



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Draft Pitches Strategy
Date:	10 February 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Members will be aware that the council is in the process of developing a playing pitches strategy. The draft strategy has been developed and was approved by committee at a Special Meeting on 13 December 2010.</p> <p>Following council approval the first phase of the public consultation exercise commenced on Monday 10 January 2011. This is an 8 week exercise which will conclude on Friday 4 March 2011.</p>

2.	Key Issues
	<p>Officers are currently doing some preliminary work regarding potential sites for investment. This work will include a narrative on deliverability within the first three years of the life of the strategy. This work can only be finalised once the outcome of the consultation process and the rate setting process are known.</p> <p>To enable work on design etc. to commence by the Summer of 2011, time to complete this work and engage parties will be extremely tight. Therefore it is proposed to organise party group briefings and to convene a special meeting of the committee in March 2011.</p> <p>As part of the ongoing consultation process, two requests have been received from elected Members for officers to attend meetings arranged by those Members with a range of sports clubs. The purpose of the meetings is to present the draft pitches strategy to assist clubs in preparing their consultation responses. While this would not normally be an issue, I have however taken advice given that the Local Government elections are to be held in May 2011.</p>

	<p>The 'Purdah' period will come into operation from the date of the publication of the Notice of Election which will be on 25th March and, under the Council's Election Protocol, it would not be appropriate for officers to be involved in such public meetings from that date until after the election on 5th May. In the period from now until 25th March, I have been advised that direction should be taken from the Committee regarding such requests. If the Committee is content for officers to be involved in these types of meetings in the period up until 25th March, then this facility would need to be offered to all political groups on the Council</p>
--	---

3.	Resource Implications
	None further at this stage.

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	An independent consultant has been appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy. They will continue to offer advice and feedback to the council throughout the consultation and EQIA process.

5.	Recommendations
	<p>It is recommended that Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to hold party group briefings and to convene a special meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee in March 2011; and 2. Provide guidance to officers regarding their involvement with Members in public meetings during the period from the commencement of the consultation exercise up until the start of the 'Purdah' period on 25th March.

6.	Decision Tracking
	The actions will be completed by the Director of Parks and Leisure by end of March 2011.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents Attached
	None.