



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Proposal for Development of a Leisure Strategy
<b>Date:</b>	10 April 2008
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Phil Kelly, Leisure Services Manager

### Relevant Background Information

In 2003/04 the Council approved a suite of decisions referred to as the Strategic Review of Council Owned Indoor Leisure Facilities. As the title suggests, this review was largely restricted to a review of current and planned leisure centre facilities.

### Key Issues

Members will be aware that there is now a need to develop a strategy for leisure which is outcome focussed, takes into account other provision in the City, reflects best practice and allows for future decisions on Council provisions for Leisure.

Since the 2003/04 review a number of key actions have taken place, not least of which has been the formation of the new Parks and Leisure Department.

Some Leisure Centres have closed or transferred to community management and some new facilities have been constructed. In addition a number of other key actions have been implemented including the following examples:

- Opening Hours have been reviewed to include early morning opening
- All fitness suites have been refurbished and new equipment purchased
- A substantial Building Upgrade Programme has been completed
- Admission charging has been radically reviewed and the new Boost leisure card introduced
- The activity programme available at leisure centres has been reviewed and upgraded to offer many more classes and activities
- Sports Development opportunities have been substantially increased
- Access to external funding opportunities has also improved

In light of this and to ensure that leisure services continues to improve, it is proposed to develop a leisure strategy over the coming year.

In developing strategic options it will be necessary to explore areas such as:

- what leisure outcomes are required;
- what is the current and future need;
- what existing or proposed leisure services are there in the City;
- synergy opportunities with Parks, other Council services and partner organisations;
- the optimum use of required resources;
- how services may be improved;
- how services may best be delivered; and
- how services may be developed in future.

Such a comprehensive review will require substantial consultation and benchmarking of best practice. It is envisaged that Members will have a leading role at all stages in development of leisure strategy.

In terms of a potential timeframe for the project, the following is offered as an initial guide for Members:

- May – July...consultants appointed
- Project initiated in August 2008
- Interim report to Members in December 2008
- Final report to Members March 2009

## **Resource Implications**

### Financial

It is envisaged that a comprehensive review of leisure services would cost in the region of £80,000. This expenditure is available from within approved Parks & Leisure revenue budgets. Tenders will be evaluated on the basis of:

- methodology;
- overall cost;
- experience of the team of similar projects;
- ability to meet timescales; and
- environmental impact/management.

### Human Resources

Officer time associated with a strategic review of Leisure Services will be met from within existing resources.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members approve:

1. The development of a comprehensive strategy for leisure;
2. The appointment of consultancy support for the project through the tender process in line with the criteria set out above.