

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 14th November, 2013

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McKee (Chairman);
Aldermen Robinson and Rodgers;
Councillors Beattie, Convery, Corr,
Cunningham, Haire, Hendron, Hanna,
Hussey, Mac Giolla Mhín, McCabe,
McNamee, Mallon, Mullan, Ó Donnghaile,
Thompson and Verner.

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

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Kyle.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 10th and 19th of October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th November.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Support for Sport -Development Grants

The Committee noted a schedule of development grants, a copy of which is set out hereunder, which had been approved by the Director in accordance with the authority delegated to him by the Committee:

<u>Club/ Organisation</u>	<u>Activity Details</u>	<u>Date of Event</u>	<u>Total Amount £</u>	<u>Recommendation and Reason</u>
East Belfast FC	Try-it event to attract new members to join the club. Activity taking place at Ashfield and targeting 16-37 year old males	October 2014	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.

<u>Club/ Organisation</u>	<u>Activity Details</u>	<u>Date of Event</u>	<u>Total Amount £</u>	<u>Recommendation and Reason</u>
Belfast Argentine Tango Society	Try-it event combining a free workshop and festival launch or the Belfast Argentine Tango Festival in June 2014.	December	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Graduates Netball Club	Coach education to develop younger players to take on some coaching responsibilities. 3 coaches at UKCC Level 2 and 1 at UKCC Level 1.	TBC	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Cavehill Bowling Club	Try-it event for 10 year old boys and girls during Jan-Mar followed by a fun day. Aiming to introduce new young members into the club	January	£915.00	Support to a maximum of £915 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Neptune's Special Olympics Club	Coach Education for volunteers to gain levels 1&2 swimming qualifications. Clubs provides year long programme of swimming for children and adults with learning disabilities. Aim to expand to other sports in the future.	November	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.

<u>Club/ Organisation</u>	<u>Activity Details</u>	<u>Date of Event</u>	<u>Total Amount £</u>	<u>Recommendation and Reason</u>
Polovia Volleyball Club "The Eagles	Kick start grant for new male volleyball club based out of Grosvenor and Shankill LC. Club is open to all but they are targeting Polish males by providing a link to the community	November	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Hawarden Tennis Club	Development event working with talented U12's and providing specialised coaching support to develop skills and prepare for tournaments	November	£900.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Dub Runners	Coach education for a volunteer to gain a Leader in running and fitness. Aiming to establish a junior section and increasing the number qualified to work with juniors.	TBC	£450.00	Support to a maximum of £450 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Leo Maguire Taekwondo-Do Schools	Deferred			
Windsor Lawn Tennis Club	U10 elite tennis programme	January		Club have already received full allocation

<u>Club/ Organisation</u>	<u>Activity Details</u>	<u>Date of Event</u>	<u>Total Amount £</u>	<u>Recommendation and Reason</u>
Belmont Ladies Bowling Club	The ladies section are targeting 8-16 year old boys and girls for a try-it session in indoor bowls. Hopefully encouraging them to join the club for a boost in younger members and players for the future especially young women.	November	£810.00	Support to a maximum of £810 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs +£250 Equipment grant.
Love Tennis NI	10 week Deaf tennis programme of training and competition at Indoor tennis arena. Targeting up to 24 players from 4 years upwards	November 2013	£750.00	Support to a maximum of £450 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Springfield Star FC	Coach Education for 2 coaches to complete IFA level 1, 8 for First Aid and 23 in Child Protection	January	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £750 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
Andersonstown Celtic FC	Kick Start and Coach Education for newly established club. Hope to put 4 coaches through IFA level 1.	November	£1,000.00	Support to a maximum of £1000 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs +£250 Equipment grant.

Phoenix Cycling Club	Phoenix are hosting the Irish National Cyclocross championships in Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park - seeking support to host the event.	January	£638.00	Support to a maximum of £638 not representing any more than 75% of eligible costs.
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Large Development Grants

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th September, it had agreed to the transfer of the administrative responsibility for the Department's Small and Large Development Grants to the newly-formed Central Grants Unit. In addition, at its meeting on 10th October, the Committee had agreed to provide funding to enable the continuation of the Parks Events Small Grants Scheme. The Director reported that it had been proposed that the Small Grants Scheme, which was administered currently by the Department's Open Spaces and Active Living Unit, would transfer also to the Central Grants Unit.

The Director reminded the Committee that recommendations in respect of Large Development Grants were presented for its approval each September. He pointed out that the Large Development Grants were the only awards for which he had not been granted delegated authority. He recommended, therefore, that the Committee consider streamlining the process by which funds would be released to successful applicants by delegating authority to him to make awards under the Large Development Grants.

The Committee approved the transfer of the administrative responsibility for the Parks Events Small Grants to the Central Grants Unit and granted authority to the Director to award Large Development Grants up to a maximum of £5,000.

Departmental Fees and Charges 2014/2015

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th October, it had agreed to defer consideration of a report in respect of the departmental fees and charges for the financial year 2014/2015 to enable briefings to be provided to those parties who so wished to receive them. Accordingly, the Committee reconsidered the undernoted report.

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 At the special Parks and Leisure Committee on 9 February 2012 the Committee agreed that a concessionary rate of approximately 50% of the full rate would be applied across all activities in relation to over 60s, those on means tested benefits, students and children (up to the age of 17) to streamline the scale of charges and make them easier to understand.

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

2 Key Issues

2.1 Belfast Castle and Malone House

The economic downturn continues to impact on business at the two venues. They continue to benchmark against the local venues and hotels to ensure that their rates are competitive. The corporate market has been impacted significantly from the reduction in internal council customers and from across the public sector. In response to this many of the room hire fees have been reduced some by up to a third to stimulate this market.

The weddings market is where the business continues to grow and the venues generate approximately 50/35% of their income each year (Belfast Castle/Malone House) in this area. The charge proposed provides a 10-11% increase year on year. Other promotions will also be put in place during the year to help stimulate usage. Committee is asked to note the discount of 50% on normal rates for the Council's own use.

2.2 Belfast Zoo

It is proposed to:

- Increase admissions by 5% for a summer ticket from £10.50 to £11 Adult; £5.25 to £5.50 for a concession.
- A winter ticket by 4% from £8.20 to £8.50 Adult; £4.10 to £4.25 for a concession.
- A family ticket has been increased by 5% from £28 to £29.50 in summer and from £22 to £23.25 in winter. This is for up to 2 adults and 3 children and represents a 23% decrease on the individual summer price.

It is also proposed to trial an additional price which will include a donation of 5% to a number of relevant conservation groups. This is currently carried out through the provision of 'donation bins'. This is a less secure method and doesn't reflect how donations are managed in other similar venues. This will be trialled for a year and a recommendation for the way forward brought back to Committee after review.

The context of adoption packages is subject to a separate report but the proposals are reflected in the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15.

The annual membership packages have also been reviewed and benchmarking data highlights that the average adult

membership package in Zoos in UK and Ireland is charged at £55.99. We currently charge £31.50 and we are proposing that we increase our price to £40 in line with the enhanced package. A family membership would move from £85 to £100; the average family membership benchmark is £165. Additional promotion will be required around this and the adoption packages especially for the gifts market.

2.3 Cemeteries/Crematorium

A 10% increase on non residents charge as agreed previously by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting in February 2011 for a four year period has been applied for cremations. It is proposed that for burials a 3% increase is levied for both residents and non-residents.

2.4 Indoor Leisure

At committee in December 2011 the framework for the review of the Boost Discount Scheme within Leisure Services was agreed. The emphasis of the framework is to promote membership rather than casual use and that charges reflect better value for money. There would also be one concessionary scheme instead of four.

2.5 The direct debit memberships have been maintained at £25 per month with a concession rate of £12 per month for the last two years. However in light of the Leisure Transformation Programme it is proposed that an inflationary increase is put in place for 2014/15 to assist in improving the income generated by Leisure Centres. The proposal is £26 full and £13 concessionary rate.

2.6 The majority of the remaining activity prices are increased mainly by inflation and rounding or have been increased to encourage the uptake of membership but are still competitive in relation to other local authorities.

2.7 An exception is for private coaching which incurs a monthly fee for coaches to use our facilities and charges others for example for swimming lessons. There is a high demand for this service and it is proposed to increase this by 17% to £140 per month. There is also a re-registration fee for private coaches who haven't coached for more than 6 months i.e. £140 charge.

2.8 The charge for the climbing wall classes at Ozone is proposed to increase from £31.50 to £38 per hour due to the increased costs of coaching in this area.

- 2.9 Family Sessions for a family group for a maximum of five people, with no more than two adults for non-bookable activities only will continue to be promoted and are currently £6.20 to increase to £7 from however this still represents good value for money when compared to other family leisure activities. The new scheme has increased the availability of these sessions and includes access to the gym.
- 2.10 The weekly holiday schemes provided in leisure have been benchmarked against other neighbouring councils and it is proposed to increase our current £24 per week to £32 per week to cover the increased costs and the provision for under 8s. It is also proposed that there will be a new concessionary rate of £25 to reduce the impact on those on means tested benefits, also Boost members get a discount on these schemes.
- 2.11 It is proposed to put an inflationary increase on hire charges for main halls due to low demand and artificial pitches (non 3G) due to under use at off peak times. An effective participation campaign and the investigation of possible promotions such as at off peak times will help to stimulate the use of these facilities.
- 2.12 As part of the Leisure Transformation Programme and the £2m efficiency that the service has to provide; a more in depth look at membership, loyalty and retention is underway. Proposals around Swim and Gym only memberships and class only memberships, as well as memberships where loyalty is rewarded by lower costs the longer you stay are currently being developed and will be consulted on. It is proposed that this will be reported back to Committee before the end of the year.
- 2.13 Outdoor Leisure

3G Pitches

A benchmarking exercise was undertaken across Belfast and neighbouring areas in light of the new 3G pitch provision within the Department. The current rate of £80 per hour is high in comparison to other schools and community facilities. The department is proposing to, in line with the pitches strategy, review this price and will undertake further consultation and report back to committee in due course. We will also be looking at how a community rate could be facilitated and also identify peak and off peak times to stimulate usage. In the interim it is proposed that we apply peak rates of £80 per hour; peak being definite as 12-2pm each day, 5pm to closure each night and all

weekend. All other times will be classified as off peak and will be available for community use at £40 per hour.

2.14 Grass Pitches

It is proposed that for 2014/15 that an inflationary increase only is provided of 3-5% on grass pitches and that a reduction in price for Blanchflower Stadium is agreed to help stimulate usage. At the Parks and Amenities Sub Committee in September 2003 Committee agreed not to permit block bookings at the Stadium given the level of current use of the pitch. It is now proposed that block bookings are facilitated at the site as a trial period for the 2014/15 season (after refurbishment is completed) and is managed by the Park Manger in conjunction with the Open Space and Active Living Manager. A further recommendation after this period will be brought to Committee.

2.16 Outdoor Bowling

The proposal is to increase the cost of the adult season ticket from £31.50 to £32.50 with a concession ticket from £15.80 to £16.30; this includes children and over 60s. All other charges are up by approximately 3-5% including rounding.

2.17 Fees linked to FMAs (non pitch bookings)

Charges are levied by FMA partners for the users of the following sites: COB Golf Course, Mary Peters Track, Orangefield Cycling track and these will be increased in line with inflation of 3%.

2.18 Cricket

It is proposed that the charges associated with Cricket are increased by 3% to cover the costs of maintenance.

2.19 Events

In relation to events the proposal is not to charge for entry to the Spring/Autumn Fairs as the charges were nominal and the administration around collecting the fees was not cost effective. All other activities have increased between 3-4%.

2.20 High Hedges

It is proposed that a report will be provided to committee by December 2013 to update committee on the service and provide

recommendations on how the service will operate going forward. This will include recommending the appropriate charging mechanisms.

3 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are no equality implications in agreeing the 2014/15 scale of charges. The outcome of any current or proposed review of schemes may impact on the scale of charges; however they will be subject to equality screening.

4 Resource Implications

4.1 Financial

(Inflation is currently around 2.7% however for administrative purposes many charges are rounded.)

Currently the impact of the economic downturn is affecting a number of the services and it is hoped that being able to respond with timely promotions will help retain customers and attract new ones. An extensive marketing campaign will be planned to support this approach. Income based on these charges has been provided for in the 2014/15 revenue estimates.

4.2 Human Resources

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

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that committee adopts the scale of charges for 2014/15, as detailed in the attached appendices, for implementation in April 2014. It is also recommended that committee accepts the proposal to allow block bookings at the Blanchflower Stadium for 2014/15.”

The Director outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered a range of Members' queries in relation thereto.

Proposal

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

That the scale of fees and charges for 2014/2015 be adopted, subject to the amendment that no increase be made to cremation charges for Belfast residents.

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

Proposal

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

That the scale of fees and charges for 2014/2015 be adopted, subject to the amendment that family membership tickets for the Belfast Zoo be enhanced to admit one additional child.

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

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Thompson,
Seconded by Councillor Haire,

That the scale of fees and charges as set out within the report be adopted.

On a vote by show of hands twelve Members voted for the proposal and four against it was declared carried.

Community Use of 3G Pitches

Arising from discussion in respect of the foregoing matter, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the feasibility of establishing a specialised rate for the use of 3G pitches by community-based organisations.

City of Belfast Zoo – Central Government Assistance

In terms of the fees and charges which had been agreed for the Belfast Zoo, a Member pointed out that all of the Political Parties within the Northern Ireland Assembly had agreed to urge the Minister with responsibility for the Environment, Mr. M. H. Durkan, M.L.A., to consider providing funding towards the Exploris aquarium in Portaferry, which was owned and managed by Ards Borough Council, to avert its proposed closure. She indicated that the support of the parties within the Assembly had been based on the view that the aquarium was considered to be a unique facility which was utilised by all of the people of Northern Ireland. As such, she added, it could be proposed that the Belfast Zoo, given its regional importance, might be considered eligible for similar assistance to help the Council to offset its running costs.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister with responsibility for Tourism within the Northern Ireland Executive, Mrs. A. Foster, M.L.A., requesting that consideration be given to providing central government funding towards the costs associated with the operation and maintenance of the Belfast Zoo.

Quarter 2 - Finance Report

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1. Key Issues

The current performance in quarter two of the Parks and Leisure department shows a 1% variance against the year to date budget; i.e.; an over spend of £119k. This overspend has reduced significantly from quarter one. There are a number of key reasons for the over spend within the department as follows:

Direct Employee expenses are overspent by 1.6% which relate mainly to overtime and agency costs as reviews are implemented i.e. Zoo, ROSPA. These continue to be monitored and hotspots challenged with managers.

Utility costs are currently on budget however there are ongoing issues with CHP within Leisure and the timeliness of charging. The connection to the water mains in the Zoo cost £40k year to date which was not budgeted for however the borehole supply has now been restored, so this should not be a cost going forward.

Vehicle costs within Parks and Cemeteries are overspent by £26k against budget in quarter two as fuel budgets remain under pressure due to increased costs

Compensation claims are £96k over budget in Parks and Cemetery Services by the second quarter. Again the timing of compensation claims is largely unpredictable but there is a high probability that this budget will be overspent by £90k by year end. The department continues to work with Legal Services to improve the reporting of incidents and ensuring these are managed effectively.

Income for the department overall is down 2% or £113k on budget. Leisure Centres are 2% £36k down on budget due to losing £33k of income with the Avoniel pool closure. Promotional activities around summer campaigns have been running from April and the holiday schemes have all been well received.

Income from fees and charges at the Zoo is down 10% or £113k against budget. This is largely due to the loss of income due to

closures over Easter. However the figures for May, June and July are up on the same time last year and the outdoor campaign 'passport to the world' was well received. The good weather has helped increase visitor numbers however August and September were down on expected income and it is unlikely that performance will improve to meet budgeted income. Income at the shop is also down £39k but a reduction on expenditure on supplies will continue to reduce this. The shop will continue to be tightly managed and a trading account is in place for the shop and regular stock takes are in place.

The new Franchise agreement at the Castle and Malone House in place from June will result in a reduced annual income. This currently sits at £58k below budget year to date.

Income from Grants outstanding is £39k and officers are working with funding bodies to ensure all monies are claimed in a timely manner. Income from fees and charges in Parks and Open Spaces is up by 10% or £136k which is mainly from the crematorium (£85k) and pitch hire. However these increases do not offset the underperformance of the Zoo and Estates unit.

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

2. **Resource Implications**

There is a year to date overspend of £119k (1%) and a forecast over-spend of some £120k by year end due to issues set out above.

3. **Recommendations**

Members are recommended to note the contents of this report."

The Business Support Manager outlined the principal aspects of the report and drew Members' attention to various aspects therein. The Director informed the Committee that the year-end forecast for the Department was for a £120,000 overspend and explained that this had arisen due to pressure on income, which had been alluded to within the report, and as a consequence of unanticipated utility costs at the Belfast Zoo. He assured the Members that, whilst the potential overspend could be attributed to

uncontrollable costs, steps would be taken to reduce spending against other budget headings to endeavour to reduce the level of overspend being forecast.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would provided an overview of the measures which were taken within the Department to monitor expenditure.

Departmental Plan - Update

(Ms. C. Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the performance of the Parks and Leisure Department during the first six months of the financial year 2013/2014 when measured against its key targets and performance indicators as set out within the Departmental Plan.

St. Joseph's College - Request from Board of Governors

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

The Council has received a request from St Joseph's College which is located on the Ravenhill Road and immediately adjacent to Cherryvale Playing Fields. There are three elements to the request:

- 1. The school is requesting permission to create an access gate from the school to the playing fields; Members will note that the railings are owned by the Belfast Education and Library Board and therefore any cost associated with the works would be met by the school; the key would also be retained by the school and the Council would not have access to the school from the Playing Fields; this would not present any operational issues for the Council;**
- 2. The school has indicated that it would wish to make better use of the facilities; this would take several forms:**
 - a. The school wishes to use of the perimeter of the playing fields for running to mimic cross country;**
 - b. they would also like to use sections of the green space for specific fitness programmes;**

- c. The school wishes to obtain greater access to the playing surfaces during week days over the school term; and

The school has highlighted that it has no grassed surfaces of its own and is largely dependent on access to Cherryvale Playing Fields.

2. Key Issues

There are a number of points to be considered by the Committee:

- i. The installation of the gate does not affect the operational management of the playing fields and is merely intended to speed up access between the school site and the playing fields; and further minimise the health and safety element of moving pupils between both locations;
- ii. There will be no cost to the Council;
- iii. Responsibility for the gate, including opening and closing will be the schools;
- iv. In relation to the increased access to the playing fields, Members are asked to note that there is no objection to this in principle, however in relation to the use of pitches Members are reminded that the pitches are already heavily used and care must be taken to ensure that the pitches remain sustainable for use by teams fulfilling league fixtures;
- v. It is important that the local site manager / supervisor is aware of proposals for use of the playing fields.

3. Resource Implications

Financial Implications

There are no additional financial costs. Through the additional use there is the potentials to generate a small amount of additional income;

Human Resource Implications

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

Asset and Other implications

There are no significant asset implications at this time, however, the proposal will enable the school to make greater use of the facility.

4. Equality Implications

There are no equality implications.

5. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Agree to the installation of a gate to provide access from St Joseph's college to the Playing Fields at Cherryvale;
2. Agree in principle to the use of the facilities by St Joseph's subject to agreement with the local site manager"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Review of Creche Provision

(Mr. J. Walsh, Town Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council has in the past provided crèche facilities in a number of its Leisure Centres across the city. Over recent years, following a series of reviews of the service all but two of these have closed. The remaining facilities are at Andersonstown and Ballysillan Leisure Centres. Reasons for the withdrawal of these services have been an inability to comply with strict legislative requirements such as health and safety, child safety and child protection regulations along with consistently low demand set against relatively high operational running costs and inadequate resources.

The Committee deferred consideration of the report presented on 13th June recommending to cease operating the crèches to enable further consultations with users and members to be undertaken.

2 Key Issues

The key issues remain the same

- The DHSSPS publish Childminding and Day Care minimum standards for Children Under the Age of 12.
- It is the legal opinion of the Council's Senior Solicitor that the crèche facilities are non compliant with the minimum standards and present an unsustainable risk as currently run.
- There are compliance concerns with both crèches regarding facilities, child protection and Health and Safety. These include the need for a separate area for small children to sleep, changing and breast feeding facilities and small toilets for the sole use of the children.
- There are compliance issues relating to staff training, paediatric first aid, staff to children ratios and appropriate cover for staff absences. The three current staff members do not hold any childcare qualifications and do not have the capacity to reach the appropriate NVQ level training.
- The service does not provide good value for money for the Council (running at a subsidy of approximately £8,000 each)
- Some alternative childcare facilities are available in both areas (sure starts, private child care) although the cost for these varies.
- The crèches operate with limited numbers of customers. Those who do use the service and attended the consultations find the service very valuable. Most reported that without the crèche they could not attend the centre.

Andersonstown consultation

A consultation event was held with elected members in Andersonstown during October 2013 allowing members to view the crèche in operation and to speak with the two staff members. A separate consultation event was also held in October with the staff and users, three users of the service attended. Whilst these users were disappointed to hear that the service may cease they understood the compliance issues faced by the Council. They would be willing to consider

childcare places in an alternative location close to the centre if this could be subsidised.

The two staff members are aware that the operation of the crèche in Andersonstown is not sustainable and they are aware that this may mean termination of their current employment contracts dependent on the decision of the Committee.

Ballysillan consultation

The users of Ballysillan crèche were invited to attend a consultation event on Friday 28th June 2013. Ten users attended the consultation event along with the Centre Manager and the Chairperson of this Committee, Councillor Gareth McKee. The users of Ballysillan are extremely disappointed about the potential withdrawal of this service.

By agreement and because of the level of extreme disappointment shown by the Ballysillan users a further consultation event was held in Ballysillan on 29th October 2013. The Centre manager and the Leisure Improvement Manager attended this consultation. 12 adults attended the meeting including service users, their friends, supporters and families. The attendees were again made aware of the current position regarding compliance including the legal opinion of the Councils Senior Solicitor. The users were informed that the recommendation to the Committee would be that the service could not continue under the current operating arrangements.

At both events the users at Ballysillan questioned the compliance issues and referred to the clause that reducing the operating time of the crèche from 2 hours to 1hour 45minutes would negate the need to comply with the legislation and guidance set out by the DHSSPS. It was explained that the Council would not look for ways of avoiding compliance with legislation, in particular where the welfare of children was concerned. The users were advised that the Council would also always strive to meet best practice guidelines.

Consultation events were held in Ballysillan for the elected members of the Oldpark area on 11th September 2013 and again on 29th October 2013.

The centre manager at Ballysillan has met with the one affected staff member. Whilst she is disappointed about the potential withdrawal of the service she has asked to be kept informed of decisions and discussions regularly and asked to be provided

with as much notice as possible regarding her contract of employment.

Options

Due to the serious nature of the compliance issues which exist at both facilities it is recommended that the crèches cannot continue to operate under the current arrangements. Both crèches will need to cease operating in order to control the current risks that the Council faces both relating to compliance and potential reputational damage.

The management of both centres will in the meantime continue to explore options for alternatives which could allow the crèche users to continue using the centre. This may include introducing classes where adults and children can participate together.

The potential to renovate the rooms used for the crèches to meet the legal requirements is not a realistic consideration. The room in Andersonstown is used regularly for other activities such as arts and crafts, yoga, Pilates, meetings and holiday schemes. In Ballysillan, the public viewing area is used to provide crèche provision and it would not be practical to renovate this room to provide a purpose built crèche.

The review of Leisure will be used as a vehicle for discussion regarding the future of childcare provision within a future Leisure Model. This will need to be a factor for consideration in the design of new facilities and in the consideration of the model of delivery e.g. partnership with community organisations and other child care specialists.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

There will be no financial implications relating to the staff contracts as sessional attendants are not permanent employees. In line with the Leisure Transformation Programme, the department is continually striving to identify efficiencies, in particular where facilities are not well used.

The Council will save on the operational and running costs of the crèches. Annual staff costs for each site are £7-8,000.

Human Resources

Corporate Human Resources and legal services were consulted as part of the review of the service and the staff implications assessed.

It is recommended that the contracts of the three sessional attendants are terminated at the end of December 2013.

Asset and Other Implications

None

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

Ceasing to provide crèche facilities does not present any equality or good relations issues as this follows the City wide approach. Continuing to provide a crèche facility in two centres does however create equity issues in that the service is not City Wide.

The recommendation below has been equality screened.

5 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the issues raised above in relation to this service and agree the recommendation to cease the operation of the service from January 2014.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation as set out within the report and agreed also that future consideration be given to childcare provision within the context of the Leisure Transformation Programme and the associated legislative requirements.

Anti-Social Behaviour Report

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents across parks and leisure facilities and electoral area;
- Update committee on the activities, interventions and future developments of the ASB programme

The ASB 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 delivers on the departmental objective of providing

programmes and services to make people feel safer. The objectives of the ASB 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 ASB Coordinator prioritises action and expenditure by collating evidence gathered through ASB 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 (PCSP).

2. Key Issues

2.1 Trends in the available ASB incident data:

The comparative data outlined on Table 1 below shows an increase in the number of incident reports of ASB in parks between April to July 2012 and April to July 2013 within the 4 electoral areas of Laganbank, Oldpark, Pottinger and Balmoral. The data highlights a downward trend in the number of reports of ASB in parks within the Court electoral area. Evidence suggests that the increase in the number of incident reports of ASB in parks are attributed to the following reasons:

- Increase in reports of groups gathering and an increase in reports of drinking; and
- Increase in the number and use of the park warden resource
 - Transfer of 8 Community Safety Wardens
 - Staff resources deployed more regularly due to the significant increase of visitors during the exceptional summer weather (particularly within Botanic Gardens).

Table 1: Comparison of the number of ASB incidents in Parks and Leisure Facilities across electoral areas between April to July 2012 and April to July 2013			
April to July 2012		April to July 2013	
Electoral Area	Total ASB	Electoral Area	Total ASB
Balmoral	46	Balmoral	109
Castle	36	Castle	62
Court	73	Court	45
Laganbank	61	Laganbank*	751
Lower Falls	7	Lower Falls	16
Oldpark	92	Oldpark	180
Pottinger	39	Pottinger	114
Upper Falls	98	Upper Falls	105
Victoria	3	Victoria	18
Total	455	Total	1400

*There is a spike in the figures recorded specifically at Botanic Gardens by newly deployed wardens. Training is being undertaken to standardise recording practices.

2.2 ASB in park and leisure facilities

The data presented illustrates a snapshot of the parks with *more than 20 ASB incidents recorded between April and July 2013*. The data details the numbers and percentages of ASB recorded within 11 parks and across 6 electoral areas, the hotspot categories of ASB and the specific interventions planned to tackle ASB.

2.3 Planned Interventions

Planned intensive interventions have been designed and introduced for parks that have more than 20 ASB incidents and/or repeated occurrences of ASB. These planned interventions span across all 4 objectives of the ASB programme: education, enforcement, partnership and environment and involve dedicated resources through scheduled enforcement operations in partnership with existing council services or with the PSNI and/or the environmental and physical development of a site. The Department has introduced a bespoke planned interventions designed for the 11 parks with more than 20 ASB incidents across 6 electoral areas.

Planned interventions have also been designed for parks that experience repeated occurrences of ASB and are linked to the ASB programme objective of education, including:

- **Musgrave Park:** A fence has been installed to protect the therapy gardens from ASB attacks. Currently

exploring options with regards to the introduction of a youth space – Young Adult Association (YAA) area;

- Falls Park & Botanic Gardens: Young Adult Association (YAA) areas are currently being developed to provide a suitable supervised location for active leisure and young adult activity. The parks will host a number of family friendly events and activities during Halloween and Spring;

2.4 Citywide interventions

Non intensive responses and interventions are implemented proportionately across all of the city's parks. This approach is used to tackle low level, re-occurring ASB incidents (parks with less than 20 incidents) and is delivered using existing and available resources. Available existing resources will be used to tackle the following:

- Reports of 'Drinking': the Park Wardens will visit the park to establish the extent of the issue and remove drinkers if present during park operational hours (dawn to dusk). Requests will be sought from the PSNI to monitor the site out of hours;
- Reports of 'Groups and gangs gathering': Park Wardens will define whether the groups and gangs are of serious concern or simply gathering in the park. If there are serious concerns then Park Wardens will assess if the groups can be engaged and safely dispersed using available resources. If not, then they will refer the issue to the PSNI and monitor the site until it is closed;
- Reports of 'Litter' and 'Animal problems': Park Wardens will be scheduled to issue fixed penalty notices through enforcement operations during park operational hours of dawn to dusk when resources permit;
- Reports of 'Damage': Park Managers and supervisors will record and repair any damage. If the damage persists then specific operations will be developed to tackle the issue with the PSNI;
- Reports of 'Motorcycles': All reports of motorcycles in parks are shared with PSNI and if the problem persists then operations will be developed to tackle the issue with the PSNI; and
- Reports of 'Youths causing annoyance': Park Managers, Park Wardens and Outreach Managers will work with the community to identify the

causes of these reports and find appropriate activities to engage the young people in.

Each individual park has its own unique visitor demographics, unique attributes and unique operational routines, all interventions and responses will be planned and designed accordingly.

2.5 Citywide ASB programme development

Alongside the intensive and non intensive interventions planned to tackle reported incidents of ASB, a number of citywide ASB programmed developments will be implemented to manage data capture, incident reporting and responding to ASB.

- The current Park Warden resource will continue to receive appropriate training to ensure that there is a consistent service delivered across the city;
- Park Wardens visit parks regularly as they follow their scheduled daily work plan; they are currently engaged in a Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) training and coaching programme. In the near future, they will be deployed in parks as part of an enforcement programme. They will issue fixed penalties in relation to litter and dog fouling offences.
- Internal systems are currently being developed to assist Park Wardens in the consistent collection of incident reports. Following an analysis of incident recording, a methodology will be developed to provide consistent standards of ASB data collection and reporting.
- A review of Park Warden allocation and deployment will support ongoing and proportionate deployment of staff resources
- A review of ASB responses and interventions will inform how the department links with local area working groups and informs the District Policing and Community Safety Partnership (DPCSP) structure.
- It is intended that the ASB programme will establish sustainable synergies and interfaces with local area working groups that will develop more appropriate responses to ASB.

Members will be briefed regarding the outcomes of the ASB citywide programme development.

3. **Resource Implications**

The development of the programme will be facilitated through the agreed ASB budget 2013/2014 which is approximately £250,000.

4. **Equality Implications**

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

5. **Recommendations**

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

After discussion, during which a number of Members acknowledged the work which staff had carried out in addressing anti-social behaviour within departmental properties across the City, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

It was noted also that officers from within the Department would monitor closely the locking of access gates to Council properties in order to deter groups from gathering after closing times.

Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park - Office Accommodation

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th November, 2012, it had approved the undertaking of a marketing exercise for the lease of the office accommodation which was located above the Stables Restaurant at the Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. Accordingly, the Director reported that, on completion of that exercise, it had been proposed that a local information technology firm, viz., Xootech Limited, would be granted the lease for the accommodation for an initial period of two years, at a fee of £8,500 per annum, with an option to extend that agreement to a maximum of five years, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee agreed that the office accommodation be leased under the terms outlined, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and 60.

Cavehill Country Park

The Director reminded the Committee that the Council was represented on the Belfast Hills Partnership and he reported that recent meetings of the Partnership had discussed the feasibility of undertaking a number of "controlled burns" within the Cavehill Country Park. He explained that significant grassland areas of the Country Park had developed a build-up of underlying organic matter which posed a fire threat and,

if combusted, would damage surrounding heather and heath land. Such wild fires, he added, had proved to be difficult to extinguish and, accordingly, the Partnership had proposed the carrying out of a number of controlled burns which would help reduce the potential for wild fires and longer-term damage to the environment. He indicated that all of the controlled burns would be risk assessed and supervised by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, which would provide staff and appliances for that purpose. The Director explained that the controlled burns would be carried out during December and January and he provided an overview of the health and safety measures which would be used for their management.

After discussion, the Committee approved the undertaking of the controlled burns as outlined and agreed that a press release be issued to coincide with the exercise to inform the public of the reasons for the controlled burns.

Woodvale Park - Multi-use Games Area

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to an interim proposal to open the multi user games area at Woodvale Park in the evenings and levy a charge in respect of bookings for the facility.

The Committee will be aware that as part of the refurbishment of Woodvale Park a Multi User Games Area was constructed on the site. This facility contains a polymeric surface and is approximately 64m x 31m, plus a 2m run off area. The pitch which is floodlit is not full size but can be used for training purposes and use for 5 and 7 a side football.

Members will be aware that parks opening and closing times are governed by seasonal variations and that during the autumn and winter closing times are much earlier, indeed closing at around 4:30 – 5-00 pm during the winter months. Therefore any use of the facility after that time incurs additional staff costs through overtime, which as members will be aware we are seeking to minimise.

Members may be aware that typically multi user games areas tend to be casually used and not bookable. They are intended to be used by local people much the same as a playground, i.e. casual drop in use. This was the intention of the MUGA at Woodvale. Floodlighting was installed primarily to enable it to be used as part of diversionary programmes within the area.

However, it has come to our notice that some local football clubs are using the facility for training purposes. Clubs are using the facility as

a replacement for pay for use facilities such as Clarendon Playing Fields.

Members will be aware that there is a review of pricing for pitches, in particular Third Generation pitches. A number of local clubs have expressed concern at the cost. This review is still in progress.

It is important that the Council is seen to be consistent in its approach to the use of its facilities for training purposes. It is therefore proposed that the MUGA at Woodvale be closed at the normal closing times over the autumn / winter period. However, it is suggested that clubs can book the facility through the Booking Office at the Ozone. Parks staff can therefore arrange for the park to be opened and floodlighting switched on at the appropriate time.

It is proposed that this is an interim measure to run until the 31 March 2014 and will be reviewed in the interim period.

2 Key Issues

The Committee is asked to consider the following:

1. The Multi User Games Area at Woodvale is currently being used in the evening times for training by local football clubs;
2. With the onset of Autumn / Winter this incurs additional costs on Council;
3. Normally these facilities are casually used, however in the case of Woodvale there are occasions when it is being used for training by local clubs;
4. Clubs in other areas are required to pay for use of grass or other synthetic surfaces, such as 3G;
5. It is proposed to make the facility at Woodvale available for booking through the Booking Office at Ozone and an appropriate fee will be charged, this is likely to be a percentage of the rate for a comparable 3rd generation facility
6. Members are asked to note that this is outside of the scales of charges and will be approved by the Director using delegated authority;

3 Resource Implications

Financial

The fee levied is yet to be agreed but is likely to be in the region of £17.50 for full pitch and £8.75 for half pitch, with concessionary rates, in line with those for 3G pitches.

Human Resources

Opening and closing the facility will require an attendant to be on duty outside of normal hours.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no equality implications.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is asked to approve the opening and closing of the Multi User Games Area at Woodvale outside of normal hours until 31 March 2014 and permit local clubs to book the facility through our booking office at Ozone.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that an update report on the initiative would be submitted in due course with a view to considering the extension of the opening hours of further pitches to meet local demand.

Pilot Leisure Facilities for Belfast Metropolitan College

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that we are currently leading on the development of the Active Belfast approach, as part the Belfast Strategic Partnerships (BSP) work to address inequalities within the city.

The Active Belfast approach is a key strand of the Council’s Leisure Transformation Programme, providing significant opportunities to work collaboratively with a range of partners, with the outcome of improving the health and wellbeing of people in Belfast.

Through work undertaken corporately as part of a Business in the Community initiative, an opportunity to further develop and strengthen our partnership work with the Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) has been identified.

This report highlights a number of key issues for Members' consideration in the development of this partnership

2 Key Issues

BMC students and campuses

BMC currently operate three campuses within Council boundaries at Titanic Quarter, Millfield and Springvale, with a fourth campus at Montgomery Road due to transfer as part of the Local Government Reform. In total BMC employ 860 staff and annually support 9,000 students on both part-time and full-time education courses.

In June 2013, the BMC Executive Board adopted a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for staff and students which put a more active workforce and student population at its core. Following the launch of this strategy BMC have approached council on how the current council provision for leisure may be modified to deliver on the aims of the strategy and support greater collaborative working in the future.

Strategic opportunities

The relocation of the University of Ulster to the York Street campus resulting in an additional 21,500 staff and students visiting the city provides a strategic opportunity to review what and how we offer services to both students and workplaces. The current proposal to pilot a programme within BMC provides an opportunity to 'test' this market.

Engagement on future student provision

The partnership with BMC presents a significant opportunity to engage a large section of student population on the types of services they would expect to receive from council leisure provision, which will guide the development of new / refreshed products including membership costs, centre run and outreach based programming.

Range of support to student and staff

It is envisaged that a range of programmes are initially offered to students and staff at the BMC campus in Titanic Quarter, given the facilities available within this site, including a sports hall and fitness suite. Due to limitations around suitably qualified staff, the fitness suite within BMC Titanic Quarter is currently unavailable for staff or student use.

Activities offered would include:

- Linking occupational health services within BMC to our physical activity referral programme;
- Delivering a series of health awareness and screening sessions;
- Promoting our current leisure membership offering to students and staff, including adding BMC to our list of corporate members;
- Providing a range of physical activity related classes; and
- Utilising the fitness suite within BMC Titanic Quarter to initially offer supervised lunch time sessions for staff.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

The delivery of a six month pilot programme will cost £13000. This will be the equivalent of one FTE member of staff although it would be expected that the functions could be spread amongst a number of team members given differing areas of expertise. Provision has been made in revenue budgets for these programmes of work.

Human Resources

One FTE referral instructor assigned on a 37hr per week basis.

Asset and Other Implications

None

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

None

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee approves the pilot partnership with BMC as advised.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

NI Hospice Fundraising - Buy a Brick Campaign

The Director reported that correspondence had been received on behalf of the Boston Marathon Challenge Team, which trained within the Falls Park, requesting the free use of the Falls Park and its bowling pavilion to enable it to fundraise for a campaign to rebuild the premises of the Northern Ireland Hospice building on the Somerton Road. The Director reported that the Team sought also permission to promote its campaign in and around the park and he pointed out that no users of the facility would be displaced should the Committee accede to the request.

The Committee acceded to the request, subject to all operational, legal and statutory requirements, as stipulated by the Council, being met by the Boston Marathon Challenge Team.

Belfast Zoo Proposal

The Chairman (Councillor McKee) declared an interest in this matter.)

The Committee was informed that the Department had received a request from the Chairman that consideration be given to the carrying out of a feasibility study to assess the viability of the development of a hotel within the site of the 'old' zoo, which might involve the refurbishment of the Floral Hall as part of any proposal. The Assistant Director outlined the principal aspects of the proposal and the potential benefits which such a development might bring to the North Belfast area. She indicated that a feasibility study would be required to assess the potential for such a development.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the matter be referred to the North Belfast Area-Based Working Group for consideration prior to it being referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Temporary Closure - Whiterock Leisure Centre

The Committee was informed that, as part of the Department's essential maintenance and upgrade programme, the Council's Property Maintenance Service had indicated that it would be necessary to undertake work to replace the floor coverings within the male and female wet changing and shower areas at the Whiterock Leisure Centre. The Director reported that work in this regard would commence during the week beginning 6th January, 2014, with an anticipated completion date of 24th February, 2014. He indicated that, whilst the work was ongoing, it would be necessary to close the pool at the centre and he outlined the alternative Council facilities which might be used by patrons. Accordingly, he sought the Committee's authority to close, during the period outlined, the pool at Whiterock Leisure Centre to enable the upgrade work to be carried out.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Schools' Cup Event

The Director reported that the Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association had submitted a request to the Council to host the quarter-finals of the Northern Ireland Schools' Cup at the City of Belfast Playing Fields at Mallusk. He indicated that the event would attract approximately 600 participants, aged between 12 and 18 years, representing 25 schools from across Northern Ireland. The Association had indicated that the event would take place on Wednesday, 12th February, 2014.

He pointed out that this was the fourth occasion on which the quarter-finals would be held at the location and it was suggested that the hosting of the event had enhanced cross-community participation and engagement in sport. The potential revenue income to the Council for the use of the pitches would be approximately £528 and the additional staffing costs of facilitating the event had been estimated at £340. However, the organisers had submitted an application for the free use of the pitches and ancillary facilities.

The Director stated that, since the event would take place on a Wednesday, there would be no displacement of regular users. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to the holding of the quarter-finals of the Schools' Cup and approve the free use of the facilities at the City of Belfast Playing Fields by the Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association, subject to the completion of an appropriate event management plan which would be to the satisfaction of the Council.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

18th Annual Aisling Awards

The Committee was advised that the annual Aisling Awards would take place in the Europa Hotel on Thursday, 21st November. The Director reported that the project associated with the redevelopment of the Mary Peters Track had been short-listed for the sports category and that the Council had been issued with two complimentary tickets for the event.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman and the Director, or their nominees, be nominated to represent the Committee at the event.

Belfast Zoo - Macaque Monkeys

Members referred to a recent incident during which a number of Macaque Monkeys had escaped from the Belfast Zoo and congratulated the zoo staff for the manner in which they had dealt with the situation.

The Director undertook to submit a report in the matter to the Committee's meeting in December.

Chairman