



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Parks and Leisure Improvement Programme
Date:	16 September 2010
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Head of Parks and Leisure

Purpose

To provide committee with an overview of the Parks and Leisure improvement programme and an update on progress and ongoing work.

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. This is being achieved through:

1. reviewing management arrangements and operational efficiency
2. bringing the Parks and Leisure functions of the department together to integrate community development and to work more closely in planning and service delivery.

The programme has a number of work streams; Parks Improvement, Leisure Services Improvement, Review of Business Support, and a Marketing and Communications Review. Given the scale of the reviews the following phased approach to streamlining management arrangements and achieving operational efficiency has been adopted:

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.

Key Issues

Progress to Date

Phase I

- The review was completed in January 2010 with agreed management side and trade union positions on the way forward. Proposals from Phase I of the structural reviews were approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in February 2010 and recommendations are being implemented.

Phase II

- A review of Bereavement services had been completed in conjunction with the review of management arrangements and operational efficiency for Parks.
- A review of parks operational boundaries has been completed which includes more efficient deployment of staff and use of equipment. There is a focus on how flexibility is increased and to ensure that resource is best used to achieve a balance between static and mobile staff whilst improving customer focus and providing a staff presence in parks. Proposals on presence in parks will be brought forward to committee in October 2010.
- Work on reviewing the staffing allocation in each parks operational area is nearing completion and will be reported to committee in October 2010. This work has been extended to include the demand required to take on the future management and maintenance of the Connswater Community Greenway.
- Recommendations from the review of the development strand of the Parks operation were made to committee in June 2010 with proposed further work to be done on the post of Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager, the Landscape Planning and Development Unit, Parks Estates and a proposed Departmental Development Strand. Recommendations are to be made to the November 2010 committee.
- Work on reviewing and defining roles and responsibilities for the Parks operation is well progressed. This includes the development of a Community Park Supervisor and Community Park Attendant roles.
- The Green Flag standard has been adopted and a framework has been developed to improve all parks and open spaces.
- Phase I of the review of Business Support has been completed and implemented. The first stage of Phase II has been completed and extensive

consultation has been carried out with the trade unions, management and staff.

- The second stage of Phase II of the review of business support will examine the provision of business support within leisure centres. A Pilot Review will commence in three leisure centres (Grove Well Being Centre, Shankill LC and Andersonstown LC) whereby we will identify any areas where there may be additional capacity in business support which could then be utilised across other areas of the department. It is anticipated the pilot review will run for a three month period.
- 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.

Phase III

- The Leisure Improvement 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.
- 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 October committee.

Summary of Future Reports:

October 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Communications • Efficiency review of Parks Operational Resource • Proposals for improved staff presence in parks
November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental Development Strand • Landscape Planning and Development Unit • Parks Estates
December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation for leisure management arrangements
February 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation from pilot review of business support in Leisure Centres
February/March 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure Operational Efficiency Review

Resource Implications

Financial

Phase I

Deletion of 7 posts including 2 business support posts with a net saving of **£217,685** per year.

Deletion of Parks and Cemeteries Senior Manager and Leisure Manager posts and the creation of a Head of Service post resulting in a net saving of **£50,797** after an initial payback period of 1.6 years.

Phase II

Deletion of 2 posts with the creation of a new Open Spaces and Active Living Coordinator giving a net saving of **£43,018** after a payback period of 2.13 years.

The outcomes of phase II of the Business Support review are being reported to the September committee. It should be noted that the terms of reference for the review were to ensure that any changes would be achieved within current budget.

Human Resources

Consultation relating to the recommendations has been undertaken with the postholders, Human Resources and the Trade Unions.

All affected postholders will be subject to the normal HR policies and procedures relating to the offer of voluntary redundancy or suitable alternative employment.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

Committee is asked:

- to note the progress of the Parks and Leisure Improvement programme
- to note decisions to be brought forward to future committee meetings.

Decision Tracking

Responsible Officer – Head of Parks and Leisure. Further report to be brought to October committee.

Key to abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

None.