



Subject:	Installation of Gates at Crescent Park
Date:	10 th January 2022
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider the request to install gating at Crescent Park (South Belfast) and note the differing perspectives on the appropriateness of this.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider the proposal for gating at the park and recommend how best to move forward.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Over the last few years Friends of the Crescent (FotC) have been leading a campaign to enhance the open green space at Crescent Park, South Belfast. This asset which is owned by Belfast city Council is a valued open space for residents as well as those who work and study in the area. The aims of the group are:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To cherish the physical environment of the Crescent and its immediate vicinity to enhance its beauty and amenity. • To encourage and enable legal and safe use of the park by the public. • To ensure that the park and the Crescent area provide a welcoming and harmonious environment for everyone. • To engage with statutory bodies in the interests of the Crescent
3.2	<p>The Group believe that Crescent Park is particularly invaluable to the people who reside on or near the Crescent. The design of the Georgian townhouses, and indeed more modern local terraces, provide limited private outdoor space to occupiers. Therefore, the park, which was originally a communal garden for the residents of Upper Crescent, forms important green space that is used by local people to this day. The park's proximity to Botanic Train Station, social venues, food outlets, schools, QUB and large corporate entities means it is also of high value to thousands of individuals who commute through it and/or use it as a social space regularly.</p>
3.3	<p>FofC are aware that for many years the Crescent has been a hotspot for anti-social behaviour and substance abuse. A combination of commercial premises closing in the early evening, derelict buildings, the hidden location of the park, and a lack of general maintenance has contributed to an environment where illegal activity has gone unnoticed. Such activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups of aggressive and loud individuals inhabiting the park • Drug dealing • Alcohol and drug misuse • Reports of serious crimes – including knife crime • Littering • Urination in shrubbery
3.4	<p>Following a scoping exercise FotC produced 'Improving the Crescent' (Appendix 1) which details actions to address anti-social behaviour and increase the attractiveness of the park to all members of the public. One of the actions recommended the installation of gates (Appendix 2) at the four entrance points of the park. FotC understand that the installation of gates is a sizable structural project, however, following local consultation they have received majority support from residents and businesses supporting the proposed work. (Email consultation sent to 55 residents/business in the local Crescent Park area – 20 responses received (36%) with 19 in favour of night-time gates (96%) and one who was opposed (4%).</p>

3.5	<p>This paper was scheduled to be discussed at last month's meeting but was withdrawn following receipt of some late correspondence opposing the gating of the park. Since then, officers have received numerous letters/emails on this matter, all of which are attached in the appendix for consideration by committee.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.6	<p>Total cost for the installation of gates at the four entrances of Crescent Park is £55,412 (excluding VAT).</p>
3.7	<p>FotC are willing to contribute £25,000 to the total costs of design, production, and installation of 4 heritage gates. They are requesting that BCC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute £30,412 to the installation costs of gates • Agree to adopt and maintain the gates immediately after they are installed and: • Add daily opening and closing of the gates to their existing schedule for other parks and open spaces in the same council area.
3.8	<p>The costs to Council are included within existing revenue estimates.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.9	<p>Both an equality impact and a rural needs assessment will be completed for this proposal and these will be assessed by the Council's Equality & Diversity Unit.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 - Improving the crescent scoping document</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Crescent Open Space Gate</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Correspondence received by Officers on this matter.</p>