

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 5th December, 2013

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor McKee (Chairman);
Aldermen Robinson and Rodgers;
Councillors Beattie, Convery, Corr,
Cunningham, Hendron, Hussey, Kyle,
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; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Haire and Hanna.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 5th and 12th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd December, subject to the omission of the minute of 5th November under the heading 'Cherryvale Playing Fields' which had been referred back to the Committee for further consideration by the Council at its meeting on 2nd December.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Cherryvale Playing Fields - 3G Pitch

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd December, had referred back the minute of the meeting of 5th November, under the heading 'Cherryvale Playing Fields', to enable further consideration to be given to options which had been formulated by local residents. Accordingly, the Committee reconsidered the undernoted extract of the minute of the special meeting of 5th November, together with an additional report, as set out, which had been tabled for the Committee's consideration:

“Cherryvale Playing Fields

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th October, it had agreed to defer consideration of a report in respect of the establishment of a 3G pitch within the Cherryvale Playing Fields. That decision had been taken to enable the Committee to undertake a study

visit to the facility on Saturday, 19th October, and to receive deputations at and a further special meeting on Tuesday, 5th November.

Accordingly, the Committee considered the undernoted report in this regard:

"1 Relevant Background Information

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in October 2013 it received a report regarding proposals on pitch development at Cherryvale Playing Fields. Following representation from some residents and users of the playing fields expressing their objections and concerns to the proposal the Committee agreed to defer the report to allow for a site visit to the playing fields and to receive representation from groups affected by the proposals. The groups invited include:

- 1. Sports clubs who use the facilities;*
- 2. Residents from Knock Eden who live immediately adjacent to the playing fields;*
- 3. Other users of the playing fields who are not affiliated to any of the sporting codes; and*
- 4. Those who are opposed to the installation of artificial turf pitch on the playing fields;*

Option 2 of that report (Proposed Agreed Option from Sporting Codes) reflects the optimal sporting solution given the land and financial parameters. It enables a full size artificial turf floodlit pitch to be provided on the site which will enable all three sporting codes use of the facility.

There is opposition amongst some residents and users to the construction of an artificial floodlit pitch in the playing fields. However, there is also a lobby which is in support of the investment on the site but opposed to its location as outlined in option 2.

Additional Option to locate artificial pitch on Pitch 1

Following the most recent engagement some residents' representatives have proposed as an alternative that an artificial turf pitch be located on Pitch No 1 which is immediately adjacent to the Ravenhill Road and which is currently a full size grassed turf GAA pitch.

Members are asked to note that whilst this may alleviate the concerns of some of the residents from Knock Eden, it may generate opposition from those living immediately facing the location, however, there has been no discussion with those

residents about the proposal. From a technical point of view, a full size synthetic pitch to meet the needs of GAA cannot be provided on Pitch 1 without removing the line of trees which are a feature of the park.

An undersized synthetic pitch could be fitted on this site but there is no real argument for development of a sub standard sports solution.

The provision of a synthetic pitch at Pitch 1 would also require the replacement of the grass GAA pitch on the site which is estimated to cost in the region of £300,000 for which there is no budget established within the financial limit set by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. This option creates issues with fitting two full sized grass GAA pitches into the space available. In addition Option 5 would remove a full size GAA pitch from the site at a time when under provision of GAA pitches in the city has been identified.

Amendment to Option 2

In an attempt to alleviate a number of the issues raised by residents, option 2 has been amended, the amendment includes positioning the pitches as far away from the houses in Knock Eden as possible. In reality, this will mean approximately 30m from the fence line at the rear of the properties. In addition, we will prepare a landscape plan which will include the planting of additional trees to buffer the light and noise from the playing of sporting games. Other options such as timing of floodlights can also be examined.

2 Key Issues

The Committee is asked to consider the following:

- 1. As part of the prioritisation of sites under the Pitches Strategy the Council has agreed that an artificial turf pitch will be constructed at Cherryvale Playing Fields;*
- 2. The Gaelic Association is currently contributing £350,000 to the development of a replacement sand based natural turf pitch with floodlighting, however, this funding is predicated on Council investment in the site;*
- 3. There are objections to the proposals and these range from those who do want any artificial surface to those who wish to displace it to an alternative*

location in the playing fields; objectors can make submissions via the planning process;

- 4. There is support from the 3 sporting codes for the provision of an artificial turf pitch which will increase the availability for each of the sports; in addition St Joseph's College which is adjacent to the playing fields has also highlighted the benefit to the school;*
- 5. It is the view of Officers that Option 2 as amended represents the best sporting option particularly given the major investment by Council and should be progressed to planning at which time issues around noise; lighting etc can be addressed within the statutory framework.*

3 Resource Implications

Financial

There are cost implications of replacing Pitch 1 with 3G and establishing a grass pitch in another location on the site. Cost estimated to be £300,000 and no budget has been established to support this.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no equality implications

5 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree that Option 2 as amended be submitted to Planning for consideration at which times representation on matters relating to planning can be considered."

The Committee received the following deputations:

St. Joseph's College

Mr. B. Gibson, Chairman of the Board of Governors of St. Joseph's College, was admitted to the meeting and he outlined the school's support for the proposal to establish the 3G pitch within the playing fields. He made the following points:

- the establishment of a facility at Cherryvale would enhance sporting provision for the pupils of St. Joseph's College and other local schools;*

- *the demand for first-rate sporting facilities was increasing within the general area;*
- *the issue of light pollution could be addressed by limiting the hours during which the pitch was available for sporting activities; and*
- *the general enhancement of the facilities would address issues relating to disabled access and would increase participation in sport by young people.*

Mr. Gibson answered a number of Members' questions and he then retired from the meeting.

Deputation in Support of the Proposals

The Committee then received Mr. G. Rogers and Mr. B. McKee, together with Masters J. McKee, L. Frances and Miss. E. Durkin, who were in attendance to speak in support of the proposal to locate the pitch within the playing fields.

Mr. Rogers suggested that a majority of local residents were in favour of the development of the playing fields to incorporate a 3G pitch. He indicated that the Roads Service had pointed out that the implementation of safety measures, such as the establishment of a pedestrian crossing on the Ravenhill Road, would be dependent on the development proceeding. He added that the growth of soccer, rugby and Gaelic Games within the general area required that such a facility be established. Each of the young people in attendance then outlined how the enhancement of the facilities would address the requirements of local teams and requested that the Committee look favourably upon the proposal.

The deputation then retired from the meeting.

Knock Eden Residents' Association

The Committee then received Ms. G. Agnew, Ms. G. Connolly, Ms. G. Dunphy and Ms. A. Given, objectors to the proposal, and they proceeded to outline their concerns.

Ms. Dunphy pointed out that the playing fields were located within an area which was distinctly residential in nature. She suggested that the proposed development would impact adversely on the amenity of the playing fields and referred to issues of light pollution and the possibility of an increase in anti-social activity arising from the development. She referred to the need to protect the requirements of casual users of the playing fields and suggested that the Council had given preference to sporting organisations over such users. In conclusion, she suggested further that the Council had not given sufficient opportunity for local residents to engage meaningfully in respect of the proposals and stated that the development would be out of character with the playing fields.

The deputation answered a range of Members' questions and then retired from the meeting.

Deputation in Support of an Alternative Location

The Committee then received Mr. E. Mulvenna, Miss. P. Haughan, Mr. T. Fearon, Mr. D. McPolin, Mr. P. Scott and Mr. E. Irwin representing a local residents' group who wished to advocate the establishment of the pitch at a separate site within the playing fields.

Mr. Fearon tabled for the information of the Committee an alternative proposal for the establishment of a 3G pitch. He outlined the principal aspects of the proposal and indicated that the alternative site which had been suggested would be in a central location and would see the establishment of a 3G pitch of approximately 90 metres by 60 metres. He pointed out that, given that the proposed pitch would not be full size, it would be suitable for some uses associated with Gaelic Games, rugby and Association Football, particularly training. He suggested that the objections which had been raised by local residents would be placated somewhat by the alternative proposal and, in addition, a significant grass training area would be retained for use by all sports.

The deputation then answered a range of Members' questions and retired from the meeting.

Representatives of the Sporting Bodies

(The Deputy Chairman, Councillor Mac Giolla Mhín, in the Chair.)

The Committee then received Mr. A. McKeagney and Mr. A. Rodgers, representing a local Gaelic and rugby club respectively, who spoke in favour of the proposal which had been submitted for the Committee's consideration. Both representatives outlined the benefits which would be realised by all of the sporting bodies should the proposal be adopted. In respect of the requirements of local Gaelic clubs, Mr. McKeagney indicated that the establishment of a full size pitch, as suggested by the proposal, would be crucial to address the need to play additional club games and address training requirements.

(The Chairman, Councillor McKee, in the Chair.)

The deputation then answered a range of Members' questions and then retired from the meeting.

After discussion, it was

*Moved by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe,*

That the Committee agrees to adopt the proposal as set out within the report.

Amendment

*Moved by Alderman Robinson,
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers,*

That the Committee agrees to defer, to its meeting on 14th November, consideration of the establishment of a 3G pitch at Cherryvale Playing Fields to enable further consideration to be given to the various proposals as presented.

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

The original proposal in the name of Councillor Ó Donnghaile and seconded by Councillor McCabe was thereupon put to the meeting when nine Members voted for it and seven against and it was declared carried."

Accordingly, pursuant to the decision of the Council of 2nd December, the Assistant Director tabled the undernoted report for the Committee's consideration:

"1. Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that at the Council meeting on 2nd December it was agreed that the decision in relation to Cherryvale Playing Fields, as agreed at a Special Meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee on 5th November 2013, be taken back for further consideration.

The decision of the Committee was that the preferred option – attached as Option 1 be worked up and a planning application be submitted. This followed consideration of reports from Officers at the October 2012 meeting, a site visit by Elected Members and representations by representatives of residents and other users on the matter received at the Special Meeting.

Members will be aware that following further representation in the form of an alternate proposal from a group of some residents and non sporting affiliated users to Elected Members it was agreed to refer the matter back to allow the Committee an opportunity to consider this alternate option – Option 2.

2. Key Issues - Outline of options

Option 1

Members are reminded that Option 1 is the preferred option of officers following lengthy discussions with the three sporting

bodies that currently use the playing fields and wider consultation with residents and users after consideration of a range of other options all of which were discounted.

Whilst this option does not have unanimous support, in the view of officers this represents the best sporting solution and best use of the space available.

Option 2

Option 2 represents a compromise on the part of some of the residents and non sports affiliated users in so far as it does not seek to reduce the size and scale of the sporting offering. It is presented as an option which seeks to satisfy the sporting codes whilst at the same time recognising the concerns of some of the residents / non-sporting users. It does so by altering the configuration of the proposed artificial turf pitch and proposed natural turf pitch, as outlined as Option 2.

Members are asked to note that:

1. This solution fits the space available; and
2. It has support from one of the interest groups involved in discussions about the proposals

However the followings concerns should be considered:

- a. Members will also note the proximity to the car park and playground, this is a concern; whilst it will be noted that there is an existing soccer pitch in close proximity to the car park, the risk is in relation to the potential damage / injury from small ball sports such as Hurling or Camogie if the GAA pitch is in this location – this may require high level fencing / ball stop netting along the side of the pitch as opposed to the proposed handrail.
- b. High fencing at this location will not be aesthetically pleasing.
- c. The free space adjacent to the car park in Option 1 is heavily used by GAA clubs for training purposes and the loss of this space would be detrimental to them. This loss of this space also limits the opportunity to extend the car park to this side.
- d. The proximity of the artificial turf pitch to trees will require more intensive management owing to the potential to obstruct drainage. Members will be aware

- e. that leaves can be left on grass pitches, this is not the case with artificial turf pitches.
 - f. Members will note that the proposal will, during construction, result in the removal or loss of two soccer pitches which will require arrangements to be made for displacement, one of the pitches will be replaced on the existing rugby pitch as indicated, however, this is unlikely to be the case until the construction works is completed.
 - g. This alternate proposal does not command the support of all of those opposed to the development. It remains probable that there will be objections raised through the planning process. Soccer did not raise any issue with the proposal and Rugby did not respond. GAA however highlighted many of the points already made, in particular health and safety and the potential for increased anti social behaviour by creating a soccer pitch in the corner with visibility obstructed from the entrance.
3. Feedback on option 1 has been received proposing that the 3G pitch and natural turf pitch should be 'flipped' to locate the 3G pitch adjacent to the school perimeter. This is on the basis that it would be more aesthetically pleasing than having high fencing located in the middle of the playing fields. This option is feasible and although the maintenance issues remain, could present a compromise solution.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

Option 1 can be delivered within the existing budget. Option 2 will require additional fencing/ball stops because of the close proximity to the car park and playground. Costs for additional fencing have yet to be determined.

4. **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to consider the options presented and determine which option should proceed to planning.

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

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Mullan,
Seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,

That the Committee agrees to rescind its decision of 5th November and approve Option 1, as presented, namely, the preferred departmental option, subject to the amendment that the 3G pitch would be located at the Aquinas Grammar School end of the Cherryvale Playing Fields.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor Hussey,

That the Committee agrees to rescind its decision of 5th November and endorses the revised residents' proposal as tabled for consideration.

On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared lost.

The proposal standing in the name of Councillor Mullan and seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile was thereupon put to the meeting where it was passed by eleven votes to six.

Schedule of Meetings 2014

The Committee noted a list of scheduled monthly meeting dates for the period from January till May, 2014, information on which was available on the Council's Mod.gov website.

Financial Reporting - Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th November, it had agreed that a further report be submitted for its consideration which would outline the procedures which the Department had implemented to manage any anticipated overspends within its budgets.

The Committee considered a report in this regard and the Director stated that the year-end forecast for the Department was for a 0.5% overspend. He pointed out that, given that the cash limit for the Department for 2013/2014 had been set at £24 million, such a variance was well within expected tolerance levels. He assured the Committee that the Department had put in place robust financial management procedures and he stated that the overspend had been caused principally by unanticipated costs, which had included significant water charges incurred at the Belfast Zoo.

Noted.

Extension to Existing Contracts

The Director sought, and was granted approval, to extend the undernoted contracts for the periods outlined. He indicated the extensions had been deemed necessary due to delays which had been encountered within procurement exercises to renew the contracts:

- the provision of a franchise catering facility at Belfast Zoo – three months;
- the provision of a veterinarian service at the Belfast Zoo – four months; and
- the supply and delivery of pool chemicals at Leisure Centres and the Belfast Zoo – four months.

Crematorium Provision

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that at its meeting in February 2012 the Committee agreed that the Council should work together with Newtownabbey Borough Council to examine the feasibility of a sub-regional approach to the development of additional crematorium facilities. Newtownabbey Borough Council had already identified a site at the Doagh Road which was to be the subject of the feasibility study.

Cogent Consulting, were appointed to undertake a study on the feasibility of a sub-regional approach to the development of a new crematorium at the site identified by Newtownabbey Borough Council at Doagh Road, Newtownabbey. The findings of the feasibility study were presented to Members at a Special Committee meeting on the 18 February 2013.

Cogent have now completed the next stage of the process which was the financial and operational modelling of three of the options that were identified through the feasibility study. As part of this work Cogent undertook a benchmarking exercise of other crematoria that have established a PPP agreement. They also undertook primary research with private sector operators to scope potential PPP arrangements and facilitated a study visit to a number of crematoria in the south of England.

2 Key Issues

Findings of financial and operational modelling

We have now received a copy of the report which outlines the financial and operational modelling of the following options:

- Creation of a new crematorium in Newtownabbey by NBC and BCC;
- Creation of a new crematorium in Newtownabbey by the private sector; and
- Creation of a new crematorium in Newtownabbey by the public and private sectors (2 variations – BCC and NBC plus the private sector and NBC only plus the private sector).

Key conclusions arising from the operational and financial modelling analysis include:

- Whilst the creation and management of a new crematorium in Newtownabbey by NBC and BCC (Model 1) would provide a number of key benefits including facilitating a strategic focus on shared services between the Councils and the sharing of crematoria risk and costs, this will require the Councils to contribute significant financial resources towards the initial outlay costs.
- From the perspective of NBC, the most potentially economically advantageous option (in the long-term i.e. over 25+ years) is likely to involve the creation and management of a new crematorium in Newtownabbey in conjunction with the private sector (where the private sector rents the land). In such a situation, NBC would not incur any costs and would derive a steady income stream (the size of which would be dependent on the terms negotiated as part of the initial SLA). The Research Team does however note that such a model would not facilitate the Council facilitating a strategic focus on shared services;
- From the perspective of BCC, the analysis suggests that whilst its involvement in a PPP with NBC may be advantageous in the longer term (given the fact that the initial outlay costs would not be passed on to the rate payer and the Council would derive an income stream) the Research Team notes that such a PPP model is less economically advantageous to NBC in the longer terms (vis-à-vis entering into a PPP arrangement alone) and the private sector has expressed a level of reluctance to entering into such an arrangement; and
- The sensitivity analysis suggests that any change in the assumptions underpinning the modelling analysis is likely to have a material impact on the costs and benefits incurred by the partners involved in each model. As such, in the event that one or more of the Councils wish to enter into a PPP arrangement with the private sector, emphasis should be placed on negotiating as economically advantageous conditions as possible.

Based on the findings of the modelling it is clear that the most economically advantageous option for Newtownabbey BC is to enter a PPP. Initial conversations with NBC officers have indicated that their Members are supportive of this option and they are likely to pursue it. Belfast City Council Members have previously expressed a reluctance to pursue a PPP in relation to the delivery of cremation services and the modelling has indicated that a PPP involving both Councils is not likely to be the most economically advantageous or the most attractive to the private sector.

It is therefore proposed that at this point Members agree that Belfast City Council no longer pursue any of the options for the development of a new crematorium with Newtownabbey Borough Council.

Redevelopment of Belfast Crematorium at Roselawn

Members will be aware that the current crematorium is working well beyond design capacity and there are a number of deficiencies which are hampering the effective delivery of dignified cremation services. The initial feasibility study recommended that regardless of the preferred option, it is considered essential that development works take place at the City of Belfast crematorium. There are currently almost 2,800 cremations taking place annually and the crematorium was not designed to cope with this level. The benchmarking research shows that is 80% higher than the average number of cremations taking place at crematoria in GB. The private sector has indicated that once a crematorium is undertaking c1,500 cremations annually they will explore the options for extending their facilities.

Members will be aware that the redevelopment of the crematorium at Roselawn is currently a Stage 2 uncommitted project on the capital programme. The next step in the process will be to develop a strategic outline case for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Future cemetery provision

Members will be aware that the Council are currently exploring the potential of a site at Dundrod for future cemetery provision. Officers had hoped to bring a joint report on future cemetery and crematorium provision but this was not possible due to the receipt of a proposal from the option holder on the Dundrod site. Officers are currently considering the proposal and will bring a report to the Committee early in the New Year.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

The costs of any new crematorium have yet to be determined. At SP&R on 22nd November 2013 the project was confirmed to be at Stage 2 of the capital programme process i.e. is an uncommitted project which has not developed to the stage where permission can be sought for tender.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

There are currently no equality or good relation implications however this will continue to be reviewed as the project is developed.

5 Recommendations

- (i) Note the findings of the report;
- (ii) Agree that Belfast City Council will not at this point pursue any of the options for the development of a new crematorium with Newtownabbey Borough Council; and
- (iii) Agree that a strategic outline case for the redevelopment and refurbishment of Roselawn Crematorium be developed for consideration by the SP&R Committee.”

After discussion, during which the Director indicated that a report, in respect of the feasibility of the Council developing burial lands at the Dundrod site, would be submitted for consideration at its meeting in January, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Tropical Ravine - Award of Heritage Lottery Funding

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will note that permission was granted to develop a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the restoration of the Tropical Ravine, Belfast Botanic Gardens.

1.2 The project sought to restore the Tropical Ravine, leveraging value through physical restoration and the development of ongoing programme delivery.

1.3 Key objectives of the bid included:-

- Works which will ensure the preservation of the Tropical Ravine into the future. This will be done in a way which preserves existing features and restores missing elements;
- Ensure ongoing conservation and development of the plant collection;
- Emphasise linkages with the historic landscape and built heritage of the Botanic Gardens, as well as the surrounding communities and institutions; and
- Provide facilities which maximises access and provide a venue for on-going programme of community involvement and learning.

1.4 The Heritage Grant application was awarded a Round 1 pass in March 2012, with permission to proceed granted on 23 August 2012. A stage C review was undertaken with the HLF Lottery on May 2013 and a full Round 2 application was submitted 8th August 2013.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Following consideration at the National Committee of the HLF 19th November; Officers have been notified that the Tropical Ravine has been successful in its application for funding.

2.2 Although a formal letter of offer has yet to be provided the grant will be the region of £2.3 million.

2.3 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee 20th September 2013 has agreed capital funding of £1.5 million as part of the Council's Investment Programme. Members should note that the overall cost for the project includes costs of future maintenance over five years; volunteer time and non-cash contribution of existing staff time.

A further funding bid is being prepared for the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency's 'Listed Building Fund' and the Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens Group has confirmed a cash contribution to the project.

2.6 Members will note that following the successful agreement of terms and conditions within the letter of offer from HLF the project will proceed through detailed design and development of interpretation and outreach work.

3. Resource Implications

£1.5 million agreed 20th September 2013 from the Strategic, Policy and Resources Committee as match funding.

4. **Equality Implications**

There are no implications at this stage. However, Equality and Good Relations factors will be taken into account in the development of the project.

5. **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to note the contents of this update report.”

After discussion, during which it was agreed that a press release be issued by the Council to highlight the development work which would be undertaken at the Tropical Ravine, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Belfast Community Sports Development Network

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

1. At its meeting on 12th February 2009 the Committee supported an application for funding to Sport NI to participate in the Active Communities Programme. This was successful and the programme has been running since 2011.
- 1.2 Active Communities is an investment programme delivered by Sport NI that seeks to employ, deploy and train a network of full time and part time sports coaches and leaders to deliver activities in community and club settings across Northern Ireland, with a view to increasing participation in sport and physical recreation, especially among underrepresented groups.
- 1.3 A package of funding and business a plan was put together to support BCSDN (Belfast Community Sports Development Network) as the lead delivery partner for Sport NI’s Active Communities programme under the auspices of the Active Belfast Consortium (ABC).
- 1.4 The Committee gave approval for the Director of Parks and Leisure, in consultation with the Chair of Parks and Leisure, to agree the Council’s contribution to the overall package of funding up to a maximum of £50,000 per annum.
- 1.5 Committee at its meeting on 10th October 2013 considered the VFM review and agreed that officers should engage with BCSDN on the development of an Improvement Plan. The Committee also agreed that a review of the options for the delivery of the Active Communities Programme is required.

2. **Key Issues**

- Officers have now met with BCSDN to discuss the findings of the report and have agreed the approach of or the preparation of an Improvement Plan. It was also agreed that BCSDN engage with the Council and the consultants to ensure that the information provided in the 'VFM' review is as accurate as possible. This has been a constructive engagement with BCSDN demonstrating its commitment to the continued delivery of the programme and to the introduction of any necessary improvements.
- Officers have also met with Sport NI to provide assurance that the Active Communities Programme continues to be delivered satisfactorily and that targets continue to be met.
- Work will commence shortly on the development of the options for future delivery and a report will be submitted to Committee in due course.
- It should be noted that this 'VFM' review forms part of the processes which are in place to continue to improve delivery of the Active Communities Programme. Routine ongoing monitoring and supervision of the programme is undertaken by officers from the Leisure Development Unit. The programme continues to deliver the targets agreed between Sport NI and the Council.

3. **Resource Implications**

Sport NI provides funding of £3.03 million over 5 years to the Active Communities Programme. An annual Council contribution of £50k has been provided for in the 2013/14 budget.

4. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the update."

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

River Terrace Community Garden

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Committee is reminded of the successful community gardens that have been established across the city. Belfast City Council now have 15 community growing spaces and continue to provide in kind support to community gardens situated on land not directly owned by the Council.
- 1.2 The Council have received a request from St John Vianney Youth Centre to explore the option of establishing a community led garden in River Terrace.
- 1.3 It is anticipated that the local community would get involved in the planning, development, maintenance and ongoing use of the garden as a resource for programmed activities and as a means of:
 - Supporting healthier lifestyles by providing growing opportunities to people of all ages,
 - Supporting and developing communities by building and encouraging ownership of and pride in the city’s growing spaces and,
 - Engaging the wider community through inclusiveness in the development of shared growing spaces.
- 1.4 Members are reminded that that £200k was allocated to the development of four community gardens one in the North (Finlay Park), one in the west (Whiterock), one in the east (Knocknagoney) and one in the south (site still to be determined) there is still 50K of this fund to be allocated to South Belfast for the provision of a community garden. It has been suggested that River Terrace could receive this investment if the scheme proves to be viable.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The land in question is owned by the Department of Social Development (DSD). Initial conversations have taken place with regards land transfer and whilst DSD seem agreeable in principle, further discussions will need to take place to finalise any formal agreements.
- 2.2 At present there are issues with public liability and currently members of the public would not be covered for any activity on the site. However if the land was transferred in to Belfast City Council ownership then community participation would be covered by the Council’s insurance.

- 2.3 In 2006 a contamination report was carried out on the site which highlighted contaminants are present. The changes to the legislation have increased the standards and as a result further contamination surveys will need to be carried out. The Landscape Planning and Development Unit in Parks and Leisure have produced initial concept drawings for the site however these are difficult to cost at this time as a result of not knowing the extent of the contamination.
- 2.4 There is already an established amenity community garden in the adjacent area owned by An Droichead. Local schools, the housing association and local residents have keys to access the existing community garden and early consultation suggests that they would be keen to work in partnership regarding future projects.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

50k of capital funds allocated to South Belfast could contribute to the build of a community garden at River Terrace.

Human

Staff time will be required to engage with the local community to prepare a draft drawing of the proposed garden. The Community Parks Outreach Manager will continue to work with the community to establish a core group and increase participation in the garden in line with the Growing Communities Strategy.

Asset

The potential transfer of this land will result in the Council gaining an additional asset in South Belfast with associated implications.

4. **Equality Implications**

There are no implications at this stage. However equality and good relations factors will be taken in to account in any activities delivered at the community garden or through the project.

5. **Recommendations**

That the Committee approves the further investigation of the potential for the development of a community garden in River Terrace with a further report brought to Committee in due course.”

After discussion, during which a number of Members paid tribute to the work of the staff within the Department who had been involved in the establishment and development of community gardens across Belfast, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities

(Ms. K. Anderson-Gillespie, Policy and Business Development Officer, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Officers have been working in partnership with Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) to pilot the use of the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC), approved by Committee in June 2013. This report provides Members with an overview and update of the SOPARC technique, present data collected from Phase 1 and outline the next steps of the SOPARC project.

Using the SOPARC technique (developed by University of California), the department will be able to effectively measure levels of usage and activity in the council parks and open spaces. This will help us to evidence the value that outdoor leisure has for the people of Belfast and how it can contribute to the achievement of local outcomes such as improved health.

2 Key Issues

As part of the SOPARC technique an observation survey is carried out. It records the number and characteristics of individuals in an open space in a systematic way.

The SOPARC technique requires an observation survey to be carried out in each site for up to 1 week. Each day a survey is conducted 4 times (i.e. 7.30am, 12.30pm, 3.30pm and 7.30pm). The SOPARC technique has been successfully tried and tested by QUB to observe levels of physical activity pre construction of the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) and will be repeated following completion.

As well as measuring value for money, performance and outcomes, by collecting this data we can:

- Inform the delivery, marketing and promotion of programmes and activities
- Contribute to community involvement criterion of Green Flag management plans
- Enable effective resource allocation (i.e. antisocial behaviour (ASB), litter and dog fouling)
- Inform local area working and planning.

The SOPARC implementation: 3 phase approach

A 3 phase approach is currently being implemented across the city:

Phase 1: Grove Playing Fields Pilot (June – October 2013)

Grove Playing Fields was chosen as the pilot for Phase 1. This was identified as appropriate for the following reasons:

- It is a Green Flag accredited park (reflective of those parks planned to take part in Phase 2 and 3); and
- It provided the perfect test bed with a variety of facilities including paths, football pitches, outdoor gyms, a cricket pitch, children's playground and dog enclosure.

The surveys carried out at Grove Playing Fields were conducted over 1 week by 4 Park Wardens from Team North. The Wardens were provided with training from QUB to undertake the SOPARC survey.

In brief, over the course of the week:

- a total of 805 people were observed using the park = average of 29 users per hour.
- 75% of users were male and 25% female.
- The largest group of users were adults who accounted for 70% of those observed in the park. The smallest user group represented were seniors who accounted for just 3%.

- 55% of those in the park were engaged in walking activities, 21% engaged in vigorous activities and the remainder sedentary.
- Pitches were used the most (52% of users), followed by paths with 29% usage. People used the dog enclosure the least representing 3%.
- Saturday was the busiest day of the week accounting for 21% of weekly usage. Friday was the least busy day of the week accounting for just 6%. Differences in uses across the time of day were also observed.
- The busiest time of day was the evening (54% of total usage) and morning was the least busy time of day accounting for 7% of total usage.

The enthusiasm and commitment shown by the Parks Wardens who took part was reflected in the high quality and robust data collected. Likewise, the Friends' group have also shown great interest in the pilot.

Phase 2: City-wide pilot (December 2013 – March 2015)

It is proposed that Phase 2 is rolled out to 4 Green Flag standard parks, one from each area of the city. The parks proposed are:

- **Area North:** Waterworks Park;
- **Area South:** Botanic Gardens;
- **Area East:** Knocknagoney Linear Park; and
- **Area West:** Falls Park.

These parks have been proposed based on the following criterion:

- They are either a city or a district park;
- Green Flag standard; and
- Have a variety of facilities.

**Orangefield Park and Victoria Park are already being surveyed as part of the CCG development.*

The schedule of quarterly SOPARC data collection and analysis can be carried out:

- Quarter 1 (April – June) w/c 12 May 2014.
- Quarter 2 (July – September) w/c 11 August 2014.
- Quarter 3 (October – December) w/c 10 November 2014.
- Quarter 4 (January – March) w/c 9 February 2015.

Phase 3: Green Flag parks project (January 2015 – March 2016)

Following the successful implementation of Phase 2 above the proposal is to mainstream across all the Green Flag accredited parks across the city.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

Provision has been made to acquire a number of android based tablets for use as part of Phase 2 of the SOPARC project.

4 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of the report, including the proposed pilots for Phase 2 and the ongoing development of the SOPARC project.”

The Policy and Business Development Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the principle aspects of the programme and answered a range of Members’ questions in relation thereto.

The Committee welcomed the findings of the report and noted the information which had been provided.

Summer Schemes 2015

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 participation numbers attending in 2013 reaching 19,000. The 2013 schemes were developed to include four sunrise clubs, one in each area of the City. Six schemes also accepted children from five years of age, (usually eight years of age).

In January 2013 Committee approved a report outlining a new approach to pre-registration for the Grove Summer scheme. The approach prioritised places for local children in front of other Belfast residents and residents outside of the Belfast boundary. This approach was very successful in that it avoided the need for queues that have been evident in the past.

During registration for the 2013 scheme, long queues were evident at Olympia, Ballysillan, Whiterock and Avoniel. The department received a wide range of feedback on the registration/enrolment for the summer schemes. A number of complaints were also received regarding queues and communication in relation to enrolment. Learning from the Grove pre-registration scheme and the feedback from parents will be used to improve the registration/enrolment of summer schemes in 2014.

2 Key Issues

The summer schemes listed below indicate the maximum number of places available for 2014. These are based on facilities at the sites and staff availability. Charges will be made at a weekly rate, as per 2014/15 scale of charges.

Centre	Number of places available per day
Grove (under 8s)	72
Ballysillan	72
Whiterock (under 8s)	72
Avoniel (under 8s)	60
Olympia(under 8s)	60
Andersonstown	60
Shankill (under 8s)	60
Ozone	48
Loughside (under 8s)	48
Falls	Coaching Scheme – places vary

The most popular of the schemes are, Grove (under 8's), Ballysillan, Whiterock (under 8's), Avoniel (under 8's), and Olympia (under 8's).

The registration for these five sites will include a pre-registration exercise which will take place on a Saturday at the beginning of May 2014. Families wishing to register an interest can apply online/by email or at the centre of choice. Parents can request a place for up to four children. Following the pre-registration date, staff at the sites will then allocate places on the following basis:

- Council rate payers (The number of weeks allocated may be restricted to three or four weeks to accommodate more families)
- If oversubscribed by Belfast residents following restriction in the number of weeks a random draw of places will take place
- Remaining places will be offered to residents of other Council areas

Those successful at pre-registration stage will be invited to attend the centre with the usual proof of address, photographic identification and child's date of birth to enrol and pay for the scheme. This is not a first come first served scheme.

Enrolment for the remaining schemes will take place on a Saturday at the beginning of June 2014 with the following availability of places. Charges will be made at a weekly rate, as per 2013/14 scale of charges. These sites will follow a similar pre-registration scheme, giving first preference to Belfast residents and avoiding queues. The sunrise club, which is a early morning service for children attending the scheme incurs an additional charge and will run at Avoniel, Andersonstown, Ballysillan and Olympia.

Free use of Council facilities

Leisure Services provide quality play, recreation and sporting opportunities for the children of Belfast over the summer holiday period. 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.

The addition of free entrance to Leisure summer schemes only to the Grove soft Play area is requested for 2014, at off peak times. This is particularly for the schemes accepting the younger age group of children.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

An allowance of £70,000 is allocated within revenue budgets to support holiday schemes in leisure centres with an anticipated £60,000 projected to be received in income from holiday scheme participants. The excursions for the 2014 will be closely monitored and limited to 1 per week because of the increasing costs associated with transportation and entry fees.

4 Recommendations

It is also recommended that Members agree the revised approach to summer scheme registration and agrees also that, as in previous years:

1. Free swimming, during July and August for community group schemes which are 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 Council Leisure Centre summer schemes, and
3. Free entrance to the adventurous playground in July and August for children participating in Council summer schemes, and 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 recommended also that leisure schemes only can access free use of the soft play area at the Grove.”

After discussion, during which the Assistant Director provided the Members with an overview of the proposals and answered a range of associated queries, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Skegoneill Health Centre

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in August 2010 it was asked to consider placing the former Skegoneill Health Centre Site within the Council's Corporate Land Bank. The Committee agreed to this however, the matter was taken back at Council and reconsidered by the Committee in September 2010. At the time it was agreed that alternative uses of the land would be explored.

Members are reminded that as part of the partnership arrangement with the North and West Trust relating to the development of the New Grove Wellbeing Centre it had been agreed that the site of the former Skegoneill Health Centre would revert to the Council upon completion of the scheme and relocation of the Health Centre within the new Grove Health and Well Being Centre.

The current position is that the former Health Centre site now sits under the management of Parks and Leisure. The site has remained derelict and unused and in 2013 it became the location for a small bonfire in the area.

Whilst the site is alongside the Playing Fields there is a difference in the levels and access between the two sites would be limited unless some re-grading was undertaken along the boundary between the sites. Members are asked to note that there are no conditions attached to the transfer of the land and there is no requirement that it be retained or developed as open space.

Should the site continue to be retained by Parks and Leisure there are two options:

1. The site remains as is without development; and
2. The site is developed as a discrete location.

A series of options have been discussed. There is the potential to develop the site:

1. As a playground;
2. As a multi user games area;
3. As a community garden;

4. As an outdoor gym area;
5. As a landscaped area

Depending on the nature and extent of the proposal, costs could vary from £100,000 to £250,000. These items would all constitute capital projects and would be subject to prioritisation and approval through SP&R.

Within the context of the current affordability limits one alternative would be to declare the site surplus to the operational requirements of the Parks and Leisure Department and that it be transferred to the Council's corporate land bank (managed by Property and Projects Department, Estates Management Unit) wherein any potential use by other Council Departments would be considered and a planning assessment could be carried out to consider development options.

2. Key Issues

The key issues for the Committee to consider are:

- The former Skegoneill Health Centre Site has been acquired by the Council as part of the arrangement with the North and West Trust. The site has no restrictions attached to its transfer.
- The Parks and Leisure Department has considered development options for Park use and has concluded there is no operational need for the site and that the Department do not have the resources to develop it.
- It is therefore proposed that it be placed within the corporate land bank for consideration of options re future development potential.

3. Resource Implications

Financial Implications

There are no additional financial costs to the Council at this stage. Potential savings of development costs to provide alternative Parks and Leisure use are provided within the body of this report. The potential financial implications arising from any alternative use are not known at this time.

Asset and Other implications

The transfer of the asset would enable a wider range of options to be considered which might enable the site to be developed.

4. **Equality Implications**

There are no equality implications.

5. **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to declare the former Skegoneill Health Centre Site surplus to Parks and Leisure Departmental requirements and further agree that a report be brought to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in line with Standing Orders”.

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendation, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Suffolk Outdoor Gymnasium

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

Suffolk Community Forum has requested permission to install an outdoor gym beside the existing community garden in Carnamore Park open space, which is located adjacent to Suffolk playing fields.

2. **Key Issues**

The Suffolk Community Forum has applied to Active Belfast for £5,000 and to Award for All for £10,000 to fund the project which is part of a wider Health and Well Being initiative. The Forum is also working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to develop family size allotments on the interface area between Suffolk and Ladybrook and Council officers are also engaged in discussions regarding this project.

The funding application for an outdoor gym is based on a number of proposed quotes which Suffolk Community Forum has acquired. However it is proposed that the installation work be carried out by a Council approved contractor and the equipment will be purchased by the Council.

After installation it is proposed that the Council will be responsible for appropriate inspection and maintenance of the equipment as per normal procedures with other existing outdoor gyms.

3. **Resource Implications**

There are no significant Human Resources issues other than officer time and routine inspection upon completion of the project.

4. **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to approve the installation of an outdoor gym at Carnamore open space, based on the successful funding applications totalling £15,000 and subject to appropriate legal agreements between the Council and Suffolk Community Forum.”

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendation.

Request for the Use of the Ormeau Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

The Council is currently in communication with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) in a bid to host a new major competition in the piping domain in Belfast The event will be known as the UK Pipe Band Championships.

The 3 European Pipe Band Championships in the city (2010-2012) were held at Stormont however it is believed that a championship in the heart of the city will be of greater economic benefit as it will encourage footfall into the city centre. The Europeans Championships in 2012 generated an economic impact of approximately £247,000.

Belfast was successful in their bid to host the event in July 2013 and would see Ormeau Park as the home of the event for the next 2 years. The event would be held on Saturday 14 June 2014 and Saturday 15 June 2015 and it is expected to attract 10,000 people on site.

2. **Key Issues**

- The use of the site would be subject to the waiving of the Council's hire costs. When the event was held previously at Stormont Pavilion there were no charges for site hire, staff or maintenance.
- The whole site including the Ozone would be booked for the event and would require the pitches to be free on the days before and after the event for set up and set down.
- Accommodation is required for parking of coaches but not for public parking.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

Income lost each year would be approximately £4,000 for Ozone and £2,700 for pitch hire. In such cases Council would also request payment of a reinstatement bond of £5,000 to cover any repairs necessary after the event; however, after reinstatement any money unspent on repairs would be returned to the event organisers. The total fees waived per year would be £6,700.

Staff overtime may be required to support set up and set down of the event. The detail is unknown at this stage but will be established as part of the event management plan.

Human Resources

Staff required to support the event.

4. **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to support the Council hosting the UK Pipe Band Championships in Ormeau Park for 2014/2015, to agree the waiving of fees and subject to an agreement with the organisers of an event management plan to satisfy all legal and statutory requirements."

The Committee agreed that to adopt the recommendations and agreed further that a report be submitted for consideration at a future meeting which would outline a draft departmental policy for the future granting of the free use of parks' properties.

Hospitality at Parks Events 2014/2015

The Director sought the Committee's approval to provide appropriate hospitality at the undernoted events and ceremonies during 2014:

- The Spring Fair;
- Belfast Parks' Primary Schools' Athletics event;
- Belfast Parks Photographic Competition;
- Rose Week;
- The City of Belfast Autumn Flower Show; and
- Various meetings with stakeholder groups to include the Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belfast Hills Partnership etc.

The Committee agreed to provide hospitality at the events at a cost of approximately £3,100, provision for which had been made within the Department estimates for 2014/2015.

Belfast Zoo - Corporate Social Responsibility Partnerships

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Sun bears are among the zoo's most popular species. Sun bears are kept by only two other UK zoos, and as such at times receive a lot of visitor focus. Their paddock is overlooked by the Mountain Tea House, and throughout the year a significant proportion of zoo visitors will have purchased food in the Tea House and sat on the new patio and watched the bears.**
- 1.2 During summer 2013, following an approach from a consortium of construction companies working on the A8 dual carriageway, namely Lagan Construction, Ferrovia Agroman and Costain, work was undertaken enhancing the paddock for the zoo's pair of endangered Malayan sun bears.**
- 1.3 The work included new outdoor climbing structures, wobble feeders (which require the bears to shake the tree trunks to get their food to topple out), tree trunks, bark pits, tunnels, a running waterfall and hammocks to relax in, as well as some landscaping.**
- 1.4 A wide range of play and behavioural enrichment equipment is vital to the welfare of the bears, which are intelligent and inquisitive. Prior to the work, there was a limited number of such pieces of equipment for the bears in the paddock, and those items that were in place had become old and were in a poor state of repair. There was limited budget available in zoo budgets to immediately undertake improvements.**
- 1.5 While the zoo covered the cost of crane hire, all other staff, plant and materials costs were provided by the companies. Staff from the companies and the zoo worked together closely to design the new enclosure furniture and develop the week long programme of works.**

1.6 Following the enhancements, the female bear, which came to Belfast Zoo with a history of antisocial and repetitive behaviours, has become significantly more relaxed. We have not observed any repetitive behaviours from her since the work was undertaken. Moreover, she has become significantly more receptive and accepting of the male bear, to the extent that within weeks of completion of the work, mating behaviours were observed. If successful, this would represent the first captive breeding of this species in the UK and Ireland.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The zoo was approached by construction and engineering companies willing to undertake work to enhance animal enclosures in the zoo.

2.2 There is an ongoing need for such work throughout the zoo, not only to renew aging structures but also to provide new and interesting items of enrichment for our animals.

2.3 Given the specialist nature of the work, in terms of both equipment and personnel, this work is expensive to procure. While finances for such work are available through annual zoo budgets, there is significant scope for such work throughout the zoo, often beyond that for which we have adequate budget availability

2.4 Companies, through their Corporate Social Responsibilities, do appear keen to develop partnerships and support the zoo. The zoo's conservation, welfare and education roles, and our links to the community via our visitors and Friends of the Zoo group, make us an attractive proposition and site for companies wanting to fulfil their Corporate Social Responsibilities.

2.5 Further, it would appear likely that there are opportunities to extend this support via similar work in the zoo, and perhaps at other Parks facilities.

2.6 In order to explore such opportunities, it is proposed that:

- we develop a list of suitable enclosure work in the zoo for potential partner engineering and building contractors to undertake, that would enhance the lives of the zoo's animals, via landscaping and the provision of play and other enrichment equipment;

- we seek expressions of interest from contractors with the capacity to assist the zoo with such work for animals in the zoo;
- we develop a package of marketing materials so that companies providing such assistance may receive appropriate credit for their work, including signage at the animal enclosures, press releases and links to the zoo's website and other social media outlets, and branded partnership certificates and other materials, which also could be retrospectively applied to those companies that assisted at the sun bear enclosure; and
- depending on the uptake, the Department will develop a policy for future Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships throughout the Department.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

The partnership described above, and the proposed extension of the programme, has the potential to generate significant financial savings.

Human Resources

There will be some work required to further develop this programme. However, in the initial stages, there is adequate HR available.

Asset and Other Implications

The partnership described above has allowed for the renewal of the climbing and other fixtures in the sun bear enclosure. This has provided for significant additional value to this asset. There appears to be considerable scope to extend this partnership arrangement, and to provide excellent marketing opportunities to both partners.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The committee is asked to note the above report and to approve the plan in paragraph 2.6, that is:

- to develop a list of suitable enclosure work in the zoo for potential partner engineering and building

contractors to undertake, that would enhance the lives of the zoo's animals, via landscaping and the provision of play and other enrichment equipment;

- **to seek expressions of interest from contractors with the capacity to assist the zoo with such work for animals in the zoo;**
- **to develop a package of marketing materials so that companies providing such assistance may receive appropriate credit for their work, including signage at the animal enclosures, press releases and links to the zoo's website and other social media outlets, and branded partnership certificates and other materials, which also could be retrospectively applied to those companies that assisted at the sun bear enclosure."**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Zoo - Lion-tailed Macaque Monkeys

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the circumstances which had surrounded the escape in October from Belfast Zoo by a number of Lion-tailed Macaque monkeys.

Donations to Societies

The Director advised the Committee that the Department had hosted the Spring and Autumn Fairs in 2013 and the events had proved to be a success, with approximately 8,000 visitors attending each fair. He reported that, in previous years, the Committee had granted a small donation to each of the societies which had been involved in the organisation of the shows in recognition of their assistance. He recommended, therefore, that a donation of £100 be made to each of the undernoted organisations:

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

- Rose Society of Northern Ireland
- Ulster Alpine Garden Society

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman