



**Belfast City Council**

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| <b>Report to:</b>         | Parks & Leisure Committee  |
| <b>Subject:</b>           | Stadia Upgrades – Windsor and Casement Park  |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 14 June 2012   |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure<br>Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager<br>Sinead Grimes, Policy Officer                                 |

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| <b>1</b> | <b>Relevant Background Information</b>  |
|          | <p>Members will be aware that last year the NI Executive committed significant investment towards local sports facilities including - £61.4m to the IFA (of which £25.2m will go towards the redevelopment of Windsor Park), £61.4m to the GAA for the redevelopment of Casement Park and £15million to the IRFU towards the upgrade of Ravenhill. The respective sporting governing bodies are also expected to provide additional substantial funding of their own towards facilities upgrades. The governing bodies are now in the process of developing full business cases for their respective projects.</p> <p>Council related projects aligned to the stadia upgrades are highlighted as emerging projects in the Council's Investment Programme 2012-2015. In addition, a comprehensive review of the Council's leisure estate is also a key project under the Investment Programme.</p> <p>The Council owns a number of leisure assets in the immediate vicinity and surrounding areas of both Windsor Park and Casement Park. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-</li><li>- <i>Windsor Park</i> – Olympia Leisure Centre/Community Centre, Boucher Road Playing Fields, head landlord for majority of Boucher Road Estate</li><li>- <i>Casement Park</i> – Andersonstown Leisure Centre, North Link Playing Fields</li></ul> <p>The Council therefore regarded it as important that these stadia developments and investments were not viewed in isolation but rather that the full regeneration impacts, added value of and synergies between the</p> |

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|  | <p>developments was examined. This would have the potential to help build critical mass, have the potential to lever further infrastructure investment, engender greater public interest and potentially generate greater economic, social and physical regeneration outcomes for the city.</p> <p>It was therefore agreed last year that the Council would commission consultants to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-examine the potential added value and regeneration impact of the proposed stadia upgrades and</li> <li>- identify practical opportunities where it might add value to the developments, and to explore how its future investments, resources and assets might be configured to align with the construction of the new stadia and secure optimum social outcomes and community benefits.</li> </ul> <p>The scope of this work was limited to the investment in Casement Park and Windsor Park given the proximity of the Council’s leisure assets to these stadia. Following a competitive tendering process Deloitte were appointed to progress this work.</p> <p>The report by Deloitte considered the strategic context of the stadia developments; future potential in terms of the surrounding areas; an economic assessment of the recommended way forward for each stadium site in conjunction with Council assets; the potential social impact and benefits which the redevelopment of the stadia could have on the local areas and the potential for partnership working.</p> <p>It should be noted that this work is being undertaken in parallel to the work which is being progressed by the sport’s governing bodies (IFA and GAA) on the development of their business case proposals and the work on the development and design of the stadia themselves. Sport NI, as part of the of the consultation for the Deloitte report, highlighted that the funding for the redevelopments of the stadia is committed under this CSR round and there is a very finite ‘window of opportunity’ in which the Council can input into the design process – in terms of, for example, the integration into the surrounding area and provision of services etc. DCAL highlighted their support for the wider regeneration of the stadia areas but it was made clear that the stadia projects have fixed budgets and fixed timescales under which the money has to be spent.</p> |
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| <b>2</b> | <b>Key Issue</b>  |
|          | <p>In their report, Deloitte have highlighted that as at the 2001 Census both areas were within the top 30% of most deprived areas of N.Ireland and have low levels of economic activity. The major investment in the redevelopment of the major sports stadia in Belfast should therefore provide a much needed boost to the local construction industry and create new jobs, training and employment opportunities. The projects link directly to the Programme for Government 2011-2015 and will contribute to national strategies relating to sport and physical recreation as well as the Council’s own priorities on playing pitches and enhancement of open spaces. The wider regeneration benefits of the projects will impact positively on the health and well being of</p> |

surrounding communities and provide economic regeneration through new employment, training and skills development opportunities.

The proposed stadia upgrades provide a one-off opportunity to consider how the surrounding council assets could be best utilised to facilitate a more comprehensive regeneration of both sites. The report highlights that leisure services are a vital aspect of both the Windsor and Casement Park areas. User numbers at both Olympia and Andersonstown Leisure Centres have been increasing with swimming a key feature at both sites. The 3G pitch is very well used at Olympia. However they feel that there is a lot of poorly utilised space within both leisure centres and their exteriors are not well configured to maximise the potential of both sites

The main recommendations in the report include:

#### Windsor Park:

Given the close proximity of Council assets to Windsor Stadium, Deloitte consider that the Windsor Park site offers significant development potential with a suggested option for the wider Windsor Park to create a Sports Village incorporating Windsor Park, Midgley Park, Olympia LC and Boucher Road Playing Fields. The key features of this could potentially include:

- Windsor Park development as planned by the IFA
- Replacement/realignment of Midgley Park pitch to facilitate longer term access from Windsor Park to Boucher Road
- Replacement Olympia LC – with reconfigured foot print and facilities
- Provision of a mini-stand back to back with West Stand of Windsor Park
- Development of commercial, floodlit 5 a side pitches
- Removal and relocation of 3G pitch to Boucher Playing Fields
- NEAP quality play facilities targeting younger people
- Frontage on Boucher Road freed up to be developed for commercial/hospitality use

Deloitte highlight that a comprehensive approach would offer a number of potential benefits. However in order to realise such a vision a number of issues would require further detailed consideration by the Council in terms of–

- The structure of any development between the Council and Linfield
- Funding for a replacement leisure centre
- Funding for spectator facilities associated with a replacement pitch at Midgley
- Capacity of the site to include a commercial 5 a side (which would help generate revenue)
- Quantum of commercial development
- Would the scheme be promoted by the Council or a third party development partner
- Longer term management options for the centre/site

The current access to Windsor Park is either through side streets in the Village area or via the caged walkway at the side of Olympia. An important requirement for the new stadium development is improved access from the Boucher Road in the construction phase and IFA have approached the Council for approval in principle to have an access for construction traffic to the side of Olympia Leisure Centre onto Boucher Road. The approximate location of the proposed access is shown on the map at Appendix 1 although further detailed proposals will be brought back to Committee for approval. The construction access will not be required until later next year but IFA wish to include it as part of their planning application process in terms of a construction access.

In the longer term a permanent access to the stadium onto Boucher Road may present opportunities to properly enhance the access and aesthetics of the approach to the stadium, provide additional economic and regenerative benefits, and it may also improve the perceptions of the stadium, making it more neutral. In this scenario a comprehensive approach would be required which took in Midgley Park, the Olympia Leisure Centre site, and Windsor Park. Initial discussions have been held with Linfield re this and were positive however this will need to be formalised.

#### Casement Park:

The close proximity of Andersonstown Leisure Centre and the North Link playing fields is highlighted and although the opportunity to collaborate leisure services with the stadium is reduced given the physical separation of the sites, there is a suggested option for the wider Casement Park development of a GAA hub.

It also highlights that the rear of Andersonstown Leisure Centre is currently unused and suggests that could potentially be redeveloped as an outdoor park for urban sports (for example skate boarding / BMX). It further suggests that consideration be given to the North Link Playing Fields being potentially redeveloped with new 3G pitch and changing rooms together with enhanced children's play facilities.

There are various other recommendations in the report around wider opportunities to extend time in the Andersonstown area on match days. It highlights the fact that if Casement's profile is raised as a big match venue there is greater potential for spectators to extend their stay in Belfast overnight which will help the area develop as a tourism location with links to the Gaeltacht Quarter, Culturlann, West Belfast Festival and Belfast Hills. Parking was also highlighted as a major concern.

The report provides some recommendations in relation to establishing community stadium working groups to influence issues such as parking and match-day experience as well as to negotiate Community Benefit Agreements. A further report is being brought to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to consider both the asset related and wider economic and social impact issues raised in the Deloitte report.

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|  | <p>Community consultation is a key element of the planning process for both stadia developments and Planning Service will require evidence of a robust community engagement process. Whilst some initial community consultation has commenced, both the IFA and the GAA are currently working up proposals for future community engagement. Council officers have requested a meeting with the GAA and IFA in the near future to assist in taking forward the community engagement process and in engaging with Members. This issue of community engagement and consultation is something that the Area Working Groups may wish to consider and officers can bring forward more details on this following an initial meeting with the GAA and IFA.</p> |
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| <b>3</b> | <p><b>Resource Implications</b></p> <p><u>Financial</u><br/>Not known at this stage. Financial implications can be assessed following the completion of the recommendations below.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u><br/>Staff resource, primarily from Parks &amp; Leisure and Property &amp; Projects in taking forward the proposed recommendations.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u><br/>Depending on the outcome of any of the recommendations the proposals should lead to enhanced regenerative, economic and social outcomes</p> |
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| <b>4</b> | <p><b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b></p> <p>None at this stage.</p> |
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| <b>5</b> | <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>Members are asked to note the recommendations of the stadia report in relation to Olympia and Andersonstown Leisure Centres and to give approval to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) In principle allow access for construction traffic to the side of Olympia Leisure Centre onto Boucher Road. A further report will be brought back in due course for approval to the detailed terms of the construction access.</li> <li>(ii) The Director of Property and Projects and the Director of Parks and Leisure progressing discussions with the IFA, Linfield and the GAA regarding the potential projects which might add value to and improve the regeneration impacts of the stadia developments with a report to be brought back to Committee in due course.</li> <li>(iii) Undertake a feasibility study in relation to the Windsor, Olympia and Midgley Park options in the context of the wider strategic review of leisure.</li> </ul> |
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|  | <p>(iv) In the context of the wider strategic review of leisure, to consider the future development of leisure facilities on the Andersonstown site including the lands to the rear..</p> <p>Members are also asked to note that a further report will be brought to Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee on the asset related and the wider economic, regenerative and social impact issues.</p> |
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| <b>6</b> | <b>Decision Tracking</b>  |
|          | Director of Parks & Leisure and Director of Property & Projects to take forward recommendations within next 2 months. |

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| <b>7</b> | <b>Key to Abbreviations</b>  |
|          | GAA      Gaelic Athletics Association<br>IFA      Irish Football Association |

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| <b>8</b> | <b>Documents Attached</b>                           |
|          | Appendix 1: Olympia Leisure Centre /Windsor Stadium |