



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Parks and Leisure Improvement Programme
Date:	15 April 2010
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Change Programme Manager

Purpose

- To inform committee of progress in the Parks and Leisure improvement programme
- To advise committee of the approach being used to review management structures in the department and to highlight key issues
- To outline key decisions to be brought forward to committee in May and June.

Relevant Background Information

The Parks and Leisure improvement programme is focused on building capacity and delivering better services and better outcomes for communities in Belfast. The programme has a number of work streams; Parks Improvement, Leisure Change, Review of Business Support, Marketing and Communications Review. For clarification of terms used in this report Appendix 1 sets out the roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups in the improvement programme.

A key objective is to deliver more efficient and effective services to assist the Council in achieving its corporate strategic objectives. This is being achieved by bringing the Parks and Leisure functions of the department together to integrate community development and to work more closely in planning and service delivery. To support the work streams previously mentioned there are currently three areas of focus; Resources (finance, people and information), Customer Focus, Planning and Performance.

The following phased approach has been developed to review management and operational arrangements:

Phase I

- Agreement and implementation of the Parks Management operational structural tier; and
- Agreement and implementation of Parks and Leisure Business Support

management tier.

Phase II

- Operational review of Parks and Leisure Business Support including the leisure centre staff;
- Parks operational review to include: the review of the role of Team Leaders or “Parks Supervisors”; review of boundaries and numbers of staff; development of processes; quality monitoring; and implementation of systems.
- Operational review of the Outdoor Leisure function
- Development of a Parks Community Resource (i.e. Community Park Attendant);
- Review of the estates function including Belfast Castle and Malone House (this will include the exploration of a coordinated estates/commercial function across the Parks and Cemeteries Service);
- Review of Landscape Planning and Development Unit; Review of Parks Services and Support unit; and Review of the Conservation and Promotion Unit. This will be conducted as one review; however they are in reality three concurrent reviews which will streamline functions and identify efficiencies and improvement leading to more effective development functions; and
- Review of Bereavement Services;

Phase III

- Review of the management strand within Leisure Services; and
- Review of the operational strand in Leisure Services.

Progress to Date

The following section highlights work carried out to date:

- The Council’s Voluntary Redundancy exercise created some urgency around the review of Parks management arrangements. The review was completed in January 2010 with agreed management side and trade union positions on the way forward. Proposals from Phase 1 of the structural reviews were approved by Strategic policy and Resources Committee in February 2010 and recommendations are now being implemented.
- The reviews involved in Phase 2 are well progressed and consultation will be completed with staff and trade unions by end of April 2010. It is envisaged that proposals will be brought to the May committee.
- Communication and engagement has been an ongoing priority delivered through staff briefings, the production of a newsletter, staff representation on task forces and reference panels and frequent engagement with trade unions.
- Work is nearing completion on a review of parks area boundaries and the allocation of Park Managers for the Parks operation.
- Work on reviewing and defining roles and responsibilities for the Parks operation has commenced. Emphasis is on ensuring the development of community involvement and establishing relationships in the community. There is a further focus on how flexibility is increased and to ensure that resource is best used to achieve a balance between static and mobile staff

whilst addressing the need to improve customer focus and provide a staff presence in parks.

- A review of best practice including use of equipment has begun with emphasis on how we can achieve efficiencies and deliver services at an appropriate standard.
- Work on Customer Focus is progressing to establish how achieving improved standards and customer service impacts on how the department undertakes community engagement, outreach work, roles and responsibilities and training and development. This brings together outcomes from pilots and the review of best practice.
- A number of pilot projects are underway to:
 - Develop a framework for all open spaces in the city to achieve Green Flag status. The pilot is targeting Falls Park, Ormeau Park and Roselawn Cemetery to undergo a self assessment exercise in June 2010 and to implement an improvement programme to formally submit for the standard in January 2011. It is intended that all parks in the city without Green Flag status will use the framework being developed and apply the process from January 2011. All open spaces without the standard will undergo a self assessment in June 2011 and based on the baseline analysis develop an improvement programme. Those locations that are ready will submit for the standard in January 2012. It should be noted that Cave Hill Country Park has already achieved Green Flag status and this has provided valuable insight into what is required; and that Musgrave Park has already completed a self assessment and is also aiming to submit for the standard in January 2011.
 - Use technology in North and South West parks areas to explore how we can work differently to record information and reengineer processes to work more efficiently. Both areas are trialling the use of handheld devices to capture information from playground inspections and the subsequent automation of works orders. The Council will benefit from quicker turnaround resulting in less risk to the public and less liability from public claims for injury. The schedule of inspections of playgrounds has been changed based on an analysis of historical data and using a risk assessment approach. Software to support the new process has been developed by ISB and all Parks staff involved have been trained. The pilot will run to June 2010 when it will be evaluated to determine if further improvements can be made and if the new process can be deployed more widely. Outcomes from this work will also inform the work of the operational review task force on roles and responsibilities.
 - Explore how Community Park Managers can be better supported to deal with the growing volume of administrative work required of them. This pilot is taking place in the East parks area and is linking in with Phase 2 of the review of business support and also influencing the work of the operational review task force on roles and responsibilities.
- The Leisure Change programme has been initiated with staff briefing sessions

and engagement of Trade Unions to set the context for the review. We are in the process of planning and establishing task forces to carry out the work of the programme. Initial focus will be on the review of management arrangements and operational efficiency in line with the Parks stream and as set out in Phase 3 of the structural reviews.

- The review of marketing and communication in the department is nearing completion and proposals for change are at the consultation stage. It is envisaged that proposals will be brought to the May committee.
- Outcomes from phase 1 of the review of Business Support were agreed at Committee in February 2010 and are in the process of being implemented. Phase 2 of the Business Support review has been initiated and will aim to be completed by end of May 2010 with proposals being brought to committee in June.

Key Issues

As the operational review of Parks has progressed with the task force considering boundaries, opportunities for operational efficiency and the allocation of managers to areas, it has become very clear that this work could not proceed in isolation from the review of Bereavement Services.

This has been influenced by the significant work the task force has completed in:

- gathering information on areas and the scale of the operation
- achieving better understanding of operational demands including developing community relations
- identifying issues with current delivery
- identifying opportunities to improve and become more efficient.

In the original timetable the Bereavement Services review was scheduled to start towards the end of phase 2. In light of information gathered it has been decided to bring the review of Bereavement Services forward and to consider outcomes from it alongside the Parks operation.

The work of the operational review task force will challenge existing roles and responsibilities and working practices. The aim is to design job profiles that support flexibility in how the workforce is deployed and reduce the volume of overtime whilst remunerating staff fairly and equitably.

It was felt appropriate at this stage to provide Committee with some insight into the thinking of the task force before final conclusions are reached.

Resource Implications

Financial

No additional - Already in business plan

Human Resources

No additional - Already in business plan

Asset and Other Implications
None

Recommendations

Committee is asked:

- to note the progress of the Parks and Leisure Improvement programme
- to consider key issues raised
- to note decisions to be brought forward to Committee in May and June.

Decision Tracking

The progress report outlined a number of key decisions to be brought to future committees:

May 2010

- (i) Recommendations on Phase 2 of structural reviews in Parks
- (ii) Recommendations on the review of Parks and Leisure
- (iii) Marketing and Communications review.

June 2010

- (i) Recommendations on Phase 2 of Business Support review

Responsible Officer – Change Programme manager

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Park and Leisure Improvement Programme Roles and Responsibilities