



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Progress Report on proposals to refurbish Dunville and Woodvale Parks
Date:	13 January 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officers:	Stephen Walker, Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee is reminded that emerging from the Parks Improvement Programme it had been agreed that the Council would undertake the refurbishment of two parks in the city and that these would be Dunville Park and Woodvale Park. Members will be aware that these projects have been ongoing for several years and officers have continued to engage locally with residents and their representatives and with the Belfast Regeneration Office to agree the schemes and secure the necessary funding.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the current situation.</p>

2.	Key Issues
	<p>The Committee is asked to note the following key issues.</p> <p><u>Economic Appraisals</u> As previously reported the economic appraisals for both projects have been completed and are currently with the Department of Finance and Personnel for consideration. The Department has recently sought clarification on a number of points and these matters will be responded to in due course.</p>

Design work and Planning Approval

In line with the preferred options emerging from the economic appraisals, design work has been undertaken 'at risk' to enable planning applications to be lodged in respect of both projects.

Dunville Park

Officers met with the Planning Service as part of the pre application process and also met with staff from the NI Environment Agency to identify potential issues which might arise from a planning perspective. A planning application has been lodged; reflecting as far as possible the discussions to date, and this is currently subject to consultation as part of the planning process. In addition, copies of the proposals have been delivered to residents in nearby streets and will be on display in local shops, schools and local facilities such as the leisure centre, community centres and health centres. Political and community representatives in the area of the Park have been proactive in engaging with residents from the surrounding neighbourhood to promote the scheme and to consolidate the buy in local people.

The planning service is currently processing applications quicker than in the past and it is anticipated that a response should be received by the end of the financial year.

Woodvale Park

Work on the design element is continuing, however the planning application is yet to be lodged. The Committee is reminded that the economical appraisal in respect of Woodvale Park was delayed and this has had a knock on impact on the design work. Discussions with the Planning Service have been encouraging.

The Committee is asked to note that one of the design features contained within the Woodvale Park proposal relates to a 'plug in' path which would improve access through the park and would provide improved connectivity to the main retail outlet in the area, Tesco, the consent of the company is required. Whilst the company had been involved in the consultation process and were aware, at a local level with the proposals, it would appear that Tesco have concerns regarding access and indeed has its own development proposals for that part of the site adjacent to the Park. This issue will need to be addressed in advance of a planning application being made, which will delay the process. Discussions have been ongoing and will continue to resolve the matter and alternative options will be considered.

Funding

While the Council has prioritised both projects within its capital programme the required match funding from the Department for Social Development (Belfast Regeneration Office) remains uncertain at this time. Members will be aware of recent developments regarding the Budget and it is hoped that this will enable greater clarity to be brought to the funding issue.

Next Steps

In relation to Dunville, it is intended to proceed with detailed design and preparation of contract documentation ahead of the receipt of planning approval and ahead of the securing of the match funding. This detailed design phase of the project can take 3-4 months to complete, plus a further 3 months for the tender process to complete.

The position with Woodvale is slightly different. The situation with regards to Tesco needs to be resolved before a planning application can be made. It is proposed to prepare a contingency scheme, which will be a slightly modified version of the existing proposal, this will be considered should agreement with Tesco not be reached. The intention is to submit a planning application as soon as possible and to similarly work at risk in terms of the preparation of detailed design and contract documentation.

It is hoped that both projects will be on site by the autumn of 2011 with completion by the end of the summer 2012, subject to the securing the necessary approvals and funding.

Involvement with the community

The involvement of the community within the surrounding neighbourhoods will be essential to the successful delivery and sustainability of these two capital projects. Consultation has played an important role in the work to date in so far as the schemes have been signed off following a lengthy period of discussion and indeed negotiation with members of the public.

As with many engagement processes, we depend on local representatives from the areas acting on behalf of residents to feed into the process. To continue our engagement process two steering groups have been established. These groups comprise representatives from the main stakeholders involved with each project including Belfast City Council; Belfast Regeneration Office and the local community. The Community Representatives are members of existing consultative mechanisms, such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Boards. Membership can be increased and widened as necessary as the project progresses.

To date the main focus has been on the physical development element. However, Members will be aware of the need for a strong people element to be established. It is therefore intended in the New Year to begin work towards our plans for the site post completion of the physical works. It is our intention to have in place a plan which will support the delivery of programmes, activities and other measures to help deliver the Council's corporate objectives and key themes around:

- Community safety
- Health and Well Being
- Older People
- Shared Space and good relations
- Sustainable development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People <p>While the process will be led by officers from the Parks and Leisure Department, the process will require input from other Council Departments and will seek to optimise existing resources and mechanisms in a joined up integrated way.</p>
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3.	Resource Implications
	None.

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None.

5.	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to note the report.

6.	Decision Tracking
	A further progress report will be brought to Committee at its meeting in May 2011 by the Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager.

7.	Key to abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents attached
	None.