



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Refurbishment of Playgrounds
Date:	12 January 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p><u>Pitch and Mitch</u> At the August 2010 committee, Members agreed improvements and the allocation of budget for playground refurbishment for the year 2010/2011. The report singled out the Pitch and Mitch facility in North Belfast as it was rated a 10 meaning it was rated as being in very poor condition and that the council needed to consider the future use of the space.</p>
1.2	<p>In January 2011 a further report on Pitch and Mitch was presented to Parks and Leisure committee. At this point work with local residents had begun and some progress made with minor works being undertaken to repair the existing bitmac surface to enable football to be played.</p>
1.3	<p>At the August 2011 committee proposed improvements and the allocation of the budget of £649,200 for the year 2011/2012 was agreed.</p>
1.4	<p>Committee agreed to continue to work with the residents in Ardoyne to reclaim the Pitch and Mitch facility and to receive a proposal regarding the future development of the site at a later date. Since then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the facility has been reopened;• local school children took part in an arts based project to develop a sign for the park incorporating its name as a symbol of the communities' commitment to reclaiming the facility; and• design options have been developed with residents – the preferred option costing in the region of £130k.
1.5	<p><u>Cavehill Country Park Adventurous Playground</u> The Adventurous Playground was first opened in 1991 and offers a wide range of playground apparatus for 3 to 14 year olds. Since its opening there has been no major refurbishment work undertaken. The last piece</p>

	of equipment to be replaced was in 2006 when the large multi play unit located in the upper section of the playground was installed. Following this a much needed permanent toilet facility was built within the grounds of the playground.
1.6	A subsequent independent inspection of the Adventurous Playground in December 2011 has identified a steady decline in the condition of the equipment due mainly to heavy usage and significant degrading of the wooden steps and surrounding wooden retaining walls which is predominantly made up of railway sleepers. Some minor replacement work was done on the retaining walls around the large space net in 2011 but the remaining walls need to be replaced. A report from the inspection carried out in December is attached at Appendix 1.
1.7	The Adventurous Playground is the only playground that levies a charge for admittance to users.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A funding application was made to DSD to support the development of the Pitch and Mitch playground. Following an economic appraisal DSD has confirmed that £182,817 will be provided to support the total cost of the scheme.
2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Adventurous Playground at Cavehill Country Park was not included in the priorities for the refurbishment programme reported to committee in August 2011 on the basis that it is a stand alone site which required enhancement of the facility and landscape setting.
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At that time the replacement of 8 of the 18 pieces of playground equipment was estimated to be £150,000.
2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inspection carried out in December 2011 indicated that the sleepers are starting to break up and have caused the inspector to recommend the immediate closure of the playground on health and safety grounds. On this basis the playground has been temporarily closed.
2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The estimated cost of replacing the wooden steps and retaining walls is in the region of £80,000.
2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members are reminded that the public are asked to pay an entrance fee of £2.20 to use these facilities.
2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members are therefore asked to consider the Adventurous Playground as a priority within the allocation of playground refurbishment budget in 2012/2013. It is estimated that works could be commissioned and completed by May 2012 in time for peak usage over the summer period.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	The £182,817 grant from DSD will cover the cost of refurbishing the Pitch and Mitch playground.
3.2	It is proposed that the urgent work required to reinstate the Adventurous Playground at Cavehill Country Park is made a priority and the £150,000 required to purchase equipment is funded from the underutilised corporate fund. The balance of £80,000 for the steps and wall will come from the 2012/2013 playground refurbishment budget.
3.3	The reprioritisation of the underutilised funding will reduce the impact on the refurbishment budget available for 2012/13.

4.	Equality and good relations implications
	None

5.	Recommendations
	<p>Committee is asked :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to note the provision of funds from DSD to support the development of the Pitch and Mitch playground scheme • to note the temporary closure of the Adventurous Playground; and • to consider the Adventurous Playground at Cavehill Country Park as a priority within the programme of playground refurbishment for 2012/2013.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure to implement decision of committee.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	DSD: Department of Social Development.

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Adventurous Playground Inspection Report.