



Belfast City Council

Report to: Parks and Leisure Committee

Subject: **Update on Strategic Review of Leisure**

Date: 15 October 2009

Reporting Officer: Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- (i) update Members on the progress to date on the Strategic Review of Leisure;
- (ii) seek Committee approval to proceed with setting up a Members' 'Challenge Workshop' to which all Members of the Council will be invited in order to discuss the key issues emerging from the review to date and to seek Member input prior to the next stage.

Relevant Background Information

On 13 November 2008 the Parks and Leisure Committee considered the following proposed approach for undertaking a Strategic review of Leisure:

Proposed approach & original timeframe	
Nov 08	<i>Stage 1</i> Visioning / scenario planning consultation
Dec 08 – Jan 09	<i>Stage 2</i> Internal & external audit
Jan09 - March 09	<i>Stage 3</i> Commission research & pre- consultation
April 09 - May 09	<i>Stage 4</i> Develop the strategy
June 09 - Sep 09	<i>Stage 5</i> Commission consultation on draft strategy
Oct 09 - Dec 09	<i>Stage 6</i> Develop final strategy

In December 2008 the Committee agreed the approach on the basis that the review made extensive use of existing council work in the areas of research, data collection and “on the ground” expertise in conjunction with any additional external expertise which may be needed.

Following a period of in-depth inter-departmental research and data collection, a small discrete piece of work was issued as a quotation in July 2009 - to collate, analyse and challenge the information and data gathered at stages 1 and 2 of the process and to confirm priorities and raise relevant issues prior to moving to the next stage of the review – the strategy development.

Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) consultants were appointed in August 2009 and have been analysing the information provided by the council alongside external and their own benchmarking information.

Current Position

In early September SLL facilitated an inter-departmental ‘Challenge Workshop’ for council officers (who had been nominated through COMT) and including senior officers within Parks and Leisure.

An initial draft report has been received from SLL however further analysis is required on the key issues arising from the desk-top research before the final draft report is issued for Members’ review.

The process has reached the stage where it would now be timely to hold a Members’ ‘Challenge Workshop’ for Members to challenge, debate and discuss the research findings and recommendations for going forward.

The confidential findings of the report will be shared with Members as part of the ‘Challenge Workshop’ process and the consultants will facilitate the discussion around the key issues. The research is focusing on strategic fit; gaps and options. It considers facility management, staff and resources, service provision, leisure development, grant aid and outreach services along with all the facilities with leisure provision onsite – leisure centres, pavilions and community centres, council-owned, private facilities and those owned by other providers.

Once this stage of the process is complete officers will be developing an appropriate consultation and engagement approach (working with the whole organisation) to explore the findings and fully develop a way forward as part of the formation of the draft strategy.

Key Issues

- **Engagement of Members**

The report is highlighting wider strategic council issues which would merit debate and discussion at an expanded workshop for all Members. In addition it is likely that party group briefings will take place following the ‘Challenge Workshop’ and these are not likely to have the external consultants in attendance.

▪ **Confidential nature of the report**

The research report will be highlighting issues which are likely to have an impact on future leisure provision including facilities management, staffing, service provision, leisure development, grant aid and outreach work across parks and leisure and other council facilities. It is essential that awareness is given to the fact that the report contents are sensitive and should remain confidential through the discussion stage.

Resource Implications

Financial

The Members' 'Challenge Workshop will cost approximately £950.00 and can be funded through the departmental revenue allocation for the review.

Human Resources

Ongoing support from the policy and business development team.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to;

- (i) note the progress update in the report; and
- (ii) agree to a Members' 'Challenge Workshop' to which all Members of Council will be invited in order to discuss the key headlines emerging from the desk top research in stage 3 of the review..

Decision Tracking

Ongoing update reports will be provided to Members on a quarterly basis by the Policy and Business Development Manager.

Abbreviations

SLL Strategic Leisure Limited

Appendices

None.

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