



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Pitch and Mitch Playground
Date:	13 January 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Walker, Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in August 2010 it received an update report on the Playground Improvement Programme. Within the report reference was made to the Pitch and Mitch Playground, located in the former bus depot close to the Ardoyne shops.</p> <p>The Pitch and Mitch was constructed in 1998 and externally funded. It has been the focus of ongoing antisocial behaviour and high levels of vandalism over the past 9 years. Members will recall that an annual independent survey of the condition of playgrounds is carried out and that each facility is given a rating of 1 – 10, where (1) indicates that the facility is in a good condition and fit for purpose and is not in need of any works however a (10) would indicate that the Council should consider reviewing its use, close it, re-site it, or change its purpose. The development ratings were first incorporated into the independent playground inspection reports in 2005 and on that occasion the Pitch and Mitch facility received a rating of (6) which was described then as being a site particularly vulnerable to vandalism, in a poor condition and was recommended for capital works.</p> <p>This play facility has continued to slide into disrepair through heavy vandalism and it was in 2009 that it received the most severe rating of (10).</p> <p>In the 2010 playground inspection report, the playground inspector retained the development rating of (10) for Pitch and Mitch and also included an additional recommendation that if the Council decided on any</p>

	<p>future redevelopment, that the community should be directly involved in the process, both children and adults.</p> <p>At the August meeting the report highlighted a number of options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construct a new playground; 2. Construct a Multi User Games Area; 3. Create amenity open space (a landscaped area); 4. Consider alternative use; 5. Dispose of the site <p>At the request of one of the local Councillors a meeting with residents was held. Those residents present accepted that there was little merit in undertaking to re-invest in the play area without a degree of confidence that the facility would be used positively for the benefit of the area. For this reason, in the interim, a number of actions were put forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Council undertake some minor revenue works to repair the existing bitmac surface to enable football to be played using the frames which remain; • To re-open the facility; • That local school children undertake an arts based project to develop a sign for the park incorporating its name as a symbol of the communities commitment to reclaiming the facility; • That residents would work with Council Officers to prepare a revised design for the Pitch and Mitch to incorporate different elements of play for a wide range of age groups and which would be presented to the Committee for consideration later in 2011; • That Council Officers would monitor levels of anti social behaviour in the playground. <p>The first three of these interim measures have been completed and have resulted in positive community involvement, improved ownership and increased use of the facility</p>
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2	Key Issues
	<p>The key issue for the Committee is how to determine the future of this facility. In reaching its decision the following points should be taken into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The site has been badly vandalised over the years; 2. The area itself has few facilities for children and young people; 3. There is a willingness and a determination within the community to reclaim the facility for positive use; 4. The residents have put forward a series of short term proposals with minimal spend implications to test the viability of the playground;

3	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial Implications</u> The cost of resurfacing the facility was £11,000 and has been funded from</p>

	<p>the playground improvement budget.</p> <p><u>Human Resource Implications</u> There are no additional human resource implications</p> <p><u>Other asset implications</u> The facility is in a poor condition and has a negative impact on its surrounding environment. The neighbourhood is densely populated and there are few facilities in the area for children and young people.</p>
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4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	There are no equality implications.

5	Recommendations
	It is recommended that the Committee agree to work with the residents to reclaim the Pitch and Mitch facility and to receive a proposal from the residents regarding the future development of the site at a later date.

6.	Decision Tracking
	An update report will be submitted by the Principal and Cemeteries Development Manager in June 2011.

7.	Key to abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents attached
	None.