

# Parks and Leisure Committee

Tuesday, 24th February, 2015

## MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Newton (Chairman);  
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Hendron);  
Aldermen Robinson and Rodgers;  
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Convery,  
Corr, Cunningham, Hanna, Hussey, Kyle,  
Mac Giolla Mhín, McCabe, Mullan,  
Ó Donnghaile and Thompson.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;  
Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks  
and Leisure;  
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Miss. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Haire, McNamee and Verner.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 15th 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 2nd February.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Mr. Andrew Hassard**

A Member pointed out that the Director was attending his last meeting of the Committee and paid tribute to him for the work which he had undertaken on behalf of the Council over the past forty years. Representatives of each of the political parties commended the Director on his achievements and expressed their appreciation for the help and advice which he had provided to Members.

The Director thanked the Committee for its kind comments.

### **Presentation – Harland and Wolff Welders F.C.**

Pursuant to the Committee's decision of 15th January, the Chairman welcomed to the meeting Messrs. J. Davidson, H. Beckinsale, L. McStravick and F.Magee, who were in attendance to outline the plans which had been formulated by the Harland and Wolff Welders F.C. for the re-development of the Blanchflower Playing Fields.

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

Mr. Davidson gave an overview of the history of the club and indicated that it wished to apply, at a future date, for promotion to the Irish League Premiership. However, the club's current facilities at Tillysburn were not considered to be of a senior league standard and, accordingly, a move to the Blanchflower Playing Fields was considered to be a longer-term solution. Mr. Davidson proceeded to outline the community benefits which would be delivered to the greater East Belfast area through the development.

Mr. McStravick, who was acting as a client advisor for the club, advised the Committee that the club would be seeking to transform the Blanchflower Playing Fields into a modern sporting facility for the primary use of the football team. He outlined the concept plan and the business case which had been formulated to oversee the proposal, together with providing an indication of the costs and the potential sources of funding which would support the project. He indicated that a steering panel, which consisted of local political, business and community representatives, had been established to co-ordinate 'Phase 1' of the project and to enable the club to meet with the requirements for accessing funding from governmental departments.

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

The Committee considered the matter and various Members welcomed the club's proposals for the redevelopment of the Blanchflower Playing Fields since it would provide tangible community benefits and significant investment to East Belfast. It was pointed out that, in order to assist the club to secure funding to support the proposals, the Committee might agree, in principle, that it would be minded to support the proposal to re-develop the Blanchflower Playing Fields and, in accordance with Standing Orders, recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it would consider the disposal of the site through a lease agreement.

Accordingly, it was

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that it would be minded to support the proposal, in principle, to enable the Harland and Wolff Welders Football Club to redevelop the Blanchflower Playing Fields, subject to sufficient funding being secured by the club and subject to the approval of a lease agreement by the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders.

**Review of Pitches Strategy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

**Members are reminded that the Council developed a Playing Pitches Strategy for the period 2011-2021 which was agreed in February 2012. The strategy included action plans under 3**

key objectives: Objective 1 – Capital Investment, Objective 2 – Management and Objective 3 – Sports Development

## **2 Key Issues**

**2.1** The following outlines the progress that has been made in the achievements of the various actions under the 3 objectives and the multiple sub-objectives.

### **2.2 Objective 1 – Capital Investment**

This objective is to deliver and, working in partnership, enable a programme of capital development, enhancement and maintenance investments to address the shortfalls identified and protect existing playing pitches.

It was agreed that the capital investment would include the development of a 3G pitch and associated facilities at 5 sites across the city. These would be hybrid to encourage the shared use of the space and maximise use at the following sites:

- Cherryvale Playing Fields
- Woodvale Playing Fields
- Falls Park
- Ormeau Park
- Cliftonville (GAA pitch only due to site limitations)

It was also agreed that the changing facilities would be provided or upgraded at 5 sites across the city - Ballysillan – new facility, Waterworks (Westland) – new facility, Musgrave Park – new facilities, Victoria Park – upgrade of existing and Dixon Park – upgrade of existing

The design process is well underway with planning applications having been submitted for all of the sites and planning approval has been granted for 9 of the 10 sites. Work has commenced on 3 sites – Dixon, Waterworks and Cliftonville. The tender process is underway in respect of a further 5 sites and work is scheduled to commence on these sites by the end of the summer 2015. Work on the remaining 2 sites will be commenced by the end of 2015 with work being completed by summer 2016, subject to planning.

A key element of this strategy is partnership working and to encourage the various sectors across the city to work together. The Council continues to work with its partners including Sports NI, governing bodies, leagues, clubs and the education sector. As part of this work, Ulster GAA are

investing £1.1million in the capital investment that is happening at Cherryvale, Woodlands, Cliftonville and Musgrave and a Joint Management Agreement is currently being developed in relation to this investment.

As part of the capital investment £750,000 was allocated to a fund for capital enhancements to school playing pitches to allow greater community use. After an application process 6 schools from across the city received funding, ranging from £73,000 to £150,000 for projects including the upgrade of surfaces and the installation of floodlighting. Work is ongoing and will be completed on all projects by the end of this financial year.

There is also focus on Council-owned provision and an annual maintenance and refurbishment programme has now been put in place. To date drainage work has taken place at 4 sites in both 2013 and 2014. Further work is planned at 5 sites in the coming year.

There has been a continued growth in small sided games at underage level and officers have held discussions with the various governing bodies around provision at this level. To date provision has been through the marking of full sized pitches and the provision of smaller portable goals. The refurbishment programme for 2015 has identified the potential to create a small sided pitch at Wedderburn and where other opportunities are identified these will be taken.

### **2.3 Objective 2 – Management**

This objective is to implement and monitor a range of management options with community and statutory partners, so as to maximise people's participation in team sports activity.

One of the actions under this objective was the review of the existing Facility Management Agreements. This has been progressing with a proposal to move towards Partner Agreements which will bring the management and maintenance in-house and put the focus of clubs onto sports development activities (separate report to be presented to Committee).

Work is ongoing around the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches, the first stage of this is the development of a monitoring process for those schools who received funding under the £750k fund. This is currently being finalised and will be sent out to the schools in the

coming months. We will then look at how we can adapt this framework to allow us to measure usage and participation of our new 3G pitches.

As part of a wider review of fees and charges and the implications of LGR on this, we have commenced the process of looking at the current charging arrangements for our pitches and the options of introducing other pricing models such as off peak or a reduced community rate. Once the options have been fully developed they will be brought to the Members for consideration.

The development of the pitches strategy was based on a baseline assessment of supply and demand that was undertaken in 2009/10. It was agreed that this would be reviewed two years from the implementation of the strategy. From the review, a number of key issues have emerged for Committee's consideration:

- In terms of supply of pitches there have been no significant changes in the number of pitches that are available across the city. However, the ongoing capital investments will impact on this;
- There has been a decrease in adult participation across sporting codes. One of the reasons for this is the growth in other physical activities such as cycling in this period, which are attracting people who would have previously played pitch sports. This has been confirmed anecdotally by sporting codes;
- There has been a dramatic increase in youth teams across sporting codes. This is a very positive outworking of the sporting codes' focus on their respective youth participation strategies, which will in turn sustain demand in the city in the adult leagues. Specifically, youth participation from 2009-2014 has grown as follows:
  - 22 mini soccer teams to 172 small sided games teams
  - 8 mini Gaelic games teams; this has increased to 128 Go Games teams
  - 12 mini rugby teams, this has increased to 31 mini rugby teams;
- An analysis of supply and demand relating to matches does not take into account requirements for pitches for training and informal use. Grass pitches are generally limited to competitive play, due to the restriction on level of usage, leaving synthetic

surfaces to cope with demand for training sessions. This also displaces individuals who choose not to be part of formal clubs and leagues, potentially discouraging more people from being active; and

- In the short-term, there may be opportunity to temporarily re-designate/re-mark some adult pitches to become available for short-sided games, to accommodate the immediate demand for youth sports.

#### **2.4 Objective 3 – Sports development**

This objective is working in partnership, to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise people's participation in team sports activity. This will include under-represented groups, such as females and those with disabilities.

The Department through its Support for Sport programme has supported clubs through large grants to develop Games Development Centres. We also continue to work with the IFA around the development of small sided games through our support for two grassroots soccer development officers who are based in Ballysillan and Avoniel.

The Leisure Development Unit through its programmes such as Active Communities and Try it days work with governing bodies and clubs to encourage underrepresented groups such as females and people with disabilities to get involved in pitch sports. They have also organised a series of events to encourage children and young people to get involved in different sports including London 2012 legacy events and the Lord Mayor's Sport Day 2014.

Work has commenced on the development of sports development plan templates which will be used in relation to the new 3G pitches. These will be rolled out on the completion of the capital works.

Sports Development Officers are actively engaging with a number of the schools who received funding from the £750k fund to look at ways in which we can work with them to further increase community use of their enhanced facilities.

#### **2.5 Next steps**

Officers will continue to progress the work relating to the capital investment element to ensure that this is completed by the summer of 2016. As each of the sites is completed sports

development plans will be rolled out and usage will be monitored through the framework that is under development.

Given the growth of small sided games at underage level it is proposed that a piece of work be undertaken over the coming months to identify full sized pitches that are currently underused and to explore the potential to established small sided games hubs across the city.

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial:** There are no financial resources associated with this progress report. £15.1m has already been allocated to investment in playing pitches. **Human Resources:** None

**Asset and Other Implications:** The continued implementation of the strategy will result in changes to the type and number of Council's playing pitches.

**4 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

Members are reminded that the Playing Pitches Strategy was subject to an EQIA and its conclusions were included in the strategy. As part of this process, the Stage 7 monitoring review will shortly be undertaken.

**5 Recommendation**

Committee is asked to approve that a further report is prepared on small-sided games provision in the city and to explore the potential to establish small sided games hubs across the city, for consideration by Committee at a future meeting.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Partner Agreements - Policy and Processes**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in October 2014 it approved the next steps in relation to the consultation on partner agreements as set out in the report to this Committee in August 2014. That public consultation process commenced on the 4 November 2014 and concluded on the 27 January 2015. The process included:

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

- An online consultation and downloadable questionnaire on the policy and process. Approximately 51 unique downloads of this questionnaire occurred with a marked increase in viewings of the relevant website around the time of public meetings and during last two weeks of the consultation and seven formal written responses were submitted.
- Three public meetings advertised in local press and on the Council's website. Approx 30 club representatives including those from incoming council areas attended these meetings.
- Social media posts on both Facebook and messages on Twitter.
- Presentation and discussion of the policy and process at the council's equality consultative forum during the public consultation period.

Members will also recall that the October 2014 Committee report on Partner Agreements informed members that recommendations would be brought back to this Committee outlining which grass pitches sites should be publically advertised as part of the implementation of the Partner Agreements process.

**2 Key Issues**

**Consultation findings**

As outlined, an extensive public consultation process was undertaken and this was independently facilitated. The key findings from the consultation process and the Council's proposed response to them are outlined in the following table:

<b>Key finding</b>	<b>BCC response</b>
<b>The overall consensus is that the Partner Agreements policy and process are generally welcomed and the correct way to proceed. The general response to the proposed policy objectives, proposed benefits, responsibilities and criteria was well received. There were some caveats expressed re the criteria as</b>	<b>Council welcomes the feedback received and based on the consensus are not proposing any changes to the draft policy and process as previously agreed by Committee. There one exception to this is a change to the matrix which will be detailed in a further point.</b>



**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

<p>outlined in a further point. Only one respondent, who provided a written response, suggested the whole process was completely unnecessary and over complicated.</p>	
<p>General concerns were expressed that existing users may be disadvantaged or possibly edged out by new entrants. Some existing users felt that perhaps they lacked capacity to complete the applications process and may not have the access to funds which new entrants may have.</p>	<p>We acknowledge these concerns and within the application process we have built in support from the Leisure Development Unit for all applicants, which will include existing FMA holders. There is no requirement for applicants to pay for assistance.</p>
<p>A similar concern was expressed that local knowledge of the clubs and local community needs might not be adequately assessed or given weight in a competitive process. This also relates to the issue of usage and what is realistic in terms of widening participation, without disadvantaging current clubs and members.</p>	<p>We acknowledge this issue and to address this point we are suggesting that the scoring matrix be amended to allow us to recognise where maximum usage is being achieved. We will also identify what the actual maximum usage is for each site to assist us in the assessment process.</p>
<p>Some concern was expressed as to how Council will guarantee that the proposed in house system of bookings will be effective flexible and responsive.</p>	<p>We acknowledge these concerns, however we continuously work to ensure that our pitch booking system is fit for purpose. As part of this process we engage with our users to get their feedback to allow us to improve the system to meet their needs.</p>

Members should note that all aspects of the Partner Agreements will be subject to annual monitoring and

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

management reporting and that an independent evaluation of all arrangements will be undertaken in year five. It is recommended therefore that based on the findings of the consultation Members should adopt the final policy.

**Selection of sites for inclusion in the process**

Members will be aware that there is limited funding for the implementation of this policy and it is therefore recommended that a phased approach to the inclusion of sites is adopted. This will allow us to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to make any necessary changes before it is further rolled out. It also provides us with the opportunity to obtain the additional resources required to roll it out. The following phased approach is suggested:

Phase	Sites to be included	Timescales		
		Site Selection	Advertise	Commence
1	Current FMA sites as outlined below	February 2015	April 2015	September 2015
2	Suitable sites that come in under LGR	Autumn 2015	Spring 2016	September 2016
3	Any other suitable Council owned site	Autumn 2017	Spring 2018	September 2018

In order to identify pitches for inclusion in Phase 1, the following criteria have been applied:

- site is not subject to exclusion under the policy;
- site is fit for purpose and has council owned changing facilities on it.

Members will be aware that there is a range of agreements operate across our facilities. Some of these agreements have not yet expired and therefore cannot be considered for inclusion at this point. Excluding these, the following playing fields have been identified for inclusion in Phase 1:

- Tommy Patton Playing Fields
- Dixon Playing Fields
- Ulidia Playing Fields
- Orangefield Playing Fields
- Loughside Playing Fields
- Shore Road Playing Fields
- Woodlands Playing Fields.

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

As partner agreements are aimed at grass pitches only, the agreement for the Woodlands site will exclude the 3G pitch. The 3G pitch will come under the Joint Management Agreement as part of the funding agreement for the GAA's £1.1 million investment in the Pitches Strategy.

**Next Steps**

The proposed next stages in the implementation of this policy are:

<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>March 2015</b>	<b>Post consultation workshop (for potential applicants)</b>
<b>April 2015</b>	<b>Public advertisement of expression of interest for Partner Agreements (opening applications to new programme). This will include a further information workshop delivered by officers</b>
<b>June 2015</b>	<b>Applications to close and assessment by officers commence</b>
<b>August 2015</b>	<b>Assessed applications report to be presented to Members for approval and award of Partner Agreements</b>
<b>Sept 2015</b>	<b>Following receipt of signed terms and conditions new Partner Agreements in place at relevant sites</b>

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial:** This policy will be supported through an enhanced Support for Sport Grant aid fund which will be funded through the existing FMA payments for the 6 selected sites which total £88,921 per annum

**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. Sport development officers have provided and will provide support to potential applicants and partners throughout the process in the form of applicant workshops in March and April 2015 and other information opportunities.

**Asset and Other Implications:** The new partner agreements will impact on the future management of assets. Legal services will continue to provide advice on this for Committee's consideration.

**4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

The policy is being screened in line with the Council's existing equality screening process and the indications are that it will be screened out with mitigating actions. The mitigating actions are around increasing participation amount underrepresented groups including females, people with disabilities and those from an ethnic minority background.

**5 Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- Agree the final policy and the amended scoring matrix, based on the consultation findings; and
- Agree the proposed phased approach to the advertising of sites for inclusion in the process including the selection of the seven sites to be included in phase one."

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Bereavement Improvement Strategy and Parks Improvement**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware that the Council is the Burial Board for Belfast and that we currently manage and operate nine cemeteries across the city and the region's only crematorium. We will also be taking over the management of Knockbreda Cemetery from 1st April.

To ensure that we deliver a high quality fit for purpose bereavement service the department has established a Bereavement Services Board which is overseeing a Bereavement Improvement Strategy. The strategy has a number of themes:

- Bereavement Services – Administration
- Bereavement Services – Operations and organisational design
- Investment and finance

- Strategic Crematoria and Cemetery Development

The Board has identified a number of priority actions under these themes and these are outlined in this paper.

## **2 Key Issues**

### **Bereavement Services – Administration**

Under this theme the Board are looking at the management of our relationship with key stakeholders including funeral directors, the Health Trust and memorial sculptors. A significant element of this theme is our customers and a key action has been a review and rationalization of our forms. One form that we are currently reviewing is 'Authority for Disposal of Cremated Remains'. This form has been updated in relation to our holding over and environmental policy. A key change to our policy is that we are proposing that we will only hold cremated remains for a maximum of 4 weeks and if they have not been collected at this point they will be scattered within the Garden of Remembrance. It is proposed that we will consult on this change as part of our public consultation on bereavement issues.

Members will be aware that under our Environmental Policy we recycle metals such as those from orthopaedic implants. This is done through the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and any monies we receive from this will be donated to bereavement related charities. Approximately £7,000 per annum is currently raised by ICCM in relation to this and it is proposed that this be split equally between several charities. It is proposed that a section is added to the form asking families to nominate a bereavement related charity that they would like the money to be donated to. Twice a year officers will collate this information and the two most nominated charities in that period, will be recommended to Members for selection as the charities to receive the donation. It is proposed that the same charity cannot receive the donation more than once in 2 years. If a charity that has previously received money is one of the 2 nominated we would move to the next charity on the list. It is proposed that we will consult on this proposal as part of our public consultation on bereavement issues.

### **Bereavement Services – Operations and organisational design**

The Council has a responsibility is to ensure that its cemeteries, graveyards and burial grounds are safe places in which to work and for the public to visit. Historically, health

and safety concerns in cemeteries have focused on the risks arising from grave digging. However, in recent years there has been increasing attention on the stability of memorials and the risks these present to cemetery staff and visitors.

Work has been ongoing to identify the risks posed by unsafe memorials and it is estimated that a significant number of memorials in our cemeteries pose a potential health and safety risk. A pilot programme was rolled out in City Cemetery and this found that there was a greater issue with the newer headstones and more of these required fixing. During the pilot these unsafe memorials were fixed by Council; however this does have resource implications for the Council particularly in relation to staff costs. Whilst Belfast City Council has overall responsibility for the safety of its cemeteries, including risks from unstable memorials, it does not own the memorials. The owner of the memorial is the Deed Holder (grave owner of Exclusive Right of Burial) or successor in title, and who is the person responsible for maintaining the memorial so as not to present a hazard. However, the current owner may not be identifiable as some records are extremely old and in many cases have not been updated by current relatives/family members.

#### **Memorial Safety Policy**

To help us address the issue we have developed a Memorial Safety Policy. This policy includes three sections which will help us address both the current issues and puts in place processes to minimise the erection of unsafe memorials in the future. The three sections are:

- Section 1 – the process if you are a grave owner and wish to erect a memorial
- Section 2 – the process if you are a memorial sculptor and wish to work in a Belfast City Council cemetery
- Section 3 – our memorial inspection process and how we will deal with unsafe memorials

#### **Memorial Inspection Process**

A key element of the policy is the Memorial Inspection Process. Officers have undertaken a process to identify the total number of memorials across all our cemeteries and have planned a five year rolling inspection programme, as recommended by the Health and Safety Executive. If a memorial is found to be unsafe in the first instance it will be staked and banded. A letter will then be sent to the owner of the memorial, with 10 days, informing them that their memorial

is unsafe, that a temporary make safe repair has been made and details of the actions that they are required to undertake to make their memorial safe. If after 6 months from finding a memorial unsafe we have received no response to our attempts to contact the grave owner we will take the necessary steps to permanently make the memorial safe which will involve:

- Removing the memorial from its foundation and partially sinking it into the ground at the head of the grave – action for lawn cemeteries. At least 25% of the memorial will be below ground
- Lay the memorial flat on the grave – action for older cemeteries where there is a surround on the grave
- Removal of the memorial – action for a memorial in a older cemetery where it has found to be structurally unsafe

Members should note that the current practice is that if a staff member through their work finds a memorial that poses a health and safety risk, immediate action is taken to minimise the risk and this will continue.

Work is currently ongoing around assessing the business administration needs of the service and the alignment of business support. As this work progresses an update report will be brought to Committee.

#### **Consultation on policy changes**

Members will note that we are proposing several policy changes and the next stage in the process is to undertake a period of consultation on these. It is proposed that we will undertake a 12 week period of public consultation during which we will consult on the change in the period for which we hold cremated remains, the proposal for the distribution of money that we receive from recycling metals and the Memorial Safety Policy. As part of the consultation we will meet with representatives of funeral directors and memorial sculptors. A copy of the draft documents will be available on the Council's website, in our cemetery offices and we will advertise it through the Council's communication channels. It is also proposed that we hold four information sessions across the city to inform the public of the proposed changes and to get their views.

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial**

There are resource implications relating to the implementation of the memorial inspection process and these are currently being worked up and will be dependent on the final process that is chosen.

**Human Resources**

There are resource implications relating to the implementation of the memorial inspection process and these are currently being worked up and will be dependent on the final process that is chosen.

**Asset and Other Implications**

The implementation of the memorial safety inspection programme will have implications for the Council's cemeteries.

**4 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

Actions identified as part of this strategy will be screened in line with the Council's policy.

**5 Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- i provide comment on the proposal to the change in the period for which we hold cremated remains, the proposal for the distribution of money that we receive from recycling metals and the Memorial Safety Policy; and
- ii subject to any amendment proposed, agree that a public consultation process is undertaken in relation to these."

In respect of the proposals which had been outlined by the Assistant Director, the following amendments were suggested:

- That the proposed revised timescale for the collection of cremated remains, that is, four weeks, might be considered somewhat stringent and, given that the loss of a loved one was a difficult time for families, that the timescale be re-examined with a view to extending that period; and
- That the proposal that families would, at the time of a cremation, nominate a charity to which the Council would make a donation from the income received from the re-cycling of metals from



**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

cremations, be re-examined with a view to providing a longer period for relatives to nominate a charity.

The Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the above-mentioned amendments being incorporated within the consultation exercise.

**Anti Social Behaviour – Update**

(Mr. P. Murray, Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, attended in connection with this item).

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

**The purpose of this report is to:**

- **Provide an overview of antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents across parks and leisure facilities and electoral area; and**
- **Update committee on the activities, interventions and future developments of the ASB programme.**
- **Members are reminded that the objectives of the ASB programme are to:**
- **enhance the environment around Parks and Leisure facilities;**
- **develop education initiatives involving creative or supportive interventions to model acceptable behaviour around Parks and Leisure facilities;**
- **define enforcement as a deterrent against infraction of bye-laws or legislation; and**
- **develop sustainable interagency and inter-departmental networks and leading a partnership approach to reducing antisocial behaviour**

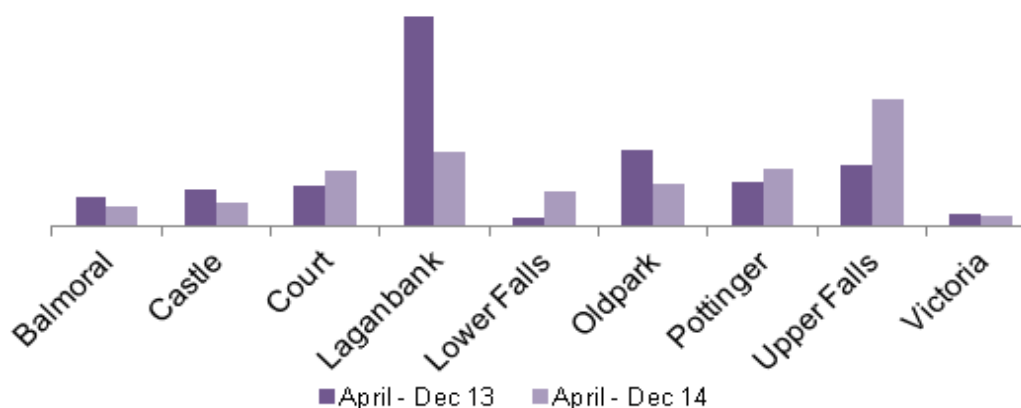
**2. Key Issues**

**ASB trends in Parks throughout Electoral areas**

**The comparative data outlined in Figure 1 below, illustrates a decreasing trend in the total number of ASB incident reports in parks in the city between April and December 2013 in comparison with April to December 2014. There is however an increase in parks within the four electoral areas of Court, Lower Falls, Pottinger and Upper Falls.**

**Figure 1**

**Incidents of ASB in Parks Across Electoral Areas  
April-Dec 2013/2014**



The data above is recorded by frontline officers. Spikes in the data are indicative of an increase in ASB. Members should note that in several of the areas that have seen an increase in ASB incidents, parks (Woodvale, Dunville & Orangefield) were closed for redevelopment in 2013, and this can partially explain the increase. Where there are hotspots, there is an increased focus for frontline staff who will record as much detail on ASB incidents as possible. This provides information on what ASB took place, when it happened and where exactly it happened, which allows the department to plan future activities to reduce ASB on Council properties.

**Successful interventions to reduce ASB**

- Engagement activities are being developed to consult with young people in Court, Oldpark, Pottinger and Upper Falls. This work is informing how we can provide services for young people in partnership with local youth providers and reduce ASB specifically in Parks.
- Community Outreach Managers have been collaborating with local youth providers and supporting community and schools groups through innovative engagement and activity programmes. These programmes bring communities into facilities in parks, allotments and community gardens to create a greater sense of ownership.
- Examples of this practice can be found in the outdoor classroom or youth area (YAA) in Falls Park which has proved to be extremely popular with over 200 school children and young people participating in a

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

diverse programme of outdoor learning activities designed to support the curriculum. This area has been animated with lots of positive activity and has led to a decrease of ASB in the immediate area around the YAA. It is hoped a similar effect will be experienced throughout the park following the proposed developments in the Falls Park Master Plan.

- There has been significant youth engagement connected to the Waterworks Halloween lantern event and in Alexandra Park supporting the ongoing discussions about the future of the interface barrier. This ongoing annual community participation supports greater ownership of the park areas and contributes to a decrease in ASB.
- Another example of community engagement can be found in the development of regeneration of Knocknagoney. This location was perceived as being neglected and suffering badly from ASB. The Outreach Manager has worked with the local community supporting the construction of a community garden, MUGA and lighting scheme. This park has a diverse programme of activity and is now perceived as a vibrant space and asset to the local community.
- The use of community engagement in City Cemetery has underpinned the development of an art project. The imminent placement of artwork will be driven by community engagement and it is hoped will raise community confidence in tackling long standing issues of ASB.
- Park Wardens continue to ensure parks are clean as they issue fixed penalties in relation to litter and dog fouling offences in parks and on their journeys between parks as part of an ongoing enforcement programme. 35 fixed penalty notices have been issued since April 2014.
- Park Wardens and Community Safety Safer Neighbourhood Officers are engaged in joint patrols to identify where ASB is taking place in Parks after closing time. This work is developing as part of the collaborative Parks and Community Safety action plans based at Woodvale Park, Falls/City Cemetery, Musgrave Park and Orangefield Playing Fields (See below).
- Park Managers, Wardens and Community Safety Officers are working in close partnership with PSNI. This has been evident recently in Orangefield and Cavehill following reports of large groups of youths

gathering. The outcomes of this work will be shared with the DPCSP.

- As Members are aware there has recently been a significant investment in programmes that improve leisure facilities in parks. Improvements in soccer pitches, additional pavilions, multi use games areas (MUGAS), and playgrounds, as well as community gardens and allotments bring more users into parks and create more legitimate activity. These facilities are further enhanced by consideration of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles (CPTED). This process ensures that improved facilities are designed with robust materials to minimise vandalism and damage from ASB.

#### **Current Citywide activity to tackle ASB**

The following citywide developments are currently being implemented:

- Members will be aware of the HES committee paper 'Tackling Antisocial Behaviour Internal review' (January 2015). Four parks have been identified as locations requiring focused collaborative working. These are Falls Park/City Cemetery, Woodvale Park, Musgrave Park and Orangefield Park. Workshops have been initiated with frontline staff. The purpose of the workshops was to develop an inter-departmental operational framework for how Council tackles antisocial behaviour, for presentation to Committee in due course.
- Collaborative Parks and Community Safety action plans are being developed to reduce ASB in the neighbourhoods around the four parks. This will be rolled out and regularly reviewed over the next year. The lessons learned will underpin the eventual expansion of this work throughout parks and neighbourhoods in North, South, East and West Belfast.

#### **Planned Interventions**

Planned interventions will focus on parks with more than 20 incidents in the last quarter. The specific types of ASB are analysed and appropriate, cost effective and realistic interventions are planned in response. The interventions span across all 4 objectives of the ASB programme.

Interventions will often involve improving the security of boundaries and gates or create specific displacement and diversionary activities. Park Wardens will be directed to specific sites to patrol in high visibility joint operations across the City with Community Safety Safer Neighbourhood Officers. Joint operations may extend to working in partnership with PSNI (dependent upon availability), to enforce street drinking legislation.

3. **Resource Implications**

The development of the programme will be facilitated through the agreed ASB budget 2014-2015 which is approximately £250,000.

4. **Equality Implications**

Much of the ASB programme work spans activities related to reducing interface tensions and bringing young people together to take part in positive programmes and activities. All of the programme work is delivered in line with the council's equality and good relations policies and procedures.

5. **Recommendations**

To note the contents of this report.”

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

**Active Communities**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Active Communities (AC) is a Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) programme, delivered from April 2010 to March 2015, through 11 council groups/ consortia including BCC.

It is recognised that the AC programme has proved to be a valuable coaching and community resource, which has led to high levels of participation in the city including under-represented groups, whilst providing opportunities for partnership working.

- 1.2 At its last meeting, Committee agreed that it would accept Sport NI's letter of offer for the delivery of the Active Communities programme in 2015/16. It also agreed to support

Disability Sport NI's management fee of £7,000. It noted that there were 2 options for the continuation of the programme:

Option 1: Continue 'as is' with a reduced management contribution to BCSDN; or

Option 2: Manage all coaches in-house, with the exception of those employed through Disability Sport NI.

Committee requested that officers concluded these discussions with Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN), to determine whether it was feasible for them to continue to deliver a sub-contract with the reduced management fee, covering the employment of 18 coaches.

## 2. Key Issues

2.1 The Director met with the Board of Directors of BCSDN, to outline the new funding scenario (i.e. £50,000 management fee) and the options available to the Council. The Chairperson of BCSDN, Mr Tom Scott noted the Director's comments and agreed to respond in writing to the Council.

2.2 At the meeting, the Chairperson requested that the Council sought clarification from Sport NI on the potential to allocate any surplus from salaries into management costs; and secondly, to ascertain whether Sport NI would permit income generation through charging for some of the activities.

The Director has spoken to Sport NI and they have confirmed that it is not possible for salaries to be allocated to management costs. It is however possible for BCSDN to apply charges provided these are not excessive and take account of need.

### 2.3 Option 1

Correspondence has now been received from BCSDN. It proposes that BCSDN continues to deliver the sub-contract, by reducing and re-configuring some of its management costs. In the letter, they commit to reducing the overall management fee required from Belfast City Council/Sport NI from £111,104 to £65,000. They have however also indicated that this would be dependent on DSD continuing to fund BCSDN but this has not yet been confirmed by DSD.

BCSDN consider they can partly achieve this by controlling expenditure, utilising a portion of their financial reserves and introducing limited charges for sessions (excluding Neighbourhood Renewal areas and/or vulnerable groups).

There remains a shortfall of £15,000 and BCSDN has requested that Council considers increasing its offer from £50,000 to £65,000.

- 2.4** The key risks with this approach is the limited resources of voluntary/community organisations to absorb the cost of managing and housing coaches, and BCSDN's ability to control expenditure. The Council would need to provide an additional £15,000 to the allocation already made.

However, this model will provide better value for money than currently and sustains a devolved local approach to sports development, with minimum disruption to programme delivery.

- 2.5** Should the Committee recommend the sub-contracting arrangement with BCSDN, it is recommended that the additional requirements are put in place:

- Quarterly reporting on agreed SMART targets reflecting the KPIs in the letter of offer from Sport NI, to be discussed at performance review meetings
- A demonstrated balance of interventions across the city and reports on an area basis to demonstrate local impact.
- This option will be subject to confirmation by DSD of their portion of funding towards management costs.

- 2.6** Option 2

Alternatively, the Council could opt to bring the delivery of the programme in-house. The revenue budget would need to be directed to additional resource to manage the network of sports coaches – either as part of the Leisure Development Unit or alternatively as a variation to the leisure contract with GLL.

Administrative support would be available within current resources at no additional cost.

- 2.7** There are a number of drawbacks to centralising the Active Communities programme. The Council would need to give 3 months notice to BCSDN, which would require the Council to continue to pay a proportion of the current management fee of approximately £27k+ up until end June 2015. In addition, the existing coaches would transfer to the Council under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. If the Council decided at any point in the

future to terminate the contracts of the coaches (e.g. if Sport NI ceased the funding), the Council would be liable for the redundancy costs of the coaches.

However, this option would standardise the sports development activities programme across all areas of the city, in line with community planning expectations. It would improve value for money, with centralised administration and management costs, as well as increase the use of Council facilities in 'down-time'.

**3. Resource Implications**

**Financial:** £50,000 revenue funding has currently been provided in the departmental estimates. An additional £15,000 would be diverted from other activities.

**Human Resources:** TUPE implications as outlined in Option 2.

**Asset and Other Implications:** None

**4. Equality Implications**

There are no equality and good relations implications at this stage.

**5. Recommendations**

**Committee is asked to consider and agree its preferred option."**

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,  
Seconded by Councillor Kyle and

Resolved - that the Committee agrees to adopt Option 1 as set out within the report on the understanding that the Belfast Community Sports Development Network would endeavour to deliver additional programme activities within the east of the City during 2015/2016.

**Shelter for the Homeless – Occupation of Council Land**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Background Information**

**1.1 Members will be aware that a homeless 'pod' was placed at Jubilee Gardens at the junction of High Street and Victoria**



**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

Street which is part of Belfast City Council's (BCC) parks estate/ land. The pod was present on the site before Christmas for one day, was removed and then reinstated week commencing 19 January 2015.

- 1.2 Following an initial health and safety assessment of the pod, the council identified potential risks and took mitigating action by removing the pod on Monday 26 January. Organisers/ owners of the pod have remained anonymous and have been unwilling to directly meet council officers to discuss the issues and risks. Correspondence and the exchange of information has taken place between BCC and CommonLawni by email and telephone to reiterate health and safety, legal and maintenance concerns and underline the council's position. On Monday 2 February 2015 Common Lawni requested the return of their property via email, which was collected by an independent agent on the 4 February 2015. Despite the difficulties and the discussion between BCC and CommonLawni that a report would be brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee for a decision in February 2015, the pod was reinstated by its organisers/ owners on Wednesday 11 February 2015.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to present the issues and risks associated with the placement of the homeless pod on council parks land so that members can make an informed decision on its future.
- 1.4 Members are also reminded of the report to the January Strategic Policy and Resources committee and the February Council meeting when an update was provided of the coordination and support agencies that work to tackle the issue of homelessness in the city and the strategic and regulatory role that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The NIHE have been consulted as part of this report and their response is below.

## **2 Key Issues**

### **BCC Issues and concerns**

- 2.1 There are a number of key issues and concerns to note in relation to the homeless pod and its organisers/ owners:
  - An initial health and safety assessment of the pod revealed the following:
    - It was not fixed in position and was placed close to a busy, thoroughfare raising safety concerns for users and passing traffic;

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

- It was made of wood which raised concerns about combustible material and the potential of it being set alight.
- A site specific in-depth risk assessment had not been carried out and no public liability insurance has been provided by the organisers/ owners. Information about the construction of the pod has been provided but it is not an in depth risk assessment.
- It was placed on council land without any prior consultation or agreement.
- Ownership is anonymous and representation is through a third party.

**Issues raised by Common Lawni**

**2.2 Throughout regular correspondence with CommonLawni several comments and conditions were put forward to the council, including:**

- The good deed to the homelessness being lost in a sea of red tape and bureaucracy presented by the council.
- The council's removal intervention is distracting their 'social experiment'.
- Makes reference to statements including: the Secretary State for Justice indicates that it is not a matter of public policy to require public indemnity insurance and the "Random Act of Kindness", tweeted by Lord Alan Sugar.
- Permits the council to use a disclaimer and suggests as a charitable act the pod could be included under existing policies to further enhance tax exempt status. Also under common law they do not believe that insurance is required and that Good Samaritan laws are applicable (although it is not clear what is meant by this).
- Asks for a license for the pod on a temporary basis (revocable at any time).
- Pushes for the release of a statement of mutual agreement and refuse to meet in person until this is reached.
- Highlights that feedback from volunteers stating that they would feel safer in units located in well illuminated sites, outlining that they have more pods.
- Suggests weekly inspection, cleaning and sanitation would be carried out by [www.foresiccleaningni.co.uk](http://www.foresiccleaningni.co.uk) and annual maintenance in the summer, the intention being to site the pod or pods from November to March each year.

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

**BCC Assessment of risks**

- 2.3** In light of the issues and concerns raised above, the council has worked closely with and sought advice from key experts within the council, including legal, insurance, health and safety and property maintenance. The main risks associated with the homeless pod are summarised in four themes below;-

**Table 1: BCC critical risks**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Risks/ Impacts</b>
<b>Health and Safety</b>	<p>Failure to comply with statutory regulations i.e. H&amp;S</p> <p>The placement of such facilities on council parks/land should be done with due regard in ensuring the safety of all users</p> <p>The use of the pod would need to be managed between potentially competing users.</p>
<b>Legal</b>	<p><i><b>Risk Management</b></i></p> <p>All statutory legal requirements must be met including a risk assessment and risk management controls put in place to reduce exposure to civil litigation.</p> <p><i><b>Public liability insurance</b></i></p> <p>Public liability insurance is required as the council has a liability to all those who use its land by virtue of the Occupiers Liability (NI) Order 1987.</p> <p>Require assurance that any liability arising from its use is something for which the council will have an indemnity as at law the installation on our property renders the council liable for any claims.</p> <p>Failure of the council to secure adequate levels of insurance for the pod. Should Committee be minded to support the retention of the pod on the site, Council would be required to cover any public liability claims.</p> <p><i><b>License</b></i></p> <p>A license cannot be granted by BCC without a robust risk assessment carried out and evidence of liability insurance provided</p>
<b>Financial</b>	<p>In the absence of risk management controls the exposure to civil litigation is increased which may ultimately impact on the councils insurance premiums</p> <p>Should committee be minded to support the retention of the pod on site, Council would be required to put in place its own measures to address the risks identified</p> <p>In the absence of a formal agreement/ indemnity it is likely that the council will have to accept</p>

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

	<b>responsibility for any public liability claims associated with the shelter(s), falling within our insurance excess of £150K.</b>
<b>Maintenance/ sustainability</b>	<b>There are potential operational risks for the council to consider regarding on going cleaning, inspection and maintenance and upkeep etc. Should committee be minded to support the retention of the pod on site, Council would be required to put in place its own measures to address these risks.</b>

**2.4 In order to reduce the issues and mitigate the risks above, the council has and is committed to working and engaging collaboratively with agencies/ charities and key individuals across the city to look at innovative ways to alleviate the problem of homelessness. The council has a duty of care to all in the City by ensuring that initiatives undertaken are properly considered and assessed from the outset. It is vital that there is a collaborative approach and that any individual initiatives are in the wider public interest and work in tandem with the overall approach to alleviate homelessness in the city.**

**2.5 The NIHE, the lead statutory body for tackling Homelessness has stated that the Housing Executive Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 17 has a key objective of removing the need to sleep rough in Northern Ireland. A range of appropriate core services are already in place in Belfast including street outreach support services, access to crisis accommodation, day centre facilities, comprehensive needs assessment and the development of a continuum of services, e.g. harm reduction programmes for addictions, floating support etc. to take the person from crisis accommodation to move on and through to resettlement. While the pod is a well-meaning gesture, NIHE would have concerns that it may have the effect of giving individuals an option to remain on the streets and cease engagement with homeless services and may ultimately prolong homelessness rather than reduce it. NIHE would also share the Council's health and safety concerns.**

**In Belfast, the Housing Executive is about to embark on an audit of rough sleeping in the city leading to a review of services which will identify any gaps in provision. This will inform the development of a commissioning plan to bring on where necessary additional services or to realign existing services to meet the need.**

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial**

**Subject to the committee decision, the council may have to accept responsibility for any public liability claims associated with the shelter(s), falling within our insurance excess of £150K.**

**Should committee be minded to support retention of the pod on site, an assessment of the financial impact would need to be undertaken by officers.**

**Human Resources**

**None determined at this stage – same as above.**

**Asset and Other Implications**

**None determined at this stage – same as above.**

**4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

**Where necessary all agreed initiatives will be subject to equality screening.**

**5 Recommendations**

- 1. to note the issues, concerns and risks associated with the pod and agree that unless the owners meet the requirements of the Council with immediate effect that the pod is to be removed from the site.**
- 2. Regardless of the decision made by Committee further attempts will be made to engage the owners in discussions regarding the use of this facility with relevant agencies and stakeholders in the city.”**

The Committee expressed its concerns at the ongoing situation and suggested that the issues raised by the positioning of the pod within the open space should be addressed on a multi-agency basis. Concern was expressed that the organisation which had placed the pod at the site had remained anonymous and failed to engage meaningfully with the Council to resolve the matter. The point was emphasised that the health, hygiene and, particularly, public safety and risk issues which had arisen as a result of the issue needed to be resolved at the earliest possibility.

After discussion, it was agreed to defer consideration of the report and that the organisation which had placed the homeless pod within the Jubilee Gardens be requested to attend the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 12th March, and that an invitation be extended also to a range of statutory bodies – particularly the Northern Ireland Housing Executive – to discuss the matter with a view to finding a long-term resolution.

### **Belfast Zoological Gardens – Research Activities**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the extent of research work which was being undertaken currently at the Belfast Zoo, in conjunction with a range of universities, to explore and enhance the conservation of various species through the exchange of information. The report highlighted also the links which the Zoo had established with the School of Biology at The Queen's University of Belfast and various faculties within the Ulster University.

The Committee commended the Belfast Zoo on its ongoing programme of research and conservation and endorsed a future programme of research.

### **Urban Buzz Project**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1 Relevant Background Information**

**Buglife are developing an Urban Buzz Project which aims to promote insect pollinators in Parks and Open Spaces, transforming mown and unused amenity grass into vibrant areas, colour-rich and buzzing with life. The project will engage communities in discovering wildlife on their doorstep.**

**Insect pollination is essential to food production. “One out of every 3 mouthfuls” is pollinated by insects. In UK this is worth £500m per annum or 13% of UK agricultural revenue.**

**Over half of our bee species have suffered declines over the past 50 years and over 250 UK pollinators are in danger of extinction. Habitat loss is a major driver of pollinator declines and currently in Northern Ireland less than 5% of grasslands are species rich.**

**The project would revitalise areas with more sustainable pollinator friendly perennial planting. The project will involve 10 flagship cities across the UK. Buglife are in the final stages of securing funding for this project and have approached Belfast City Council to become a partner Flagship City.**

#### **2 Key Issues**

**The project will bring £100,000 of spend to increase the number of pollinator-friendly places within the City, enhancing green networks, providing attractive and engaging spaces for people, and involving local communities in their creation. This will include urban meadows, enhanced**

amenity planting, road verge enhancements, work with local schools and trees for bees.

This would be a 3 year project expected to commence in Autumn 2015. The project will include a part time staff resource who will undertake project work and deliver outreach activities to encourage local communities to engage more with their parks and open spaces. BCC would be agreeing to:

- permission to carry out project work on BCC land. All works would be developed and agreed in advance with the Council.
- maintain any new habitat/enhancements for 5 years
- work with Buglife promoting Urban Buzz in the City.

If successful and Belfast becomes a Flagship City a partnership agreement outlining roles and responsibilities will be developed and brought back to members for approval.

### **3 Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

There is potentially £100,000 of external funding available for this project.

#### **Human Resources**

None required at present

#### **Asset and Other Implications**

The project will involve the creation of wildflower rich habitats within parks which the Council will be required to maintain for 5 years.

### **4 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

There are no equality and good relations implications in relation to this project.

### **5 Recommendations**

It is recommended that approval is given to become a Flagship City and provide a letter of support to Buglife.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Request to Undertake Research within Council Parks**

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from The Queen's University of Belfast seeking permission to undertake research into the distribution of squirrels and pine martens on Council sites across Belfast. The Director explained that the research was part of a programme which sought to establish the following:

- the distribution of pine martens, red and grey squirrels in Northern Ireland and the border counties;
- the number of adult pine martens in Ireland;
- to enable the relevant agencies to meet with their statutory requirements on the status of the pine martens within the EU; and
- to raise awareness of Ireland's protected mammals.

The Committee was informed that the research would be carried out in a number of sites, including the Barnett Demesne, the Clement Wilson Park, the Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, the Ormeau Park, the Cave Hill Country Park, the Cregagh Glen and the Glenbank and Glencairn Parks.

The Committee granted permission for the research to be undertaken as outlined, subject to the drawing-up of an appropriate licence agreement between the Council and The Queen's University of Belfast.

**Land Disposal – Development of a Corporate Policy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

**The purpose of this report is to inform and advise the Committee regarding a request from the current owner of land adjoining 35 Brookvale Avenue to construct residential accommodation on a piece of land which had been previously leased to a prior owner of the property to enhance his garden. By way of background information, a copy of two reports from February 2009 and August 2010 are appended.**

**In February 2009 the Committee received a report which proposed that requests for land for domestic use from private individuals should not be approved unless the land had been declared as surplus to operational requirements. This was approved. However, the report highlighted 3 such requests which were under consideration, at the time. The report sought consent to progress the 3 requests for disposal. One of the requests related to the acquisition of land to the north west of 35 Brookvale Avenue, which adjoins Waterworks Park. The proposed disposal of the land in respect of 35 Brookvale**



was presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources in August 2010.

The report to Strategic Policy & Resources outlined the terms of the agreement as follows.

- Area for disposal comprises approximately 429 square metres;
- Use of the land will be restricted to open space and to garden use in particular.
- Disposal price agreed at £12,200.
- Purchasers will erect a boundary fence at their own expense along any of the boundaries which are not currently fenced

In addition, the report stated: *“The owner states it will be used to enlarge the garden surrounding his house. The proposed restriction on use to open space guards against redevelopment of this portion of the site for housing or other commercial purposes and helps retain a buffer between the park and neighbouring buildings”*.

2. Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee to note is that this land was disposed of on the clear understanding that was to be retained as open space and that it was not intended for housing or any other form of commercial development. The change in ownership is irrelevant.

The land concerned was originally created as a buffer area to protect the adjoining house at 35 Brookvale Avenue from anti-social behaviour, the development of a dwelling on this buffer area could result in a future request to the Council to create a further buffer area, thus eroding the space available for public use within the Park.

It is important that the Council maintains a position wherein land disposed off as open space to private individuals should remain so regardless of any change in ownership. To convey consent would set a precedent for all future disposals.

Should the Council have been advised at the time of the disposal that the intention was to construct residential accommodation it is likely that the request would have been declined.

3. **Resource Implications**

**Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications at this time.

**Human Resource Implications**

There are no additional human resource implications.

4. **Equality Implications**

Equality considerations have not been assessed at this time.

5. **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to consider the request and, given the previous decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources, is asked not to support the request.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**River Terrace - Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 In December 2013, P&L Committee considered a report on a request from St John Vianney Youth Centre to explore the option of establishing a community garden in River Terrace. At that time, Committee recommended the further investigation of the potential for the development of a community garden in River Terrace with a further report to be brought to Committee in due course. It agreed that part of the £50,000 of capital funds allocated to South Belfast could contribute to the build of a community garden at River Terrace.
- 1.2 It is also noted that in 2006 a contamination report was carried out on the site which highlighted contaminants are present, in the high risk category. Soil samples were taken from a small section of the site along the railway line, the environmental consultant therefore recommended that additional testing is undertaken which is dispersed evenly across the full extent of the site.
- 1.3 As the land is owned by the Department of Social Development (DSD), work has been ongoing to provide a licence for the land to Council ownership with the appropriate agreements and insurances in place. There has been some

engagement with local communities, although this has been limited due to access to the land and the constraints regarding the growing season.

## **2 Key Issues**

**2.1** The formal discussions to grant access to the land are now planned to conclude by the beginning of March. It is now proposed that the immediate actions are undertaken:

- Do an immediate clean-up on the site and remove any fly-tipping;
- Determine if any patching/replacement of pathways is needed; and
- Insert the site into the East Area maintenance programme to include regular grass-cutting and litter picks.

**2.2** It is vital that all stakeholders and interested parties be involved and lead the process to develop a sustainable community space, with the strong sense of local ownership needed for a successful garden.

The following steps with local stakeholders/ residents / interested community members to determine the next step in the development of River Terrace as a growing space:

- March 2015 Stakeholders to engage in formalised workshops. These workshops will identify the stakeholder's main priorities for the growing space including the strengths and weaknesses of this space for the community.
- March 2015 Work in partnership with the stakeholders to consult with the residents adjacent to the site
- April – May 2015 Open invitation to attend a presentation and workshop on community gardens, to include site visits.
- May 2015 Working group to be established. Results of previous workshops and consultation to be analysed with group.
- June 2015 to February 2016 In collaboration with the working group, a programme of initial community engagement will be developed and may include community clean ups/ environmental and educational workshops/ neighbourhood activity days. How the community decide to utilise the space within these months will influence the design brief for this site.
- November 2015 Landscape Planning and Development Unit to develop a design based on the working group aspirations and the communities capacity.

- December 2015 – February 2016 construction of community garden to be undertaken by Council contractor, subject to capacity shown by the community to be involved in the construction of the community garden as a form of skills development.
- March 2016 – growing activities to commence.

2.3 As noted above, the contamination survey reported that it is a grossly contaminated site and in the high risk category. Further survey work would be required if there is any site disturbance or earth re-modelling recommended and there is no estimate for remediation costs. A cost for this work can be ascertained following a further detailed site investigation. This would like require a funding bid to maximise value for money.

### 3 Resource Implications

**Financial:** An immediate allocation of £20,000 is available for the project.

**Human Resources:** The Community Parks Outreach Manager will work with the community to establish a core group and increase participation in the garden in line with the Growing Communities Strategy.

**Asset and Other Implications:** The transfer of this land will result in the Council gaining an additional asset with associated maintenance implications.

### 4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

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

### 5 Recommendations

Members are asked to agree the proposed community engagement programme.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### City Cemetery - Decorative Arts Project

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the progress which had been achieved in respect of the decorative arts project at the Belfast City Cemetery. The Assistant Director outlined the steps which would be taken in the delivery of the next phase of the project and gave an overview of the artwork

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

which had been chosen, together with an indication of the sites which had been identified within the Cemetery for the installation of the artwork.

**Waterworks Park - Angling Club**

The Committee deferred consideration of a request, which had been received from the Angling Club within the Waterworks Park, for the Council to provide electricity to the club's cabin adjacent to the top pond to allow for further information to be submitted in respect of the costs which might be incurred in the provision of electricity to that cabin.

Arising from discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would explore the feasibility of the Council providing similar-type support to the Belfast Aero-modelling Club, which was based within the Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park.

**Meccano Bridge at the River Lagan - Proposal**

The Director indicated that a request had been received from the Engineering Faculty at The Queen's University of Belfast seeking permission to host an event at the Clement Wilson Park. He explained that the Faculty would be seeking to erect a temporary 'Meccano' bridge across a 24-metre span of the River Lagan, on a date as yet to be determined in mid-June. He stated that the proposal had to be approved by the Rivers Agency, however, the University had indicated that it would indemnify the Council against any loss or damage which might occur as a result of the holding of the event.

The Committee granted permission to the Engineering Faculty to host the event, subject to the approval of the Rivers Agency, and agreed that a temporary container be located at the site by the organisers for that purpose. The permission would be subject to the organisers meeting with the Council's Event Management Plan and submitting details of relevant insurance documentation, stewarding arrangements, the payment of a bond and to the organisers adhering to all health and safety requirements.

**Grove Playing Fields - Request**

The Committee agreed to defer, until its meeting scheduled for 12th March, consideration of a request which had been received for the use of the Grove Playing Fields on Saturday, 9th May. That request, which had been submitted by the Ulster Centenary Committee, would be for the purposes of an assembly point for a parade through Belfast which would mark the centenary of the march past the City Hall by members of the 36th (Ulster) Division, prior to their leaving for pre-war training. It was agreed that representatives of the Ulster Centenary Committee would be invited to attend the meeting to provide further clarification on its request.

**'Run, Walk, Jog for Palestine' - Request**

The Committee was informed that a request to host a sponsored 'Run, Walk and Jog' event at the Waterworks Park had been received from Palestine Aid. The Director

**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

reported that the event, which would commence at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, 29th March, would be attended by approximately 200 participants. He confirmed that, whilst the participants would be sponsored, no money would be collected at the park since that aspect of the event would be managed online. In addition, Palestine Aid had been advised that no flags or banners would be permitted to be displayed, other than those advertising the event which would be agreed in conjunction with the Park Manager.

The Committee granted approval for the use of the Waterworks Park for the event, subject to the completion of an appropriate event management plan, which would be to the satisfaction of the Council.

**FIFA Schools' Super Festival**

The Director reported that the Irish Football Association had requested permission to host a Schools' Super Festival for girls at the City of Belfast Playing Fields on Wednesday, 10th June. He pointed out that, if agreed, it would be the second year in which the Council had hosted the event and added that the 2014 festival had served to promote and enhance women's and girls' football in Northern Ireland on a cross-community basis.

The Committee agreed to grant the free use of the City of Belfast Playing Fields to the Irish Football Association for the pitches and associated facilities, subject to the completion of an appropriate event management plan to the satisfaction of the Council.

**Belfast Mela 2015**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

**The Mela is a multicultural festival that has attracted 20,000 people annually from all communities across Belfast and beyond. The Mela has been successful in raising cultural awareness, encouraging civic identity and promoting a positive image for Belfast. In March 2014, the Committee agreed to support Mela 2014 (Artsekta) up to £20,000, subject to a number of conditions.**

**2. Key Issues**

**Evaluation of 2014**

**The Council established a successful arrangement with the Belfast Mela in 2013 and 2014. It operates at minimal cost to the public and in 2014 attracted over 230,000 spectators. In their evaluation for 2014, Belfast Mela estimate that the return on Council's investment is approximately a ratio of £8.90 spend per visitor to every £1 Council support. Visitors rated**

the event programming at 8 out of a possible 10 and an affordable, family-focussed day out.

As a condition of the financial support, Belfast Mela was requested to facilitate 3 taster events across the city in advance of the main event. These were facilitated at Falls Park, Knocknagoney and New Lodge with over 5,000 participants attending. Other more in-depth outreach activities were facilitated with about 100 participants from An Droichead, Annadale Haywood Residents Association, Glenbyrn Women's Group and participants recruited through the NIHE East Belfast office.

Overall, at the Mela event itself, 93% of participants felt they had learnt something about another culture through the programme and 79% of participants felt that events such as the Mela enhance civic identity and participation.

#### Proposal for 2015

The Committee is asked to note that the Council has received a request from the Director of ArtsEkta to use Botanic Gardens for the Belfast Mela on 30th August 2015.

It is proposed that Council continues to provide financial support to the event (up to £20,000), given the positive economic impact it has for the city, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.

Similar to 2014, as a condition to funding, it is recommended that ArtsEkta is requested to facilitate community engagement and taster events in other local neighbourhoods, to build the audience from across the city. Specific locations could be identified in conjunction with the Community Parks Outreach team, ensuring a spread across the city, and potentially include re-developed assets such as Victoria Park and newly developed such as Girdwood Park.

In relation to facilitating the event itself, the key issues are :

1. In this particular instance the Council has received a request for use for Upper and Lower Botanic Gardens for the Belfast Mela on 30th August 2015 from midday to 6.00pm;
2. The proposed timescale from set up to take down of the event is eight days 25th August to 1st September 2015 inclusive in Botanic Gardens;
3. ArtsEkta has requested permission to collect an entrance fee in the region of £5 per adult;

4. The event shall be subject to the preparation of an event management plan which shall cover all aspects of management including health and safety, access and will comply with the current events policy;
5. A legal agreement will be provided by Legal Services;
6. Consultation by ArtsEkta will be undertaken with other local stakeholders such as Queens University, Lyric Theatre, local residents groups and the Friends of Botanic Gardens.

### 3. Resource Implications

#### Financial

The Bond of Intent shall be waived but the Bond of reinstatement of £1000 shall be provided by ArtsEkta as in previous year's per event. An allocation of £20,000 can be made from within the departmental revenue budgets to support the event.

#### Human Resources

Community Park Manager to be in attendance for 8 Hours during event.

#### Asset and other implications

ArtsEkta shall ensure all minimal impact on Council property and will provide a Bond of reinstatement prior to the event.

### 4. Equality Implications

The Events Policy for Parks and Leisure facilities and venues was previously screened as part of its consideration at Committee. The application of the policy is deemed to have no differential impact on any one group, given the diversity of applicant groups and range of events organised across the Council's properties.

### 5. Recommendations

Committee is asked to grant permission to ArtsEkta to provide the Belfast Mela in Botanic Gardens subject to the development of an Event Management Plan and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure and on condition that :

- The event organisers resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;



**Parks and Leisure Committee,  
Tuesday, 24th February, 2015**

- An appropriate legal agreement, to be prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor is completed;
- The event organisers meet all statutory requirements including Health and Safety and Licensing;
- The organisers be permitted to charge an admission fee in the region of £5 to access the Botanic Gardens for the event;
- Permit Closure of Botanic Gardens on the 30th August 2015 to permit admittance by Mela tickets holders only.”

Minute the full report

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Northern Ireland Electricity – Stewart Street**

The Committee was informed that a request to install an underground electricity cable at the Council-owned land at Stewart Street had been received from Northern Ireland Electricity.

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Orders, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it would approve the installation of an underground cable by Northern Ireland Electricity, as requested, and authorise the completion of the way-leave in respect of the matter, subject to same subject to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive offering having no objection.

Chairman