



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Summer Fun Days 2011
Date:	11 November 2010
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Alice Blennerhassett, Marketing Officer

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the series of fun days held during 2010 and to present proposals in respect of 2011 and the future of the scheme.

Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that the council has held a programme of activities and fun days in parks for children over the summer for a number of years.

By way of background during the 1980s the former Parks Department organised a range of summer activities for children in the form of summer schemes in parks. These events ran for many years. In the late 1990's summer fun days were introduced as an alternative to summer schemes. The aim at that time was to streamline the summer schemes which were increasing in cost and increasingly difficult to manage and deliver.

The fun days provide activities for children aged 5 – 12 years and are held in a number of parks across the city. The underlying purpose of the events, in addition to providing fun activities for children, is to promote the parks and encourage local residents to take part in the fun days and to take ownership of their parks.

Initially fun days were held in 9 parks, over the years this has increased to 14. Appendix 1 provides a list of the parks where fun days are currently held. A typical event would include bouncy castles, face painting, climbing tower, street entertainers, games and sports.

Attendance numbers at the events can vary and are influenced by factors such as the weather or indeed other alternative forms of entertainment or recreation. Appendix 2 provides the estimated numbers at each event over the past 6 years.

The budget allocation for the fun day programme has remained relatively constant at around £30,000. However, inflation and the increase in the number of venues has effectively meant a reduction in real terms.

Key Issues

While the Council wishes to continue to hold such events it is important that they are kept under review from time to time. Within that context the Committee is asked to note the following points:

- We wish to continue to provide a range of local events in our parks and open spaces to encourage positive use and to promote their value.

Numbers attending

- In general while the number of children attending such events has remain constant and relatively high in some locations, in other locations the numbers are low or have reduced. For example the numbers at South Link, Dunville Park, Ulidia Playing Fields, Tommy Patton Memorial Park and Grove Playing Fields are 75 or less – see Appendix 2.

Cost of provision

- The budget for the fun days has remained fairly static for a number of years now leaving little opportunity to further develop and expand each fun day.
- In 2010 the total cost of providing 14 fun days was in the region of £30,000. The average overall cost per child to attend a fun day is £10.18. However this varied from £5.25 to £49.18 per child in 2010 depending on the number attending.
- At those venues where the average attendance is 75 or less the cost is between £24.26 and £49.18 per head.

Anti Social behaviour concerns

- In a small number of locations there has been reported anti-social behaviour. Of particular concern in 2010 was an incident at Dunville Park which led to the cancellation of the event after only 45 minutes due to concerns regarding the safety of the children themselves and those providing the entertainment.
- In addition, at Springhill Millennium Park the climbing tower was damaged and bricks and bottles were thrown at entertainers at the end of the event whilst they were leaving the venue, although the event itself passed off without incident.
- Owing to the incidents above the providers have expressed concern about the re-occurrence of similar incidents, Members will be aware that these providers are brought in by the Council to provide the entertainment on our behalf.

Alternative forms of entertainment

- The Council provides a range of similar events and summer schemes across the city through the Parks small grants' scheme, leisure services, community services etc and there may be an issue around the duplication of events in some locations.
- The fun days have been in operation for over 10 years with only minor adjustments to the programme and format. Owing to limited resources there has been little opportunity to vary the programme of activities and consequently the Fun Days may have lost some of their initial appeal potentially contributing to a drop in numbers in some areas.

It is proposed that the scheme is reviewed to establish:

- continued need;
- a revised content and approach to refresh what has been generally viewed as a successful project;
- the most appropriate locations;
- an appropriate level of funding; and
- governance issues

Until the review is completed in consultation with communities and other council providers of events it is proposed that on those sites where numbers have been low that the fun days are withdrawn to enable the resources to be allocated to enhancing events at other venues. This would mean reducing the number of fun days to nine and terminating the fun days at:

- Alderman Tommy Patton
- Dunville
- Grove Playing Fields
- South Link;
- Ulidia

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of providing the Fun Day programme in 2011 is estimated at £30,000.

The cost of a review of the future of the scheme would be in the region of £5,000.

Human Resources

There are no additional human resource implications.

Asset and Other Implications

The use of events in parks and the organisation of programmes and activities is an integral element in the promotion of our parks and open spaces.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. agree to continue to fund the fun day scheme;
2. agree to reduce the number to 9 in 2011 and retain the budget in line with option 2 above; and
3. agree that officers undertake a review to inform the future of the scheme after 2011.

Decision Tracking

All actions to be completed by the Marketing Officer by October 2011.

Key to abbreviations

None.

Documents attached

Appendix 1: list of summer fun day locations

Appendix 2: chart of average numbers attending 2008-10