



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Update Report – A Multi-Sports Stadium for Belfast
Date:	10 April 2008
Reporting Officers:	Director of Parks & Leisure, Andrew Hassard – Ext 3400
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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to;-

- (i) update the Committee with regard to the status of the Business Plan which Drivers Jonas have been commissioned to prepare for the Council;
- (ii) to seek Committee approval for a Special Meeting to which all Members of Council will be invited to receive the Consultants report give consideration to the next steps .

Relevant Background Information

At a Special meeting of the Council held in the City Hall on Thursday, 17th May 2007 the Council met to discuss its position in relation to the siting of the National Stadium, which had been the subject of a requisition signed by Members.

At that meeting it was resolved to call upon the Northern Ireland Assembly to abolish plans set in place by Direct Rule Ministers to locate a National Stadium at the Maze site and to give due and proper consideration to other options before coming to a final decision. It was felt that this was necessary due to the lack of transparency in the process to date, including the failure to produce a comprehensive business plan for the Maze site and the summary dismissal of alternative locations in Belfast without full and proper consideration.

The Council further requested at that meeting that the following be undertaken / noted;-

- officers to prepare detailed reports, including an assessment of necessary resources, on each of the possible sites in Council ownership and other alternative sites;
- agreement to work with potential private developers in drawing up a comprehensive business plan;
- that the Council seek a meeting with appropriate Ministers to present Belfast's case

At a later meeting of this Committee on 9th August 2007 independent research carried out by the University of Ulster into the optimum location for a multi-sports stadium was

presented. Members will be aware that the report published by the University of Ulster on 20 June found overwhelming evidence to support in-town sites as the most advantageous location for multi-purpose sports stadia and found only limited support for an out-of-town location.

At this meeting the Committee agreed to seek a meeting with the relevant Assembly Ministers and the Strategic Investment Board to ascertain why alternative Belfast sites had been ruled out as possible locations for a National Stadium.

Key Issues

At the meeting of this Committee on 13th September 2007, it was proposed that Drivers Jonas, who had already carried out significant work for the Council with regard to the Belfast stadium proposals, be further tasked to prepare a business case which would consider the following:

- who and what the stadium would be for;
- the size and nature of the stadium needed to meet demand;
- the resources required and the funding options for the construction and operation of the stadium;
- the business mix that would be needed to make it work operationally;
- site specific considerations.

In addition it was proposed that the business case should also look at the benefits accruing to Belfast from the Maze development if it were to proceed and also identify any necessary infrastructure improvements that would be needed to maximise the benefits to Belfast of the Maze proposal.

Drivers Jonas are finalising their report on the Business Plan for a Multi-Sports Stadium. A number of meetings have taken place to discuss the draft report and it is expected that a final version will be received in the next week.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of the business plan was agreed at £140,000 at the September Committee meeting. This was not originally allocated in the revenue budgets but agreement was reached with the Director of Corporate Services to make the necessary funds available from Corporate reserves.

Asset and Other Implications

None at this stage.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the update and to agree that a Special Meeting to which all Members of Council are invited can be arranged to receive the report on the Business Plan from Drivers Jonas consultants.