



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Parks & Leisure Committee |
| Subject: | Departmental Plan Update |
| Date: | 10 November 2011 |
| Reporting Officer: | Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure |
| Contact Officers: | Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager Maria McAleer, Policy and Business Development Officer |

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| 1. | Relevant Background Information |
| | <p>The purpose of this report is to provide a six month progress report on the 2011-12 departmental plan highlighting key achievements during this period and to ask for Members input into the development of the 2012-13 Departmental Plan.</p> <p>The Parks and Leisure departmental plan 2011-12 was approved by Committee on 9 June 2011 with agreement that a six month update report would be presented to Committee in October 2011. This update is for the first six months of 2011/12 (for the period 1 April – 30 September 2011).</p> |
| 2. | Key Issues |
| | <p>The department plan describes how the Parks and Leisure Department's purpose, vision, values, objectives, activities and key performance indicators for the year 2011-12 complement those outlined in the corporate plan. As agreed at the September 2011 meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee, a six monthly up-date report on the progress associated with 2011-12 departmental plan would be provided to Members in Nov-Dec 2011.</p> <p>Lead officers were asked to provide updates on the status of their service/ unit projects, programmes and activities under each of the departmental objectives, providing commentary if necessary. As many of the department's projects involve land re-development, repair and improvement, a number of the projects continue to feature on an ongoing basis in the department's plan. Key areas of progress and achievement are summarised under each of the corporate strategic themes below.</p> |

City leadership

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about **partnering and leading**. The Parks and Leisure Department takes a strategic lead role on behalf of the council in working with other partners and agencies to deliver an active, healthy and vibrant city. Work is still continuing with arrangements being made for the management and maintenance of phase of the Connswater Community Greenway. An economic appraisal is underway for the Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens with a planned re-submission of application for funding to Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2011.

Better care for Belfast's environment

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about **protecting and linking** the city through its parks, open spaces and leisure centres. Throughout the year we will be committed to delivering a sustainable approach to service provision, contributing to a cleaner, greener and healthier environment. This year the Department achieved 5 new Green Flags and retained 3 – bringing the total achievement to a record 8. Three additional sites: Waterworks, Belmont and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon have been selected to go forward in 2012. Green Flag Management Plans are being developed for these sites. Applications planned for submission in January 2012.

Better opportunities for success across the city

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about **physical** regeneration in **local** neighbourhoods and the department playing a key role in the local economy. The department will continue to develop ways of using our facilities and open spaces; to enrich the city's cultural, tourism and heritage offering.

Operational staff working with the Departmental Portfolio and Programme Manager continue to develop local communities' programmes for Connswater, Dunville and Woodvale with anticipated commencement in April 2012.

Better support for people and communities

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about **participation and lifestyles**. The Department will continue to provide programmes and services to make people feel safer and encourage people to lead healthier and more active lifestyles.

The Presence in Parks Pilot is in the process of redevelopment as the initial approach proved not to be practicable; a new plan has been produced and is awaiting approval.

The Department has delivered improvements in dog services and dog control in Parks and is actively participating in the Dog Fouling Campaign and Working Group with Health and Environmental Services. Over one thousand poop scoop bags have been distributed in Parks.

Currently a base line for measuring dog fouling in Parks is being developed and problem areas are being identified by monitoring the issuing of fixed penalties. Also we are exploring other dog control measures in parks such as zoning areas in line with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment bill. Relevant bye law signage has also been reviewed.

A range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities have been delivered including parent and toddler swim classes, 'Make a Splash' swim programme, summer schemes, Health wise exercise referral scheme, Cardiac rehabilitation (Phase 4) programme, Work for health, Health for life scheme, Activ8 programme, Healthy families, Watch this space programme, toddler to teenager programme and programmes for seniors and women. Some programmes are continuous throughout the year e.g. Make a splash, Health wise.

Better services

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about delivering a **proficient** service and **listening** to our customers. The Department will continue to deliver service improvement right across the department. Operational reviews identifying and delivering improvements and efficiencies in our services in relation to both Parks and Leisure Services are currently underway. "Growing Communities" strategy development commenced with a baseline study commissioned, pre-consultation meeting conducted in September 2011 and a timetable of steering group meetings scheduled throughout 2011/12. We have developed a customer charter and continue to roll-out a programme of customer care training.

Better value for money

In the Parks and Leisure Department this theme is about reviewing and improving our **processes** and creating a **learning** organisation. The Department will continue to invest and support our people by improving employee capacity and capabilities. The corporate approach to personal development planning has been implemented throughout the Department. This will facilitate the planning and prioritisation of training needs and more efficient procurement with external training providers if necessary. The department is continuing to work towards the corporate achievement of liP and is currently implementing a detailed action plan to support this aim.

Finance

The Department continues to identify opportunities and implement initiatives to maximise income most notably through completing a review of the Boost membership programme and pricing scheme with recommendations' to be presented to committee in December 2011. The Department continues to secure and manage funding from external sources with a number of external grants sourced in the year to date including the securing of funding under Phase II of the Belfast Peace III Plan for delivery of the City of Neighbourhoods - Health and Wellbeing project Respect through Sport commencing in January 2012.

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| | <p><u>Policy, Planning and Performance</u> The Department progressed the development of the playing pitches strategy and proceeds with work on the associated action plans. In line with the improvement programme, the Department continues to develop its business planning and performance management processes in line with the corporate priorities.</p> <p><u>Communication and Engagement</u> As part of the improvement programme we continue to prioritise online transactions within available budgets and system functionality. Key online transactions have been identified, notably in relation to leisure, cemeteries' and grant schemes and these are being progressed as part of specific projects. The Department participated in the council wide video project which produced promotional and information videos that are hosted on the council website. The department now has 11 short videos showcasing our venues and services.</p> <p><u>Planning for 2012-13</u> Work has commenced on the development of a draft departmental plan for 2012-13. It is proposed that a draft will be presented to the Committee in either February or March 2012. Key priorities for action will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progressing the playing pitches strategy; • continuing with the improvement programme to modernise service delivery in line with customer expectations; • development of a draft "Growing Communities" strategy – including allotments and community gardens; • planning to be able to fulfil our obligations under forthcoming legislation – including clean neighbourhoods, high hedges and biodiversity; • retaining our 8 green flags and attaining 3 additional in 2012; • ongoing development and regeneration of our parks and open spaces; • agile programme development and diversionary provision to deal with anti-social behaviour in and around our sites; • active development of friends groups in a number of sites; and • ongoing development of health and activity programmes – with key connections to the emerging Active Belfast agenda and the Active Communities programme. <p>This list is in no way exhaustive and input from Members would be welcome if there is anything they think should be included.</p> |
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| 3. | Resource Implications |
| | <p>There are no additional resource implications at this time. The 2012-13 Departmental Plan will be developed in line with the Department's allocated budget.</p> |

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| 4. | Equality and Good Relations Implications |
| | None. |
| 5. | Recommendations |
| | Members are asked to note this update report and advise if there is anything they feel should be addressed in the draft departmental plan for 2012-13. |
| 6. | Decision Tracking |
| | There is no decision tracking attached to this report. |
| 7. | Key to Abbreviations |
| | <p>KPI Key Performance Indicator IIP Investors in People FOI Freedom of Information DMT Departmental Management Team PDP Personal Development Plan</p> |
| 8. | Documents Attached |
| | None. |