



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Midnight Soccer Programme
Date:	13 October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Adrian Walker, Acting Leisure Operations Manager

1. Relevant Background Information

The Midnight Soccer intervention programme ran from July – September 2011. In June 2011 Health and Environmental Services (Community Safety Section) successfully applied for summer intervention funding of £6,900 on behalf of the Parks and Leisure Department to develop this initiative. It was intended that midnight soccer would be available at the following leisure centres:

- Avoniel
- Ballysillan
- Olympia
- Whiterock

The proposal was developed to service all geographical areas of Belfast and was designed to operate primarily between the hours of 2000-2300 during Tuesday/Wednesday and Friday evenings.

The original objective of the project was to create a diversionary activity in order to help reduce traditionally higher levels of antisocial behaviour within Belfast during the summer months. In addition the expansion of community and voluntary sector linkages was identified as a mutual benefit to operating the project.

2. Key issues/events

Following the award of funding an implementation plan involving representatives from Parks and Leisure, Community Safety, PSNI and Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN) was developed and the initial Midnight Soccer session was held at Avoniel Leisure Centre on Friday 8 July. BCSDN were chosen to co-ordinate all coaching and refereeing aspects of the programme and the council managed infrastructure, logistics, advertising, safety and equipment provision.

The initial plan was expanded to include an under 14 age group in addition to the targetted 14-17 age group. The under 14 sessions were named "Community Kick About " and due to the programme expansion and leisure centre availability the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) sports pitch was also utilised as part of the programme. This further enhanced the ability of the scheme to reach a greater volume of young people.

An interim report during early August indicated that the programme was enjoying a notable level of success. Average weekly attendances for both age groups were recorded as follows:

- Avoniel: 75
- Ballysillan: 105
- Olympia: 45 (limited pitch availability)
- LORAG: 75
- Whiterock: 85

Whilst previous Midnight Soccer initiatives had been undertaken in specific geographical areas this programme has formed the basis of the first structured citywide involvement from Parks and Leisure in conjunction with partners. It should also be noted that traditionally the East Belfast area has struggled to successfully implement such a programme however this year's initiative attracted nearly 600 young people to Avoniel Leisure Centre for soccer participation. Ballysillan Leisure Centre enjoyed the single highest participation level when numbers had to be limited to 130 during a Friday evening session.

A 'Finals Day' was organised at Ballysillan Leisure Centre for Sunday 4 September 2011. This celebratory event invited the best performing nine teams during the programme, throughout the city, to Ballysillan for a league style competition. Following the league style event a knock out finale resulted in the Village team defeating Santos by a score of 1-0. The successful Village team received their trophy from the Lord Mayor.

In addition to competing teams from geographical Belfast areas, players originating from Romania and Hungary participated enthusiastically throughout the initiative.

Programme feedback involved surveying 104 participants on 19 August 2011. The resulting surveys indicated that some 77% of participants identified that they would have either been consuming alcohol (27%) taking narcotics (18%) or walking the streets (32%) if the programme had not been commissioned. 96% of young people advised that they had enjoyed the initiative and the optimum ages ranges were 16-17 (55%) and 14-15 (37%).

The programme has surpassed officer expectations and all involved are keen to develop and expand the Midnight Soccer initiative during 2012.

3. Resource Implications																							
	<p><u>Human Resources</u> A Leisure Centre Manager was directly deployed to co-ordinate the programme development and management. Support was received from Leisure Operations, Leisure Development, Community Safety, P&L ASB Co-ordinator and BCSDN.</p> <p><u>Financial</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Costs</th> <th></th> <th>Funding</th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BCSDN coaching and refereeing costs</td> <td>£10500</td> <td>Department of Justice</td> <td>£6900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advertising/equipment purchase</td> <td>£2500</td> <td>Council contribution</td> <td>£ 9300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transport</td> <td>£ 3200</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£16200</td> <td></td> <td>£16200</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> Facilities utilised during periods of low usage and times of closure.</p>			Costs		Funding		BCSDN coaching and refereeing costs	£10500	Department of Justice	£6900	Advertising/equipment purchase	£2500	Council contribution	£ 9300	Transport	£ 3200			Total	£16200		£16200
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4. Equality and Good Relations Implications																							
	This was a cross community scheme which contributed positively to good relations in the city.																						
5. Recommendations																							
	That Committee note the contents of this report and support the proposed development of this initiative during 2012.																						
6. Decision Tracking																							
	N/A																						
7. Key to Abbreviations																							
	BCSDN – Belfast Community Sports Development Network. LORAG – Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group																						
8. Documents Attached																							
	None.																						