

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 14th February, 2013

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Kelly (Deputy Chairman);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Garrett, Haire, Hartley,
Hendron, Kyle, McKee, McNamee,
Mac Giolla Mhín, Mullan, A Newton,
Ó Donnghaile, O'Neill, Spence and Thompson.

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of the Chairman (Councillor McCabe), Alderman Humphrey and Councillors Corr and Mallon.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th February.

Minute Clarification - Avoneil Leisure Centre

(Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 10th January, whilst considering a report in respect of Avoneil Swimming Pool, a proposal had been moved and seconded requesting that all outstanding remedial work at the pool be carried out by the end of March, 2013. At the Council meeting on 4th February, when the minutes of the Parks and Leisure Committee had been discussed, a Member had queried the accuracy of the minute in so far as he felt that the above-mentioned proposal had been agreed but that the decision had not been recorded in the minutes.

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee that during a debate any number of suggestions could be made. However, the making and seconding of a proposal did not mean that it had been agreed by the Committee. Agreement, he pointed out, was reached only if a proposal was put formally to the Committee and either the Chairman ascertains that the Members are in agreement by clearly enunciated consent, or if the matter is voted upon and a majority of Members present and voting are recorded in favour of the proposal. In this particular circumstance, the Committee had concluded that it would have been unrealistic to stipulate that the work on the pool should be completed by the end of March in the absence of a site visit. The site visit had been

deemed to be an acceptable compromise and it had been clear that the original proposal had not been put formally to the Committee and, therefore, agreement had not been forthcoming.

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

Avoniel Swimming Pool – Update

Arising from discussion in the foregoing matter, the Director reminded the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 25th January, had agreed to endorse a proposal to set aside the usual requirements under Standing Orders to invite tenders for the necessary remedial works at the swimming pool and had opted instead to invite quotations for the works. That decision, he pointed out, had been taken to ensure that the matter was resolved as quickly as possible. He indicated that regular progress reports in respect of the work would be submitted to the Committee.

Noted.

Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 3 viz., 'Stadia Developments', Councillor Mullan declared an interest in this matter in that she was related to an individual associated with the contractors appointed by the Irish Football Association for the Windsor Park re-development.

Notice of Motion - John Luke

(Councillor Ó Muilleoir attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th February, had referred the undernoted notice of motion, which had been moved by Councillor Ó Muilleoir and seconded by Councillor Kyle, to the Committee for further consideration.

"John Luke (1906-1975) is one of Belfast's most celebrated artists and among our great city's most famous sons. His works of astonishing beauty adorn Belfast City Hall (in the form of his striking 1951 mural on the granting of a city charter to Belfast in 1613, painted for the Festival of Britain) and he is being honoured by a special retrospective now showing at the Ulster Museum.

According to the programme for that exhibition, John Luke 'was a painter, muralist, printmaker and sculptor, who began his life working in the city's shipyards. A modernist who was dedicated to craftsmanship, Luke's work is characterised by a unique sense of "rhythm" he found in Ulster as a region'.

Among the most stunning works of this revered Belfast artist are several evocative landscapes of the Lagan River. It is of note that his

credo as a painter was poetically captured by Luke in 1945 in the magazine Lagan: 'I believe in the curve, the straight line and the holy shape, colour-relations, tone and design – all which go to make a living thing and not a culled mistake.' His mesmerising tempera masterpieces were, he said, products of 'going modern and being Irish'.

One of his most-loved works, 'The Locks at Edenderry' (one of several of the Lagan), depicts the point where the current Council-mooted Lagan Gateway scheme would culminate. This Council therefore agrees that it would be fitting for the City of Belfast to honour John Luke by naming the new bridge (currently without any formal name) being restored by the Council across the Lagan at Newforge in honour of this great artist who has left such a marvellous legacy to our citizens."

The Director reminded the Committee of the policy regarding the renaming of parks and informed the Members that while the policy did not apply strictly to parts of parks or structures within them, an assessment of this request indicated that it complied with the criteria set out in the policy.

After discussion, it was

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that the new bridge over the River Lagan at Newforge be named in honour of the artist John Luke, subject to permission being granted by the family of the late artist.

Marrowbone Millennium Park

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation at a future meeting from representatives of Ardoyne Youth Providers in respect of its plans to develop a 3G pitch facility at the Marrowbone Millennium Park.

Financial Report - Quarter 3

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- 1. Key issues**
The current performance in quarter three of the Parks and Leisure department shows a (2.9%) variance against the year to date budget; i.e.; an under spend of £496K.

The main issues are:

Income

Income for the department is down 4% or £341k on budget. Leisure Centres are down by 7% or £175k on the budget for fees and charges. Promotional activity especially around the new membership scheme is ongoing and campaigns have been underway from June.

Income from fees and charges at the Zoo is down 10% or £127k against budget and the income at the shop is also down £88k but this is offset by a reduction on expenditure on supplies by £78k. The poor weather and the opening of other prestigious visitor centres have impacted on the Zoo however promotional activities are taking place to address this.

Income from fees and charges in Parks and Open Spaces are up by 8.5% largely in relation to events and pitch hire and the Crematorium which is up on budget by £116k due to additional slots and increase in price.

Utility Costs

Utility costs are currently £131k over spent: 11% in Leisure and 2% in Parks and Cemeteries. The ongoing issues with the borehole at the Zoo are being resolved however the Zoo is currently connected to the mains which incur costs of £17k approx per month. The over spends in leisure relate to water and electricity costs being higher than budget and consumption increasing with the ongoing issues with the CHP units.

Grounds Maintenance

Grounds Maintenance expenditure is under spent against budget by £321k. £250k of this relates to the maintenance of playgrounds and £25k in relation to paths but both projects are on schedule to be completed by the end of the year. It is expected that £130k of expenditure for CCG will be used on preparation work for the overall scheme leaving £120k under spent in this financial year.

Supplies and Services

Supplies and Services within the department are under spent by 8% or £364k This expenditure relates to a number of programmes of work that are being developed and also

programmes of work with external partners that are underway and are being monitored on a monthly basis. The corresponding under claimed grant income off sets some of this under expenditure in relation to a number of key programmes. This also refers to the issue of the Zoo shop referred to above which has reduced its supplies for resale by £78k in response to poor sales.

General

Directorate support is largely on target however the ASB budget is likely to be under spent by £50k due to planning permission being required for a project and therefore the project has been delayed.

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

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

The Business Manager informed the Committee that the year-end expenditure forecast for the Department was for an anticipated £160,000 overspend. She explained that this had arisen principally due to pressure on income which had been alluded to within the report and unanticipated maintenance issues that had arisen in respect of the borehole at the Belfast Zoo and the pool at the Avoniel Leisure Centre. She assured the Members that steps would be taken to reduce spending against other budget headings to endeavour to reduce the level of overspend being forecast currently.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Mary Peters' Trust

The Director reported that a request for a financial contribution of £5,000 had been received from the Mary Peters Trust for the financial year 2012/2013. He explained that the Trust provided small grants to individual applicants in order to assist them to achieve excellence in their chosen sport. He reminded the Committee that, in previous years, it had approved a contribution of £5,000 to the Trust under the specialised expenditure powers which the Council possessed under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011. He reported that, should the Committee accede to the request, it must pass a resolution in this regard to the effect that the contribution made would provide direct benefit to the City and its citizens commensurate with the payment made. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee accede to the request.

After discussion, it was

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to contribute £5,000 to the Mary Peters Trust for the financial year 2012/2013 under the specialised powers which exist under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the City and its citizens with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefit so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

Anti-Social Behaviour - Update

(Mr. P. Murray, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, and Mrs. E. Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Key Issues

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

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

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

Members will recall that a new ASB incident recording system was implemented in February 2012. The new CRM system

records more detail than the previous Flare system and a substantial increase in the number of reported ASB incidents was expected due to the improved categorisation of ASB

1.1 Trends in the available ASB incident data

The evidence available for June to August 2012 indicates a slight seasonal increase in antisocial behaviour, especially in park areas in Balmoral, Court, Lagan Bank, and Old Park.

- 1.2 The data for the period September to December 2012 indicates a decreasing trend of ASB. The rate of the decrease in ASB between June to December 2011 and June to December 2012 is significantly different. In 2012, incidents of ASB declined sharply between summer (June to August) and autumn (September to December) whereas they declined marginally in 2011.

1.3 Previous Interventions

There are a number of interventions that will have contributed to the reduction in expected ASB reports:

- During the months June to September 2012 in Old Park, in Marrowbone, walls were removed, fencing and gates were redesigned to restrict access from youths and increase the capacity of PSNI to identify youths gathering in the park.
- In Old Park, in the Waterworks, a series of mobile CCTV van visits were planned in conjunction with the PSNI in support of the wishes of surrounding communities to reduce tensions in June and July.
- In Lagan Bank, in Botanic Gardens, there was a group of drinkers that had repeatedly congregated at the bandstand and a series of joint operations were initiated in partnership with the PSNI to remove them.
- A series of mobile CCTV van visits were also planned in Botanic Gardens and Ormeau Park to reduce the numbers of drinkers gathering.
- In Balmoral, in Musgrave Park, Wedderburn and Woodlands, a number of fencing improvements, a series of joint operations with the PSNI and use of mobile CCTV van patrols was initiated to reduce the numbers of drinkers using the sites.
- In Court, the closure of Woodvale park has had a significant effect on the decreasing number of ASB incident reports.

- 1.4 The available data provides an accurate ASB profile for each park. The parks with the most incident reports suffer the following ASB issues:

Falls Park: Drink, Littering and Rowdy behaviour
Alexandra Park: Substance abuse, Drinking and Rowdy behaviour
Waterworks: Drinking and Rowdy behaviour
Botanic Gardens: Drinking and Rowdy behaviour
Ormeau Park: Rowdy Behaviour and Vehicle nuisance
Woodvale: Drinking and Vandalism
Musgrave: Drinking and Rowdy behaviour
Cavehill: Animal problems
Victoria: Animal problems

1.5 Future Interventions

The profile of incidents above demonstrates that specific interventions are required to reduce specific ASB. The use of mobile CCTV will be programmed to attend parks during the lighter evenings to deter drinkers and rowdy behaviour. The development of the approach to Young adult association areas will continue in Falls, Botanic and Musgrave. Ormeau Park will benefit from further restrictions to vehicular access and options will be explored with the Park Manager. Enforcement operations will be scheduled in Cavehill and Victoria Parks to reduce the impact of Animal problems.

The electoral area which continues to show an overall increase of ASB incidents in parks areas, is Old Park. In the period of February to March 2013, the ASB coordinator will liaise with local Councillors, Park Managers and PSNI in order to identify appropriate interventions which will respond to the particular profile of ASB in the area.

Members will recall the report to committee detailing the Young Adult Association areas (December 2012). The development of these sites are ongoing, they are designed to reduce the incidents of damage, littering and rowdy behaviour. The proposals are attracting positive comments from PSNI and community partners. Although these interventions are not appropriate for every park area in Belfast, there are a number

of alternatives such as weekend education initiatives designed to attract participation from young people, which may be more appropriate for the Old Park area. A report will be brought back to members following any development or evaluation.

1.6 Park Warden developments

The internal resource used to reduce incidents of ASB is the deployment of Park Wardens. They have recently attended formal training led by the Association of Public Sector Excellence which was designed to support them in adopting statutory enforcement powers and inform their understanding of the legal framework underpinning enforcement operations. The partnership between the Dog Wardens, Litter Wardens, Get Home Safe Officers and Park Wardens has been very successful in providing a series of joint working opportunities and the necessary support to issuing fixed penalty notices.

2. Resource Implications

The development of the programme will be facilitated through the agreed antisocial behaviour budget 2012-13 which is approximately £250,000.

3. Equality and good relations implications

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

4. Recommendations

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

During discussion, a Member, on behalf of the Chairman, requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the extent of antisocial activity at the Marrowbone Millennium Park and that officers from the Department consult with the Police Service of Northern Ireland to ascertain the number of incidents which had been recorded by that organisation at the vicinity. In response, the Director undertook to submit a report in this regard to a future meeting.

Further Members requested that information be circulated in relation to the number of incidents which had been recorded at the Knocknagoney Linear Park, particularly in respect of abandoned vehicles, and in regard to the overall number of incidents reported at the Ballysillan Playing Fields.

A further Member referred to the ongoing levels of antisocial activity taking place at the Woodlands Playing Fields and requested that officers assess and secure the number of unauthorised access points to the venue. He requested also that officers from the Department consult with a full range of statutory bodies and agencies to address any issues which might arise at the venue during the weekend surrounding St. Patrick's Day. In response, the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator pointed out that officers from within the Department would liaise with the local Community Safety Partnership and the Police Service of Northern Ireland in advance of St. Patrick's Day to address, in partnership, any anticipated problems which could arise in this regard. In respect of the securing of access points to the Playing Fields, he indicated that an audit in this regard would be undertaken.

A Member referred to a number of incidences which had been reported in the local media of organised gatherings which had been arranged through social media networks at both the Alexandra Park and the Waterworks in north Belfast. The Director responded by indicating that officers from within the Department would continue to monitor the situation in conjunction with the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Concern was expressed in relation to damage which had been caused recently to a number of football pitches within Ormeau Park by scrambler-type motor bikes and it was requested that measures be put in place to secure access to the pitches, particularly at the Ozone entrance to the park at the Ormeau Embankment. In response, the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator outlined the range of cost-effective measures which might be considered to address the issue raised, including the feasibility of erecting a purpose-built fence in conjunction with work which was ongoing in the establishment of a 3G pitch at the site. He indicated that further information would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

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

Improvement Programme Review

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th January, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would provide an overview of the number of operational reviews which had been carried out thus far as part of the Parks and Leisure Improvement Plan and which would provide also an outline of the number of reviews which had as yet to be undertaken. Accordingly, the Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Key Issues

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

- 1.2 Phase II has been completed with the exception of the review of the estates function including Belfast Castle and Malone House and the operational review of playground inspections. Significant improvement has been realised in the delivery of the Parks function and the service has in the last three years achieved 10 Green Flag awards which reflects the improvement and high quality of the service.

The review of the Development Strand now referred to as Neighbourhood and Development has commenced with the appointment of the Neighbourhood and Development Manager in January 2013. Given the priority for delivery of the investment programme and the significance of the Parks and Leisure agenda within that, priority will be given to this review with further work being undertaken to bring together the Parks and Leisure operations and to establish management of the Departments' commercial businesses, i.e. Belfast Castle, Malone House and Belfast Zoo through the appointment of a Commercial Manager.

This work will seek to ensure the integrated management and planning of effective service delivery in support of Active Belfast and area based planning. Proposals on these functions will be brought to committee at a later date

The review of the OSAL unit is currently being implemented and the review of the Biodiversity function which was outstanding from the OSAL review will be completed in April 2013.

The review of playground inspections as part of the operational efficiency review is ongoing and will be reported to committee at a later date.

- 1.3 Phase III has been completed with the exception of the operational review of Leisure which now forms part of the transformation of the function under the Strategic Review of Leisure.

2. **Resource Implications**

Finance

Summary of financial implications to date:

Phase I

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

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

The operational review of driving requirement in the Parks function has resulted in a net saving of £39,730.

Phase II

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

The value of the proposed new Park Warden role and Team Leader role resulted in an increase of approximately £40,000 on operational staff costs which is accommodated within existing budgets.

Increased capacity at Roselawn Crematorium cost £100,000 but will be paid for in year one of operation. Growth in income in the first quarter of operation is £55k, however it should be noted that this is partly due to the increase in crematorium changes.

Phase III

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

A management led job evaluation of Landscape Planning and Development Unit resulted in a number of posts being upgraded with a net cost of £14,405. The cost was met by the savings generated from the deletion of 3 x posts from the structure and also from the termination of a number of agency contracts within the unit.

The cost of creating a Neighbourhood and Development Manager was £56,695 and was funded from corporate resources repaid from departmental efficiency savings to be realised through an agreed action plan.

The financial implications of the OSAL review were as follows:

Cost of re-designating posts: £ Nil
Cost of creating new post of Events Officer: £ 36,160
Total cost: £ 36,160

Savings from deleting post of Marketing officer: £ 36,160
Net Cost: £Nil

As part of the OSAL review there was a one off cost of £70,806 for voluntary redundancy. This was funded from existing departmental budgets. The payback period is 1.92 years and met with corporate criteria.

The Zoo review financial implications were as follows:

Cost of redesignating posts	£14,358
Cost of creating new posts	£255,858
Savings from deleting posts	£106,447
Total costs	£163,769

The Zoo operation has been dependant on agency staff at a cost per annum of £213,088. These agency costs have been met from direct employee costs and are included in the revenue estimates for 2013/14 which will cover the cost of new posts however agency costs will need to be tightly managed going forward.

The Zoo review has contributed to the Council's commitment laid out in the investment programme to create job opportunities in particular at basic entry level.

Human Resources

Staff and Trade Unions have been consulted throughout the review process and an agreed position on proposals has been achieved as they have been developed and brought forward to committee."

The Assistant Director outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered a number of questions in relation thereto, particularly in respect of the administrative arrangements at the public office at the City Cemetery and on the use of agency staff at the Zoo.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and noted that a report in respect of the administrative arrangements at the public office at the City Cemetery would be submitted to a future meeting.

Connswater Community Greenway Park - Opening and Lighting

The Committee was informed that consultations were ongoing with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and local residents in respect of the proposed opening hours and the installation of lighting at the Connswater Community Greenway. It was noted that a report in this regard would be submitted to the Committee on completion of the exercise.

Noted.

Leisure Estate Review / Stadia Update

(Councillor Mullan left the room whilst this matter was under consideration.)

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the re-development of both the Windsor and Casement Parks and which outlined the associated regeneration opportunities which existed for the Council in respect of the Olympia and the Andersonstown Leisure Centres. The Director reported that initial consultations in respect of the proposed redevelopment of the Olympia Leisure Centre had been undertaken with local residents in the Village area and initial feedback had been positive. He also informed the Committee that a similar exercise would be undertaken regarding Casement Park with the first public consultation event planned for late February. It was noted further that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had considered a report in this regard at its meeting on 25th January and that a special meeting of that Committee would take place on Friday, 1st March, at which a presentation would be received from representatives of the Gaelic Athletic Association regarding the Casement Park development and to receive also a presentation on the Leisure Estate Review.

Support for Sport - Interim Report

The Committee noted the contents of an update report which provided an overview on effects of the changes which had been approved by the Committee to the Support for Sport Grant Scheme at its meeting on 12th April, 2012.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure - Water Recreation Grant Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure’s (DCAL) Inland Waterways Water Recreation Grant Programme 2013/14 is currently open for applications. Appendix 1 refers.**

- 1.2 The objective of the grant programme is to provide funding to assist in creating and / or improving access to inland waterways on publicly owned land, which is free for the public to access and use. This is an opportunity for the Parks and Leisure Department to submit applications, to access external funding which will assist in enhancing inland waterway sites within the Department's responsibility.
- 1.3 Criteria which will be of particular merit in the application process are as follows:
- improving access to inland waterways to encourage increased use of facilities;
 - developing and enhancing facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities or have mobility problems; and
 - targeting social need by addressing issues surrounding social exclusion or contributing to improved social inclusion.
- 1.4 The total grant budget available from DCAL for 2013/14 is £90,000 across Northern Ireland and individual projects can attract funding up to a maximum of £20,000. DCAL has advised that, given the level of interest in the programme, funding will only be considered for one project per Council. Projects must be delivered and completed during the period 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014. Project proposals must demonstrate match funding, both financial and in-kind, from Council and associated partners.
- 1.5 The application process required interested parties to submit an initial expression of interest to DCAL by 31 January 2013. The Parks and Leisure Department forwarded an expression of interest to DCAL on 25 January which identified its intention to explore the following Council sites as options for project proposals:
- Lagan Lands East
 - Lagan Meadows
 - Sir Lady and Dixon Park
 - Half Moon Lake
- 1.6 The completed application for a project proposal is due to be submitted to DCAL no later than 15 February 2013.
- 1.7 Council, through its Corporate Plan, is committed to improving access to services and facilities, ensuring as many people as possible within the city can connect to all opportunities available and which improve their quality of life. The Parks and

Leisure Departmental Plan supports Council's objectives by committing to work with partners to integrate services, creating links across the city whilst making facilities accessible and valued by citizens which contribute to improving social and wellbeing outcomes.

The Council's Investment Programme demonstrates a commitment to maintaining and enhancing vital community facilities and assets whilst ensuring everyone has access to high quality green spaces and good leisure opportunities. The DCAL Inland Waterways funding opportunity will assist Parks and Leisure Department to directly contribute to these aims and objectives, through delivery of its programme themes people and communities and the environment.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Parks and Cemeteries Services planning process includes key actions to improve customer experience in parks and open spaces. The DCAL Inland Waterways Funding Programme is an opportunity to attract external funding, which will supplement in-house financial resources to support the key actions identified in the planning process.**
- 2.2 Following further consideration of the sites detailed in paragraph 1.5 it was identified that Half Moon Lake was likely to be the most suitable location to meet the criteria specified in DCALs funding programme. Additionally, consultation with DCAL has suggested that Half Moon Lake is a site that has attracted its attention and one which DCAL is keen to see developed and improved.**
- 2.3 The proposed project at Half Moon Lake would predominately involve creating permanent, structured, safe viewing platforms, incorporating disability and mobility access. Building these platforms and completing mobility improvements will create enhanced access and improve opportunities for greater use of the lake and surrounding area for everyone.**
- 2.4 Project proposals within DCAL's funding programme will connect with planned work identified in the Parks and Leisure Departmental Plan and Council's Investment Programme, thus maximising all available resources and avoiding potential duplication.**

- 2.5 To comply with the funding criteria, the Parks and Leisure Department must demonstrate sufficient in-house resources, matched with partnership funding to complete the project within the designated timescale. It would be Parks and Leisure Department's intention to evidence its commitment through in-house financial and in-kind resourcing. This will be supplemented in the longer term with funding from Council's Investment Programme. Given the direct link with Public Health Agencies strategies around health and wellbeing and active lifestyles, external partner funding is currently being explored with the Public Health Agency. Additional in-kind contributions from relevant voluntary and community organisations including Friends of Half Moon Lake is ongoing.
- 2.6 As the project proposal is presently a work in progress, a final budget has not yet been completed. The budget will be included in the funding application submitted to DCAL and presented to Parks and Leisure Committee in a further report to be presented to Committee in March 2013.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

As outlined above, it is a requirement of the funding criteria to demonstrate partnership funding and options are currently being explored with Public Health Agency. The project proposal is still a work in progress therefore a final budget has not been prepared. A financial contribution will however be required by Council and this will be provided from the Parks 2013/2014 budget, in line with current planning and estimates processes.

3.2 Human Resources

Officer time will be required for coordinating and submitting funding applications, liaison with DCAL officers and planning, managing and delivering project activities.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are no known associated equality considerations at this stage however, should the application process progress, Equality and Good Relations factors will be taken into account in the development of the project.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- **Note the contents of this report;**
- **Agree that the funding application as outlined in paragraph 1 is submitted to DCAL by 15 February 2013;**
- **Agree that a further report is submitted to the Parks and Leisure Committee in March 2013, which will include a detailed budget illustrating partnership funding attracted to the projects, together with the financial investment required by Council.”**

A number of Members welcomed the report and the potential it presented for the development of waterways within Belfast. A Member pointed out that the South Belfast Area-Based Working Group had expressed an interest in the development of the tourism potential of the River Lagan and, in particular, the feasibility of developing Lagan Lands East, which ran from the Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Park Forest. She welcomed the potential which existed for partnership working through the initiative and indicated that the Members of the South Belfast Area-Based Working Group would be keen to explore further the opportunities which had been presented in respect of the River Lagan.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Review of High Hedges

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Key Issues

High Hedges Act – the review of the process

From April 2012 to date the service has dealt with 119 complaints in relation to high hedges the majority of these by telephone. All but one of these complaints was dealt with informally. The one complaint that did proceed through the formal route was completed without any appeal with the service receiving the £350 required fee. The officers however have dealt with over 1300 calls requesting advice and guidance on the legislation. Nine months into the new legislation there is still an uncertainty about the volume and patterns around the enquiries going forward.

Originally the DoENI scoping consultation had estimated that there could be a backlog of 800 high hedge problem cases

which will be required to be determined by district councils in the first 2 to 3 years that the legislation is in operation.

The experience to date therefore is that the service is working hard with residents to resolve issues regarding high hedges through the informal process. The service will continue to improve the communication of this legislation and has information packs available and detailed information on the website which it will continue to maintain and promote.

Committee is therefore to note that the unit wishes to continue with the existing process as it has been tested and proven successful. Committee is asked to recognise that the service being provided is proving to be more in relation to advice and guidance through the stage one of the process and that only one complaint has gone through all the stages of the process. The financial implications in relation to this are set out below.

2. **Resource Implications**

In the report to committee in March 2012 the view was that the High Hedge fee of £350 would cover the costs associated with administering this new legislation.

Currently there are two fixed term officers providing advice and support in this area at a cost of £54k. The estimates for 13/14 include both officers' costs however there is associated income from other projects to offset their costs. The assessment is that sustaining this level of income over time is unlikely.

It is recommended that the current provision of service with the two officers as set out above continue as is and review after a further period of a year. It is acknowledged that there are peaks and troughs in the requirement for advice and guidance provided by the unit. However both officers are also involved in supporting other funded work that is provided by the unit and officers are satisfied that both posts can be covered by the income from these projects for the next year subject to review and the impact of RPA on the unit.

3. **Equality Implications**

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

The High Hedges legislation was presented to the Council's equality consultative forum and it was suggested that the High Hedge process was reviewed after a 12 month period. From the analysis of the enquiries/complaints that we have received we do not feel that there is any adverse impact on any of the nine categories under Section 75. Also as the majority of the cases were resolved without any fee being levied we do not feel our process is prohibitive due to a fee being applied where relevant. However we will review this again in 12 months.

4. Recommendations

**Note the success of the informal process to date
Note that the formal process has been tested successfully
Agree to maintain the resources currently in place for the service with a further review in a year's time."**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Proposed Playground at Monagh Road / Drive

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

Officers have received a request from the Upper Springfield Development Trust relating to a proposal to develop a piece of land to the rear of shops and flats adjacent to Monagh Road / Monagh Drive in West Belfast.

The land is currently owned by the Belfast Education and Library Board. An unused Youth Club is currently on the site however the Board has declared the land surplus and has engaged with the local community and the Department for Social Development to consider development options for the site. The site is essentially derelict, rubbish is routinely dumped, fires are set and it is a gathering point for local youths engaging in general nuisance activity in the area. The community is anxious to regenerate the site and bring it into positive use and believe that a physical development will aid this.

The Upper Springfield and Whiterock Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board commissioned a Feasibility Study, supported by DSD, to look at potential development options for the Monagh Road Site at Turf Lodge. A copy of the study is available upon request. The study has identified a series of options. The preferred option was a multipurpose community

facility at an estimated cost of £700,000, excluding Vat and professional fees and charges. However, a number of issues have been raised around the sustainability of such a building and the feasibility study is currently being reviewed. One of the options considered related to the provision of a play park. The Council has been asked, should a Play Park emerge as the best option for the site, following a review of the feasibility study:-

Would BCC take ownership of the land?
Would BCC maintain it?

2 Key Issues

The Committee is asked to consider the request within the following context:

1. The Community is anxious for the derelict land to be brought into positive use. A feasibility study has been completed, albeit being reviewed at present;
2. The community is aware of the social challenges within the area and believe that the physical improvement of this site will greatly support their efforts on the ground;
3. There is a commitment from those involved at a community level to make this project work;
4. However, the proposal at this time is speculative, there is no design detail; there have been no site surveys and there is no funding commitment; although the DSD has been supportive of the feasibility study;
5. Traditionally the Council has accepted the transfer of land and the associated management, maintenance and public liability of play parks where the capital cost has been secured from sources other than the Council. However, within the current financial constraints it is becoming increasingly difficult to absorb the revenue cost of additional facilities, estimated to be £13,500 per annum, excluding any cost associated with vandalism or anti social behaviour on the site; in addition, this increases the future potential capital liability of the Council, i.e. the need to replace the facility; agreeing to the request would increase the liability placed upon the Council;

6. The position regarding the disposal of the land by the Board is not yet clear, it is likely that there would be a cost associated with the acquisition of the cost; this cost may be borne by DSD but it is not clear nor are the terms and conditions associated with the disposal;
7. The Committee is asked to note that there are a number of Council maintained play parks in the general area at Falls Park; Moyard; Springhill; and Pat O'Hare Park (McCrorry Park); in addition consideration is currently being given to a further play area. Committee should note that no assessment of this proposal has been carried out under the Council's Strategy for playgrounds. However this will now be carried out in advance of the Committee's meeting.
8. The general area suffers from anti social behaviour;
9. The site itself is sufficient in terms of size for a play park, however it is situated in a secluded area at the rear of properties, it is not considered to be an ideal location for a play park;
10. In addition, access to the site is limited, there are pedestrian paths however vehicular access is restricted and construction on the site would be hampered by these factors.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

Whilst there would be no capital spend implications it is anticipated that the routine maintenance of this would be a further £13,500 per annum plus the associated public liability and any costs resulting from anti social behaviour.

Human Resources

The project would be added to the work load to existing in the area in terms of opening and closing of the facility; daily inspection and any associated clean up.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no equality implications

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is asked to note the report and to direct officers as to whether they wish to agree in principle to accept the management, maintenance and public liability responsibilities for the proposal in the event that it should go ahead.”

A Member indicated that the Committee should exercise caution when considering the request since there were issues which had been highlighted within the report relating to the number of Council-maintained play facilities within the area as well as outstanding issues relating to vehicular access to the site. Accordingly, he suggested that it would be prudent for Members to undertake a site visit in order to assess the issues at first hand.

After discussion, the Committee agreed, in principle, that the Council would accept responsibility for the management, maintenance and public liability for the site in the event of the proposed development taking place. In addition, it was agreed that a study visit would be facilitated for those Members who wished to view the site at first hand.

Roselawn Crematorium - Listed Building Proposal

The Director informed the Committee that the Department had received advanced notification from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency that it was considering listing of the undernoted buildings at Roselawn Cemetery and Crematorium:

- the Crematorium Building;
- the Gate Lodge and Gate Screen; and
- the Toilet Block, Porters' Lounge and Concrete Gazebo.

The Director indicated that the proposals had arisen as a result of an audit of buildings of historic interest which had been undertaken by the Agency in the Castlereagh area. As the owner, the Council would be entitled to make a written submission to the agency regarding the architectural or historic interest of the buildings. In addition, the Agency was seeking the views of both Castlereagh Borough Council and the Historic Buildings Council, the latter of which had indicated that it would support the proposals to list the buildings. The Director indicated that it was likely that the Agency would agree that the buildings be listed.

The Committee was reminded that, should the buildings be listed, it would place certain responsibilities on the Council regarding their future maintenance and upkeep and this would be significant in light of the ongoing review of cremation provision which the Council was undertaking. Accordingly, Council officials had met with the Agency on 7th February and had expressed concerns about the proposed listing from an operational perspective insofar as it might impinge on the future development, maintenance and upkeep of the buildings. The Director indicated that the Agency had agreed to extend its

deliberations on the buildings until after the meeting of the Committee so as any Members' comments could be taken into consideration.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report, together with the comments of the Director thereon, and noted further that an update in this regard would be submitted in due course.

Victoria Park - Tidal Flood Barrier

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware of the ongoing problem of flooding in parts of the city. In response to this a number of projects have been identified which are aimed at minimizing the impact of the flooding. A series of recommendations were made in the flood incident report which was approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in June 2012. One of the recommendations related to the installation of a tidal flood barrier at Victoria Park.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARDNI) was in contact with our Emergency Services staff in January 2013 and informed us of their intention to install the tidal flood barrier at Victoria Park as quickly as possible and proposed a date in early February. Following discussions with operational staff it was agreed that the work would be completed on the 5 and 6 February. The intention was to install the barrier at the tunnel access to Victoria Park and that access through the tunnel will not be permitted. Temporary notices informing park users of the closure have been put up and the Council's web site updated.

A pedestrian gate will remain open during the works.

2 Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following points:

1. This work was undertaken as part of ongoing flood alleviation measures to minimise the potential impact of flooding;
2. DARDNI / Rivers Agency carried out the work and has a right of access in such instances;

3. The work was undertaken over a two day period and has been completed;
4. Access to the park was restricted during the works; however a pedestrian gate remained opened to minimise the inconvenience to park users;
5. Notices had been put up in the area in advance of the works to inform users and residents about the works and a diversion sign was in place during the work period.”

The Committee noted the information provided.

155-157 Newtownards Road / 2 Tower Street

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to inform members of a proposal to develop a small corner site at 155-157 Newtownards Road and 2 Tower Street. The proposal has emerged from the East Belfast Partnership Board and is supported by the Department for Social Development who is also the land owner. A copy of the site map is attached as Appendix A and an outline of the proposal is attached as Appendix B.

The project is the latest in a series of similar environmental projects in the area aimed at improving the general appear of the neighbourhood.

The Department has asked the Council to consider:

1. Accepting the maintenance; management and public liability associated with the project once it is completed;
2. Accepting the transfer of the land.

2 Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note:

- i. The Council is supportive of environmental projects of this nature and in the past has accepted the management, maintenance and public liability of similar projects, however, owing to financial constraints within the Council it is becoming

increasingly difficult to absorb the additional workload associated with these sites;

- ii. The Council cannot undertake the management and maintenance of a site which it does not own unless accompanied by a service level or contract agreement with another public organisation;
- iii. The Council cannot accept the public liability of a site it does not own;
- iv. Should the Committee agree to accept the liability associated with this site it is likely that the land would need to transfer;
- v. The Department has indicated that the maintenance could be absorbed within its own regime for a short time however it does not wish to take on the public liability element; the site will not be enclosed and may be subject to damage.
- vi. The Committee has four options

Option 1 would be to refuse the request to accept the transfer of land and associated maintenance and public liability;

Option 2 would be to refuse the request accept the transfer of land but agree to include the maintenance on the basis of a service level agreement;

Option 3 would be to agree to the request to accept the transfer of land and the associated maintenance and public liability;

Option 4 would be to agree to the request to accept the transfer of land and the associated maintenance and public liability but seek a maintenance contribution from the Department for an initial five year period.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

There is no capital expenditure implications associated with the works however there will be an ongoing maintenance liability and associated public liability responsibility.

Human Resources

This would add to the workload of the existing staffing establishment.

Asset and other implications

This project would improve the general appearance of the area and would help support the wider regeneration of the area.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no equality implications

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is asked to note the report, consider the options outlined above and direct officers as to its preferred option.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt Option 4 as set out in the foregoing report as its preferred option.

Land Adjacent to Springmartin Play Area

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Committee aware of a lease request from the Blackmountain Action Group in respect of the potential development of land adjacent to Springmartin Play area.

1.2 The SP&R Committee at its meeting on the 23 November 2012 endorsed the Shankill Area Working Group recommendation to add a further £50,000 to the £100,000 of Local Investment Funding previously approved in principle (in October 2012) to allow Blackmountain Action Group to develop a mini soccer pitch at the site adjacent to Springmartin Play Area, with all funding subject to confirmation of costs, clarification of legal issues, sustainability etc.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The Council hold the 1.02 acre site at Blackmountain Park off the Springfield Road from the NIHE by way of a 9000 year lease subject to the following main terms:

- To use the site as a play area.
 - Not to assign or sub-let the site without consent.
- 2.2 That part of the site shaded yellow has been developed as playground and the remainder of the site is effectively an area of waste land.
- 2.3 The Springfield Star Blackmountain Community Mini Soccer Pitch committee comprising of 14 members from local schools, youth projects, residents, football club and local councillors was set up to discuss the lack of sporting facilities available within the Blackmountain Community. Due to the lack of sufficient facilities in the immediate area the Blackmountain Springfield Star Football Club has been training and competing on offsite locations and as such they advise that they are finding it increasingly difficult to actively engage and recruit local children. The Springfield Star Blackmountain Action Group agreed to seek LIF funding through the AWG to redevelop the existing grassed area, shown shaded blue on the plan attached at Appendix'1', at Blackmountain Park with a third generation playing surface, erection of 4m high pitch side fencing and 4 floodlight masts.
- 2.4 The Springfield Star Blackmountain Mini Soccer Pitch committee have now become the Blackmountain Action Group.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the Council's Property & Projects Department will deliver this project.
- 2.6 The Committee is asked to note that the Blackmountain Action Group have requested a three year lease for the portion of Springmartin Play Area. This proposal is in line with the SP&R Committee's clarification of LIF guidance to Members at its meeting on the 22 June 2012, that a LIF proposal in respect of a Council asset could be eligible if it was subject to a lease of reasonable duration from the Council. The Blackmountain Action Group specifically requested a short term lease as they are aware of the risks and responsibilities associated with managing sporting facilities. The granting of the lease will be subject to receipt of the following;

- I. a satisfactory business plan which clearly demonstrates the sustainability of the proposed project,
- II. a sports development plan,
- III. consent from NIHE to change of user and subletting,
- IV. securing the appropriate approvals including planning and building control.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The redevelopment of this land to provide a third generation playing surface, erection of 4m high pitch side fencing and 4 floodlight masts is to be funded by way of £150,000 of LIF support as agreed in principle by SP&R on the 23 November 2012. The Council will deliver the scheme via Property & Projects. The amount of rent to be charged by the Council and the details of the lease will be the subject of a further report to SP&R in due course.

3.2 Human Resources

Resources in Parks and Leisure, Estates Management Unit and Legal Services involved in agreeing detailed terms and drawing up the proposed lease..

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

The provision of a third generation synthetic surface would increase use of the facility and help address short fall in provision. It would support the development of programmes to support initiatives around health and well being; community safety and the creation of shared spaces.

4. Equality Implications

- 4.1 An EQIA was carried out at the outset of the Investment Programme. As part of the due diligence process, officers will equality screen all the LIF projects, both individually and as a whole programme. Where any adverse equality impact is identified, either at individual project level, or at a programme or area level, mitigating actions will be devised for inclusion in the letter of offer, and/or for the consideration of the AWGs.

5. Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Agree, in principle to enter into a lease arrangement with Blackmountain Action Group for a period of 3 years subject to:
 - I. receipt of amended business plan,**
 - II. sports development plan,**
 - III. consent from NIHE to change of user and subletting,**
 - IV. securing the appropriate approvals , including planning and building control and council agreement to making the land available.**
 - V. approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in line with Standing Orders.”****

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Land at Whiterock Close - Glor na Mona Lease

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Committee aware of a lease request from Glór Na Móna in respect of the potential development of Council land adjacent to Whiterock Leisure and Community Centre and to seek a decision on this matter.**
- 1.2 The SP&R Committee at its meeting on the 24 August 2012 endorsed the West AWG recommendation to provide £112,000 of Local Investment Fund to Glór na Móna subject to match funding being obtained within 18 months and subject to confirmation of costs, clarification of legal issues, sustainability etc.**

2.0 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council owns an extensive area of land in the vicinity of the Whiterock Leisure and Community Centre. Part of this area, was formerly the site of Bunscoil an Sleibhe Dhuibh; the site has been vacant since that school opened its new accommodation on the Ballymurphy Road in 2002.**

- 2.2 The site lies within the Whiterock Community Corridor concept area. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 22 June 2012 agreed that the Whiterock Community Health and Well Being Corridor was one of a number of schemes that should be progressed to Strategic Outline Case stage. This would allow for it to be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for inclusion in the uncommitted section of the Capital Programme
- 2.3 Glór na Móna is an Irish language organisation that operates to promote Irish language and related activities in Upper Springfield and the surrounding area. The group promotes Irish through cultural events and develops services for the Irish language community.
- 2.4 Glór na Móna's existing leased premises is basement accommodation which is poorly lit and ventilated with low ceilings creating an uncomfortable and oppressive environment.
- 2.5 Glór na Móna have received approval in principle for £112,000 of Local Investment Fund support as outlined at paragraph 1.2 above which will be matched by a further £112,500 from CISTE to construct a modular building on that part of the former Bunscoil.
- 2.6 The Committee is asked to note that Glór na Móna have requested a seven year lease for the area of land. This proposal is in line with the SP&R Committee's clarification of LIF guidance to Members at its meeting on the 22 June 2012, that a LIF proposal in respect of a Council asset could be eligible if it was subject to a lease of reasonable duration from the Council.
- 2.7 The Glór na Móna project, while progressing under the LIF, is also being considered as part of the wider project proposals emerging for the Whiterock site as the Strategic Outline Case for the Whiterock Community hub develops. Given the modular nature of the proposed construction it is proposed to retain flexibility within the lease to allow for future reconfiguration of the overall site, if required, in order to ensure a joined up delivery of community facilities at this location.

3.0 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The SP&R Committee at its meeting on the 24 August 2012 endorsed the West AWG recommendation to provide £112,000 of Local Investment Fund to Glór na Mona subject to match funding being obtained within 18 months and subject to confirmation of costs, clarification of legal issues, sustainability etc. CISTE have confirmed match funding of £112,500. If any additional funding is required Glór na Móna have advised that they may well seek a loan from the Ulster Community Investment Trust.

3.2 Detailed terms of the lease including rent will be brought to the SP&R Committee for approval.

3.3 Human Resource

Resources in the Estates Management Unit and Legal Services involved in agreeing detailed terms and drawing up the appropriate form of lease.

3.4 Asset and Other Implications

The siting of the proposed modular building for Glór na Móna at the Whiterock Road end of the former Bunscoil site leaves the use of the remainder of the area flexible in terms of the emerging Whiterock Community Health and Well Being Corridor.

4.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

An EQIA was carried out at the outset of the Investment Programme. As part of the due diligence process, officers will equality screen all the LIF projects, both individually and as a whole programme. Where any adverse equality impact is identified, either at individual project level, or at a programme or area level, mitigating actions will be devised for inclusion in the letter of offer, and/or for the consideration of the AWGs.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree in principle to enter into a lease arrangement with Glór Na Móna for a period of 7 years subject to:

- (i) **Glór na Móna receiving £112,500 of match funding from CISTE.**
- (ii) **Glór na Móna providing a satisfactory business plan.**
- (iii) **Glór na Móna securing the appropriate approvals including planning, building control.**
- (iv) **Approval of the SP&R Committee to the rent and detail terms of the lease in accordance with Standing Orders.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Mary Peters Track - Update

The Director provided an overview to the Committee on the progress of the upgrade work at the Mary Peters Track and reported that he had been advised that the running track and grandstand at the facility had been completed by the contractors. During discussion, he clarified a number of issues in respect of press facilities and accommodation for the World Police and Fire Games.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Sport NI Consultation - New Outdoor Recreation for Northern Ireland

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response to the consultation exercise which had been undertaken by Sport NI in respect of its Ten-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland:

Council Response

- 1 Does the Action Plan reflect the key issues that you believe are fundamental to developing Outdoor Recreation in Northern Ireland?**

The greatest opportunities people have to participate in outdoor recreational activities are those which are easily available to them (local parks, open spaces etc). For this reason issues around regeneration need to be considered with greater involvement of Department of Social Development, Planning Service and local authorities. Issues which impact on local land use such as lighting, anti-social behaviour, etc need to be considered.

With the topic of health and wellbeing featuring strongly in the action plan, it will be essential to ensure high level representation from the Public Health Agency. Consideration

should be given to the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on walking and cycling: local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel and recreation.

Whilst councils may provide secretariat functions for local outdoor recreation forums and that the role for Local Authorities post RPA will be taken into consideration, there is sparse reference to Local Government. Given input to the previous consultation by the majority of councils participation may be implicit. However, with Planning and Tourism responsibilities moving to councils in the near future, it will be important for councils to remain closely involved alongside Government departments and agencies in delivering outdoor recreation opportunities.

- 2 Are there any changes that you feel need to be made to the detailed actions? Please highlight any specific sections to which your comments relate.

Barriers to sport and physical activity participation' identifies socio-cultural barriers, practical barriers and knowledge barriers. A common theme across each of these is the issue of self-perception. The communication theme could greater reflect the need to promote outdoor recreation as an option for people to be active.

- 3 Do you believe that the suggested structures will help to give a clearer voice for change and developments on a local and national level?

A diagram of the proposed structure would assist in understanding who will be involved and at what level.

- 4 Is the document clear in its structure and easy to understand?

The addition of case studies and pictures will soften the document considerably.

- 5 Does the language used provide clear information in plain English?

The term AONB is used within the structure theme (page 13) without a full description (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The full description is not given until page 14.

The Committee was advised that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency had issued for consultation a document which sought to ascertain views on the creation of an agreed policy on the future establishment and management of country parks by that organisation. Accordingly, the Committee considered the contents of a draft Council response to the exercise which had stressed the need for clarity regarding local and regional involvement in any future management of country parks.

The Committee endorsed the contents of the response and it was noted that it was available on the Council's modern.gov system.

Public Holiday Closure / St. Patrick's Day

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting 12th January, 2012, it had endorsed a range of proposals for the opening/closing times for departmental facilities given public holidays and maintenance agreements for the financial year 2012/2013. He reported that the recommendations within the previous report had been made on the basis that Sunday 17th March, 2013, would be allocated as the St. Patrick's Day public holiday for shift workers. However, the Council had since confirmed that Monday, 18th March, would be allocated as the designated public holiday for all staff, including shift workers.

Accordingly, he recommended that the following leisure centres, which had been due to be close on Sunday, 17th March, would now instead close on Monday, 18th March, viz., Andersonstown, Whiterock, Ozone Tennis Centre, Loughside and Falls.

During discussion, it was noted that officers from within the Department would explore the feasibility of, in future, providing alternative attractions for young people, in conjunction with local community groups on public holidays when leisure centres were closed.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Parks Events - Small Grants Schemes

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th November, 2012, it had agreed to support the provision of a grant scheme in the summer of 2013 and had agreed also to increase the maximum grant, per group, from £2,250 to £3,000. In addition, at its meeting on 10th May, 2012, the Committee had agreed that the Director be authorised under the scheme of delegation to approve further funding applications under the scheme and that reports in this regard would be submitted to the Committee periodically. It was reported that applications to the latest tranche of the scheme had closed on 8th January. Of the twenty-two applications received, twenty-one had been deemed to have met the pre-agreed criteria and the recommendations for grant awards are set out hereunder:

Group	Date(s)	Venue	Title of Event	Amount of Grant Requested	Proposed Amount of Grant to be Awarded
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Inner East Youth Project	24-Jul	Victoria Park	Teddy in the Park	£3,000	£2,835
St Teresa's Youth Centre	19-Jul-13	Northlink Playing Fields	Party In the Park	£2,440	£2,440
Ballynafeigh Community Development Assoc	April 9,11,13,14 & June 4,6,8,9	Ormeau Pk	Neighbourhood Bird Watch	£2,288	£2,288
The Conservation Volunteers	06-Oct	Ormeau Pk	The Big Green Weekend	£2,900	£2,900
Artillery Young Mothers Group	12-Jul	North Queen Street Playground	Young Parents Fun Day	£2,381	£2,381
Cairde Loch na Leathghealai	04-Aug	Half Moon Lake	Fun Day in the Park	£3,000	£2,780
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	12-Jul	Cliftonville Playing Fields	Craic @ the Cricky	£3,000	£3,000
All Nations Ministries	10-Aug	Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park	International Community Picnic	£2,780	£2,758
Féile an Phobail	28-31-Aug	Falls Park	Draíocht Children's Arts Festival	£2,800	£2,800
Sólás	7-Apr & 29 Sept	Botanic Gardens	Awareness of Special Needs in Our Community	£3,000	£3,000
Ardoyne Fleadh Project	25-Aug	Marrowbone Park	Fun on the Hills	£3,000	£3,000
Belfast Hills Partnership	01-Jun	Ligoniel Park	Invertebrate Investigation Day	£1,000	£1,000
Belfast Hills Partnership	29-Jun	Cave Hill Country Park - Carrs Glen	Walk for Woodland & Waterside Wildflowers	£1,000	£1,000
Belfast Hills Partnership	5&6-Jul	Cave Hill Country Park - Hazelwood	Mammal Watch	£1,000	£1,000
Shankill Area Social History Group	13-May	Shankill Graveyard	Bringing Our History Alive	£2,850	£2,950
Willowfield	07-Sep	Ormeau Park	Family Fun Day	£2,050	£2,050

Parish Community Association					
Holy Family Youth Centre	12-Jul	Alexandra Park	Lark in the Park	£2,852	£2,852
Old Stranmillis Residents Association	01-Jun	Sharman Road Open Space	Stranmillis Residents Good Relations Day	£3,000	£3,000
Rare Breeds Survival Trust NI Support Group	6 & 7-Apr	Victoria Pk (TBC)	Country in Town Spring Display	£3,000	£3,000
Disabled Ramblers NI (Shopmobility Belfast)	May-Sept	Various Parks	DRNI Park Rambles 2013	£3,000	£3,000
Lower Oldpark Community Association	14-Sep	John Hewitt (Alloa Street)	John Hewitt Park Event	£3,000	£3,000

It was reported that, due to the lower number of applications received, further applications would be invited. Information in this regard would be advertised and outreach officers would work to ensure that all communities across the city were made aware of this funding opportunity and be encouraged to apply.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and it was noted that clarification would be provided in respect of public liability issues surrounding Council-supported large and small scale events.

Contribution to Societies

The Director of Parks and Leisure advised the Committee that the Department had hosted the Spring and Autumn Fairs in 2012 and the events had proved to be a success, with approximately 8,000 visitors attending each event. He reported that, in previous years, the Committee had granted a small donation to each of the Societies involved in the organisation of the shows in recognition of the assistance which they had provided in respect of the event. He recommended, therefore, that a donation of £100 be made to each of the undernoted organisations:

Friends of Bonsai
Northern Ireland Daffodil Group
Belfast and District Beekeepers' Association
Belfast Wine Makers' Circle
British Cactus and Succulent Society
Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland
Irish Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society
North of Ireland Dahlia Society
Northern Ireland Bonsai Society
Northern Ireland Group of Flower Arrangement Societies
Northern Ireland Orchid Society

Northern Ireland Vegetable Association
Rose Society of Northern Ireland

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Charity Abseil - McArt's Fort, Cave Hill

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from Activities NI to hold, for the third year in succession, a charity abseiling fund-raising event at McArt's Fort, Cave Hill, on Saturday, 14th September.

The Director outlined the health and safety considerations which were deemed relevant to the event, together with the issues which had been raised in respect of the possible disturbance which could be caused to nesting birds in the vicinity. He explained that, by holding the event in September, it had been anticipated that the issues regarding nesting birds would be minimised. However, he pointed out that the organisers would be required to carry out a survey of birds in the area in the weeks leading up to the event. Should birds be discovered to be nesting in the vicinity, he reported that the event would be delayed.

The Director reported that permission for the holding of the event would be subject to the submission by the organisers of a satisfactory event management plan. In addition, the organisers would provide all the necessary risk assessment documentation and provide adequate public and employee liability insurance which would be applicable to the event. He reported that it was anticipated that the organisers would submit further requests to host similar-type events at the Cave Hill and he proposed that he be granted delegated authority to consider such requests. He added that, in future, consent would be granted only after consultations with the Park Manager and representatives of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign and on the condition that all criteria had been met by the organisers.

Accordingly, the Committee granted authority for the charity abseiling event to be held at McArt's Fort, subject to the following conditions:

- that the event organisers ensure that all health and safety requirements are met to the Council's satisfaction, including the submission of an event management plan, risk assessments, safe systems of work and equipment inspection information;
- that the event organisers ensures that the necessary bird surveys are carried out prior to the event taking place; and
- that any future abseiling requests for the Cave Hill be permitted, if deemed appropriate, by the Director of Parks and Leisure under the Scheme of Delegation.

Górt na Móna Historical and Cultural Society

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from Górt Na Móna Historical and Cultural Society seeking permission to hold a cultural event on Saturday, 30th March, in the Main Hall at the Andersonstown Leisure Centre, with a clean-up being undertaken on Sunday, 31st March. The Society was based in the Upper Springfield area of the City and had carried out research which sought to tell the history of the area and the people who resided there. The Society had held three similar successful events at both the Whiterock and Andersonstown Leisure Centres since September, 2008.

The Society's application had requested permission to host a folk night with bar facilities and had given assurances of full compliance with the Council's policy and statutory requirements. The fee charged by the Council would be in line with normal charging policy and would include staff costs for out of normal opening hours use.

The Committee approved the application by the Society to hire the facilities at Andersonstown Leisure Centre on the dates mentioned, subject to the Society providing an appropriate event management plan.

Chairman