



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Proposed Nursery School at Cliftonville Playing Fields
<b>Date:</b>	12 April 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager, Property and Projects Department Stephen Walker, Departmental Portfolio Manager

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>At its meeting on 6 February 2007 the former Parks and Cemeteries Sub-Committee approved the disposal of a total of approximately 1.54 acres of frontage land at Cliftonville Playing Fields to the Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain for the development of an Irish Medium School. This included an area of 0.54 acres which was to be jointly used by the school and the Council for vehicle parking and turning. The scheme at that time also provided for the potential development of a grass Gaelic games pitch on the remainder of the site. The attached map (Appendix 1) shows the proposed site utilisation approved by Committee in 2007</p> <p>The Bunscoil subsequently obtained Outline Planning Approval in February 2009 for development of a primary school, nursery unit and playing field on the Cliftonville Playing Fields site. This replaced a previous similar Outline Permission obtained in 2004.</p> <p>The matter however went into abeyance because the Department of Education (DENI) could not commit to the arrangements until their own appraisal processes had been completed and was subject to the availability of funds. DENI have however continued to consider the original Bunscoil proposal, which includes a nursery unit, and the Council were recently approached by them in relation to disposal of land (by way of a lease and option to purchase) to facilitate the nursery unit only at this stage. The current nursery unit is co-located with the Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain school at Wyndham Drive/Torrens Crescent, close to Cliftonville Playing Fields. The aspiration is to have the unit constructed and ready for use by the start of the autumn term in September 2012. DENI also wish to keep alive the prospect of developing a Bunscoil on the site in addition to the nursery unit and whilst they are currently unable to</p>

	<p>confirm whether the Bunscoil will be able to proceed, they would hope to be able to clarify the position later this year.</p> <p>The current grass pitch at Cliftonville Playing Fields is used by two local Gaelic Clubs. In 2010 the Council installed temporary modular changing accommodation at the south eastern end of the site, fronting the Cliftonville Road. The approximate position of the modular changing accommodation is shown shaded blue on the attached map (Appendix 2).</p> <p>The development of a 3G Gaelic Games pitch and associated changing accommodation at Cliftonville Playing Fields now forms part of the Council's Pitches Strategy and following the more recent contact from DENI, Council officers have primarily sought to ensure that use of the existing modular changing accommodation and grass pitch is preserved until the commencement of any site works associated with the 3G pitch development. In addition officers have sought to ensure that the 3G pitch development is not in any way prejudiced by any short or longer term proposals being made by DENI.</p> <p>The current proposals by DENI are based on a phased Masterplan approach with the initial phase being the nursery unit only with access and parking; but with a Phase 2 envisaging the full Bunscoil which can proceed either on the basis of an integrated changing room facility which would serve both the pitch and the school or an independent changing facility. This proposal also allows for potential for the use of the school's multipurpose hall outside school hours. Dependent on the timing in relation to DENI approval for the Bunscoil proceeding, the Council's pitch and changing accommodation proposals could run in parallel with the school and potentially a combined planning application could be submitted</p> <p>However, the development of the pitch and the changing accommodation are not contingent upon the Bunscoil proposal and the Council can still go ahead with an independent changing room facility if the Bunscoil proposal does not proceed.</p> <p>In discussions with DENI, Council officers have sought to minimize the land that DENI wish to reserve for the 'longer term' Bunscoil development.</p> <p>DENI and BCC officers have met with Planning Service and Roads Service and there were no major issues raised in relation to the proposed vehicle access arrangements associated with the potential ultimate development of the Bunscoil, 3G pitch and changing accommodation.</p>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>The proposed location of the pitches included in the Council's Pitches Strategy, including the Cliftonville site, were approved at a Special meeting of the Parks and Leisure Committee on 17 January 2012. The proposed position of the pitch at Cliftonville presented at Committee took account of the plans for the Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain to the front of the</p>

	<p>site although it was recognised this was still under consideration by the Department of Education.</p> <p>Consultants are being appointed in May to take forward the development of the overall Pitches Strategy, which includes Cliftonville. It is envisaged that the design, planning approval process, award of tender and subsequent development of the pitch and changing facility should be completed within a two year timeframe.</p> <p>To facilitate the development of an Irish Medium nursery school the Department of Education are seeking a 5 year lease on an area of 0.29 acres at Cliftonville Playing Fields, as shown outlined red on the attached map (Appendix 2). A rent of £1780 per annum has been agreed with Land and Property Services in respect of this area, subject to Committee approval. The site includes an area of 0.07 acres for car parking which would be available for shared use with the Council. DENI wish to include within the lease an option to purchase the nursery site from the Council, at market value, within the 5 year term, should the need arise, which would be subject to further Committee approvals.</p> <p>DENI wish to preserve the longer term goal of developing the Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain on land which would adjoin the nursery site and the proposed 3G pitch. As outlined above, there is previous Committee approval to the disposal of the subject land to Bunscoil Bheann Mhadigan. Officers are continuing to work with DENI to minimise any additional costs associated with the co-location of the 3G pitch with the Bunscoil on the Cliftonville site. There is also the potential for benefits in terms of joint use of changing accommodation and sports hall facilities within the Bunscoil. This integrated approach is in line with the 'One Public Estate' concept and the improved use of publicly owned assets across the wider public sector, voluntary and community sectors.</p> <p>The site area being proposed for the nursery unit will allow continued use of the existing grass pitch and modular changing accommodation.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Financial</u> A rental income of £1780 per annum would flow from the proposed grant of a five year lease to Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain for the provision of the nursery school unit.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> Resources in Property and Projects Department, Legal Services and Parks and Leisure Department associated with drawing up a legal agreement and agreement of detailed terms with the Department of Education / Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain in relation to the proposed 5 year lease. Further staff resource required in developing potential joint arrangements with the Department of Education/Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain regarding future use of the future facilities to be developed on the site.</p>

	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>The proposed integrated approach is in line with the ‘One Public Estate’ concept and the improved use of publicly owned assets across the wider public sector, voluntary and community sectors.</p> <p>The proposed five year lease, with an option to purchase at market value, allied to the proposed positioning of the nursery within the site is considered to represent the best available solution for the Council in the current circumstances. The proposal also appears to satisfy the needs of the Gaelic Clubs and the Bunscoil.</p>
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<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
	No known good relations or equality issues associated with this proposal.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Committee is recommended to approve the grant of a 5 year lease to Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain of the lands outlined red on the attached map (Appendix 2) at a rent of £1780 per annum, subject to an appropriate legal agreement to be drawn up by Legal Services and subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 46. Committee is also recommended to note the continuing discussions with the Department of Education regarding the future overall site utilisation.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with the Director of Property and Projects to ensure the matter is progressed at the earliest opportunity.

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	DENI: Department of Education Northern Ireland

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Map showing site utilisation as presented to the Parks and Cemeteries Services Committee on 6 February 2007.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Map showing proposed nursery unit site, outlined red, and approximate position of the Council’s existing modular changing accommodation (shaded blue).</p>