

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 9th May, 2013

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCabe (Chairman);
Aldermen Humphrey and Rodgers;
Councillors Corr, Garrett, Haire, Hartley,
Kelly, McKee, McNamee, Mallon, 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 Councillors Hendron, Kyle and Mac Giolla Mhín.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th April 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 May.

Declaration of Interest

In respect of item 7 viz., 'Stadia Update', 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.

Support for Sport Development Grants

The Committee noted a schedule of Support for Sport applications which related to development and hospitality grants and which had been approved by the Director in accordance with the authority delegated to him, information on which was available on the Council's Modern.gov website.

Improvement Programme - Commercial Operations

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that the Department's Improvement Programme was discussed by the Committee at its meeting on 14th February 2013. Reference was made to a review which had commenced and to the significance of the commercial businesses within Belfast Castle, Malone House and the Zoo. Members were informed that proposals were being developed for the creation of a new post of Commercial Manager to manage all three commercial operations and to ensure the implementation of the reviews of the business models at all three sites.

Income is under pressure at these three sites, as well as across the leisure operations. This is clearly in part due to the current state of the economy.

2 Key issues

The recent review of the Zoo indicated the need for the development of a longer term strategic plan together with a capital development plan for the business. It also clearly indicates the need to focus on the commercial operation of the Zoo.

The operating models for Belfast Castle and Malone House are also in need of review.

The Commercial Development Manager role is considered as being fundamental to turning the performance of the functions around. The role will also take a lead in delivering a revised operating model and managing any appropriate corporate contracts.

The department has considered the performance of the three commercial businesses and, given the decline in income and the increased subsidy, there is an urgent need to develop the commercial capacity.

The parks commercial operations urgently need to review:

- the products
- how they are packaged
- the potential for collaboration with other partners
- pricing
- positioning in the market

To allow these businesses to gain some competitive advantage and start performing positively.

In the review of the business model at the Zoo, the need for a more professional approach to Commercial Management was identified. It is intended to extend the remit of the post to manage the operations at all the sites. It is also the intention to include some duties of a corporate nature to enable best use of the resource to assist other commercial operations in the Council.

It is anticipated that this proposed post will report through the Departmental Business Manager in the first instance. The interim structure is attached.

Programmes and Pricing

In September 2012, the Committee was informed of a programme of initiatives being rolled out in relation to Leisure Centres to address the retention of our members and also to grow memberships and casual use through weight loss programmes and other marketing initiatives. These have proved to be beneficial and the number of members has grown by 12% for full members and 30% for concession members. However due to the decrease in our membership fees the income per member has reduced and we still to need address the gap this has created in income. Promotions and incentives are needed to increase our membership and ensure retention. During 2013/2014, the department would like to continue to run promotions and develop specific programmes that will require strategic pricing especially in relation to retaining customers.

To help address the decline in income the department is looking at how it can more effectively take advantage of events and activities that are run by the department and the Council as a whole. A number of promotions have been developed and are hoped to be rolled out in the next few months for the Zoo, Leisure Centres, Malone House and Belfast Castle.

As an immediate response to the Easter closures at the Zoo, a promotion was offered for all those attending the Spring fair which allowed them to avail of a 20% discount until the end of May. The Zoo also intends to work with the local schools in the area to offer incentives and also the local media to ensure any losses in relation to Easter can be recovered.

Governance will need to be considered in terms of the commercial functions' agility, i.e. their ability to make critical decisions about product/pricing etc. in a timely fashion to gain advantage and meet market demands. This will require

delegated authority for the Director to set and agree prices and promotions.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

The post of Commercial Development Manager has been provided for in the 2013/2014 revenue estimates. The job description is currently being finalised and it is anticipated that it will have a notional grading in the range of PO8-PO10, subject to evaluation. All promotional and marketing activities will be provided for within existing marketing budgets.

Human Resources

Staff and Trade Unions will be consulted throughout the review of the operating models of Belfast Castle and Malone House. The marketing staff in conjunction with operational managers and corporate communications will agree a programme of promotions and activities.

4 Equality Implications

None

5 Recommendation

The Committee is requested to:

- 1. approve the creation of a Commercial Development Manager post in the context of the overall approach to the commercial operations.**
- 2. grant delegated authority to the Director to approve a range of measures to increase business at our key facilities as set out above."**

During discussion, the Director clarified a range of issues in respect of the roll, scope and reporting line for the Commercial Development Manager and undertook to circulate, on completion, the job description for the position. In addition, he agreed to provide an update to the Committee on the future of the proposed post of Partnership Development Officer.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the following:

- to the creation of the post of Commercial Development Manager who, pending the completion of the review of the Department's Council operations, would report to the Assistant Director; and
- to delegate authority to the Director to authorise, as deemed appropriate, promotional activities at key departmental facilities.

Fund for the Enhancement of Schools' Pitches

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that they have previously agreed to the allocation of £750,000, to a fund for capital enhancements to playing pitches owned by schools, as part of the Playing Pitches Strategy. The purpose of the capital enhancement is to achieve greater community access to pitches facilities, 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 November 2012 this Committee agreed the application process for the £750k for schools. Within this process it was agreed that there would be a minimum award of £70,000 and a maximum award of £150,000. The Council would fund up to 100% of the construction costs, up to a maximum of £150,000. Design costs would not be eligible.

2 Key Issues

The application process opened on the 10 December 2012 and closed on 29 March, a total of 15 applications requesting a total of £2,017,818 was submitted. A panel consisting of the Director and Business Manager from the Parks and Leisure Department and a representative from the Department of Education met to assess the applications against the prioritisation matrix.

On assessment 5 of the applications were deemed ineligible in that they did not meet the criteria of the fund. The remaining 10 applications were assessed and received the following scores out of 300:

School	Amount requested	Description of project	Total Score
St Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School	£85,211 (no funding being sought from elsewhere)	Floodlighting for all weather pitch	300
Aquinas Grammar School	£150,000 (part of large scale project and funding being sought from several sources)	Upgrade of existing grass pitch and concrete basketball area to synthetic area, floodlit grass pitch and MUGA	260
Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	£73,000 (no funding being sought from elsewhere)	Upgrade existing MUGA to 3G surface	235
Grosvenor Grammar	£150,000 (no funding being sought from elsewhere)	Floodlighting	205
Corpus Christi College	£150,000 (part funding being sought elsewhere)	Construction of 3G MUGA	195
Belfast Royal Academy	£150,000 (shortfall in funding being covered by the school)	Floodlighting of existing synthetic hockey pitch	190
Ashfield Girls	£150,000 (no funding being sought from elsewhere)	Floodlighting	180
Belfast Girls Model	£150,000 (no funding being sought from elsewhere)	Floodlighting	155
Methodist College	£150,000 (shortfall in funding being covered by the school)	Construction of new all weather synthetic pitch	150
De La Salle College	£73,712.16 (no funding being sought from elsewhere)	Replace and extend surface of existing pitch and replacement of current fence with ball stop fencing	70

Based on the scores and the amount of money available it is recommended that the following applications are forwarded for delivery and cost screening as a due diligence exercise:

St Marys Christian Brothers Grammar School -	£85,211
Aquinas Grammar School -	£150,000
Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh -	£73,000
Grosvenor Grammar -	£150,000
Corpus Christie College -	150,000
Belfast Royal Academy -	£150,000
Total applications -	£758,211

The due diligence process will test both deliverability and provide cost assurance. As part of this schools will be asked to provide a project plan; risk management framework; procurement strategy; costs and designs; and necessary approvals. It will also give assurance where match funding is required. No letters of offer will be forwarded to schools until this due diligence has been completed.

It may be that the costs will vary or that the process will identify high risk projects and it is therefore recommended that the Ashfield Girls School as 7th highest scoring application is also forwarded for delivery and cost screening, as a contingency. We anticipate that funding agreements, with the necessary terms and conditions, will be issued by December 2013. All projects will have to be completed by 30 September 2014.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

£750k has been allocated for this element of the Playing Pitches Strategy.

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. This element of the overall strategy has been screened out and a screening form has been forwarded to the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer.

5 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to approve the recommendations made in relation to the award of funding.”

The Director reported that, given that the playing fields belonging to the Belfast Royal Academy were located outside the City boundary, the application for funding would be subject to the school being able to demonstrate, during the due diligence process, that the expenditure to be incurred would provide direct benefit to the City and its ratepayers. In response, the Committee indicated that, in such a circumstance, it would offer no objection to the funding being made available as outlined.

After discussion, during which the Director agreed to circulate the assessment criteria which had been used in considering the applications, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

High Hedges Act - Implementation Update

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 18th February, it had noted the contents of a report which had provided an update in respect of the implementation of the High Hedges Act. Subsequently, at the meeting of the Council on 4th March, in considering the minutes of the Parks and Leisure Committee, it had been agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment enquiring as to the steps which could be taken within the legislation to address the problem of overgrown hedges at properties for which no owner could be identified.

The Director reported that officers had since discussed the matter with the Member who had proposed the amendment and they had clarified issues regarding the powers available in cases where no owner could be identified for a property at which a high hedge existed. He pointed out that, in such circumstances, a complainant could apply to the Land and Property Services who would be able to provide information on the ownership of vacant properties.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that it would not be necessary to write to the Minister at this stage.

Grove Wellbeing Centre – Provision of Pool Seating

The Director reminded that Committee that, prior to the opening of the Grove Wellbeing Centre, the Council had agreed that priority for the use for the new pool at the facility would be for public recreational swimming, rather than for the use of swimming clubs. Accordingly, the main pool in the Grove Wellbeing Centre had not incorporated spectator seating. He reported that, since its re-opening, one of the main clubs which used the pool at Grove had lobbied the Council to make provision for spectator seating which would enable gala swimming events to be held at the venue.

The Director reminded the Committee that, within the context of the Investment Programme, the Council would be undertaking an extensive review of its leisure estate

with a view to transforming leisure provision in Belfast. He pointed out that the requirements of swimming clubs in Belfast, insofar as they related to the hosting of swimming galas, would be considered as part of that process. In addition, he outlined the capital costs which would be incurred in providing spectator seating at the facility, together with the considerable structural works which would be required to be carried out. Accordingly, he outlined the following two options for the Committee's consideration:

1. to refer the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration as an emerging project within the Capital Programme, subject to the undertaking of a feasibility study; or
2. to defer consideration of the request on the understanding that the future requirements of swimming clubs, insofar as it related to the provision of spectator seating for the hosting of swimming galas, would be considered as part of the Council's future review of its leisure estate.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt option 2 as set out.

Stadia Update

(Councillor Mullan left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.)

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the proposed re-developments of both Windsor Park and Casement Park.

Request for Use of the Ballysillan Playing Fields

The Director advised the Committee that correspondence had been received from the County Grand Lodge of Belfast enquiring if the Ballysillan Playing Fields would be available for hire on Friday, 12th July from 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. He reported that representatives of the County Grand Lodge had indicated subsequently that they might wish to use the car park of the site for a meeting or dispersal point, if deemed necessary. He pointed out also that the request had been considered by the Council's Joint Group of the Party Leaders and Historic Centenaries Working Group.

A Member suggested that, given the potential disruption which might occur as a result of the event, it would have been beneficial to have considered the contents of the Equality Screening Form which had been completed in relation to the application.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,

That the Committee agrees to defer, until its meeting on 13th June, consideration of the request from the County Grand Lodge of Belfast for the use of the Ballysillan Playing Fields to enable further information to be provided.

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

Avoniel Leisure Centre

The Committee considered the contents of a report which provided an update on the work which had been carried out in the refurbishment of the Avoniel Leisure Centre. The Director reported that the temporary changing accommodation erected at the site to facilitate the refurbishment of the main changing rooms and the health suite corridor had been vandalised by young people. However, in response, the Department's Participation Unit had organised a number of diversionary activities in the centre in an attempt to engage with local young people and, as a result, vandalism had not re-occurred at the site.

After discussion, during which it was noted that the report would be the last submitted in respect of the refurbishment of the leisure centre, the Committee agreed that, if feasible, a site visit be undertaken to the facility prior to its re-opening.

'Big If' - Belfast Event

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that a request from Christian Aid and others to permit the staging of a 'BIG IF BELFAST' concert in the grounds of City Hall to coincide with the hosting of the G8 summit of world leaders in County Fermanagh in June 2013 has been agreed by Council.

Following discussion at a planning meeting attended by the organisers, members of the PSNI, Emergency Planning Team and City Centre management team and others, it was evident that the increased activity around the G8 conference being held in N. Ireland would make it difficult to stage an event for thousands of people in the grounds of City Hall on that afternoon.

The organisers have therefore approached the Council to seek approval to change the venue of the event to the Great Lawn in Botanic Gardens. The event is scheduled to take place on Saturday 15 June 2013 from 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm.

The organisers have stated that the purpose of the event is to:

- Provide an entertaining and informative mass mobilisation event in Belfast on 15 June.**

- Prioritise IF campaign supporters at the Mass Mobilisation event in Belfast.
- Provide a platform for Campaign messages to be heard by thousands of people.
- Link the whole of Northern Ireland into the Mass Mobilisation event.
- Generate positive media coverage for the campaign through creative stage programming.
- Produce memorable images for wider campaign use.

2. Key Issues

The capacity of the Great Lawn is for approximately 9,000 people subject to set up and take down and entertainment license. However, PSNI estimate that in excess of 30,000 people may protest in Belfast at various times during the period of the G8 Summit.

These protests would raise a range of health & safety and possible public order concerns which would require significant additional resources to manage and control – costs that could be transferred to the organisers to ensure the integrity of the environs of Botanic Gardens and in particular the Palm House.

Officers have met with the event organisers and asked them to consider using the Lower Botanic area as it would be easier to fence off and control. The event organisers however have stated a strong preference for the Great Lawn area due to the iconic nature of the surroundings. To mitigate the risk of damage to the Palm House, the organisers have been asked to create an inner perimeter around the Palm House to provide greater protection.

In order to stage this event, if permitted by Council, it will require the organisers to work in cooperation with the Council and PSNI to make sure the event is delivered in a manner that does not impinge upon the local area and local residents. Preliminary discussions have taken place with PSNI about staging the event in Botanic Gardens.

For the purposes of set up and take down, the gardens will be required by the organisers from Thursday 13 June to Sunday 16 June. The event area will be fenced off and stewarded to allow the rest of the park to remain open during set up and take down. It is proposed to close Botanic Gardens on the day of the event and to put appropriate access control measures in place for the event.

The event will be free and will be by invitation only via a coalition of charities involved in the organisation. The event would be a no alcohol event. The organisers will liaise with The Queen's University and the Ulster Museum to consider the impact of the event on these venues. An event management plan will be required to provide assurance that the event will meet all statutory requirements including health and safety and entertainment licensing.

It is proposed to announce the event to the media using a staged photograph opportunity in Botanic Gardens on 14 May. The photographs would be used to accompany a press release giving details that the event is happening and will be used to raise the profile of the campaign and the objectives. It will not be a call to action as no tickets will be publically available.

The Council would also request that the event can be cancelled if it or PSNI feel that the event would be become a target for other types of G8 protests that would attract a larger socially disruptive crowd.

3. **Resource Implications**

Finance

The bond of intent shall be waived but the bond of reinstatement of £5,000 will need to be provided by the organisers. The fee for the use of the area would be £3,000 and a bond of intent of £1,000 would normally be required however Members may wish to waive these fees due to the charitable nature of the event.

Assets

A bond of reinstatement as outlined above shall be applied. Measures will be taken to protect the Palm House.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

Local residents will be consulted as part of the development of the event management plan.

5. **Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to consider whether or not to grant permission to hold the Big IF Belfast event in Upper Botanic Gardens (the Great Lawn area). If permission is granted, this will be subject to satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of Parks and Leisure and on condition that:

- the event organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- an appropriate legal agreement being prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor is completed; and
- the event organisers meet all statutory requirements including health and safety and entertainment licensing.

In the event that permission is granted, the Committee is asked to confirm if they wish to waive the bond of intent of £1,000 and the fees of £3,000 for use of Botanic Gardens.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the application of the bond of intent of £1,000 and, given the charitable nature of the event, the waiving of the hire fee of £3,000.

New Attraction at the Belfast Zoo

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th April, it had agreed to defer to its meeting in May, consideration of the above-mentioned report regarding the installation of a carousel-type attraction at the Zoo. That decision had been taken to enable further consultations to be undertaken with local Elected Members and additional information to be provided to the Committee. Accordingly, the Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Key Issues

Business Case

A review of the business case has taken place, and an estimated income to the Council of between £12,500 and £15,000 (i.e. 25% of the total gross income) would appear realistic given expected visitor numbers during the spring and summer, the capacity of the carousel and the proposed period that it will be on site.

It has proved difficult to accurately estimate the potential effect of Zoo visitors spend at the proposed carousel and any impacts on income at the Zoo shop. It could be assumed that in the current economic climate, with a limited capacity for secondary spend, visitors may be less inclined to purchase goods at the gift shop if they have already purchased tickets for the carousel. However, this is not proven, and the carousel might prove to be an effective test of the attractiveness and potential demand for this, or similar attractions in the future.

In order to provide a suitable electrical source for the carousel, the Belfast City Council Property Maintenance Unit have

scoped the required works, which include modifications to an existing feeder pillar at the Zoo Farm, civil works to bury a new cable under the road between the Farm and the Floral hall, and the supply and installation of a new 'Lucy Pillar' at the proposed carousel site. The cost of this work is estimated at £6,500, and the supplier has proposed that this cost is shared between the supplier and the Council.

The supplier has further proposed that costs for the electricity used by the carousel will be shared between the supplier and the Zoo, the cost is estimated at £1,200 per annum.

Planning Permission

In consultation with the Planning Office, as the carousel will be on site for more than 28 days it will require planning permission. The processes involved for an application can take between 2 – 3 months and there is a cost of £820 for the application. It is proposed that this cost is shared between the supplier and the Council. Given the time required for such an application, it is possible that planning permission would not be granted before mid-June, i.e. half way through the proposed period that the carousel could be made available, and there would be therefore be a reduction in income of approximately 50%.

Health and Safety Considerations

The carousel has a diameter >12m (40'). Having reviewed possible locations in the Zoo, the only suitable site is at the front of Floral Hall. This would leave 4m of the current roadway to the side of the carousel for visitor and vehicle traffic. Health and Safety colleagues were consulted about the proposed installation. This road is used frequently by tractors and other Zoo vehicles which would create a serious hazard with regard to vehicle and pedestrian separation. It might be possible to extend the path by covering the adjacent grass area but there would always be a pinch point at the trees and bushes. Serious thought would need to be given to crowd control and queuing for the ride as there would potentially be a large number of people and parents watching and waiting for their children to get on and off the ride.

General

Previous consultation with Legal Services and the Procurement Unit has raised procurement of the service as an issue, and the potential for challenge. The department has been advised that if there is an interest in providing this attraction at Belfast Zoo

expressions of interest for supply of the service should also be sought.

Members should be aware that the Floral Hall is in very poor condition. Its current dilapidated state received comment in our 2012 market research and it is the subject of regular visitor feedback. While it would require a specific survey to properly gauge visitor reactions, it might be considered that a new attraction sited very close to the Floral Hall would assist in making the area, and hence the building, appear more attractive to visitors. Conversely, by requiring potential carousel users to queue next to the building and by raising the profile of the building with such an eye catching attraction sited nearby, we would also encourage additional scrutiny, and potentially negative feedback.

Conclusion

Having considered all the issues in the round, the provision of this attraction is considered not to be feasible.

2. Resource Implications

- 2.1 The requirement for planning permission would reduce the time available for the carousel to be sited at the Zoo. This would reduce the estimated income. The supplier has proposed that costs would be shared with the Council and that the Council enters into a legal agreement for a three year period. A summary of the cost implications to the Council are as follows:

Expenditure Year 1

Planning application	£425
Electrical installation	£3,250
Electrical running costs	£600
Potential extensions of path at Floral Hall	<u>£5,500</u>
	£9,775

There is currently no budget established for this expenditure.

Income Year 1

25% of gross income	£12–15,000
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The projected income is based on footfall and as it is weather dependant it is not guaranteed. This does not take into account the unknown potential impact on the Zoo shop income.

3. **Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Committee is recommended, in light of the key issues raised and in particular those with regard to health and safety, that the proposal to introduce this attraction to the Zoo is not supported.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Pilot Scheme for Dog Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

At its August 2012 meeting the Parks and Leisure Committee adopted a recommendation that a Dog Control Order be made in respect of dog fouling. The Dogs (Fouling of Land by Dogs) (Belfast) Order 2012 became operative on 1 October 2012, replacing the dog fouling provisions contained in the Litter (NI) Order 1994.

The Order limiting to four dogs the number which a person may take on to land was considered at the Health and Environmental Services Committee on 7 November last. The recommendation to limit the number of dogs was subject to public consultation and the order was endorsed by the Council and became operative on 1 April 2013.

At its November 2012 meeting, the Committee agreed the recommended approach to deciding whether or not to make a dog control order excluding dogs from cemeteries, children’s playgrounds and playing fields or pitches in the city. This order was subjected to public consultation at the same time.

The Council therefore provided clarification on the meaning of ‘exclusions’ within the draft Order and stressed that the exclusion from land Order was, in effect, repeating the terms of existing bye-laws whilst giving the Council stronger enforcement powers.

Issues were raised about the need for facilities to allow dogs off lead. This refers to the order requiring dogs to be kept on a lead in designated areas which was still under consideration by the Dog Control group and proposals had not been brought forward at this stage. Due to the public response, the consultation on the exclusion from lands order was suspended to allow further clarification and consideration of the issues raised. The Dog

Control Group considered the issues raised and in particular the need for areas to allow dogs off lead.

To help inform the implementation of further dog control orders a pilot project was proposed to trial this approach in the North of the city.

2. Key Issues

The proposed pilot will allow the group to ascertain the benefits of providing such a facility and provide evidence to inform a decision on future provision. It is proposed that the pilot will be in operation from June 2013 and will be monitored for a period of six months.

An area within Grove Park has been identified as the location for the facility due to the number of dog issues on site, the availability of land to meet the requirements and its potential catchment area within North Belfast. The enclosed area will measure 80metres x 30 metres and will be secured using 1.5m ranch style fencing with chain link attached.

It will provide a social hub for dog walkers (a sizeable percentage of users) to exercise their dogs in a controlled environment. It will be a sustainable facility, easily maintained and attract new users to the site and help with the overall issues of controlling dogs in parks. Signage will be erected at the facility advising users on the following rules.

- No children under sixteen
- Only two dogs per person allowed in.
- People must be supervising their dog at all times.
- No food permitted.

3. Resource Implications

- Use of 250m² of parkland.

Element	Price
150 metres of 3 rail chain link attached fencing	£4000
3 gates	£ 600
Install a gravel path to the entrance and install a 4m sq holding area.	£2000
Signage	£400
Total Cost:	£7,000

- The cost of installing the facility will be met from existing budgets.

4. **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to approve the installation of the pilot dog off lead enclosure at Grove Park.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Summer Schemes 2013

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Each year summer schemes are organised in leisure centres providing a programme of sporting and play activities to young people over the months of July and August.

In recent years the summer schemes have been a huge success with numbers attending last year reaching 19,400 compared to 11,700 during 2008. The 2013 schemes have been developed to include four sunrise clubs, one in each area of the City. In 2012 two centres provided access to children less than five years of age and in 2013 this will be extended to four areas in the City.

A pilot youth scheme aimed at 12-15 year olds is also being held in four centres across the City.

Free use of swimming pools has been offered in recent years to those community groups which are in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from Community Services, subject to availability. Free entrance to the zoo has also been offered to children participating in Leisure Services Summer Schemes and concessionary entrance fees are offered to community groups which are in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from Community Services, subject to availability.

Free entrance to the Adventurous playground has also been offered to children participating in Belfast City Council Leisure Centre summer schemes, and free entrance before noon for community group schemes which are in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from Community Services, subject to availability.

All users of Belfast City Council leisure centres benefit from a subsidised service, funded through the rates. The Parks and Leisure Department are also currently working with other council departments to better align all summer intervention schemes.

In January 2013 due to the demand for the Summer Scheme at Grove Wellbeing Centre the Committee gave approval to pilot a new approach to pre-registration for the Grove Summer Scheme. The approach prioritised places for local children in BT14 and BT15 in front of other Belfast residents and residents outside of the Belfast boundary.

This report provides members with an update on the pre registration which took place in April 2013.

2 Key Issues

The Grove Summer Scheme offers places for 72 children on a daily basis for five weeks. A communication plan to raise awareness of the new approach to registration involved utilising the following approaches to inform the public of the scheduled pre- register day on Saturday 13 April 2013:

- BCC website advertising from 29 April – 15 April 2013
- Notices at Grove Well Being Centre from 3 April 2013
- Notices on Facebook from 8 April 2013-05-01
- Article on UTV news on Friday 12 April 2013 including a live interview
- General coverage in City Matters in January and February 2013.

136 applications were received from within BT14 and BT15. An additional 40 applications were received from outside of this postcode area. Management at the Grove are confident that they can accommodate the 136 BT14 and BT15 applicants as all applicants did not apply for all five weeks. The additional 40 applicants can be accommodated in the neighbouring Loughside or Shankill summer schemes. The enrolment for these schemes and other centres schemes will open on 18 May 2013.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

An allowance of £71,900 is allocated within revenue budgets to support holiday schemes in leisure centres with an anticipated £32,000 projected to be received in income from summer scheme participants.

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree as in previous years:

1. Free swimming was provided during July and August for community group schemes in receipt of summer scheme funding from the Community Services Section, and concessionary entrance fees to the Zoo.
2. Free entrance to the Zoo in July and August for children participating in Belfast City Council Leisure Centre summer schemes, and
3. Free entrance to the adventurous playground in July and August for children participating in Belfast City Council Leisure Centre summer schemes.
4. Free entrance before noon for community group schemes which are in receipt of Summer Scheme funding from the Community Services Section, subject to availability.

It is also recommended that Members note the update on the Grove Wellbeing Centre Summer Scheme.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Leisure Centres - Public Holiday Closure Dates

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th March, it had approved a schedule of closures for the Council's leisure centres for 2013/2014, subject to final confirmation being provided of the dates of the July public holidays. The Director reported that the Council had confirmed that Saturday, 13th July, rather than Monday, 15th July, had been deemed as the second public holiday for employees whose rotas included weekend working. He, therefore, recommended that the Committee agree to change the date for the second public closure over the July holiday period from Monday, 15th July to Saturday 13th July, for the seven leisure centres affected.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Land Lease Agreements

The Committee agreed to recommend a schedule of land lease agreements, a copy of which was available on the Council's Modern.gov website, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval. It was reported that the agreements related to the leasing of portions of the parks estate to private individuals for the purposes of grazing, silage-making and crop growing. The Director reported that the Department had undertaken an expression of interest exercise and the agreements had been made on the basis of the most advantageous bids which had been submitted.

Belfast BMX Trails Jam Event

The Committee was reminded that the Barnett Demesne Mountain Bike Trail and Mary Peters Jumps Park had opened on 26th April, following a £475,000 scheme as part of the Council's Investment Programme. The Director reported that a request had been received from an organised group of 'jump bikers' seeking permission to hold an event on 28th and 29th June. He indicated that approximately 50 professional riders, together with a number of amateur participants, would partake in the event and he recommended,

given the potential which existed to promote the new facilities, that the Committee accede to the request.

The Committee granted authority for the holding of the event, subject to:

- the event organisers resolving all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- the event organisers meeting all statutory requirements, including the submission of event management and risk assessment plans; and
- an appropriate legal agreement being completed by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor.

Strangford Avenue - Keyholding Arrangements

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Linfield Ladies' Football Club seeking permission to be afforded key-holding privileges for the changing facilities at the Strangford Avenue Playing Fields. The Director explained that the club used the facility for training and as a home venue for matches. He outlined the range of sports development activities which the club would provide to promote association football to female participants and pointed out that, should the Committee accede to the request, the Department would save on staff overtime costs. In addition, the granting of keyholding privileges to the club would be bound by a legal agreement and subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with the Director of Parks and Leisure and to the following conditions:

- that the Linfield Ladies' Football Club manage all operational and health and safety issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- that a legal agreement, which would be prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor, was completed; and
- that all bookings by the club would be arranged in advance with the Outdoor Leisure Unit.

The Committee acceded to the request from the Linfield Ladies' Football Club, subject to the foregoing conditions.

Request for the Use of the Dixon Park Playing Fields

The Director reported that a request had been received from representatives of the Bloomfield Gospel Hall Outreach Initiative seeking permission to host a mission at the Dixon Park Playing Fields. The organisers had indicated that the proposed five-week programme would commence on 14th September, with services taking place in a mobile hall in the car park each week day from 8.00 p.m. till 9.30 p.m., and on Sundays from 7.00 p.m. till 9.30 p.m. He reminded the Committee that the organisation had hosted, without incident, similar-type events in the park in previous years. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee grant authority for the holding of the mission as outlined, subject to:

- the event organisers resolving all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- the event organisers meeting all statutory requirements, including compliance with Entertainment Licensing legislation; and
- an appropriate legal agreement being completed by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Polo in the City 2013

The Director reminded the Committee that it had, in 2011 and 2012, granted the free use of the Lower Botanic Gardens to the charity Mencap for the hosting of a fundraising polo event viz., 'Polo in the City'. He reported that a further request had been received from the charity to host the event on Saturday 31st August, from 2.00 p.m. till midnight, and seeking also the Committee's approval to grant the free use of the park.

The Committee was advised that preparations for the event, which it was anticipated would attract 850 attendees, would commence on Sunday, 25th August, with the deconstruction being completed on Sunday, 1st September. The Director outlined the arrangements which had been put in place by the charity to manage the event, which included the hiring of a security firm and a waste management company, together with the implementation of a strict bar policy. In respect of any damage which might be caused to the grass areas as a result of the event, he indicated that a bond of £5,200 would be requested by the Council to oversee the reinstatement of the grounds, if necessary.

Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Committee grant the use of the Lower Botanic Gardens for the holding of the event as outlined, on the conditions:

- that the organisers consult with the Health and Environmental Services Department and ensure that all health and safety requirements were met to the Council's satisfaction and that event management and risk assessment plans were submitted prior to the event;
- that the organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction; and
- that the organisers pay the stipulated bond, enter into an appropriate legal agreement and meet all the statutory requirements, including entertainment licensing.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and delegated authority to the Director to consider and approve any further requests received for the hosting of 'Polo in the City' in future years.

Royal Life Saving Society - Annual Awards

The Director reported that, in May, 2012, seven members of staff had been involved in the rescue and recovery of an unconscious swimmer at the Olympia Leisure Centre. Subsequently, management within the Department had nominated the staff for consideration under the Pool Lifeguard of the Year Awards, which were overseen by the Royal Life Saving Society, and they had been shortlisted and invited to the awards ceremony in Cheshire on 14th June.

After discussion, during which the Committee commended the staff team on being shortlisted, it was agreed that the incoming Chairman and the Director (or their nominees), together with two members of the staff team involved in the incident, be authorised to attend the ceremony.

Chairman