

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 16th January, 2014

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

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

Also attended: Councillor Hargey.

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.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Cunningham.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 6th January, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading 'Cherryvale Playing Fields' which, at the request of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman Stalford), and with the permission of the Council, had been referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Routine Correspondence - Belfast Zoo

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th November, it had agreed to write to the Tourism Minister, Mrs. A. Foster, MLA, requesting that she consider providing financial support to assist the Council in the running of the Belfast Zoo. The Committee had noted that the political parties at the Northern Ireland Assembly had, in October, urged the Environment Minister, Mr. M. H. Durkan, MLA, to provide funding to Exploris, which was owned and managed by Ards Borough Council, in order to avert its proposed closure. The parties at the Assembly had considered that Exploris was a unique facility which was utilised by people from across Northern Ireland and, as such, could be entitled to direct funding. The Committee was of the view that, given its regional importance, the Belfast Zoo should be considered eligible for similar assistance.

The Committee was informed that a response had been received from the Tourism Minister's office which had pointed out that the Zoo, like other attractions in Northern Ireland, could apply for funding through the full range of schemes which were administered by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. The Minister had acknowledged that the Zoo was an important asset for both residents and visitors and that it continued to deliver high standards. However, she had indicated that the provision of direct funding for the Zoo was not under consideration.

After discussion, during which the Director outlined the extent of capital assistance which the Tourist Board had provided to the Council to assist in the development of the Zoo, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Cherryvale Playing Fields - 3G Pitch

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 6th January, had referred the minute of the meeting of 5th December, under the heading 'Cherryvale Playing Fields – 3G Pitch', back to the Committee to enable consideration to be given to a further option which had been formulated. Accordingly, the Committee reconsidered the undernoted extract of the minute of the meeting of 5th December, together with an additional report, as set out also, and a further proposal with outline maps, which had been submitted earlier that day by another group of local residents:

Committee Meeting of 5th December

"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.

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 that leaves can be left on grass pitches, this is not the case with artificial turf pitches.*
 - e. *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.*
 - f. *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."

Report Tabled at Meeting on 16th January, 2014

"1. Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that at the Council meeting on 2 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 5 November 2013, be taken back for further consideration. The matter was subsequently reconsidered by the Committee at its meeting on the 5 December and the decision of the 5 November was reaffirmed. At the Council meeting on 6 January 2014, following further representation from some residents of Knock Eden Park and the presentation of a further revised option, the matter was again deferred and referred back to Parks and Leisure Committee for consideration of the new option, which is attached as Appendix B.

Members are reminded that the decision of the Committee in December was that the preferred option with the 3G pitch and natural turf pitch 'flipped' to locate the 3G pitch adjacent to the school perimeter – attached as Appendix A, be worked up and a planning application be submitted.

The Committee will note the new option is a derivation of the previous option considered in December; the difference being that the configuration has been changed to locate the artificial pitch in the centre of the playing fields, further removed from the rear of residential properties in Knock Eden Park and in closer proximity to the car park.

On 16 January 2014 Officers received a further proposal from another group of Cherryvale users and local residents. The proposal is based on the existing layout of pitches but includes additional community facilities. The proposal does not include a 3G pitch in line with the recommendations of the pitches strategy. The proposal will be tabled at committee.

2. Key Issues

Option 1 – Appendix A

Members are reminded that Option 1 is the preferred option of officers and whilst this option is a compromise, it raises some maintenance issues and 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 – Appendix B

Option 2 represents a compromise and 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, Appendix B.

Members are asked to note that:

1. This proposal fits the space available;
2. The proposal also ensures that there are 2 natural turf GAA pitches and an artificial turf pitch;
3. It has support from some of the residents of Knock Eden Park;
4. It locates the artificial pitch further away from the rear of properties in Knock Eden Park;
5. It locates the artificial pitch closer to the car park and changing pavilion therefore improving access and reducing maintenance.
6. As for other options Officers would assess measures such as additional tree planting along the perimeter of the playing fields adjacent to the proposed pitches to provide an additional buffer to mitigate against noise and lighting.

However the following points should be considered:

- a. The Council's standard approach has been to secure 3G pitches with high level fencing and it is the high visibility of the fencing in this location that may raise objections. High fencing is essential due to the risk posed by small ball Gaelic games.
- b. Members will note from option 1, Appendix A that there is a small area of open space adjacent to the car park which is used casually by users and by clubs for training purposes. The loss of this space would be detrimental to users although option 2 will create a portion of open space in another location. This location would be in the middle of playing pitches and may not be attractive to the casual user of the park, would not be as easily accessible and may not be suitable as an area for use by any of the sporting codes. This loss also limits the opportunity to extend the car park to this side which may be required to accommodate the additional use; the car park is already at capacity at times of maximum use of the facilities;
- c. During the construction phase there will be disruption. Option 1 will remove the use of 1 Soccer pitch whilst option 2 will require the removal of two soccer pitches creating greater displacement. One of the soccer 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.
- d. It is unclear whether this alternative proposal has support among other groups. It is felt that the erection of the high level fence in the proposed location may give rise to planning issues although Council Officers have not had formal preplanning discussions with the Planning Service about this option.

Additional Option Received 16 January 2014

This option does not include a 3G pitch and proposes a number of enhancements to the site for wider use. The number of pitches remains the same with the layout similar to the current configuration. This option proposes two new sand based GAA pitches, one with crowd fencing and a sand based soccer pitch. It also proposes the construction of a community building.

The proposal, whilst there is merit in some of the enhancements for wider use, does not fulfil the objectives of the pitches strategy to address the needs for Gaelic pitches and intensification of use.

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. At this stage in the process it is not clear whether there would be an additional capital cost associated with the delivery of the proposed alternative option.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

There are no equality implications.

5. **Recommendations**

Committee is asked to consider Options 1 and 2 and to determine which option they wish Officers to develop with a view to making a planning application. Committee is asked to note that Officers' preferred option remains as Option 1."

The Assistant Director outlined the principal aspects of the alternative proposal for the development of the site which had been received earlier that day on behalf of a group of local residents. She pointed out that no provision had been made within the proposal for the establishment of a 3G pitch. As such, it was contrary to the Pitches Strategy, which had determined that the Council would construct an artificial pitch at the Cherryvale Playing Fields.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Mullan,
Seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,

That the Committee agrees to endorse its decision of 5th December and approve Option 1, namely, the preferred departmental option, that the proposed 3G pitch to be developed at the Cherryvale Playing Fields would be located at the Aquinas Grammar School end of the site.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor Hussey,

That the Committee agrees to rescind its decision of 5th December and endorses Option 2, that is, the revised residents' option as presented to the Committee at its meeting on 5th December.

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 when it was passed by eleven votes to none.

Financial Estimates and District Rate 2014/2015

(Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report, which had been prepared by the Director of Finance and Resources, regarding its Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the Financial Year 2014/2015. A copy of that section of the report, in so far as it related specifically to the Parks and Leisure Department, is set out hereunder:

"Parks and Leisure Committee

2.9 A spending limit of £23,971,115 is recommended for the Department in respect of the financial year 2014/15. This represents a decrease of 0.5% on last year.

The main budgetary intentions of the Department for next year are set out below:

	Excluding Capital Charges
Leisure Centres	£7,723,051
Parks and Cemetery Services	£9,799,378
Neighbourhood & Development	£3,513,203
Directorate	£2,935,483
Total Net Expenditure	<u>£23,971,115</u>

There are a number of areas where change has occurred from last year.

2.11 Increased costs

Additional costs of £117,813 must be borne by the Department in respect of superannuation increased provision.

- 2.12** Increased electricity, gas and water charges have been provided based on current projections of costs which have added £137,252 to the budget.

Income

- 2.13** The leisure centres have projected growth in income for 2014/15 due to a review of charging policies and also a focus on retention and loyalty within the service. £108k of additional income has been provided in the estimate.
- 2.14** Belfast Castle and Malone House have both reflected no growth in income from fees and charges for 2014/15. The franchise fee for each site has also been reduced as aftermarket testing through a tendering process the fee received is down £111k overall. A reduction of income of £31,000 and £70,000 for Malone House and Belfast Castle respectively has been reflected in the estimates.
- 2.15** Income from High Hedges legislation has not been received as the majority of the work has been to give advice and support and very few legal challenges have taken place. The provision of £54k income has been taken out of the 2014/15 estimate.
- 2.16** The Cemeteries and Crematorium income is up by 7% to reflect in the increased income in relation to increases in charges as per previous committee decisions. The crematorium income has also increased significantly due to the availability of extra slots each week as a result of the new opening hours.
- 2.17** It is projected that income from fees associated with the enforcement of Dog Control orders will result in £50k of income for the service and this has been provided in the estimates
- 2.18** The department has delivered efficiencies as it has been able to absorb additional operating requirements in relation to new and refurbished assets under the investment programme Efficiency savings have been delivered in relation to agency and overtime reductions and the more effective procurement of contracts.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Parks and Leisure Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and agree the cash limit for the Parks and Leisure Committee for 2014/15 of £ 23,971,115.

APPENDIX 1

**PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
MAIN ITEMS OF ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2014/15**

<u>Leisure</u>	2014/15	2013/14
Leisure Centres	7,723,051	7,884,475
<u>Neighbourhood Development</u>		
Leisure Development	553,518	644,984
Landscape Planning and Development	2,043,640	2,138,565
Open Spaces & Active Living	788,002	660,954
P&C Development	128,043	139,533
<u>Parks and Cemeteries</u>		
Belfast Zoo	858,260	856,055
Estates Mgt / Belfast Castle/Malone House	398,928	342,052
P&C Services	1,111,259	1,301,692
Area East (Including Roselawn/Crem)	1,945,760	1,889,381
Area South West (including City Cem)	3,080,298	2,966,253
Area North	2,404,873	2,299,520
<u>Directorate</u>		
Anti Social Behaviour	251,730	254,356
Business Development Unit	673,031	705,346
Business Support / Bereavement Admin.	2,010,722	2,013,966
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>23,971,115</u>	<u>24,097,132"</u>

The Director of Parks and Leisure outlined the factors which had been taken into account in the preparation of the Estimates and highlighted the savings identified which had contributed to a decrease of 0.5% on the previous year's figure. He informed the Committee that, at its meeting on 10th January, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that the cash limit for the Parks and Leisure Committee be set at £23,971,115.

The Committee agreed that its Estimate of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2014/2015 be set at £23,971,115.

The Committee agreed also that the Director would undertake a review of the Council's policy of levying additional charges for burials or cremations on Saturdays and submit a report to a future meeting which would outline a range of options in this regard.

Burial Ground at Dundrod - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

Over the last number of years officers have been working on a phased approach to cemetery and crematorium development in the city. This has been based on an analysis of available data, trend information and the development of a robust plan to meet current and future service requirements. Members will also be aware that since the process to identify new burials grounds began the Council has acquired additional land at Roselawn and it is estimated that at the current rate of burial there is sufficient land available to cater for the burial needs of Belfast for the next 35 years approximately.

As part of the approach to cemetery and crematorium development we have been engaged in a process to identify a site for development as a new cemetery. Members will be aware that discussions have been ongoing around a potential site at Dundrod.

The site at Dundrod came to the Council through an expression of interest exercise which the Council initiated. This site was put forward by an agent acting on behalf of a business man who holds an option on the site. Officers from the Parks and Leisure Department, Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit have held a number of meetings with the party who holds an option on the site along with their agent. The Council is aware of who the landowners are but at this point have had no direct dealings with them.

2 Key Issues

Initial testing carried out on the Dundrod site showed that the site has some potential for use as a cemetery but that further more detailed Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 hydro-geological tests are required to establish with greater certainty the amount of land available on the site for burial purposes. Prior to undertaking these tests it was agreed that due to their cost it would be advisable to first undertake a number of further feasibility studies on the site.

These were:

- Hydrogeological Assessment of Land for Cemetery Development prepared by McLorinan Consulting Ltd
- Lands at Dundrod – Stage 1&2 Planning Report' prepared by Fleming Mounstephen Planning
- As assessment of the sight lines required at the proposed site entrance which was prepared in house.

These studies have shown that there remain issues with the site, several of which have the potential to make the site unsuitable for development as a new cemetery and thus require further investigation. Of particular concern are:

- Roads Service has advised that the provision of suitable access arrangement to the site appeared on preliminary review to be potentially problematic. The Roads Service would require the provision of a right turn filter lane at the site. This would require the re-engineering of the roadway.
- A secondary access at Carnaghliiss Road would almost certainly be unacceptable to Roads Service except as an 'emergency access'. The main entrance to the site is on the Ulster Grand Prix circuit and the provision of a secondary access during race week is thus a key requirement.
- Ensuring sufficient sight lines at the main entrance would be available without the need to acquire additional land from other landowners.

The findings of the feasibility studies outlined above were shared with the option holder and they have commissioned their own advice to consider the findings. The option holder has now come back to the Council with their interpretation of the findings and has suggested possible solutions to the issues that have been identified with the site. Our initial assessment is that it remains uncertain whether the access solutions proposed will meet Council and Roads Service requirements. Given the level of engagement that has taken place around this site and to satisfy ourselves, it is proposed that we undertake further work to get clarity around the sight lines and access issues. It is proposed that we commission an expert to do detailed drawings of the sight lines and to determine what options for a viable secondary access exist at the site. As part of this piece of work the expert will be asked to consult with both Planning and Roads Services.

In addition to the concerns around access there are also potential hydro-geological issues with the site and additional ground investigations are required. These include deeper trial pits and boreholes across the site which would need to be monitored for 1-2 months. It is proposed that this work be undertaken after we have undertaken the work around the provision of potentially suitable sight lines and secondary access, subject to this work providing us with satisfactory solutions to the sight lines and access issues.

Members are also asked to note that Tier 2/3 hydrogeological tests will still be required to be undertaken at the site but these will not be undertaken until after the Council takes a position on the viability of the site based on the additional work proposed.

3 Resource Implications

Financial

The development of a new cemetery is currently a Stage 1 emerging project in the Council's capital programme.

We anticipate that the cost of the work around the sight lines and secondary access will fall within the Council's quotation limits. It is anticipated that the additional ground investigations will be in region of £35,000 and if Members agree to this work being undertaken it will be procured through a tender exercise. Committee is asked to note that the tender will be evaluated on both cost and quality criteria and the most economically advantageous will be awarded.

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage although the final phases of the project will inevitably increase the Council's land ownership and associated liabilities.

4 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (i) Agree to commission an expert to do detailed drawings of the sight lines and to determine what options for a viable secondary access exist at the site;
- (ii) Subject to the findings of the above, commission additional ground investigations at the site including deeper trail pits and bore holes across the entire site; and

- (iii) Authorise the Director, under the Scheme of Delegation, to award the successful tender in respect of the ground investigations and in respect of the access arrangements should these exceed quotation limits.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out and agreed that approval be sought from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to meet the funding associated with the investigation from within the Capital Programme Feasibility Fund. It was also noted that a report on the outcome of the process would be submitted for the Committee’s consideration at its meeting in April.

Reservoir Supervision and Maintenance

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

At its meeting on 10th November 2011, Committee agreed to the establishment of an inspection process in line with current best practice for all appropriate water retaining structures.

Northern Ireland is currently in the process of developing a Reservoirs Bill similar to the Reservoirs (Scotland) Act 2011. The Bill will have its First Stage / Introduction on 20th January 2014, when a copy of the Bill will be made public and is expected to become an Act in 2015.

Under the terms of current Rivers Agency classification, Belfast City Council have five Reservoirs that require inspection and they are:

- Waterworks Upper Pond
- Waterworks Lower Pond
- Alexandra Park
- Boodles Dam, Ligoniel Park
- Half Moon Lake, Suffolk Road

The current ‘best practice’ is the Reservoirs Act 1975 and council commissioned Section 10 Reports for each of the above structures. These reports were carried out by URS Infrastructure and Environment Ltd.

2.0 Key Issues

The reports make a series of recommendations for each site. Some of these are maintenance issues e.g. cutting grass, tree pruning and general clearance which are carried out as part of everyday duties.

The most significant recommendation however relates to Boodles Dam, where it is recommended that this impoundment be abandoned because of the nature of the ground above it. In 1996 Doran Consulting produced a report on ground movement within Ligoniel Country Park. Remedial work was undertaken at that time which included reducing the water stored in the impoundment and the installation of deep seated drainage throughout the park. Doran Consulting monitor the park on an annual basis and it remains relatively stable. However given the history and the nature of the ground above the impoundment it is now proposed that it be abandoned and the area landscaped. A proposal and costing will be presented to Committee in due course.

In addition the Act places a responsibility on Reservoir owners to carry out monthly and six monthly inspections. The Supervising Engineer is to carry out 6 monthly inspections until the remedial works have been completed. The other inspections can be incorporated alongside existing inspections by Council staff.

Further, Inspections must be carried out by the Supervising Engineer once a year and a Panel Engineer every ten years. The dates for these repeat inspections by the Panel Engineer are set in the various reports and vary from June 2021 to April 2023.

3.0 Resource Implications

Finance

At present there is only one Panel Engineer in Northern Ireland (see explanation below), URS. Therefore Council will use URS for any further annual and 10 yearly inspections. At current rates, each of these inspections is £3000 per inspection per site.

Human Resources

Staff from the Landscape Planning and Development Unit within the Parks and Leisure Department will be required to engage and liaise with URS during the procurement and execution of the works.

4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to give authority to the Director of Parks and Leisure to proceed with works and associated expenditure to implement the various recommendations in the Reservoir Reports.”

After discussion, during which the Director outlined the extent of the consultation which would be undertaken with local residents as part of the process, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

Irish Football Association - Strategic Plan

The Director outlined the principal aspects of the Irish Football Association's Strategic Plan for the period from 2013 till 2018, entitled 'We're not Brazil, We're Northern Ireland'. He indicated that the Association would seek to promote, foster and develop football for everyone in Northern Ireland and it had identified six long-term objectives in order to achieve its aims. The Director gave an overview of the strategic aims within the document and he outlined how the Council could work in partnership with the Association on a number of projects in the foreseeable future.

After discussion, the Committee welcomed the publication of the Strategic Plan and noted the information which had been provided.

City Cemetery Gate Lodge - Development Brief

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had, at its meeting on 24th August, 2012, authorised the issuing of a Development Brief for the redevelopment of the derelict Gate Lodge at the Whiterock Road entrance to the City Cemetery, opposite to the Westrock Estate. The Director reported that one proposal had been submitted, which the assessment panel had determined had not fulfilled the criteria as set out within the Brief and, accordingly, it had been rejected. Therefore, the Director outlined the undernoted options for the Committee's consideration in respect of the site:

- Option 1 – to authorise officers to engage further with the proposed developer to ascertain additional information regarding the nature of the development and to submit a further report to the Committee in due course; or
- Option 2 – to agree to place the property on the open market for sale through a firm of chartered surveyors, with no restrictions placed on its use or the nature of development of the site; or
- Option 3 – to agree that officers be granted authority to consider alternative uses for the site, which could, potentially, include the demolition of the property, landscaping of the site and its incorporation within the Cemetery.

The Committee agreed to adopt option three as outlined, subject to further consultation being undertaken with locally Elected Members and adjacent communities. It was noted that a report would be submitted for the Committee's consideration at the conclusion of that exercise.

Lenadoon Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The Committee is asked to note that there is an existing Facilities Management Agreement in respect of Lenadoon Park in West Belfast. This agreement is currently held by the the Lenadoon Community Forum. This agreement is subject to a month by month renewal in line with the existing Council position on Facilities Management Agreements.

Members are asked to note that the Forum has previously secured funding from Sport NI to construct a changing pavilion on land adjacent to the park, The intention was that this pavilion would be used by the Forum to support local clubs by providing modern changing facilities and meeting / reception area. This building is currently owned by the Forum and is known locally as the Lenadoon Sports Centre. In order to construct the building a strip of Council owned land, which formed part of the Lenadoon Park was required, This strip of land was subsequently leased to the forum under a 99 year lease agreement. .

The Forum has advised Council Officers that following an internal reconstitution the Forum concluded that the Lenadoon Sports Centre and the facility managed playing field would benefit from being managed through a more focused and dedicated organisation within the Community. The Forum has proposed the newly formed Lenadoon Amateur Sports Community Interest Company CIC to undertake the ownership and management of both the Sports Centre and the football pitch in Lenadoon Park and has requested that the Council transfer both a) the existing FMA; and b) the Lease Agreement to the Lenadoon Amateur Sports Community Interest Company and part of the pavilion was subsequently constructed upon this land.

Officers have met with local elected representatives, the Forum and the Community Interest Community and have obtained the relevant documentation which would enable the transfer to take place. This information is currently being reviewed by our Estates management Unit and Legal Services.

2 Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following points:

1. There is provision within Facility Management Agreement for assignment / transfer, however, this has not been widely used;
2. The newly formed CIC is aware of the Council's proposal to terminate these agreements;
3. Subsequently discussions have established the Lenadoon Community Forum has recently re-established itself as a Limited company and therefore this should technically be reflected in the FMA;
4. The lease agreement relates to the recently constructed Lenadoon Sports Centre, part of the building currently sits on top of the leased land; the transfer of the building is subject to Sport NI approval, as the funding body, however, Sport NI has indicated that it will not consider the transfer until the new CIC has secured the lease on the land;
5. The transfer of the lease requires approval from Strategic Policy & Resources Committee and a report on this will be presented to that Committee by Estates Management setting out the detail of the transfer;
6. Members are asked to note that whilst there is no legal tie between the FMA in relation to the playing pitch and the Sports Centre, there is a practical and functional relationship between the two; this relationship will therefore have to be explored in the coming months in conjunction with Sport NI and the CIC;
7. The Committee has several options:

Option 1 – Agree to the request to transfer the existing Facility Management Agreement under the existing terms and conditions;

Option 2 – Refuse the request;

Option 3 – Terminate the existing agreement

8. It is the view of Officers that Option 1 should be followed at this stage.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree to:

- 1. The transfer of the existing FMA from the Lenadoon Community Forum to the Lenadoon Community Forum Limited;**
- 2. The transfer of the existing FMA from the Lenadoon Community Forum Limited to the Lenadoon Amateur Sports Community Interest Company;**
- 3. The transfer of the lease from the Lenadoon Community Forum Limited to the Lenadoon Amateur sports Community Interest Company, subject to approval by Strategic Policy and Resources.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out.

Templemore Users' Trust - Funding Agreement

The Committee was reminded that the Council had, since 1994, provided funding to the Templemore Users' Trust to oversee the management of the Templemore Baths. The Director reminded the Members that the agreement had enabled the Trust to maintain, on behalf of the Council, the operation of the building, carry out minor repairs and maintenance, meet utility and insurance costs and undertake chemical treatment of the pool. That agreement, he added, which had been endorsed by the Committee in 2009, was due to expire on 31st March, 2014.

The Director reported that the Templemore Users' Trust had applied to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to assist in the restoration of the baths and there existed a possibility that, should that application be successful, the Council, as the owner of the building, might be requested to match fund such a project. In addition, he indicated that the Trust had undertaken discussions with the Council regarding the potential to extend the baths to provide additional swimming provision in east Belfast as part of the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme. The Committee was reminded that the extent of leisure provision in that part of the City had, as yet, to be determined as part of the Programme. However, he pointed out that the role of the Templemore Baths would have to be considered as part of the Council's wider leisure provision.

The Director recommended, therefore, that the Committee agree that the current agreement be extended for a three-year period, at a cost of £190,000 per annum, commencing on 1st April, 2014, with an option to extend that arrangement for a further two years, at the same cost, if deemed appropriate.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Mary Peters Trust

The Director reported that a request for a financial contribution of £5,000 had been received from the Mary Peters Trust for the financial year 2014/2015. He explained that the Trust provided small grants to individual applicants in order to assist them to achieve excellence in their chosen sport. He reminded the Committee that, in previous years, it had approved a contribution of £5,000 to the Trust under the expenditure powers which the Council possessed under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011. He reported that, should the Committee accede to the request, it should pass a resolution in this regard to the effect that the contribution made would provide direct

benefit to the City and its citizens, commensurate with the payment made. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee accede to the request.

After discussion, it was

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to contribute £5,000 to the Mary Peters Trust for the financial year 2014/2015, under the specialised powers which exist under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the City and its citizens, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefit so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

Review of Mobile Playground Inspectors / Litter Lifting Teams

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Background Information

Background

As part of the Departmental Improvement programme a number of operational efficiency reviews have been ongoing since January 2012 and have resulted in recommended improvements being approved by Committee. This report sets out recommendations from an operational review of the department’s Mobile Playground / Litter Attendants.

Current Situation – Inspection of Playgrounds and litter lifting.

At present there are 8 teams consisting of 3 Mobile Playground/Litter Attendants per team. The main role of the squads is to travel between each playground/ open space/ car park on their routes, picking up litter and glass and inspecting each playground for defects and making play apparatus safe. Repairs that are required are noted and forwarded to Property Maintenance for the repair to be undertaken. Teams operate in North, West, South and East Belfast and provide a seven day inspection and litter collection service. For minor repairs this is an inefficient practice as playground equipment may be rendered unusable for a number of weeks until the repair is undertaken. Defects, such as small holes in the wet pour rubber surfacing at playgrounds, can attract further vandalism and the minor repair can escalate into a larger more costly repair.

A Review of the Mobile Playground Inspectors was undertaken to consider how the role could be adjusted to be more efficient and effective. The review involved meetings with staff and trade unions and determined that the Mobile Playground/Litter teams could, with the appropriate training and access to the necessary tools and equipment, conduct a number of minor repairs and undertake additional duties, including grass cutting, weed spraying and the use of appropriate Information Systems to support the process.

2. Key Issues

- It is anticipated that the response time for minor repairs and time taken to complete minor repairs will be reduced compared to the current situation and this will reduce the potential for costly compensation claims, currently £206k per annum.
- Playground equipment will be out of action less often as the squads will be able to complete temporary repairs rather than 'taping off' units, awaiting repair.
- In some instances the size and cost of the repair will be minimised e.g. where small holes appear in the wet pour rubber safety surface. If these are repaired quickly it will deter vandals from making the situation worse and therefore increasing the cost to the Council to repair.
- The addition of minor repair responsibilities and additional horticultural duties will enhance the job role, skills will be enriched and post-holders will experience greater job satisfaction and 'ownership of the locations' on their routes.
- It is proposed that supervision of the Mobile Playground Inspectors on the ground remains with the Parks Operational Managers and that there is a central role created within the Landscape, Planning and Development Unit to oversee the maintenance of playgrounds and to have oversight of incident reports and public liability claims. This new central focus on maintenance will be aligned to the current inspections regime which forms part of the annual Playground Improvement Programme.

It is also proposed that a post of Claims Investigator is developed and trialled for a period of two years to ensure the improvement of our information and capability to defend claims. It is proposed that a case for this role will be put forward under the 'Invest to Save' initiative and that it will pay for itself by a reduction in claims.

Parks Officers have consulted all Mobile Playground/Litter teams and Trade Union representatives regarding the additional responsibilities and changes to existing job description. Consultation is ongoing with Facility Management officers concerning minor repairs and implementation of the new responsibilities.

Further work is required to review the current inspection routes to minimise travel time and ensure resources are allocated effectively to each geographical area.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

It is estimated that the implementation of Parks & Leisure Services staff conducting minor repairs once identified would lessen the demand for major repairs ,improve the quality and safety of the facilities and reduce the legal liability/compensation costs to the Council, currently costing £206k per annum.

The proposed new Playground Inspectors post has an indicative grade of Scale 4. The implementation of the changes to the existing Playground/Litter Squad Attendant posts (Scale 3 to Scale 4), will be approximately £59,996. (24 posts).

It is envisaged that this cost will be offset by improved management of repairs and reduction in cost of repairs. The additional cost is included in the revenue estimates 2014/2015.

Human Resources Issues

There has been extensive consultation with staff and Trade Unions resulting in a joint agreement on the recommendations. Normal Human Resource policies procedures will be applied in implementing all changes.

4. **Equality Implications**

There are no equality implications.

5. **Recommendations**

- Committee is asked to approve the revisions to the role of Mobile Playground Inspector and the subsequent increase from scale 3 to scale 4.

- It is recommended that the existing inspection routes are further reviewed to establish new balanced routes designed on concentrated geographical areas to minimise travel time.
- A temporary post of Claims Investigator is trialled for a two year period subject to funding.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that an update report on the operational efficiency of the review would be submitted for its consideration after a six month period.

Bridges Urban Sports Park - End Project Review

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that funding was granted to the Council by SEUPB in August 2008 for the purposes of building an outdoor urban sport facility located between Little Patrick Street and Corporation Street under the M3 flyover bridge. The total project cost of £500,000 was:

- £390,000 funded by SEUPB under measure 2.1 of the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2007-2013
- £80,000 funded by Belfast City Council through the Capital Build Programme
- £50,000 funded through the Brighter Belfast Landfill Tax Credits Scheme.

The development period of the Urban Sports Park ended on 31 December 2013.

2. Key Issues

Since May 2011 regular sports events, activities and programmes have been running at the park including 25 cross community events, 6 cross border events, 24 formal competitions, and 12 events involving community and voluntary groups throughout Belfast with an emphasis on involving a wide range of organisations from neighbourhood renewal areas throughout all parts of the City.

A further 120 events were staged focussing on outreach work and coaching, and a wide range of volunteers have been trained and have sought employment in the increasing popular urban sports industry. By targeting local neighbourhood and community and voluntary organisations we ensure that all events and activities are representative of all community backgrounds.

A project evaluation has been completed and sent to Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). All programme expenditure including capital, marketing, programme and staff costs has been drawn down to date.

A further claim is to be made in relation to expenditure occurred between October 2013 and December 2013. This claim will be submitted in January 2014.

The key strengths to the project are as follows:

- Good partnership approach from the beginning of the project until project closure;
- Achievement of all KPI's within budget;
- A healthy focus on providing volunteering opportunities for young people and providing / enabling pathways to further training, education and / or employment;
- Detailed communications plan drawn up and the use of social media to promote and highlight the regular events, activities and programmes that occurred through the Peace III Bridges Urban Sports Park project.

Importantly, according to user surveys, the park was attractive and reached a key group of young, male adults who are often not accessing mainstream leisure provision. Also of note, is the accredited pathway for volunteers which has targeted young people not in training, employment or education and enabled them to access paid opportunities in the emerging urban sports industry.

The evaluation report also noted a number of areas for future development including the potential to improve monitoring of participants, who use the facility as well as the potential to seek funding for increased facilities e.g. toilets, seating areas, power generators.

The report recommends that the partnership arrangements with the urban sports organisations BUS and No Limat continue, in order to support a comprehensive management plan for the park. No Limat is a community interest company who are responsible for managing events in conjunction with Belfast City Council and are key holders who lock the facility on a daily basis. Over the duration of the Peace III funding, a successful partnership has developed in which No Limat support the management and animation of the site.

The current 'Service Level Agreement' (SLA) with "No Limat" runs to 31 January 2014 and on a month to month basis thereafter, unless determined by either party by the giving of one month's written notice to the other.

Based on the successes to date, Legal Services has suggested that we extend the SLA with our partners No Limat for a further two years to ensure the up keep of the facility and to develop regular events and activities working with groups and communities city wide with a focus on young people.

This will ensure the sustainability of the park in terms of maintaining the facility to a high standard as well as running events throughout the year with a focus on cross community events and working with community and voluntary groups. This is in line with the commitments in the letter of offer from SEUPB in relation to sustaining their investment.

3. **Resource Implications**

Asset: Subject to Committee agreement, Legal Services will undertake to negotiate the terms for the renewal of the SLA/partnership agreement with No Limit for the management of the Bridges Urban Sports Park. Parks Service (Area North) is responsible for the maintenance of the park.

Financial: There is no direct cost for the SLA/partnership agreement. Any costs relating to events organised as part of the SLA/partnership agreement will be covered either by revenue budgets or external funding.

Human Resources: Parks Service – outreach will have overall responsibility for the Bridges Urban Sports Park, and work with No Limats to manage the park to achieve the desired outcomes and sustain successes to date.

5. **Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to grant authority to Legal Services, in liaison with the Director of Parks and Leisure to agree the terms for a further extension to the SLA/partnership agreement with No Limats for the management of the Bridges Urban Sports Park."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Boucher Road Funfair - Invitation to seek Tenders

The Director sought and was granted authority to instigate a tendering exercise for the provision of an annual funfair at the Boucher Road Playing Fields, for a period of two years commencing in 2014, with an option to extend any agreement for a further two years until 2018. It was noted that the estimated income which would be generated by such an agreement would be approximately £20,000 per annum. The Committee noted that the evaluation criteria would be based on both cost and quality and that the contract would be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender received. The Committee authorised also the Director to award the tender in line with the evaluation criteria.

'Walkability' Partnership with The Queen's University of Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the KESUE project, approved by Committee in February 2012.

The KESUE project was led by QUB and part funded by the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) knowledge exchange programme, in conjunction with Belfast City Council (BCC) and a number of key partners across Belfast and Northern Ireland (NI).

2 Key Issues

The main aim of the KESUE project was to extend the 'walkability' research to cover the entire BCC area.

The objectives of the project were specifically to:

- **Develop the real walkability network (RWN) and the walkability model as a policy-support tool for increasing physical activity across Belfast;**
- **Identify further opportunities for implementing the walkability model in other settlements across NI; and**
- **Disseminate the use of GIS based walkability tools in other UK cities.**

The KESUE project was completed over a period of 12 months.

The Council has gained valuable experience and knowledge of the purpose and the potential of GIS based walk-ability models. For example, the research was used to inform park management policy, evaluating the potential benefits of maintaining 24 hour access within the parks that make up the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG).

The results and analysis of the KESUE project were presented via workshops in NI, Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Great Britain, where other local authorities and government agencies recognised BCC's involvement as progressive and forward thinking.

There are a number of ways in which the research could be applied in the future, including:

- Development of a comparative 'walk-ability' measure/indicator, to provide an overall assessment of how conducive a neighbourhood is to walking. This will feed into future developments around local area planning;
- Application of a citywide walk-ability index as part of an active travel strategy for the Active Belfast programme;
- Investigation of the impact of interface barriers in terms of accessibility and connectivity, and the impact of opening and closing gates on service provision;
- Assessment of the benefits of new infrastructure projects, e.g. at the impact of new footbridges such as the Sam Thompson Bridge in East Belfast.

The KESUE project has highlighted the real value of collaborative and integrated partnership working between the education sector, the Council and other statutory agencies in promoting healthy cities.

A final workshop has been organised for the KESUE project in Belfast which will take place on 17 February 2014, giving BCC the opportunity to showcase some of the excellent case study work generated. A final recommendations report will be prepared following this workshop.

5 Recommendation

Members are asked to note the content of the report and support the final workshop on 17 February 2014."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Belfast in Bloom Awards

The Director reminded the Committee that the Belfast in Bloom competition, which had been established in 1994, was a major project which sought to enhance the appearance of the City. He reported that 2014 would be the 20th anniversary of the commencement of the competition and each year the Council hosted an event for the winners of each category in both the community and commercial sectors. He added that the initiative had in 2013 generated income for the Council of £35,000.

Accordingly, he sought the Committee's authority to host an awards ceremony for the 2013 Belfast in Bloom winners, which would serve also as the official launch for the 2014 competition, at a cost of £3,500, provision for which had been made within the departmental budget.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Erection of Murals at South Link Park

The Assistant Director reported that it had come to the Department's attention that the Link Community Organisation had erected a number of mosaic murals on fencing at the South Link Park, which was owned by the Council. She explained that prior permission from the Council had not been sought by the organisation and, subsequently, it had written to apologise for the oversight and to seek retrospective approval. She added that officers from the Department had inspected the murals, which were of a cultural and sporting nature, and had deemed them to be in keeping with, and an enhancement to, the site.

The Committee agreed to grant retrospective approval for the erection of the murals and authorised expenditure in the sum of approximately £600 to enable additional work to be undertaken to secure the murals to the fencing.

Naming Request - Cabin in the Waterworks Park

The Director reported that the Department had received a request from the fishing club which was based in the Waterworks Park seeking permission to name its cabin the 'Anglers' Cabin'.

The Director reminded the Committee that, in August, 2008, it had adopted a policy to oversee the naming of parks and leisure facilities within the City. He pointed out that the policy did not apply to the naming of parts of parks, buildings or facilities and he suggested that the Committee might wish to exercise its discretion in considering the request.

The Committee acceded to the request.

Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park - Request for Use

The Director reported that correspondence had been received from the Belfast and District Amalgamated Committee of the Apprentice Boys of Derry requesting the use of the car park at Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park as an assembly point for its annual parade on Easter Monday, 21st April, 2014. The District Amalgamated Committee had sought also access to the Pavilion for the use of the toilets. The Director pointed out that the Pavilion was operated as part of a Facilities Management Agreement and, as such, permission would be required to be sought from the agreement holder. He provided an overview of the arrangements which would be put in place to oversee the management of the activity on the day.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to grant the use of the facility as requested, subject to the following terms and conditions, namely, that:

- the event organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- an appropriate legal agreement, which would be prepared by the Town Solicitor, be completed; and
- the event organisers would meet all statutory requirements, including health and safety matters, to the Council's satisfaction.

Chairman