the letting. It is estimated that the potential income generated from the letting of offices on the second floor of the Castle could be in the region of £20/25K inclusive.

The costs of bringing the accommodation at Belfast Castle to a condition suitable for letting for office accommodation is currently being investigated and will be brought before Committee at a later date.

#### **Human Resources**

Resources from Parks and Leisure, Estates Management Unit and Legal Services would be involved in arranging termination of the existing lease, granting of new lease to the Marathon Office and arranging re-letting of the vacated property at both sites.

#### **Asset and Other Implications**

The proposed changes in leasing arrangements have the potential to realise an increased income to the Council, however the increase will only be realised if the existing properties can be re-let on appropriate terms.

The termination of the existing lease between the Council and the Marathon Office is subject to certain notice periods. Termination outside the relevant notice periods may require the completion of a Deed of Surrender by the Council and the Marathon Office.

#### **4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

There are no known equality or good relations issues associated with this proposal.

## 5 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. approve the grant of a lease to Belfast City Marathon Limited, on an annually renewable basis subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders and subject to the terms set out in an appropriate lease to be compiled by the Town Solicitor.
2. accept termination of the lease dated 16 December 2010 between the Council and Belfast City Marathon Limited, from a mutually agreed date, in accordance with any relevant contractual and statutory obligations as may be legally necessary to achieve this and reporting of same to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders
3. note the proposed marketing of the vacated first floor offices area above the Stables Restaurant.
4. note the proposals in relation to Belfast Castle and authorise officers to further consider the feasibility of these including costs and Planning issues, with a further report being brought to Committee in due course.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### Shankill Cemetery Artwork

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Shankill Area Social History Group seeking permission to erect a piece of artwork in the grounds of the Shankill Cemetery. The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the feature, which would measure 1.2 metres in height and 2 metres in width, would provide a visual history of the cemetery and the surrounding Shankill area. The artwork, which would be a permanent feature at the entrance to the Cemetery, would cost no more than £1,500 and be mounted on a concrete base. It was envisaged that the feature would generate increased tourism in that area and provide both local people and other visitors with information on those who had been interred within the Cemetery. A number of local groups, including Alternatives and the Youth Safety Network, had been involved in the design of the artwork. The Council had been requested to cover the cost of its installation, which would be in the region of £1,500.



The Committee acceded to the request from the Shankill Area Social History group to erect a mosaic artwork in the grounds of the Shankill Cemetery and agreed that the Council would meet the costs associated with its installation.

### **Proposal for a Community Garden – Northlink Park**

The Committee was reminded that a number of successful community gardens had been established across the City, at locations such as the Musgrave Park and the Ozone and Shankill Leisure Centres. The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure explained that the gardens had been very beneficial in creating a community-led approach to learning new skills and growing healthy fruit and vegetables and that they had drawn participation from all members of the community, including the young and elderly.

She reported that a request had been received from the residents of the Northlink area of the City seeking to explore the option of establishing a similar community-led garden in Northlink Park. That request had been generated as a result of their involvement and in visiting other gardens across the City. Preliminary work would be required to assess the risk of contamination and the preparation of a draft landscape plan and officers would be required to engage with the local community to prepare a drawing of the garden. The combined cost of that work would be in the region of between £500 and £1,500, which would be met from current budgets.

The Committee granted authority to draft a provisional plan and undertake a contamination risk assessment survey in relation to the proposed community-led garden at Northlink Park and noted that a report on the outcome of that work, together with the costs of creating the garden, would be submitted to a future meeting.

### **Parks Events Small Grants Scheme**

The Committee was reminded that the Parks Events Small Grants Scheme had been operating successfully since 2006. The Director of Parks and Leisure reported that the Scheme had sought initially to encourage community-based groups and bodies to hold events in parks, which, in turn, would increase their usage and instil a sense of ownership within the community. He explained that the initiative continued to be popular with community groups, churches and other organisations and that during 2012 it had been funded to the extent of £100,000, with a grant of up to a maximum of £2,250 being made available to each successful group. A total of 45 applications had been received in that period, with 41 groups having been funded for 57 different events to be held in 29 separate locations.

The Director of Parks and Leisure reported further that the two organisations listed below had met the criteria of the scheme and had been granted funding under the authority delegated to him and he recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approve the continuation of the Parks Events Small Grants Scheme for 2013/2014;

- (ii) agree that the fund be maintained at £100,000 and that the maximum grant available per group be increased to £3,000; and
- (iii) delegate authority to him to approve funding applications under the Scheme.

**Parks Events Small Grants Scheme – Successful Applications**

<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Title of Event</b>	<b>Amount of Grant Requested</b>	<b>Proposed Amount of Grant to be Awarded</b>
PESGS 43/2012	Solas	30-Sep	Botanic Gardens	Awareness of Special Needs in the Local Community	£2,250	£2,250
PESGS 44/2012	Belfast Healthy Cities	21 Sept, 30-31 Oct	Cathedral Gardens & City Hall	Kidsquare	£2,250	£2,250

The Committee noted the information on the groups which had obtained funding and adopted the recommendations.

**Northern Ireland Annual Youth Football Association Event**

The Director of Parks and Leisure informed the Committee that the Northern Ireland Boys' Football Association held each year a youth football festival at the City of Belfast Playing Fields. He reported that the organisation had submitted an application seeking the free use of the Playing Fields in respect of this year's event which had been held on 25th August and 1st September. As in previous years, the organisers had required access to all twenty-one pitches, which had represented an estimated loss of income of £2,014 to the Council. He pointed out that the event had been held at that site for the past thirty-six years and, that the organisers had, as had been the case during that time, requested a financial contribution from the Council.

The Committee granted retrospectively the free use of all facilities at the City of Belfast Playing Fields in relation to the Northern Ireland Boys' Football Association's Annual Youth Football Festival and agreed to provide funding in the sum of £1,500 towards the event. The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Parks and Leisure to approve the holding of the event over the next three years, subject to the receipt of a formal request from the Association and confirmation that the arrangements would be unchanged from the previous years.

### **Belfast Mela 2013**

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Director of ArtsEkta seeking the use of the Botanic Gardens for the holding of the Belfast Mela 2013 event. The Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure reported that that was a large multi-cultural festival which, in 2012, had attracted in excess of 20,000 people from all communities across Northern Ireland. It had developed a shared culturally rich inclusive space which connected minority ethnic and local indigenous communities and had been successful in raising cultural awareness, encouraging civic identity and promoting a positive image for Belfast and Northern Ireland.

She advised the Members that ArtsEkta had stated that it wished to use the Botanic Gardens between the hours of noon and 6.00 p.m. on 25th August 2013 and that a total of six days would be required to erect and dismantle all of the equipment needed for the event. Due to the current economic climate, the Director of ArtsEkta had requested permission to charge an entrance fee to the event of £3, but had highlighted the possibility of varying that amount, depending upon the success of its funding strategies. As part of Belfast Mela 2013, alcohol could be sold within one element of the overall activities but would not be used in any promotions to maintain the main focus of the event. She pointed out that it would be subject to an event management plan, which would cover all aspects of management, including health and safety and access and that it would comply with the Council's current events policy. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee grant approval for ArtsEkta to hold the Belfast Mela event at the Botanic Gardens in August, 2013, subject to satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of Parks and Leisure and on condition that:

- (i) the event's organisers resolve all operational issues to the satisfaction of the Council;
- (ii) an appropriate legal agreement be prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive/Town Solicitor; and
- (iii) the event's organisers meet all statutory requirements.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and authorised the charging of an admission fee of £3, with authority being delegated to the Director of Parks and Leisure to vary that fee, subject to the provision by ArtsEkta of appropriate financial evidence to support that decision.

### **Temporary Closure of Leisure Centres**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **"1 Relevant Background Information**

**The Facilities Management Unit has have identified various risk based maintenance projects within the leisure estate which are scheduled to be completed within the next twelve months. The works outlined**

below are considered essential maintenance to sustain the delivery of the Leisure Service. The extent of the work further underlines the importance of the strategic review of the leisure estate which is ongoing and will be reported to Committee in due course.

Centre	Proposed Work	Proposed Start	Proposed Duration
Andersonstown	Replace the floor coverings to the male and female changing and shower areas	January 2013	6-8 weeks
Andersonstown	Replace Roof lights and roof covering to main hall and Plant room roofs.	April 2013	4 weeks
Indoor Tennis Centre	Pulmastic Floor covering cracked recommend replacement or refurbishment	April 2013	2 weeks

Centre	Proposed Work	Proposed Start	Proposed Duration
Indoor Tennis Centre	Replace roof felt	April 2013	6 weeks
Shankill Leisure Centre	Replace flooring in male & female dry and wet changing areas. Replace carpet in Sauna changing new flooring required.	September 2013	12 weeks
Ballysillan Leisure Centre	Replace flooring in male & female wet changing	September 2013	8 weeks

Various additional works have also been proposed for Avoniel Leisure Centre but these will now be carried out during the current pool closure.

## **2 Key Issues**

At its meeting on the 11th October 2012, the Committee requested a monthly update on Avoniel Leisure Centre.

The pool has been closed since Monday 20th August 2012 and communications have taken place with local users to advise of the closure and alternative services. Templemore Baths is facilitating some users and we have accommodated some clubs in other centres. A contractor has been appointed to carry out works on the pool basin and balance tank to enable further works to repair leaks. It is estimated that the preliminary works will start week commencing 19 November 2012. At this stage it is anticipated that the pool will remain closed until April 2013.

At the January 2012 Committee, Members approved the Swimming pool closure of between one and two weeks at Andersonstown Leisure Centre, during Christmas 2012 for essential planned maintenance which will involve draining, refilling and reheating of the pool.

It is now proposed to change the closure date until January 2013 so that it coincides with the six week closure that is required to replace the floor coverings to the male and female changing and shower areas.

The tennis courts and climbing wall at the Indoor Tennis Centre will be required to close for two weeks to enable the new floor to be installed.

The male and female dry changing facilities at Shankill leisure centre will be required to be closed for six weeks to allow for replacement of the floor surface but customers will still be able to use the wet changing facilities during this time.

The male and female wet changing facilities at Shankill Leisure centre will be required to close for six to eight weeks again for replacement of the floor surface, but because the dry changing rooms are located on a different floor it is not practical or safe to ask pool users to use the dry changing rooms, consequently the pool will be closed for a period of six to eight weeks

The wet changing facilities at Ballysillan will be closed for an eight week period.

The male and female dry changing facilities at Ballysillan leisure centre are not located close to the wet changing facilities so the pool will be required to close during this eight week period.

### **3 Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

The maintenance projects are being fully funded from the Council's Facilities Management Budget.

Several areas are required to close when the maintenance work is being carried out and this will result in a loss of income for each centre.

It is estimated that the loss of income this financial year will be:

- Andersonstown Leisure Centre £ 15,000 - £20,000  
(dependant on length of closure)

It is estimated that the loss of income next financial year will be:

- Shankill £8,000
- Indoor Tennis Centre £9,000
- Ballysillan £8,000

#### **Human Resources**

With the various pool closures some of the staff will not be required and management will liaise with Human Resources to get these staff temporarily deployed to other centres.

#### **Asset and Other Implications**

The proposals will ensure that the various facilities remain safe for public use.

### **4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

There are no equality or good relations implications associated with the recommendations from this report.

### **5 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee approve;

- (i) the new closure date and duration of the works at Andersonstown Leisure Centre
- (ii) the temporary closures of the tennis courts and climbing wall at the Indoor Tennis Centre and the pool closures at Ballysillan and Shankill Leisure

**Centres in order to facilitate the necessary maintenance works to be carried out.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Belfast Zoological Gardens – Marketing Awards 2012**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

**The Committee will recall that, at its meeting of September 2011, it had been advised of the Belfast Zoo’s success in winning three prestigious awards during the year, including the Northern Ireland Tourism Award in the ‘Visitor Inspired’ category.**

**During 2012, the Zoo has continued this success with the winning of two significant marketing awards.**

**2 Key Issues**

**At the 2012 Northern Ireland Tourism Awards, the Zoo won the award for ‘Marketing and Sales Excellence’.**

**More recently, at the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) Awards for 2012, the Zoo won the award in the ‘Tourism and Hospitality’ category.**

**Such success is noteworthy especially given the significant industry competition there is for these prestigious awards. For instance, runners up to the Zoo at the Chartered Institute of Marketing awards included the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Titanic Belfast.**

**The Committee should note the significant work the Zoo undertakes in its marketing activities, their creative approach to ongoing market research and the implementation of a successful marketing and sales strategy. Zoo staff work closely with other tourism providers, including the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, local hotels and, in 2012 for the first time, NI Opera.**

**The Zoo’s annual summer advertising campaign is delivered working closely with colleagues in the Parks and Leisure Department and Corporate Communications.**

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial**

**All marketing activities for the Zoo are realised within agreed budgets.**

**Human Resources**

Resources for marketing will be addressed within recommendations from the review of the Zoo.

**Asset and Other Implications**

None identified at this time.

**4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

Successful marketing of the Zoo has an ability to drive significant visitor numbers to the Zoo, from a variety of backgrounds, age range and abilities.

**5 Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.”

Noted.

Chairman