



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Grove Wellbeing Centre – Project Update
Date:	10 April 2007
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Katrina Morgan-Talbot, Leisure Operations Manager

Relevant Background Information

Construction began at Grove Wellbeing Centre on 29 August 2005 and in line with a projected 24 month build programme, the original completion date was identified as 29 August 2007. At the Community and Leisure Services Sub Committee of 3 April 2007, Members were advised that the target completion date for construction of the project was 12 November 2007 however, due to the necessity to incorporate landscape works within the project to the value of £1,064,400 associated with funding received from Belfast Regeneration Office, the construction completion date had to be adjusted and the earliest completion date was projected as 4 February 2008.

The building was actually handed over from the contractor to the Council on Friday 21 March and Members were advised at the Parks and Leisure meeting on 11 October 2007 that a period of approximately 2 months would be required to enable the commissioning of plant, service testing, staff training and familiarisation, before the new facility becomes available for public use and fully operational.

At the Parks and Leisure Committee on 14 February 2008 Members agreed to refer to the Council at its meeting on 3 March the question of the closure of the Grove Leisure Centre. The Committee also agreed that, in the event of the closure of the Centre, there should be a seamless transfer of operations from the Grove Leisure Centre to other Council facilities and agreed to the allocation of the necessary resources and to the restriction of the use of the Grove Leisure Centre during that period to clubs only.

At the monthly meeting of Belfast City Council on Monday 3 March 2008, the decision was taken to close the Grove Leisure Centre and examine uses for the site which would maximise benefits to the area.

At the monthly meeting of Belfast City Council on Tuesday 1 April, the decision was taken to keep the fitness suite at Grove open to the public. Officers will update Committee on 10 April on the arrangements that have been made.

Key Issues

Key issues during the next 2 months;

- 1) In order to achieve the objective of a seamless transfer for clubs it is necessary to provide adequate staffing levels at the existing site until the new facility opens. Designations affected by this decision include, receptionists, leisure attendants, swim teachers, cleaners and staff involved in duty management and all affected designations have the opportunity to work at both sites. Staff will remain onsite in the Grove Leisure Centre on a rotating basis and will ensure the safety of the clubs and groups as well as assisting with the closing down of the old centre.
- 2) This 2 month pre-opening is necessary to complete all the work on the snagging list and for the delivery and installation of equipment and also to facilitate training, both BCC site specific training and joint training with the BHSCT & BELB as well as operations testing prior to opening.
- 3) The process to recruit the additional staff for the centre, as approved by Members at the Parks & Leisure Committee on 13 March 2008 is currently underway and it is anticipated that these posts will be filled prior to the centre opening.
- 4) Ten pin bowling alley – two tenders have been received for installation of bowling equipment and advice is currently being sought from the Procurement Section as a result of the poor standard of response. It is anticipated that the bowling alley will now not open at the same time as all of the other leisure facilities.
- 5) Following the decision by Members at the Parks and Leisure Committee on 13 March 2008 regarding franchise catering for Leisure Centres, the new quotation documents for the Grove Well Being Centre will be issued by Friday 4 April 2008. It is still hoped that the successful caterer will be in place either before the centre opens in May or shortly afterwards.
- 6) To assist with the smooth opening of the centre, and due to the technologically advanced nature of much of the plant, it is the intention to hold 'field trials'. Invited groups will be asked to use facilities so that staff can test the systems in a realistic situation. The invitations will also be useful in promoting the Centre amongst potential users prior to opening.

A full programme of tests, covering a six-day period, from Monday 19 - Saturday 24 May, and requiring groups representing a wide range of ability-levels, age-groups and special interests, is being produced at present by officers, and it is proposed that, since these tests are necessary for the effective operation of the centre, no charges be levied. It is further proposed that the first group to be given the opportunity to use the Centre during this period be the Elected Members and the suggested date is Monday 19 May.

- 7) The delay in the handover of the building to the Council has impacted upon the proposed timing of an official opening ceremony to mark the occasion. It is proposed that the centre will have 'soft opening' before the

end of May and options will be presented to Members for consideration. Officers would welcome any suggestions regarding the 'soft opening' or for the official opening which is now proposed to take place in late September or early October 2008

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of the official opening will depend on the decisions made, particularly in terms of the Official opening. All costs would be met from approved budgets.

Human Resources

There are no additional resources required to implement the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and to:

- a. Consider the nature and format of the 'soft opening'.
- b. Approve the pre-opening field trials as outlined in the report.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

None.

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