



Subject:	Anti-Social Behaviour – update on previous interventions and initiatives in parks
Date:	7 th February, 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services, City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Jim Girvan – Lead Officer, Community Safety- CNS

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"/>
Some time 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	Members had requested that a report be brought to Committee to take consideration of successful interventions that have been previously undertaken in Parks, in particular Dunville Park, and how similar initiatives might be applied to other Council parks with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) problems.
1.2	In addition, Committee has asked for a further report to be brought to a subsequent meeting detailing the costs of undertaking repair works to parks damaged by ASB. This report will follow.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the range of interventions and services which have been previously used within BCC Parks to counteract issues of ASB.

3.0	Main report
	<p>Background</p> <p>3.1 Belfast City Council have the responsibility to maintain and keep our public parks safe for citizens and accessible for all. In the December report to Committee, in response to requests from Members, BCC officers highlighted the amount of ASB reported within Parks over the last 3 years.</p> <p>3.2 Officers would remind Members to note that the figures presented in the December report may not provide an overall accurate picture of ASB within Parks and therefore, their usefulness in terms of determining patterns or hotspots is extremely limited for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents complaining about ASB in Parks state that they under report what is occurring. • The capturing of information relating to ASB within Belfast City Council Parks lies within the responsibility of Park Wardens, ASB Officers, and Safer Neighbourhood Officers. However, Safer Neighbourhood and ASB Officers are not located within parks but are rather deployed in the city centre and neighbourhoods. • A team of Park Wardens is located in each quadrant of the city and each Park in the city is patrolled daily, with the more problematic parks receiving more targeted patrols than others. • The Park Wardens service operates to the current Parks' closing times (dawn to dusk). However, the BCC and PSNI do plan and carry out interventions outside these hours in response to large events in Parks, reports of ASB and underage drinking etc. <p>3.3 Belfast City Council has previously used a variety of initiatives to tackle ASB in Parks. Each initiative is unique to the specific circumstances within our Parks. The measures have been based upon available resources on a short, medium or long-term basis.</p> <p>Belfast City Council have 3 teams which work across Parks, these include Park Wardens, SNO's and ASB Officers, their role includes:</p> <p>A team of 9 Safer Neighbourhood Officers work across the city centre, parks and neighbourhoods. SNOs are a frontline enforcement / engagement service whose primary role is to help address issues of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a visible presence through high visibility foot patrols • offer guidance, support, and advice on community safety issues • challenge low-level anti-social behaviour • enforce laws relating to on-street drinking and environmental crime

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help to reduce crime and fear of crime
3.4	The SNO's are deployed across current hotspots which is updated on a daily basis depending on community safety issues across the city centre, parks and neighbourhoods.
3.5	<p>A team of 5 Anti-Social Behaviour Officers work across the city centre, parks and neighbourhoods. ASB Officers are a frontline engagement service whose primary role is to help address issues of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating ASB Forums in partnership with PSNI, Housing Providers and Youth Justice Agency • Offer guidance, support, and advice on community safety issues • Central point of contact for the public to raise issues and redirect them to the most appropriate agency / organisation • Central point of contact for Public Utility Companies / Organisations to address issues / concerns raised • Challenge low-level anti-social behaviour • Support the removal of sharps • Support the delivery of the safer city coordinators action plan
3.6	The team service over 20 community safety forums across the city and will react to any ASB issue when they arise.
3.7	A team of 24 Park Wardens currently operate from within our Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) area teams (8 North, 4 West, 8 East and 4 South) carrying out an important role within our parks and open spaces including security, gate opening/closure, graffiti removal, supporting outreach, enforcing bylaws of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2011 as well as addressing ASB issues. Park Wardens are also deployed as required to provide a targeted response to areas of identified ASB during their working hours which reflect the standard opening hours of our parks (dawn to dusk).
3.8	Belfast City Council have delivered a variety of initiatives over the last 12 years which have had a positive impact in tackling ASB within our parks. The detail on some of the successful initiatives are detailed below:
3.9	<p>Medium term Initiatives</p> <p><u>Partnership Agreement with the Community</u></p> <p>Department for Communities, Belfast City Council and the community identified a derelict site within the Divis area (west Belfast) which had suffered ongoing serious ASB issues</p>

over a number of years. This site was re-imagined over a 2 year period with investment to have an outdoor sports area to help support the health and well-being of the community. The site is owned by Belfast City Council and a partnership agreement was established with the local community groups to have a key holder responsibility for the facility which involved the opening/closing of the asset with Groups having the flexibility to use the facility and provide animation through an allocated budget of £15,000. The first year of operations has contributed to zero reported ASB incidents within the facility.

3.10 Dedicated Wardens and Animation

Dunville Park (west Belfast) was redeveloped in 2013 with £2 million investment from Belfast City Council and Department for Communities. The Park was transformed into an animated space with investment in the first 2 years which included dedicated wardens who worked from 8am to 10pm throughout the entire year to maintain the site, engage with the public and to work with community organisations and engage particularly with young people. A small, dedicated animation budget was set aside to allow for seasonal events and weekend sports in the facility. This combination of dedicated staff and programmatic resources of investment contributed to very low levels of ASB reported within the Park over that period.

3.11 **Short Term Initiative**

Reactive Response

The Páirc Nua Chollann / Colin Park was opened in late 2022 after an investment of over £5 million from the TEO's Urban Village Programme. After the Park opened, a range of ASB involving young people occurred regularly which also created difficulties for the local area. Belfast City Council engaged with a number of stakeholders including community groups and Elected Members regarding the problems and 2 core issues were identified which were times when ASB occurred and the need for animation. To counteract these issues, the time for SNO's to patrol the park was altered from 7pm to an earlier time of 4.30pm and animation of the site was introduced to create a safe welcoming space.

Belfast City Council provided a small budget of £15,000 toward animation which provided a short-term intervention which increased usage and helped reduce ASB within the facility. This budget came from a range of CNS services where animation could contribute to a range of mutually beneficial outcomes.

3.12 **Future initiatives**

The above short, medium and long term solutions highlight the different approaches which has been taken by BCC to help alleviate ASB within Parks.

	<p>A key element to gaining any resolution to ASB within parks is partnership working with key stakeholders (Residents, Community & Voluntary Sector, PSNI etc) to identify the core problems and develop joint solutions.</p> <p>Officers would highlight a variety of initiatives (budget and resources depending) which could be considered in the future to tackle ASB within Council Parks.</p> <p>The initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Wardens focussing on those parks which have the highest level of ASB. • Partnership Agreements drawn up with appropriate groups from the community and voluntary sector which would include allocating resources to manage the parks opening/closing, animation, and employment of wardens. • Safer Neighbourhood Officers to be utilised more when patterns of ASB are identified. • Animation and seasonal budgets to be allocated to Parks to create welcoming spaces which attract more citizens to use the facilities. <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.13 The financial and resource implications for each initiative will vary depending on the size of the Park, issues presenting and the intensity and length of any programme. Members should note that any additional initiatives proposed within Parks would have to be considered and prioritised within the context of the current budgets being agreed as part of the rate setting exercise.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u></p> <p>3.14 There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None