



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Belfast Zoological Gardens – Recent successes and Operational Review
Date:	15 September 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Mark Challis, Zoo Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Already in 2011, the Zoological Gardens has been successful in achieving three significant and relevant industry awards, recognising the Zoo's role as a leading visitor attraction in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In May 2011, at the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Tourism Awards, the Zoo won the 'Visitor Inspired' category.</p> <p>In June 2011, the zoo topped the poll for UTV's Ultimate Ulster programme, being voted as 'the best place to spend a day with the children'.</p> <p>Also in June 2011, the Zoo's website, Facebook and twitter won the 'best use of social media by a tourist attraction' category in the first ever Northern Ireland Social Media Awards. This success reflects positively on the work of Parks and Leisure staff together with staff in Corporate Communications and ISB.</p> <p>Whilst this is a significant achievement and demonstrates improvements the zoo has made in recent years we now need to examine the zoo's business model to improve how we operate and to develop a business model fit for the future.</p> <p>A review of the management of the zoo was completed in June 2011 by FGS McClure Watters which highlighted a number of issues that should be addressed including:</p> <p>Strategic planning – The zoo needs to have a long term business strategy in place to allow capital investments (that often taken place over a number of years) to be planned for and funded. This longer term strategy should set out what needs to be achieved over a 3-5 year period and this should then guide the content of the supporting annual plans which need to be developed each year.</p>

	<p>Income generation - The Zoo needs to develop an Income Generation Plan to support its strategy and its implementation should become a priority for the Zoo. This should include a review of pricing, developing business ideas that will generate income such as expanding a 'day with the keeper', examining opportunities to expand the education function and exploring private sponsorship opportunities.</p> <p>Structure, resources and culture are central to improving the income generation success of the Zoo; therefore an operational review should specifically focus on quantifying the resource and capacity needed to deliver on the Zoo strategy.</p> <p>Work will begin to develop a Strategic plan for the Zoo while an operational review is carried out by the Council's Organisational Development Unit.</p>
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2.	Key Issues
	<p>Some of the key issues the operational review will cover include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management/leadership responsibility for future development of the Zoo • Strategic development and business planning • The delivery of parks services within the zoo • The role of the education unit • Income generation • The customer experience • Levels of overtime and agency staff • Working practices.

	Resource Implications
	<p>The winning of the three awards has been achieved within existing Zoo budgets.</p> <p>The operational review will be undertaken by the Council's Organisational Development Unit.</p>

	Equality Implications
	None.

	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to note the above report.

	Decision Tracking
	The outcomes of the operational review will be reported to Committee by the Assistant Director Parks and Leisure.

	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

	Documents Attached
	None.