



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Fire at Grove Wellbeing Centre
Date:	14 August 2008
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Katrina Morgan-Talbot, Acting Leisure Services Manager

Relevant Background Information

Grove Wellbeing Centre (GWC) was damaged by fire on Sunday 20 July 2008. This report will inform Members of details of the incident, extent of the damage, actions taken, length of time to return the centre to full operation, impact on staff and impact on partners of the Wellbeing Centre.

Key Issues

Details of the incident

At approximately 6.00pm on Sunday 20 July, at which time the centre was closed to the public, the fire alarm at the GWC was triggered. Control room contacted the Centre Manager and Assistant Manager who made their way promptly to the centre. The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) were also alerted. NIFRS arrived on site in advance of keyholding staff and made a forced entrance to the building to extinguish the fire.

The fire, which was discovered to be in the undercroft of the building and in close proximity to electrical and water services, was smouldering when NIFRS identified the location.

The presence of potential accelerants in close proximity to the fire site suggested that the fire may have been started maliciously and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) attended the site. Forensic examination of the site took place the following day, once the electrical and water supplies were safely isolated.

The site was secured at 11.00pm.

Observation of recorded closed circuit television (CCTV) footage indicates that five males were inside the compound and left the site prior to the fire alarm sounding. This footage was passed to PSNI at York Road.

Extent of damage

Although the fire was relatively small and dealt with quickly by NIFRS, it created smoke and soot which travelled through ventilation ducting until dampers automatically closed down. A total of 39 smoke detectors were set off and the sequence of these alarms indicates the path which the smoke took within the building. The centre's smoke removal system operated effectively.

Soot was deposited in the fitness suite, swimming pool changing area, soft-play area and management offices, rendering these areas unusable until deep cleaning was carried out by specialist contractors.

The mains water supply pipe was damaged and supply to the building was closed down. The centre's reserve tank was able to supply water over the short term for hygiene and cleaning purposes, but was not sufficient to allow showers or the swimming pool to operate.

Damage to the supply pipe also caused flooding in the ground floor area, which is designated for the bowling alley. The equipment in this area is not yet installed.

Electrical supplies were re-instated the day after the fire.

CCTV was returned to full operation on Tuesday 22 July.

Actions taken and control of the situation

Management and staff, with advice and on-site support of officers from the Project Management Unit, Facilities Management, Health and Safety and Corporate Communications acted promptly to;

- minimise the extent of damage to the building;
- ensure the safety and security of the site;
- engage cleaning teams and specialist contractors to return the centre to full operation;
- alert customers and general public of interim disruption to services; and
- alert Chief Officers and Committee Chair of the incident.

The Director of Corporate Services also visited the centre and provided an updated for all Members of Council.

Disruption to services

On Monday 21 July the café was available to the public, and the centre's multi-purpose rooms catered for 64 children who were enrolled in the Summer Scheme. No other services were available.

The swimming pool was open at 2.30pm on Wednesday 23 July.
The fitness suite was open at 10.00am on Thursday 24 July.

Impact on staff

Two members of management attended the incident on the night, no other staff were present during the fire. Staff were made aware of the incident on reporting for work. The Manager has spoken to most members of staff concerning the incident.

Impact on partners of the Wellbeing Centre

The nature of the fire meant that no services were disrupted for the partner organisations. The Manager advised the partner agencies of the detail of incident and there has been no negative impact on partner agencies.

Resource Implications

Financial

Loss adjusters have attended the site, the financial impact of the fire due to remedial work and loss of income is estimated at around £30,000.

Human Resources

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the content of the report is noted.

Key to Abbreviations

NIFRS – Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland
CCTV – Closed Circuit Television

Documents Attached

None.

