

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 13th February, 2014

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor McKee (Chairman); and
Aldermen Robinson and Rodgers;
Councillors Beattie, Convery, Corr,
Cunningham, Haire, Hanna, Hendron,
Hussey, Kyle, Mac Giolla Mhín, McCabe,
McNamee, Mallon, Mullan, Thompson
and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks
and Leisure; and
Mrs. P. Scarborough, Democratic Services Section.

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Ó Donnghaile.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd February.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Finance Report - Quarter Three

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

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of the Department's quarterly financial performance as of 31st December, 2013.

The Business Manager informed the Committee that the year-end forecast for the Department was for a £120,000 overspend, which represented 0.5% of the Department's estimate. She explained that this had arisen due to pressure on income, which had been alluded to within the report, and as a consequence of unanticipated utility costs at the Belfast Zoo and the closure of the pool at the Avoniel Leisure Centre. She assured the Members that, whilst the potential overspend could be attributed to uncontrollable costs, robust financial management procedures had been put in place to reduce spending against other budget headings to endeavour to reduce the level of overspend being forecast.

Noted.

Support for Sport 2013/2014 - Interim Review

(Mrs. C. Moraghan, Sports Development Officer, attended in connection with these items.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Support for Sport has been assisting sports clubs and community organisations develop sport and increase participation for over a decade.

1.2 Since 2005, the Director has held delegated authority to approve support for sport hospitality, small development grant awards, and more recently Club Mark payments and Individual grants. Members, each year, approve a limited number of large development grant awards.

1.3 At Committee on 12 September 2013 members approved the transfer of the Support for Sport Grants to the Central Grants Unit with the evaluation and approval process remaining with the department.

1.4 The application process for the first tranche of funding for 2014/15 financial year has already closed with 152 applications submitted for assessment. The applications will be presented to members in April 2014 for information.

1.5 Members have also requested a breakdown of the current financial year allocation.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The Support for Sport Priorities for funding are:

- The education of coaches and volunteers
- Increased opportunities for women and girls, disabled and older people
- Promoting sport and physical activity as a social integration and health improvement tool
- The need to address any imbalances in applications across the City.

2.2 It is estimated that there are over 19,000 club members benefiting from the 150 successful applications made to the small grant scheme. This is a 3,000 increase from 2012/13 and from this 13,794 are male (up from 11,671) and 5,300 female members (up from 5010).

2.3 Table below shows the breakdown of awards in 2012/13.

Category	No. of Awards	Total Amount
Small Development (£1000 + £250 Equip)	150	£134,020
Large Development (£5,000)	7	£35,000
Hospitality	23	£25,290
Individual Grants (13 sports represented)	34	£15,000
Club Mark awards	17	£10,500
	Total	£219,810
<u>Small Grant Breakdown</u>		
New Clubs/sections	20	
No. of coaches qualified	303	
No. of diversionary programmes	15	
Women/Girls Groups	21	
Disability Groups	7	
Older people	6	
No. of equipment grants	28	
No. of Sports supported	29	

2.4 The data shows that in the current financial year (2013/14) there is a similar spread in small development awards in the East and West of the city with a slightly higher proportion going to North Belfast. However clubs applying from the South area has reduced from previous years. This could somewhat be explained in that a significant number of the clubs applying from the south also view themselves as being citywide due to the spread of their members and facilities they use for training.

2.5 The data also highlights a significant level of support for Association Football, totalling 51 applications although this does reflect the high number of football clubs across the city in comparison to other sporting disciplines.

2.6 **Support for Sport moving forward**

Targeted workshops were conducted during November and December 2013 to inform and prepare clubs for the new application process through the CGU. It is anticipated that the second tranche will reopen in May 2014 for funding commencing from September.

3 **Resource Implications**

3.1 **Financial**

Members should note that the annual budget has remained the same for the Support for Sport Scheme for the last 10 years.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 Following the review of Support for Sport, the revised scheme has undergone equality screening in accordance with Council requirements. This process has ‘screened out’ the revised scheme, identifying only minor, positive equality impacts, and determining that there is no requirement to proceed to Equality Impact Assessment.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 The Committee is requested to agree that a further report is brought in 12 months to give an analysis of the full financial year and to assess the impact of the centralised programme.”

After discussion, during which the Director clarified a number of issues in respect of the Scheme, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Boodle's Dam - Community Engagement

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th January, it had endorsed the contents of the report regarding the future supervision and maintenance of reservoirs located within parks properties. It had been noted that a further report would be submitted which would outline the engagement process which would be undertaken with local residents in respect of the work which would be carried out at the Boodle's Dam in the Ligoniel Park. Accordingly, the Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

Boodles Dam is located off the Mountain Hill Road in Ligoniel Park. It is likely that the reservoir was constructed circa mid 1800's for industrial use. Ligoniel Improvement Association works closely with Belfast Hills Partnership in developing education and environmental programmes both in Ligoniel Park and the area surrounding.

The Chair, John Gray, has written to the Director of Parks and Leisure seeking to establish an organisational relationship with the Council to improve linkages between the Ligoniel Park and other open spaces in the neighbourhood.

In discussion with LIA, they have indicated that they would be able to support community engagement around this urgent Boodle's Dam issue. This would also enable the Council and LIA to examine the potential for a wider relationship on the ongoing development and management of the park.

2. Key Issues

Terms of Reference

If the Committee is agreeable to this proposal, it is suggested that the Council convenes a joint working group, initially comprising BCC officers, LIA representatives and Belfast Hills Partnership. The purpose of the joint working group is to:

- Support Council officers in the communication of the safety issues at Boodle's Dam to the public;
- Facilitate community engagement on plans for the dam and wider development issues for Ligoniel Park;
- Present a development proposal and annual animation plan to Committee, linking to the agreed management plan and identifying resources, where appropriate by September 2014; and
- Establish a partnership delivery group thereafter, to oversee and support the delivery of the plan, as agreed by Parks and Leisure Committee.

As part of the development proposal and annual plan, the group would be expected to identify necessary resources (including sourcing external funding) and seek approval from Committee on its delivery.

Proposed objectives

The group would be committed to:

- Promoting a wider sense of ownership of the park by the community
- Making the park a safer place and using the asset to contribute to a safer environment
- Encouraging greater use of the park and contributing to improving health and well being in the neighbourhood
- Encouraging inclusive and diverse participation in its community engagement and plan delivery.

Membership

It is proposed in the first phase the working group comprises BCC officers, Belfast Hills Partnership and LIA representatives.

In the establishment of the partnership delivery group at the next stage, it is anticipated that a wider membership will be proposed to Committee for its consideration.

Benefits to Council

There are a number of key benefits to the Council in working collaboratively with LIA and Belfast Hills Partnership in this way:

- Effectively discharges its safety obligations at Boodle's Dam with community support
- Encourages local civic stewardship in Ligoniel Park, to protect the Council's asset and local biodiversity
- Links the Council's programme of work to established LIA's existing networks e.g. with schools
- Links the Council's programme of work to Belfast Hills Partnership's strategic plan
- Potentially draws down additional external funding for capital and revenue proposals
- Fulfils Green Flag standard principles for 'good' community engagement
- Contributes to wider strategic outcomes related to promoting healthy living, protection of the environment and vibrant, safe neighbourhoods.

It is expected that the joint working group would provide a review of its progress to Committee within 12 months of its establishment, i.e. by October 2015.

3. Resource Implications

Asset and Other Implications

Boodle's Dam to be completely abandoned, in-filled and re-developed, following a community engagement process, no later than end September 2014. Allocation has been made for this within maintenance budgets 2014/15. As asset owner, any further asset-related developments will be presented to Committee for its consideration, prior to implementation.

4. Equality Implications

There are no equality and good relations implications at this stage. Screening of any emerging development proposal and annual plan will be undertaken in the future.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to agree that:

- A community engagement process to determine the re-development of the impoundment (dam) is facilitated in

partnership with Ligoniel Improvement Association (LIA) and Belfast Hills Partnership;

- A working group to examine a wider development plan is convened by Council officers.”

After discussion, the Committee endorsed the community engagement process as outlined and agreed to nominate officers to the Working Group.

Partnership Agreements

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that over the years the Council has reviewed ‘facility management agreements’ (FMAs). In 2011 it was agreed that a fundamental revision was needed and a framework and set of criteria established to ensure requests for such arrangements would be assessed on a consistent basis.

The draft Playing Pitches Agreements policy seeks to provide the flexibility required to enable mutually beneficial partnership arrangements to be developed that add value to the Council’s service delivery, balancing public access with dedicated use. This was considered and agreed by Committee in December 2012. In September 2013, Council agreed to undertake an engagement process with relevant partners to consider this draft policy.

2. Key Issues

In October 2013, three engagement workshops took place at Council venues citywide with over 50 participants. At each workshop, Council Officers gave a presentation on partner agreements, the draft policy which only applies to standard grass pitches and the outcomes Council is seeking to achieve. Independent facilitators from the Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC) facilitated discussion around these areas. The workshops provided an opportunity to hear the views of and engage with current partners (FMAs holders, representative bodies and sporting codes from all levels) on the draft policy. IISC summarised the key issues arising from the consultation:

Overall policy direction:

- More clarity is required around the details of the proposals to enable partners to provide more detailed

feedback on potential implications. That said, some felt that the *'partnership agreements are a good idea as they could assist in ensuring better and more efficient usage of pitches'*.

- There was also support for the Council's wider objectives of trying to enhance inclusion, address inequalities, promote participation and enhance wellbeing across the city.
- Some participants felt if the overall responsibility for pitch upkeep resides with the Council that this could work out better for the clubs.
- There was concern that the policy may take little account of the increase in usage which has taken place over the last few years. Over the years many FMA holders have built up good working relationships with council parks and leisure staff. There was some concern that the new arrangements may not ensure continuity in terms of the provision of skilled and knowledgeable Council staff that play a pivotal role at in ensuring standards and quality of provision at grass pitches across Belfast.
- The issue of provision for intermediate level was raised and it was noted that there is little available at the moment. It is therefore *'important that governing bodies work in partnership with the Council and grass roots to solve problems'*, particularly in relation to the rules and regulations of the various sporting associations.
- There was a broad agreement amongst consultees that increased grass pitches provision was needed and that the welcome introduction of 3G will not fully address this issue.

Future criteria for partner agreements:

- Questions raised were around what the criteria for applications will be, with a suggestion that flexibility will be required in terms of how policies / assessments are applied to specific issues and contexts.
- The issue of how a small club could run a big facility was raised with participants asking if there are likely to be options such as portioning up larger sites or having an

agreement with one club to take on just one or two pitches.

Pitches management:

- Many of the questions raised were to do with the details of who would run the site, with queries on specific tasks such as pitch marking, setting up pitches for games and cleaning up afterwards.
- There were questions as to how a new centralised system would work in practice. Concerns were expressed about the potential for conflict over bookings and it was suggested that changes in the current booking system is required.

Specific sporting code related issues.

- Improved provision for rugby was raised as an issue.
- There was concern over how cricket provision at City of Belfast Playing Fields at Mallusk will be managed as there are currently two teams using it.

Next steps

Following the initial engagement stage, it is proposed that officers continue discussions with relevant partners including current FMA holders, Sports NI and sporting associations.

This will allow a full examination of the complex issues emerging from recent engagement and for a robust partnership agreements framework to be brought back to Committee for its consideration. This framework will include arrangements for capacity-building, seeking expressions of interest, distributing grant-aid, facilitating bookings systems and maintenance of pitches.

It will also consider issues related to intermediate provision. The Council is currently finalising the update of the baseline study on supply and demand for pitches in the city. This is a useful context piece for the next stages of development of the partnership agreements.

3. **Resource Implications**

Financial

Existing FMA payments will be re-distributed in the form of grant aid for active sports development plans. The total figure available for this has not yet been defined.

Human Resources

Ongoing officer time from a range of officers across the department will be dedicated to implementation and ongoing management in the medium to long term.

Assets and Other Implications

It is proposed within the draft policy that new partnership agreements will impact on future management of assets. Legal services will continue to provide advice on this for the Committee's consideration.

4. Equality Implications

The policy will be screened in line with the Council's existing equality screening process.

5. Recommendations

The Committee is requested to note the report."

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

Loughside Sports Educational Village

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of an emerging proposal from Seaview Enterprises in respect of Council owned land at Loughshore. The land in question is the site of the Loughside Recreation Centre and associated football pitches at Loughside, which is adjacent to Shore Road / Mount Vernon. Clearly at this stage of the Leisure Transformation Programme no decision has been taken about the future of the Recreation Centre.

Members may be aware that the Department of Education has recently released a call for expressions of interest in respect of its Shared Education Campuses Programme. This is part of the wider 'Together: Building a United Community' initiative from the First Minister / Deputy First Minister.

A preliminary meeting between Council Officers and representatives from Seaview Enterprises (SE) has indicated that it wishes to make application to the programme for funding to deliver a 'Shared Campus'. To do SE has identified the Loughshore site as its preferred location and has asked for the Council's support in a number of ways:

1. To agree in principle to lease land to SE to enable the project to proceed; and
2. To be a partner to the bid and participate in the development of the bid and the project moving forward

The indicative scheme includes a 5,000 seat stadium, however, at this time; this is not included in the proposal going forward to Department of Education, although the proposal will include the provision of a 3G artificial turf pitch.

2. Key Issues

There are a number of issues which members may wish to consider at this time;

1. This project is at a very early stage in development;
2. The proposal cannot proceed without the land;
3. At this stage, detail regarding the terms and conditions of the funding are not known;
4. Based on the guidance notes accompanying the call for expressions of interest there is no requirement at this time in relation to security of tenure;
5. The proposal presents a potential opportunity to secure funding which would enable an existing sport and leisure facility to be regenerated and offer potential benefits to the wider community in North Belfast;

3. Resource Implications

Asset and Other Implications

The proposal presents an opportunity to regenerate the site within similar existing land use parameters and would provide additional modern facilities to support programmes for the local community.

5. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to give consideration to agreeing to authorising Officers to represent the Council on a Project Board to progress the bid to Expression of Interest Stage with a view

to the potential use of the existing land at Loughside Recreation Centre to facilitate the proposal;”

During discussion, a Member expressed concern that the plan which had been formulated by Seaview Enterprises had been placed within the public domain prior to it being considered by the Council. Concern was expressed also that the current users of the facility, together with Loughside Boys’ Football Club, had not been consulted in respect of the plans and it was suggested that the proposers would undertake to rectify this matter.

After discussion, during which the Director undertook to write to representatives of Loughside Boys’ Football Club in respect of the proposals, the Committee adopted the recommendation as set out within the report.

Multi-use Games Areas (MUGA)

The Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the Council’s future programme for the installation and upgrade of Multi-use Games Areas across the City. It was noted that this programme had been endorsed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24th January.

Grove Playing Fields - Dogs' Enclosure

The Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the findings of a public users’ survey in respect of the pilot ‘dogs off leads’ enclosure at the Grove Playing Fields, a project which had been endorsed by the Committee in May, 2013. The Director outlined the principal aspects of the findings of the survey, which had determined that over half of those individuals interviewed had expressed satisfaction with the facility.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to extend the trial period for the dogs’ enclosure at the Grove Playing Fields and to the development of similar-type enclosures at other parks in the City with a report thereon being submitted for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

Proposed Allotments in the Falls Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

A report was presented to Committee on the 11 October 2012 outlining a number of short, medium and long term proposals, as part of the Falls Park and City Cemetery Master plan. One of the short term proposals made reference to a potential allotment site adjacent to the Whiterock Leisure Centre. An initial environmental survey has indicated the area is suitable for a total of 25 allotments.

Officers have been working with partnership organisations to deliver a programme of work as part of the Master plan and 'Growing Communities' strategy. The Public Health Agency (PHA) has expressed an offer in principle to fund the development of the allotment site and to pilot the combined use by private individuals and community groups/ schools from the local residential area.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of this element of the Master plan and to seek authority to accept PHA's in principle funding award subject to internal legal advice.

2. Key Issues

Belfast City Council has a long history (30+years) of designing, implementing, managing and facilitating 'Grow your Own' provision within Belfast. Currently the council provides a total of 240 allotment sites across five locations in Belfast: Ballysillan, Belmont, Blythefield, Annadale and Musgrave and a number of community garden facilities across Belfast.

Demand for allotments currently outweighs supply and research indicates that this is likely to increase. Waiting lists for allotments are long and turnover is minimal. The pilot proposes to develop 25 allotments including 19 for private/ individual use and 6 for community/ school use. Many community organisations have been actively involved in the Whiterock community garden to date, gaining vast knowledge and skills in food growing. Community allotment provision will enable more people to use the space, and benefit from the food grown, while creating more sustainable growing activities for the community/ schools and giving them a greater sense of pride and ownership.

A local allotment waiting list currently exists for residents, community groups/ schools following an 'expression of interest' exercise carried out in 2010. A master allotment waiting list for all sites across the city is currently being collated by the department. As part of the funding agreement, the PHA have outlined conditions to be followed, including:

- Allotments are allocated to residents/ community groups/ schools from the local residential area i.e. within 1.2km mile radius catchment area/ approx 10/15 min walk;
- The allotment site combines both individual and community/ school use; and
- The PHA funding is recognised via signage and associated literature.

On this basis it is proposed that we undertake an exercise to identify current interest among local residents within the catchment area, using the existing list as a starting point. If there are a greater number of names than plots available, these will be added to the master list.

There are significant benefits to be gained by combining both individual and community growing facilities from the local residential area, including improvements to the following:

- Physical health by increasing the accessibility and availability of fresh fruit and vegetables;
- Mental health and wellbeing by giving people the opportunity to be physically active and engage socially;
- Poverty levels by addressing some of the food security issues by increasing accessibility to and availability of inexpensive, locally grown fruit;
- Social isolation issues by increasing community engagement in sustainable activities and building community cohesion; and
- Green space development by enhancing biodiversity in an urban environment.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

The PHA has agreed in principle to fund the development of the allotment site. This will cost approximately £70,000 and will include drainage, footpaths and watering point for allotment holders. The council will be responsible for the implementation, management and maintenance of the allotment site.

Human

There will be no additional human resources required at this stage.

4. Equality Implications

There are no equality or good relations implications anticipated at this stage.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee:

- Endorse the content of the update report; and

- **Grant authority to accept the PHA grant award subject to an agreement being drawn up by Legal Services.”**

After discussion, during which the Assistant Director indicated that, if agreed, work on the development of the allotments would take place over the summer period to enable the allotments to be ready for the spring growing season, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

Opening of the Sam Thompson Bridge

The Committee was reminded that the new bridge, which would link the Airport Road with the Victoria Park as part of the Connswater Community Greenway, had been named in honour of the Belfast playwright, Sam Thompson, following a public ‘name the bridge’ competition. It was reported that the official opening of the bridge would take place on Friday, 4th April, and it would coincide with a community festival which would take place between noon and 4.00 p.m. The Director provided an overview of the proposed event and outlined the manner in which Members would be involved on the day.

After discussion, during which the Director undertook to clarify issues relating to out of hours access to the park from the new bridge, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

High Hedges Review

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

In March 2012, Committee was presented with a report on the implementation of the High Hedges Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 setting out the four key stages of the process.

Committee agreed to grant delegated authority to the Director of Parks and Leisure to exercise all powers relating to the High Hedges Act (NI) 2011. It was also agreed that the High Hedges process would be reviewed after an appropriate period of implementation.

2. **Key Issues**

From April 2012 to date, the service has dealt with 149 complaints in relation to high hedges the majority of these by telephone. The vast majority of complaints have been dealt with informally. The three complaints that proceeded through the formal route were completed without any appeal with the service receiving the £1,050 required fee.

The officers however have dealt with over 1600 calls requesting advice and guidance on the legislation. The experience to date is that the service is working hard with residents to resolve issues regarding High Hedges through the more informal route which is proving to be successful.

In the report to Committee in March 2012, the view was that the High Hedge fee of £350 would cover the costs associated with administering this new legislation and the programme would be cost-neutral. Currently there are two fixed term officers providing advice and support in this area at a cost of £54k.

The assessment is that realising this level of income over time is now unlikely, given the track record of informal dispute resolution. The role of the High Hedges Project Officer and Project Assistant has been more an advice and mediation role.

The costs for both officers have been offset against income from other projects, generated within the Landscape Planning & Development Unit. This includes the DRD Street Trees programme and DSD Environmental Improvement schemes.

More broadly, there is increased pressure on the Landscape Planning and Development Unit to deliver more information in relation to public liability claims in all areas and to significantly improve its processes, particularly inspections and records retrieval. In recent months, the High Hedges team has been assisting in this regard.

In order to release specialist technical staff to undertake more inspections and management of repairs, it is proposed that for a temporary period of 6 months, the High Hedges Project Officer undertake the following tasks:

- Dealing with telephone enquiries relating to high hedges, tree pruning requests and complaints
- Development and provision of High Hedges information as an online resource to enable the public to more easily access the information
- Drawing up (tree) planting plans for small scale environmental schemes
- Attending site meetings with DRD Roads Service Engineers, Parks Managers, Councillors and members of the public and giving tree advice
- Updating park and street tree details on the City Tree Management System software using information received from Contractors.

In addition, the Project Assistant will:

- Log all complaints/requests for work and allocate these to relevant officers within Landscape Planning and Development Unit, as part of the roll-out of digitised reporting by the Mobile Playground Inspectors
- Assist as a central resource with the recording and processing of invoices associated with the arboricultural and horticultural tenders, playground tenders, street furniture, fencing quotations, tracking spend and providing budget information on request
- Assist with the supervision and implementation of contracts across a number of work-streams
- Assist with information gathering associated with inquiries from Legal Services regarding horticultural and playground claims.

At the end of 6 months, it is planned that the advisory functions of the High Hedges team will be largely fulfilled by the information provided online. At that point, there would also be a review of the business support functions within the unit, to determine longer term needs in the context of Local Government Reform and other improvement initiatives, including the recently agreed Claims Investigator post.

The interim arrangement would remain cost-neutral offset against income from contracts with DSD and DRD.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

The extension of the two fixed term posts will cost £30k for a period of 6 months. This will be funded through income from contracts with DSD (Open Site maintenance and Environmental Improvement schemes) and DRD Roads Service (Street Trees).

4. Equality Implications

There are no equality implications.

5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to approve the extension of the High Hedges team for a time-limited period of 6 months up until end September 2014 for the tasks outlined above.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Posts of Gravedigger

The Committee considered the undernoted report.

“1. Relevant Background Information

Currently there are 10 x Gravedigger posts (Scale 3) and 14 x Cemetery Operative posts (Scale 4)

	City Cemetery	Dundonald Cemetery	Roselawn Cemetery
Gravedigger	4	2	4 (includes 1 vacancy)
Cemetery Operative	7	1	6

The Cemetery Operative posts were introduced in 2008 following approval by Committee on 15 May 2008. It has been identified by management that the posts within the cemeteries, and in particular Roselawn, are not providing sufficient operational flexibility to meet today's demands, service standards and health & safety requirements. At Roselawn there is a growing requirement that staff must be flexible in order to deal with the increasing number of burials on this expanding site, associated increases in ground maintenance requirements, the introduction of memorial safety and the provision of operational back-up cover at the Crematorium.

It is within the job description of the Cemetery Operative to provide this required level of operational flexibility, but not all the required aspects are covered within the job descriptions of the current Gravedigger posts.

There are over 55,000 graves in Roselawn Cemetery which is expanding rapidly, at approximately 250 new graves per annum. Dundonald Cemetery has approximately 22,000 graves. Within Roselawn and Dundonald Cemeteries approximately 80% of graves have headstones/memorials already erected on them. None have yet been inspected for memorial safety, stability and permission to erect.

Within the existing structure there is currently 15 seasonal staff, i.e. 4 Park Operatives and 11 Gardener Scale 3s to assist with the seasonal increase in work within Parks & Cemeteries.

2. Key Issues

At present there is 1 vacancy for a Gravedigger at Roselawn Cemetery, this post needs to be filled as it currently is being

covered by the extension of a Seasonal Gardener's contract which cannot continue long term.

In addition Memorial Safety Inspections must be introduced at Roselawn and Dundonald Cemeteries as reported to Committee on 14th March 2013. The Cemetery Operatives, under the supervision of the Community Park Supervisors and following directives from the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager will shortly commence carrying out these vital inspections.

In order to ensure that the staff 's job descriptions are suitably flexible to provide the full range of operational requirements within the cemeteries, it is proposed that the current vacant post of Gravedigger at Roselawn and all other Gravedigger posts elsewhere (10 in total) would be replaced by the recruitment of Cemetery Operatives, if and when they become vacant.

Discussions have recently been with the current Gravedigger post holders and their Trade Unions representatives at their request to review the role of Gravediggers.

Outcomes from this review will be brought to a later Committee.

To reduce agency staff and overtime usage, the Parks & Cemeteries Managers have requested 11 Park Operatives and 9 Gardener Scale 3s seasonal staff across all areas for 2014/15. This will be a change to our current establishment by an additional 5 seasonal posts and the designation numbers will also change.

3. Resource Implications

The phasing in of the new Cemetery Operative posts will have financial implications, the differential between the current remuneration of Scale 3 for Gravedigger to the current remuneration of Scale 4 for Cemetery Operative posts. This will incur an additional cost of £1,984 per post per annum.

It is anticipated, as a result of the proposed memorial safety work that the Cemetery Operatives will undertake, that income will increase however it is difficult to establish by how much at this stage. This is due to the recouping of income from the many unauthorised memorials and foundation fees.

Many fees are not being currently paid by sculptors, as there is not an adequate checking mechanism in place within the

cemeteries to ensure that the correct procedure and fees are paid before a headstone is erected. Sculptors therefore are erecting headstones ad hoc which are not only a potential health & safety risk to staff and visiting public, but the council is not receiving any income through the required fees. By replacing current Gravediggers with Cemetery Operatives posts, this will mean more flexibility and provide an adequate checking mechanism to ensure correct procedures and fees are paid before headstones are erected.

Proposed changes to seasonal staff would increase the limit to recruit up to 20 staff, i.e. 11 Park Operatives and 9 Gardener Scale 3s which is an increase of 5 posts. Please note that these will not be recruited unless operationally necessary.

Human Resources

If approved to recruit Cemetery Operatives instead of Grave diggers the recruitment of the current vacancy at Roselawn and those in the future, as and when required, will be carried out through the normal Council recruitment and selection procedures. Please note the others will be replaced as and when further vacancies occur within the Gravedigger designations at Roselawn, Dundonald and City cemeteries.

A reserve list will be compiled (with a time limit) so that if/when a vacancy arises successful candidates may be recruited off this list. If approved, seasonal staff will also be recruited through the normal Council recruitment and selection procedures to commence in April 2014.

5. Recommendation

The Committee is requested to agree to the phasing out of existing gravedigger posts as they become vacant and replace these posts with Cemetery Operative posts.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Out of Hours Use of Leisure Facilities

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting of 11th December, 2008, it had agreed to extend out of hours usage of leisure centres for clubs and societies and had adopted a rate of £20 per hour as a contribution towards utility costs. The Director indicated that a charge of £11.60 per hour would be levied from April, in line with the new scale of charges, and he reviewed the level of usage by clubs and associated participants of the facilities.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the extension to the out of hours agreements until 31st March, 2015, and granted delegated authority to the Director to extend such agreements as deemed necessary.

Public Holiday Closures

The Committee endorsed the undernoted closing arrangements for 2014/15.

Cemeteries and Crematorium

DATE	Central and Site Offices PROPOSED OPENING HOURS
Monday 21 April 2014	CLOSED
Tuesday 22 April 2014	08:30am – 12.30pm
Monday 5 May 2014	CLOSED
Monday 26 May 2014	CLOSED
Saturday 12 July 2014	CLOSED
Monday 14 July 2014	08:30am – 4.30pm
Tuesday 15 July 2014	CLOSED
Monday 25 August 2014	CLOSED
Wednesday 24 December 2014	08:30am – 3pm
Thursday 25 December 2014	CLOSED
Friday 26 December 2014	08:30am – 12.30pm
Thursday 1 January 2015	CLOSED
Friday 2 January 2015	08:30am-12.30pm
Tuesday 17 March 2015	CLOSED

Roselawn Crematorium and Cemetery

DATE	CREMATORIUM OPERATING	CEMETERY BURIALS
Monday 21 April	CLOSED	CLOSED
Tuesday 22 April	08:30am – 5pm	08:00am – 11am
Monday 5 May	CLOSED	CLOSED
Monday 26 May	CLOSED	CLOSED
Saturday 12 July	CLOSED	CLOSED
Monday 14 July	08.30am -5pm	08:00am – 11am
Tuesday 15 July	CLOSED	CLOSED
Monday 25 August	CLOSED	CLOSED
Christmas Eve	08.30am -2pm	08.30am -2pm
Christmas Day	CLOSED	CLOSED
Boxing Day	08.30am -12noon	08:00am – 11am
New Year's Day	CLOSED	CLOSED
Friday 2 January	08.30am -12noon	08:00am – 11am
Tuesday 17 March	CLOSED	CLOSED

Female Soccer Provision in South Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

There are 8 senior female football clubs in Belfast, many with second and third level streams and junior sections. However they represent only 6% of Belfast football clubs. Members will be aware that a baseline survey into pitch provision is underway with early indication that there are issues around provision of grass pitches in the summer to meet the demand for women’s football.

2. Key Issues

The current review of provision has highlighted the lack of playing opportunity for female football with only 9 confirmed grass pitches available for summer play in 2014.

Pitch	Area	No. of pitches available
Mallusk	North	3
Ballysillan	North	1
Boucher	South	1 (unavailable due to Tennents Vital)
Wedderburn	South	2
Ormeau	East	3
Victoria	East	3 (likely to be available due to Connswater Greenway development)

With the loss of the single summer pitch at Boucher Road the provision for the south of the city is reduced. This is coupled with the issue of reports of anti-social behaviour during the summer months and the use of one of the pitches at Wedderburn as a bonfire site.

An alternative site in the south of the city is Strangford Avenue playing fields which currently has no provision for summer play and is routinely under used due to the additional costs for providing a second manned changing pavilion.

The proposal to ‘flip’ one winter pitch on this site to summer play would also come with key handling agreements for the second changing facility and therefore no additional costs would be incurred by the council.

This would result in meeting one of the key playing pitch policy objectives of providing quality dedicated space for competitive sporting play.

3. **Resource Implications**

None. The clubs booking the facility would still pay the agreed rate following the agreed booking procedure through Outdoor Leisure.

4. **Equality Implications**

The proposal aims to rebalance the provision across the city and will be quality screened in accordance with Council requirements through the review of Parks & Leisure playing pitches review.

5. **Recommendation**

Members are asked to agree the proposal to convert one winter pitch at Strangford Avenue playing fields to a summer pitch and for officers to draw up key handling arrangements with legal services. The legal agreement to be in place for the beginning of the summer season in April 2014.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Requests for the Use of Parks and Leisure Facilities

Belfast Mela

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from ArtsEkta to host the Belfast Mela in the Botanic Gardens on 24th August, 2014. The Director explained that the event would, subject to funding, utilise the Upper and Lower portions of the Gardens from 12:00 noon till 6.00 p.m. on the date mentioned. It was reported that the preparation and dismantling operation for the event would be carried out between 19th and 26th August. The Director outlined the consultation processes which would be undertaken by ArtsEkta with other local stakeholders, such as The Queen’s University of Belfast, the Lyric Theatre, local residents and the Friends of Botanic Gardens.

The Committee acceded to the request and granted delegated authority to the Director to consider and, if deemed appropriate, grant the use of the Gardens – both Lower and Upper portions – in future years for the purposes of the Belfast Mela. It was agreed also that:

- the organisers of the 2014 event would be permitted to charge an admission fee in the region of £3, and granted delegated authority to the Director to vary that admission charge, if appropriate, subject to the provision of financial information in respect of the level of sponsorship obtained by the organisers.

In addition, it was agreed further that the use of the park would be subject to:

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

Loughside Recreation Centre - Pride of the Shore

The Director reported that a request had been received from the Pride of the Shore flute band seeking permission to hold a 'musical extravaganza' on Saturday, 26th April, from 3:00 p.m. till midnight. It was estimated that the event, which would take place in the main hall, would be attended by 600 individuals and four bands from Scotland. The applicants had applied also for an occasional licence for the event.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to grant the use of the facility, as requested, subject to the submission of an event management plan by the organisers, and 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.

Whiterock Leisure Centre - Cumann Spoir an Phobail

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from Cumann Spoir an Phobail seeking permission to hold a cultural evening on Saturday, 29th March, in the main hall at the Whiterock Leisure Centre. It was pointed out that the cleaning of the hall would be undertaken on Sunday 30th March, which would necessitate its closure on that date. The event would be a community celebration which would include an awards ceremony to recognise those who had contributed to the development of the Whiterock area in sporting and cultural terms. The applicants had applied also for an occasional licence for the event.

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.

Barnett Demesne - County Grand Lodge of Belfast

The Director reported that the County Grand Lodge of Belfast had written to the Council requesting the use of the Barnett Demesne for its Belfast demonstration on 12th July, 2014. He advised the Committee that the Council had granted the use of the site to the County Grand Lodge for the 12th July demonstrations in previous years and that there had been no significant difficulties or problems reported.

The Committee granted approval 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.

Victoria Park - Bombardier Aerospace

The Director reported that a request had been received from Bombardier Aerospace seeking the Council's permission, in principle, to use the Victoria Park as part of its overall site evacuation plan in the event of a major incident at the Queen's Island. It was reported that the company had indicated that it would prefer to utilise the Odyssey complex in such an eventuality, with the Victoria Park acting as an alternative site should the need arise. He added that Bombardier had indicated that access to the park would be via the Connsbrook Road and the Sydenham Bypass and, if required, by The Sam Thompson Bridge, should the bridge be accessible on a 24 hour basis.

The Committee agreed initially, subject to the drawing up of an appropriate legal agreement, to grant permission for the use of the park as an emergency evacuation point during normal opening hours only. It was noted that the use of the park as an evacuation point on a 24 hour basis would be determined once the access arrangements to and from the park via The Sam Thompson Bridge had been clarified.

Ormeau Park - United Kingdom Pipe Band Association

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th December, 2013, it had acceded to a request to grant the use of the Ormeau Park in 2014 and 2015 for the hosting of the United Kingdom Pipe Band Championships. Further to that meeting, the organisers of the championships, which would take place on 14th June, 2014, and 15th June, 2015, had advised the Council that they would wish to apply for an Occasional Licence to sell alcohol at the events.

The Committee agreed, in the event of the Occasional Licence being obtained by the organisers, that it had no objection to the sale of alcohol at the event.

Chairman