



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Playground Improvement Programme – Update
<b>Date:</b>	11 November 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen Walker, Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee regarding the playground improvement programme for 2010/11.

### Relevant Background Information

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 10 June 2010 it received a report on the playground improvement programme. The Committee agreed that refurbishment be carried out in respect of playgrounds at:

- Alexandra Park (Lower);
- Alloa street;
- Horn Drive;
- Springhill Park; and
- Willowbank.

It is further reminded that at its meeting on 12 August 2010 it subsequently agreed to also include play areas at:

- Carrick Hill; and
- Tyndale

### Current Position

In the interim period officers have been preparing drawings in respect of the programme and these have been completed for all sites. In line with the changing focus of the department to engage more actively with the community, officers have held meetings to make people aware of the programme and to obtain a greater degree of ownership and buy in through an improved engagement process. Discussions have been well received.

Drawings have been agreed in respect of the refurbishments at:

- Alexandra Park;
- Alloa St;

- Carrick Hill;
- Lenadoon Park/Horn Drive;
- Springhill Hill; and
- Willowbank Park

In respect of Carrick Hill, work is underway. In relation to Willowbank, work is due to commence in December 2011. Equipment is being procured in relation to Alexandra Park and Springhill.

Discussions are being completed in respect of Tyndale.

It is anticipated that physical construction will commence in the new year and continue through to the end of March depending on weather conditions, as the laying of the surface is weather dependent.

### **Key Issues**

The Committee is asked to note that the refurbishment programme is progressing on schedule. The consultation and engagement has been welcomed by local communities, although it does add to the time scales and requires officer time.

Of particular significance the Committee is asked to note that during discussions with residents regarding proposals for refurbishment, concern was expressed about the levels of anti social behaviour. This was particularly evident in parts of West Belfast. Although the number of reported incidents were low, residents were clear that there was an on going problem of youths gathering in playgrounds at night time and causing nuisance.

There was a general view that physical measures would be required to deter this. Methods suggested included fencing, lighting and in one case the use of CCTV.

Residents clearly stated that investment without adequate security is compromised. In response to this Officers have agreed to enclose the playgrounds at Willowbank, Springhill and Horn Drive in high level fencing. It is proposed that the fencing be 3m high, although some had suggested 6m fencing, and to include a rotor attachment on top to deter youths from climbing over it.

The Committee is asked to note that this level of expenditure, up to £25,000 per site depending on the dimensions and the size of fencing, means that the level of equipment has to be reduced. However, the communities are willing to accept the compromise in order to secure the site and the investment.

The Committee is also asked to note that in these cases planning approval is required as the fencing is over 1.8m, and this may delay construction. However, equipment can be procured in advance and stored as this process is underway.

<b>Resource Implications</b>
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None.
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<b>Recommendations</b>
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It is recommended that the Committee note the report.
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<b>Decision Tracking</b>
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The actions will be completed by the Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager by the end of March 2011.
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<b>Key to abbreviations</b>
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None.
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<b>Documents Attached</b>
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None.
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