



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Review of Business Support Phase Two
Date:	9 February 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Jacqui Wilson, Business Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The purpose of the report is to update the Parks and Leisure Committee on phase two of the review of the department's business support function including the provision of business support in leisure centres and to set out recommendations for approval.</p> <p>At the Parks and Leisure committee on 16 September 2010 approval was given for an assessment of the business support requirement within leisure centres. It was agreed that a three month pilot would assess the support requirements in leisure regarding receptionist, clerical and business assistant duties, including membership management, key performance and management information and the linkages with business support in the centre of the department.</p> <p>Phase one of the business support review highlighted a need for administrative support to park managers to enable them to deliver the key requirements of their role effectively.</p>

2.	Key Issues
	<p><u>Current Situation</u></p> <p>There are currently ten leisure centres within Belfast City Council and all have a business assistant except Falls and Ozone which currently have temporary arrangements and Loughside which currently shares its business support with another centre. There are one or two clerk/WPOs depending on the size and staffing numbers within each centre.</p> <p>The business assistant supports business delivery within each centre and delivers on the key processes such as payroll, management reporting, reception management, membership management, customer accountability</p>

and care. However there have been inconsistencies within this role and different levels of service provision within individual leisure centres.

Out of the nine business assistant posts four are filled on a secondment basis or through acting up arrangements. These have been predominately recruited from the designation below i.e. clerk/WPOs. In turn the vacant clerk/WPO posts are being filled by agency staff. This mode of operation creates uncertainty, a lack of stability and creates a potential for inconsistencies in service provision.

Key Findings

Analysis of the pilot has concluded that:

A business assistant is required within each leisure centre to support management and ensure business delivery. The role of clerical staff was found to be required to provide support and cover (at the appropriate level) for the business assistant to ensure continuity of service.

The bookings function within the centre was successfully carried out by the business assistants at the pilot sites. This is clearly an administrative role and has clear links with other responsibilities within the business assistant's role i.e. debt and customer management.

There is also a requirement within the service to provide administrative bookings support for the outdoor leisure function, which will provide a more consistent and effective approach to pitch bookings, lodgements and bank reconciliations. This administration is currently being carried out by two temporary outdoor leisure officers and is under review. It is felt that this duty could move to the business assistants and free up the outdoor leisure officers to manage facility management agreements and events. A separate report will be presented to committee on this issue.

The current job description is outdated and needs to reflect other corporate initiatives such as the introduction of the central transaction unit and other system changes.

The current established reporting arrangement has the business assistant reporting through to the leisure centre assistant manager. However in reality this post reports directly to the manager and this has been the case for a number of years.

During phase one of the review there was a recommendation for 2 additional clerks within central business support however these were subject to completion of the operational review of business support within leisure. Phase two has concluded that there is a requirement for these posts and has identified how they can provide support to other areas within the department such as; Park Managers, Leisure Development and Cemetery Administration. Phase one also recommended a post of messenger for the department rather than the existing arrangement which relates to parks operations only. The job description for this post is currently being developed and revised practices will now allow for a departmental resource.

	<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>The duties and responsibilities of the business assistant need to be updated and realigned to meet the increasing demands placed upon the centres. This will ensure they are positioned to embrace additional functions and provide improved customer services (eg sale of fuel stamps) and continue to demonstrate value for money.</p> <p>The two temporary business assistants should be made permanent to enable the effective running of their designated centres. There is a requirement to have a clerical post at each of the centres to ensure continuity of key administrative tasks e.g. wages, memberships.</p> <p>It has been determined that the centres that currently have two clerks will utilise the additional capacity by providing administrative support across the whole department. In the first instance this will focus on administrative support for the parks management.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Ozone will assume responsibility for all outdoor leisure bookings. A separate report will be presented to committee at a future meeting on the findings of the wider review of outdoor leisure.</p> <p>The structural reporting line from the business assistant to the centre manager should be formalised to reflect the long standing operational practices, as well as recognition of the working relationship with the finance team in central business support.</p> <p>The two clerks and the messenger that were agreed as part of phase one of the review should now be recruited (see appendix 3).</p> <p>In order to ensure stability and provide a more consistent service there is a need to normalise the structure and fill the business assistant posts and subsequently clerk/WPOs on a permanent basis. There are 4.5 posts currently being filled by agency staff. If these recommendations are approved it will remove the need for the reliance on and the financial premium associated with the use of agency staff.</p> <p>The budgets in relation to the existing temporary staff are appropriately realigned to reflect the permanent establishment structure being recommended.</p>
--	--

3.	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p><u>Financial Implications</u></p> <p>The net cost of implementing the proposed changes is zero. However due to the fact that the existing temporary posts are funded from agency budgets and not staffing budgets permission is required to realign the budget accordingly. This will confirm the permanent establishment as per the business need.</p>
-----------	--

	<p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>There are minimal human resource implications. However all affected staff will be required to sign up to a revised business assistant job description. The affected post holders will be subject to the council's categorisation procedure and will be asked to sign and agree the new job descriptions prior to implementation. It should be noted that all staff and trade unions have been fully consulted throughout the process and no objections have been raised to date. Recruitment of vacant posts will be in line with normal council vacancy control procedures.</p>
--	---

4.	Equality and good relations implications
	None.

5.	Recommendations
	Members are asked to agree the recommendations contained within this report.

6.	Decision Tracking
	The responsible officer for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations will be the Business Manager.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Leisure Centre structure</p> <p>Appendix 2: Proposed Leisure Centre structure</p> <p>Appendix 3: Proposed final Business Support Structure</p>