



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Parks and Leisure Committee |
| Subject: | Playing Pitches Strategy |
| Date: | 12 January 2012 |
| Reporting Officer: | Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure |
| Contact Officer: | Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer |

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| 1. | Relevant Background Information |
| 1.1 | <p>Members are aware of the recently developed playing pitches strategy and that as part of this a number of reports have been considered by committee. At its meeting on the 9 June 2011 the Committee agreed:</p> <p>(i) <i>that the following five sites be prioritised for development during Phase I of the programme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· <i>Cherryvale Playing Fields</i>· <i>Woodvale Playing Fields</i>· <i>Cliftonville Playing Fields</i>· <i>Falls Park</i>· <i>Ormeau Park;</i> <p>(ii) <i>that the following three changing facilities be upgraded during Phase I of the programme:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· <i>Ballysillan – new facility</i>· <i>Waterworks (Westland) – new facility</i>· <i>Musgrave Park – new facility;</i> <p>(iii) <i>that the Dixon Park Playing Fields and Victoria Park sites be removed from Phase I of the programme associated with the upgrade of changing facilities to enable those Members of the Committee representing the East of the City to undertake site visits to those facilities and the Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park in order to consider the prioritisation of those sites within Phase I of the programme;</i></p> <p>(iv) <i>that officers meet with the Irish Football Association to discuss a programme of joint working around junior association football based around best practice;</i></p> |

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| | <p>(v) <i>that officers develop a process for the invitation of applications for enhancement to educational facilities to secure greater community access;</i></p> <p>(vi) <i>that letters be forwarded to the Ministers with responsibility for the Departments of Education and Culture, Arts and Leisure seeking meetings regarding the Pitches Strategy; and</i></p> <p>(vii) <i>to note the action plans.</i></p> <p>It was further agreed at the Council meeting on the 4 June 2011:</p> <p><i>‘That the decision under the heading “Playing Pitches Strategy” be amended to provide that the Dixon Park Playing Fields and Victoria Park sites be included in Phase 1 of the programme associated with the upgrade of changing facilities.’</i></p> |
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| 2 | Key Issues |
| | <u>Public Consultation</u> |
| 2.1 | Members will also be aware that the second phase of public consultation took place from 25 July to 14 October 2011. This phase of consultation focused on the local impact of the development of pitches to inform the EQIA and sought views on the Action Plans for Years 1-3 of the Playing Pitches Strategy. |
| 2.2 | The second phase of consultation included an online questionnaire, a series of independently facilitated public meetings combined with meetings with key groups including the Council’s Section 75 Forum, the Youth Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. |
| 2.3 | Invitations were sent out to 222 sporting clubs, societies and organisations informing them of the events. Information was also sent to the secretaries of soccer leagues and the Antrim County Board asking them to circulate it to their members. Public notices were also placed in local newspapers and on the notice boards of council facilities including leisure and community centres. Although in the end there was not a significant attendance at any of the public sessions there was a good input from those in attendance and a number of relevant issues discussed. |
| 2.4 | A total of five completed questionnaires were returned at the end of the phase 2 consultation period; one from an individual, one from a GAA club and three from governing bodies (GAA, association football and rugby union). The responses and the feedback from the public meetings were considered as part of the final EQIA report. |
| 2.5 | <u>Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</u> A copy of the full EQIA final report is attached as appendix 1. Section 5 of the report outlines the key findings and includes a table (p25) which |

provides an assessment of impacts against each of the section 75 categories.

- 2.6 The EQIA has suggested that there is potential for people in a number of the Section 75 groups to be differentially affected by the strategy and associated action plans. This is on the basis that they may have less opportunity to benefit from the provision of new and upgraded facilities. The groups identified include:
- People from a Protestant community background;
 - Black and Minority Ethnic people, Eastern European migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
 - Children and young people;
 - Older people;
 - Single parents;
 - Women and girls;
 - People with disabilities;
 - People with dependants (including carers and those with dependent children).
- 2.7 The investment priorities have been established as a result of applying the prioritisation matrix in the strategy which was the subject of extensive consultation last year.
- The EQIA found that any differential impacts caused by the selection of sites (principally to people from a Protestant community background) are justified in that the highest deficiencies/needs identified by Strategic Leisure were in respect of Gaelic sports.
- 2.8 The EQIA outlines mitigating actions under the following three areas:
- 2.9 Sports development
An important element of the Action Plans is the development of a new sports development programme which will specially address the under-representation of certain Section 75 groups in team sports activity, including older people, women and girls, people with disabilities and people with dependants. The programme will include targets for increased participation by these groups.
- 2.10 Junior pitches
The lack of facilities across the city for small sided (or junior) games which directly affects a range of under-represented groups was highlighted. The EQIA states that as a mitigating action we intend to continue to examine the potential to convert underused full sized pitches into junior sized pitches and in relation to association football to develop a programme of joint working with the Irish Football Association.
- Members will be aware that the Committee has already agreed *'that officers meet with the Irish Football Association to discuss a programme of joint working around junior association football based around best practice'*. Officers are currently exploring various options around junior

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| | <p>provision and will continue to work with a range of partners including the IFA on this issue. It is proposed that an additional action on junior provision is included in the action plan already agreed by the Committee. The final version of the strategy includes the proposed action points in this area (Section 9, points 9.12.10 and 9.14.7) – attached at Appendix 2.</p> |
| 2.11 | <p><u>Wider Initiatives</u></p> |
| | <p>The EQIA emphasises that it is important to view the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans in the context of a wide range of initiatives currently being taken by the Council to benefit people in particular Section 75 groups. These include programmes aimed at children, young people and older people.</p> |
| 2.12 | <p>One of the actions within the Management sub-objective of the strategy is to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches. As part of this we will monitor the equality impacts of the investment decisions.</p> |
| | <p>During the consultation the Irish Football Association (IFA) offered to share the findings of its own monitoring programmes with the Council and to assist in facilitating wider consultation and monitoring. Officers will work not just with the IFA but with all the governing bodies, clubs and other organisations to share monitoring information and ensure that vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups are able to contribute to the ongoing development of the strategy and action plans.</p> |
| 2.13 | <p><u>Final strategy</u></p> |
| | <p>The draft playing pitches strategy has been updated to reflect the feedback received from the public consultation exercises and the Members’ decision to change the weighting in the prioritisation matrix. It has also been “proofed” to ensure that it meets the Plain English guidelines (a copy of this is attached at Appendix 2).</p> |
| 2.14 | <p><u>Next steps</u></p> |
| | <p>Officers have carried out an initial assessment of the sites which were agreed by Members for development in phase 1. The purpose of the assessment is to identify potential planning and construction issues, and taking these into account to determine the best locations on the sites for the 3G pitches and changing rooms and the exact specifications of each. The next stage in this process will be to present this information to Members at a Special Committee meeting to be arranged.</p> |

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| 3 | Resource Implications |
| | <p><u>Financial</u> £10 million has been allocated in the capital programme for the implementation of the playing pitches strategy in the period 2011-2014.</p> |
| | <p><u>Human Resources</u> No additional human resources known at this time.</p> |
| | <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> |

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| | None at this stage although the implementation of the strategy will have implications on the number and type of playing pitches provided by the council. |
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| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Implications |
| | Policy Arc Ltd were appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy which has been subject to an EQIA. The full EQIA is attached at Appendix 1. |

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| 5 | Recommendations |
| | Committee is asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) to note the findings of the EQIA; and (ii) to agree the proposed additional actions relating to the provision of junior facilities included in the final strategy and action plans. |

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| 6 | Decision Tracking |
| | Further update reports on action plan implementation and status will be brought by the Property and Portfolio and Leisure Development Managers as strategy implementation progresses. |

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| 7 | Key to Abbreviations |
| | GAA: Gaelic Athletic Association EQIA: Equality Impact Assessment IFA: Irish Football Association |

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| 8. | Documents attached |
| | Appendix 1: Final EQIA report Appendix 2: Final Pitches Strategy |