



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Suffolk Playing Fields
Date:	11 March 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>Suffolk Playing Fields are currently managed in part by Suffolk Football Club under a facilities management agreement. There are 5 pitches on the site, 2 of which are unused and require refurbishment and drainage.</p> <p>The issue of playing fields is currently under consideration within the draft pitches strategy. Members will be aware that Suffolk playing fields have been identified within the draft strategy as a site with potential for a replacement 3G facility. However council officers have been approached by and met with representatives of Suffolk Football Club to discuss development proposals held by the club.</p> <p>The football club plays a significant role within the small community housed within the Suffolk Estate and wishes to support and contribute to that community through making the best use of its resources. It also has aspirations for its own future development as a club to play at a higher level.</p> <p>To support both these aims the club has prepared a preliminary development proposal. The proposal can be subdivided into two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phase 1 relates to the refurbishment of one of the two unused pitches to bring it into use; the cost of this would be met through a grant for £30,700 from the Alpha programme which is administered through Groundwork NI. In addition, the club would, at its own expense, erect perimeter and spectator fencing and undertake additional work regarding access. It should be noted that within the proposal the pitch would not be available for use until the start of the 2012/2013 season. Members are also asked to note that it is the club's proposal that the pitch, once playable would be for the specific use of the Suffolk Football Club.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 2 of the proposal relates to the construction of additional changing facilities on land adjacent to the pitch. These would be in addition to the existing changing facilities and for use by the club and its opponent teams. The provision of this facility would require significant external funding and a long lease on the land. In line with the terms and conditions of the funding body; it would also require the necessary statutory approvals; planning, building control etc. <p>The current position is that the club has received conditional approval from Groundwork NI in respect of their application for funding to refurbish the pitch as outlined as part of Phase 1.</p> <p>In relation to Phase 2, the proposals are at a concept stage and there has been no significant progress towards obtaining the necessary approvals or seeking funding. The committee is therefore asked to note that at some point the club may return with a further request for land to facilitate the construction of additional changing facilities.</p>
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2.	Key Issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site at Suffolk has been identified in the draft strategy as being capable of accommodating a replacement 3G pitch. Consultation on the draft playing pitches strategy closed on 4 March 2011. Party group briefings have been arranged to discuss the findings from the consultation and to discuss the prioritisation of sites for investment. A special meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee has been arranged for 21 March 2011 at which it is anticipated that decisions will be made regarding investment in sites for the first three years of the strategy. £10m has been included in the capital programme for this first phase of the strategy. It would be premature to make a decision regarding this proposal by Suffolk FC in advance of the special meeting on 21 March 2011.

3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial Implications</u> The proposals would be totally funded through external funding with any short fall matched by the football club.</p> <p><u>Human Resource Implications</u> There are no additional human resource implications</p> <p><u>Asset and other implications</u> The proposal would increase the availability of pitches for general booking.</p>

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	There are no equality or good relations implications associated with the recommendations from this report.

5.	Recommendations
	It is recommended that the Committee defer consideration of the request from Suffolk FC until after the special meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee on 21 March 2011.

6.	Decision Tracking
	A further report will be brought to the Committee in April 2011 by the Principal Parks and Cemeteries Development Manager.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents Attached
	None.