



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Process for Prioritisation of Areas for Future Alleygating
Date:	4 th February, 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that last year Belfast Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) completed a pilot alleygating scheme which saw the installation of nearly 200 alleygates in five areas across the city (Little Americas, Lower Windsor, Woodvale, the Mount/Willowfield and Beechmount). The scheme attracted considerable political, public and media attention and there has since been a high level of demand for gates across the city.

Members will also be aware that the objectives of an alleygating scheme are to:

- Reduce anti-social behaviour;
- Reduce domestic burglary;
- Reduce the fear of crime;
- Reduce littering and illegal dumping; and
- Gain community involvement in environmental improvement and neighbourhood initiatives.

An independent evaluation of the pilot scheme has shown that a positive contribution has been made to these objectives. For example as a result of the pilot phase, 89% of residents reported a positive impact on reducing the fear of crime.

The Community Safety Team has been working on the development of proposals for the future implementation of a comprehensive alleygating scheme across the city for the next 2 – 3 years, taking into account factors such as finance / potential funding, staff resources and the average time taken to complete the detailed process set by the Department for Regional Development to enable gates to be legally erected. To support this work, Deloitte LLP was engaged to develop and agree selection criteria for alleygating that could be used for prioritising and phasing alleygating across Belfast.

A briefing, to which all Members were invited, was held on the 8th October 2008 to inform Members of the emerging approach and ask for their input into the process. The views of Members and those of other partner agencies consulted by Deloitte have now significantly influenced the recommendations detailed in their report (attached as Appendix 1).

Key Issues

The Community Safety Team is facilitating the development of proposals for future gating within the city; using the findings of the evaluation and experiences of the pilot scheme. To support this work Deloitte LLP has been engaged to identify selection criteria to allow the prioritisation of potential areas for the roll-out of the Belfast Community Safety Alleygating Scheme as well as supporting the development of ongoing evaluation criteria

As part of this process, Deloitte consulted with key stakeholders such as BCSP, PSNI, NIHE, NI Fire and Rescue, the Roads Service and colleagues internally within BCC including Cleansing Services, responsible for cleaning the entries. The responses from each partner are detailed in section 2 of the attached report.

Deloitte has used the findings of this research to develop a series of considerations / indicators which will allow the Community Safety Team to assess both the 'need' for and the 'feasibility' of, alleygating in neighbourhoods across the city. These include:

- Completion of streets adjacent to the pilot areas;
- ASB and criminal damage;
- Community support for & capacity to support an alleygating scheme;
- Physical structure of alleyways

Deloitte has structured these factors into two levels of criteria, **mandatory criteria**; i.e. those that **must** be met before an area would be earmarked for alleygating and **prioritisation criteria**; i.e. those against which each street is assessed and weighted marks are awarded as a score. Page 18 of the attached Deloitte report (Appendix 1), details the selection criteria and depicts the process in a flow diagram. Deloitte has applied the prioritisation criteria to streets throughout the city (where there have been requests for alleygating) to develop an initial list of streets. The mandatory criteria would then be applied by the Community Safety Team as a second phase as this will require on-site surveys to assess for example whether it is physically possible to erect gates. For efficiency reasons, streets will be surveyed taking the initial list in descending order until resources are likely to be exhausted.

Taking cognisance of the comments of Members, Deloitte has prioritised streets in each of the four city quadrants, North, South, East and West to ensure a cross-city approach (See Appendix 1, pages 27 – 29 of the attached report). It is important to note that these lists of streets have not been surveyed for their physical suitability and this will form the next phase of the application and roll out of the scheme over 2009-11.

The size of the scheme will depend on the finances available and the staff capacity. In order to take forward a significant alleygating scheme across the City over the next 2 – 3 years, it will be necessary to seek external financial assistance. Each gate is likely to cost in the region of £4,000 installed, which in effect means it is likely to cost £500,000 to erect gates in approximately 65 streets. Negotiations are already taking place with the NIO and BRO. However, it must be appreciated that outside bodies providing funding are likely to stipulate some further conditions for spending their funds which could then affect the prioritisation of streets presented in the Deloitte report.

Given the costs outlined above, it is unlikely that all streets that are on the current waiting list can be facilitated in the near future. Therefore the prioritisation of the streets against agreed selection criteria is critical.

It is important that Members agree the broad process so that the Community Safety Team can take the various stages forward (see Appendix 2 showing the process and phases for installation of alleygates).

Evaluating the impact of future alleygating schemes will be important to demonstrate how these have helped to achieve the overall objective of making Belfast safer as well as assuring value for money. Deloitte has therefore refined the evaluation criteria originally used in the pilot and developed a new evaluation framework which is linked to the selection criteria and which includes performance targets which will be measured against neighbourhood baselines.

Resource Implications

Financial

£500,000 for alleygating has been proposed as part of the Council's Capital Programme. However, given that existing capital programme commitments mean that the cost of the capital programme is already at or close to the agreed affordability limits, it has not yet been possible to subject this proposal to the first stages of the Gateway process and to present a report to Committee requesting approval to progress the scheme. The SP&R Committee is to consider affordability and prioritisation of the capital programme during February, 2009

Match funding is being sought from other sources mainly the Department for Social Development (Belfast Regeneration Office - BRO) and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). Key meetings with these organisations will take place over the next few weeks.

Human Resources

None at present. This work is being supported by the Community Safety Team, namely 2 posts of Project officer (Alleygating) within the Environmental Health Service. If the scheme is rolled out across the City it is likely there will be an increase on the administration burden. Support for this may have to be drawn from within current budgets or through funding agreements.

Asset and Other Implications

None at present.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Agree to the proposed process to be used for the roll-out of the Community Safety Alleygating Scheme for Belfast, including the methodology for selection of areas;
2. Agree to the Environmental Health Service progressing the development of a Business Case/Economic Appraisal for submission through the Gateway process to progress the £500,000 scheme for alleygating within the Capital Programme, subject to discussions at SP&R in February 2009;
3. Note that once further negotiations have been held with the other potential funding organisations a further report will be brought forward to Committee on the implementation of the scheme.

Key to Abbreviations

ASB – Antisocial Behaviour
BCC – Belfast City Council
DRD- Department for regional Development
BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office
NIO- Northern Ireland Office
NIHE- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIFRS- NI Fire and Rescue Service
PSNI – Police Service for Northern Ireland
SP&R – Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Documents Attached

Appendix 1. - Deloitte LLP Report - Identification of Selection Criteria to Prioritise Potential Areas for the roll out of the Belfast Community Safety Alleygating Scheme and the Development of Evaluation Criteria.

Appendix 2. - Flow Chart, Alleygating Process