



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy development update: Learning and implications for Belfast from the Liverpool study visit
<b>Date:</b>	9 December 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Head of Service Caroline Wilson, Policy and Business Development Unit

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>As part of the process of developing the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces (ABOS) strategy, Members requested continued engagement in considering key issues such as targeted provision, partnerships and alternative business models for delivery.</p> <p>For this purpose, a short study visit was organised to Liverpool, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ view alternative models of leisure provision at city and neighbourhood levels;</li><li>▪ engage with practitioners and policy-makers experienced in a parks and leisure modernisation programme;</li><li>▪ consider the challenges and opportunities for future provision in Belfast.</li></ul> <p>The 3 day study visit included inputs from Liverpool City Council (LCC) elected members, their parks and leisure teams, key external partners and regeneration site visits. The final programme and participant list is attached at appendix 2.</p> <p>At a follow-up meeting held on 11 November with those who participated on the visit, a number of key themes were highlighted as relevant to the development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>The paper proposes a series of areas to be considered as part of the development of the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy. An overview of the initiatives of interest, aligned to the ABOS strategy objectives, is included in appendix 1.</p>

It was recognised that some of the initiatives examined already happen in Belfast, including work with the health sector. There are also differences between Belfast and Liverpool; for example, Belfast has more green space. However, Members were impressed by the overall scale and approach in Liverpool.

The resulting discussion within the Belfast delegation centred on a set of core ideas:

### **1. Visionary leadership and a lateral strategy**

The Active City Partnership in Liverpool, sponsored by the Council and the Primary Care Trust, worked across all sectors in the city, identifying multiple opportunities to maximise the city as an active and healthy city. This included the private sector, emphasising the importance of health and well-being in a competitive city.

A lateral strategy stretched across sectors to improve health and well-being, emphasising that money spent on parks and leisure services was saving the health trust money in the longer term. The city's transport strategy was also included, promoting all opportunities for activity.

Liverpool's Active City Partnership also worked with the universities in the city to develop a comprehensive performance management system which demonstrated the social and economic value of using this integrated approach. Likewise, citizens were involved in large-scale targets ("Liverpool's Challenge") and the 'co-production' of health outcomes in the city.

Members have already recognised that partnership working is a core principle for the new ABOS strategy. It is recommended that any proposed Active Belfast Partnership would adopt a lateral approach, similar to that in Liverpool.

As a new partnership develops, it is important to facilitate the continued evolution of the ABOS strategy and its objectives, in order that other organisations have the opportunity to buy into the vision and objectives. It was suggested that this might be facilitated through a large-scale conference to scope all activities and resources related to promoting activity, health and well-being. This would allow the city to assess the baseline of this type of work, identify opportunities for collaboration and pinpoint gaps in the city's provision.

Finally, Liverpool City Council demonstrated bold imagination to restore parks as welcoming and open with a strong architectural vision. The Belfast delegation suggested that such a strong aesthetic vision is incorporated into future regeneration projects commissioned by the Parks and Leisure Committee.

### **2. More people, more active, more often**

Liverpool dedicates a considerable amount of its resources to those who are sedentary and most at risk of ill-health from non-participation in any form of activity. It then uses a series of incentives to sustain participation, including social marketing and monetary rewards (discounts, free passes).

The Belfast delegation is keen to develop a '*language of invitation*' which encourages people to get and stay active. Fundamental to this is the centrality of the customer and promoting a broad culture of activity in the city. The Belfast delegation highlighted that the 'customer welcome' is the key to sustaining physical activity, both in our leisure centres but also in non-traditional venues. In Liverpool, leisure centre staff have generic job profiles which are flexible to enable their deployment to meet the needs of the customer – supplying what, when and where the customer wants it.

A staff task group has been established as part of the improvement programme to examine these issues. Members' comments from the study visit regarding flexible management, working practices and promoting participation have been fed into this group. Officers will bring forward recommendations for Members' consideration next month.

Cross-service working is fundamental to improving quality of life and embedded in the culture of Liverpool City Council. Members recognised the value of our staff and the innovations already undertaken in our services. In order to further encourage this, and in addition to the staff task group described above, they suggested that a cross-departmental staff forum is established. This group would gather, share and implement improvement and collaboration ideas from across the services.

Also, a planning session for the entire Leisure Services in December has been previously agreed by Committee and it is anticipated that this workshop will cover these themes.

Finally, as part of a fundamental review of the Boost scheme, Members also recommended consideration is given to the incentives used to sustain membership. This could include links with the private sector and a rewards scheme in the NI Civil Service.

### **3. Models for delivery**

Liverpool City Council (LCC) sought to achieve complementarity across the city, recognising that the Council was not the sole provider of facilities for physical activity in the city. In order to do this, they had an agreed vision for the provision needed in an area. The Belfast delegation suggests that in order for the Council to fully exploit its neighbourhood assets – including green spaces and community centres – that a similar exercise would be valuable for Belfast. This would also identify areas where we need to build strategic linkages with education and private providers. This would inform future investment and rationalisation decisions as well as minimise duplication.

Preliminary discussions are ongoing with the Development Department to this end and it is anticipated that a set of recommendations will be brought forward in due course. This will be in the context of the Council's forthcoming Asset Management Strategy.

The Belfast delegation also recognised the potential for alternative management models for upcoming asset regeneration projects, such as the Tropical Ravine. It was agreed that models such as community trusts can facilitate different

	<p>relationships with the private sector to ensure investment in facilities and programmes, particularly important in the current economic climate.</p> <p>It was also suggested that consideration is given to partnership on assets, similar to the partnership to refurbish the Liverpool City Council-owned park adjacent to the Alder Hey Children's Hospital. This will be regenerated as an extension of the hospital grounds, allowing patients and visitors to boost their sense of well-being in a connected green space. This may have application for the Dunville Park project and discussions should be initiated with the Belfast Trust on this matter.</p> <p>In summary, it is proposed the next steps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed the ideas for initiatives into the existing staff task groups, currently working on various aspects of the new ABOS strategy, including a participation plan;</li> <li>• Continued development of the Active Belfast Partnership, in line with the Liverpool model, commencing with a large-scale workshop in the City Hall to scope existing programmes and resources available to promote activity in the city;</li> <li>• Establish a cross-departmental staff forum to identify improvements, efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration in parks and leisure facilities.</li> </ul> <p>Finally, to consider the outputs of the above pieces of work, it is proposed that a further Members' workshop is organised in February 2011 for members of the Parks and Leisure Committee.</p>
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<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Resource Implications</b></p> <p><u>Financial</u> Up to £2,000 towards the costs of a workshop, to be held in City Hall in early 2011. Provision for both of these items been made within revenue budgets.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> Officer time to participate in staff task group and staff forum.</p> <p><u>Assets</u> Committee has already given authority (10 January 2010) for the closure of leisure facilities to facilitate a staff workshop. This will happen on 22 December 2010. No other asset implications identified.</p>
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<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b></p> <p>None identified at present. The final ABOS Strategy will be consulted upon and screened for equality implications in line with the Council's statutory obligations.</p>
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<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>
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	<p>As outlined above, the Committee is requested to grant authority to the Director to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitate a large-scale workshop in the City Hall to scope existing programmes and resources available to promote activity in Belfast;</li> <li>• establish a cross-departmental staff forum to identify improvements, efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration in parks and leisure facilities; and</li> <li>• organise a Members' workshop for Committee in February 2011.</li> </ul>
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<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	<p>Actions outlined to be completed by March 2011. A report to be brought to Committee on the ABOS strategy by May 2011 by the Policy and Business Development Manager.</p>

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	<p>ABOS Strategy – Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy</p>

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1: Liverpool Study Visit Report – 11 November 2010 Appendix 2: Programme and participant list</p>