



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Community gardens and allotments - next steps
Date:	10 March 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
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1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	As Members will be aware the Parks and Leisure Department is currently working with partners to develop and provide a number of community gardens to complement the provision of allotments across the city.
1.2	The council, in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the Belfast Health Development Unit (BH DU), is developing a shared community gardens and allotments programme including the development of a vision and strategy.
1.3	The community gardens and allotments programme of work will make a valuable contribution to the council's quality of life agenda and the emerging Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy (ABOS). In addition this programme of work will help to deliver the Public Health Agency's corporate objectives and the Belfast Health Development Unit's priority areas for action while also contributing to the overall sustainability of Belfast and the region by providing health, social economic and environmental benefits.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	The council, PHA and the BH DU have developed a detailed community gardens and allotments programme proposal (see Appendix 1 for further details) in order to take forward the vision for a shared community gardens and allotments strategy for Belfast. The programme will include the following projects and activities:
2.2	<u>1. Delivery of a community gardens and allotments seminar</u> A community gardens and allotments seminar is being organised for

	<p>the 22 March 2011. The purpose of seminar will be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine good practice in community garden provision and promote its benefits as well as explore the challenges; • outline an agreed approach (or model) for the provision of community gardens; and • engage the community in identifying practical opportunities for collaborative working. <p>2.3 The outputs of the workshop will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an agreed approach for the provision of community gardens and allotments in Belfast; • a network of practitioners, including statutory, established to meet on a regular basis to share practice; and • contribution towards the development of the emerging Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy, led by Belfast City Council, and supported by the Public Health Agency and the Belfast Health Development Unit. <p>The seminar will be for up to 70 persons including Parks and Leisure Committee Members.</p> <p>2.4 <u>2. Community garden demonstration project</u> The PHA is making a significant contribution to this programme of work, part of which needs to include an additional demonstration project. In line with a previous decision of this committee in September 2010 on a future community gardens and allotments strategy, Musgrave Park is the site which is most appropriate for the project given its co-location with the hospital and schools. This demonstration site will explore and document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good practice in community engagement and ownership; • improving health and wellbeing; and • longer term sustainability of community gardens and allotments. <p>2.5 As Musgrave Park has previously been agreed as a site for the development of allotments and a community garden, the PHA and the BHDU have agreed that it is an ideal demonstration project as it meets the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • currently being developed as a community garden, individual allotment plots and a therapy garden; • located within the Belfast City Council area; • has strong engagement and ownership by local stakeholders, community groups, schools, self help groups, special interest groups, charities and trusts; and • is at a stage of development where existing services can be enhanced and developed. <p>2.6 Community garden and allotment support packs will be developed as part of this project and provided to schools in Belfast in partnership with the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB). The demonstration project</p>
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	at Musgrave Park and the impact and outcomes of the enhanced service will be shared at the seminar.
2.7	<p>3. Community consultation</p> <p>The PHA is commissioning a comprehensive community engagement exercise to be undertaken in March/April 2011 which the council and BHDU will also contribute to. Alongside the community consultation, training and information sessions will take place across the city for community groups interested in finding out more about community gardens and allotments. This exercise will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a baseline audit of existing community gardens and allotments across Belfast; • focus groups with community and voluntary sector organisations across Belfast; and • information and training sessions on community gardens and allotments
2.8	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>The community gardens and allotments seminar will be delivered on 22 March 2011. The detailed programme from the seminar will in turn inform the development of a shared community gardens and allotments vision and strategy for Belfast. The immediate next steps for officers are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver the elements of the detailed community gardens and allotments programme proposal (Appendix 1); and • develop and deliver the community gardens and allotments vision and strategy for Belfast.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>Financial</p> <p>The PHA has set aside £35 000 for the programme, including a significant contribution to the demonstration project and equipment for work with schools. The Council will match this contribution in 2011-12 and provision for this has been made in the revenue estimates for next year.</p> <p>Human Resources</p> <p>There will be no additional human resources required at this stage.</p> <p>Asset and Other Implications</p> <p>None at this stage.</p>

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	There are no known equality and good relations implications at this stage and the strategy will be equality screened in line with the council's procedures.

5.	Recommendations
	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. endorse the outlined community gardens and allotments programme proposal in Appendix 1; and 2. note the invitation to the community gardens and allotments seminar on the morning of 22 March 2011.
6.	Decision Tracking
	<p>A draft community gardens and allotments strategy for Belfast will be brought to Committee in August 2011 by the Policy and Business Development Manager.</p>
7.	Key to Abbreviations
	<p>PHA: Public Health Agency BHDU: Belfast Health Development Unit ABOS: Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy BELB: Belfast Education and Library Board</p>
8.	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Programme outline for next steps in community gardens and allotments.</p>