

Additional Information

North Queen Street

The intention is to construct a 70m x 30m 3rd Generation playing surface, this would be bookable and a charge would be levied. In addition, the proposal contains a smaller 30m x 12m multi user games area (a kick about area) which would be for casual use and would be free of charge. Planning approval would required for this proposal.

Hammer Open Space

In relation to the proposal relating to the Hammer Open space, the proposal is to replace the existing grass pitch with a 3rd Generation, full size soccer pitch. It is unlikely that planning approval will be required for this as it is merely a change of surface. However, this is to be confirmed.

Marrowbone

The Marrowbone Park is located on the Oldpark Park over looking the Ardoyne area of North Belfast. It consists of a playground, which was provided as part of the City with a Landscape Millennium funding programme back in the late 1990's and early 2000's; it has also contains a football pitch which has a grass surface and meets the minimum standard for use as a soccer pitch, there is high level fencing, no lighting and no changing facilities. There are drainage problems associated with the site. The remainder of the park is landscaped and provides one of the few green spaces in the local neighbourhood.

The Ardoyne and Oldpark Community Forum, which is an umbrella group for community organisations in the area has formed a health and well being group to look at how the provision of facilities in the area might be improved and better utilised. One of the focal points to emerge has been the Marrowbone Park, primarily owing to the lack of the provision and open space in the neighbourhood.

The group has prepared a preliminary business case and associated drawings and costs to refurbish the Park. The business case provides sufficient preliminary evidence of a need for an enhanced facility in the area. There is a need to test the robustness of the case and this would be addressed though an economic appraisal.

The feasibility study sets out the technical element of the proposal and deals with the construction of a 3rd generation soccer pitch and a two storey building. The proposed building would provide 5 changing rooms which would enable intermediate league football to be accommodated and would also provide appropriate provision for the continuous use of the facility at peak times and would support the use of the facility by female and youth teams. The building proposes to make provision for some office accommodation, storage space and a large activity area. This proposal is of course only one option and would be subject to scrutiny as part of an economic appraisal.

Copies of the business case and the feasibility study are available upon request.

At a meeting, with Council Officers, on the 13th December the group asked that a report be brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee seeking its support for the proposal. Specifically, the group asked that the Council:

- Make an application for planning Permission for the project based on the Feasibility Study;
- Undertake an Economic Appraisal of the proposed project; based on the Business Case and Feasibility Study; and
- Begin the process of supporting the venture by means of Capital Funding

The group also advised that an application had been made the Sport NI Community Capital Programme. The Committee will recall that several other groups have made similar applications in respect of Council land and / or facilities.

Key Issues

- There is a clear lack of recreational and leisure provision within the Crumlin / Ardoyne Neighbourhood Renewal Area and where such exists it is in need of refurbishment;
- The local community association has been proactive in working up the business case and option to enhance the recreational and leisure offering in this part of North Belfast;
- There have been preliminary discussions between Council Officers and representatives from the community association and local councillors;
- The group has made an application to Sport NI for funding, the application was made through the Community Capital Programme which has a maximum grant of £245,000; the programme requires that all statutory approvals be in place by 15 March 2011 and work must be completed by the end of March 2012;
- The Committee is asked to note that no planning application has yet been submitted and within this context it would appear unlikely that the necessary approvals would be in place within the time scales set by Sport NI, i.e. 15 March 2011; however, the position of Sport NI on this matter is not known;
- The total cost of the project is estimated to be in the region of £1.3m;
- notwithstanding the application to Sport NI, the group is exploring other sources of funding, but as it stands there is a capital shortfall of approximately £1.05m;

Barnett's Demesne

The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in 15 April 2010 it was reported that the Countryside Access and Activities Forum (CAAN) had made an application to the Rural Development Programme (RDP) to construct a mountain bike trail at Barnett's Demesne. For further background information a copy of the report is attached an Appendix A.

The Committee agreed to support the application in principle and agreed that it be put forward for inclusion on the capital programme. At the present the project remains on the uncommitted list awaiting the determination of the funding application. Council Officers have met with representatives from CAAN and from the RDP to clarify the position regarding the project and specifically the likelihood of funding.

The current position is that an economic appraisal is to be carried out in the New Year and this will inform the funding decision, a decision is expected in April 2011.

Depending on whether the application is successful the project will then be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources for prioritisation. The cost estimate indicates a short fall in the region of £70,000.

The Committee is asked to note that CAAN has made a second application to construct a complementary trail (Phase 2) at Barnett's Demesne. This would increase the scale of the trail from around 7km to 14km. This application has been made to Sport NI under the Community Capital Programme. A decision on this is expected by the end of March 2011. The estimated cost of Phase 2 would be in the region of £300,000, the maximum grant available is £245,000, leaving a short fall of £65,000.

Council Officers in the meeting with CAAN have explained the position regarding capital funding and have advised that should both be successful that the Council would need to consider whether it would be in a position to meet the short fall in relation to the construction costs. It has been explained that there is no authority or support at this time in relation to the Phase 2 application. The Committee is reminded that the original report in April 2010 refers to a contribution of £70,000; if both applications were successful this contribution would increase to around £135,000. However, the Committee should note that a portion of this cost might be off set through a contribution in kind by undertaking the project management and procurement elements of the project. However, the matter would need to be reviewed with the funding body. Officers have sought clarification on this matter and await a position.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Committee to consider is to what extent it wishes to support the development of a mountain bike trail at Barnett's Demesne. A decision has already been taken to support the application to the RDP and work on this is progressing. It is the issue of the proposed 2nd phase which requires further consideration. However, at this time it is not clear whether the application will be successful and it is proposed that a decision be deferred until further clarification can be provided, this is likely to be in March 2011. At that time it would be possible to provide the committee with a clearer position. At this time members have three options:

Financial

The construction of a mountain bike trail will have capital implications and would incur estimated expenditure of between £70,000 and £130,000. In addition, there would be revenue costs. These costs will be worked up as part of an economic appraisal which would be carried out in advance of any capital funding.

Asset and Other Implications

There is no similar facility in Northern Ireland and this would potentially prove to be a major attraction for mountain bike riders.