



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Update on Playing Pitches Strategy and £750K Fund for Schools
Date:	09 August 012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officers:	Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Members will be aware that the Playing Pitches strategy, its recommendations and actions plans were agreed by Committee through a number of its meetings during 2011 and 2012.</p> <p>Since then officers across the Council have been working to implement the playing pitches strategy, a key element of the Council's investment programme and its associated action plan. Members recently requested more regular updates on ongoing progress.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to outline for Members the progress to date on the different elements of the action plans and to present, for review and approval a draft application process for the £750K for Schools fund, which was agreed as a key sub-objective of the Capital Investment strand of the strategy.</p>

2.	Key Issues
	<p>Within the playing pitches strategy there are three objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital Investment• Management• Sport Development <p>Various activities are taking place under each objective and these include the following:</p>

Capital Development – 3G pitches and changing facilities

Planning and discussions around the physical development and specific locations of the new pitches and changing facilities are progressing. The implementation programme and progress reports will be reported to both Parks and Leisure and Strategic Policy and resources Committee as part of the Investment Programme updates.

Review of Facility Management Arrangements (FMAs)

A review of FMAs has been ongoing and Members were briefed on the work to date earlier this year. The proposed future partnership arrangements framework and policy will be the subject of a separate report to the Committee meeting in September.

Sports development activities

A range of activities are taking place to promote pitch supports among underrepresented groups including females and people with a disability. These include supporting clubs through Clubmark and Support for Sport. Among the grants awarded was one to Belfast Deaf United (association football). Clubs also have an ongoing opportunity to provide their view through the Sports Forum. We are also partnering with governing bodies and Sport NI to host participation events aimed at underrepresented groups including females.

Allocation of £750k fund for school pitches

Members will be aware that they have previously agreed to the allocation of £750,000, from the total £10million allocation, to a fund for capital enhancements to playing pitches owned by schools. The purpose of the capital enhancement is to allow greater community access to the pitches, for example the installation of flood lighting to allow the pitch to be used by the local community in the evenings. Any application to the fund would have to demonstrate that the capital enhancement would increase wider community usage of the playing pitch.

Officers from the department have worked with colleagues from Legal Services to develop an information and guidance pack for applicants which is attached in draft as appendix 1. The document outlines information on project eligibility, the process for application and assessment of applications.

The fund is open to any school which is based within the Belfast City Council area and primary, second level and special needs schools from any of the sectors (controlled, maintained, voluntary or integrated) will be eligible to apply.

The application can be for a capital enhancement on a grass or synthetic pitch that is used for at least one of the following sporting codes:

- Association football (soccer)
- Gaelic games – football and hurling
- Camogie
- Rugby

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cricket • Hockey <p>Section 3 of the information and guidance pack outlines what we consider to be a capital enhancement and what will not be eligible for support.</p> <p>Due to there being a limited amount of money available and based on practice elsewhere, it is suggested that there will be a minimum award of £25,000 and a maximum award of £75,000. The Council will fund up to 100% of the construction costs, up to a maximum of £75,000, although design costs will not be eligible.</p> <p>To assess the applications that are submitted we are suggesting the use of a matrix which is included as appendix 1 of the information and guidance pack for applicants. The proposed criteria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation – type • Participation – increase in usage additional to school use • Funding (secured and anticipated) • Access to pitch • Access to ancillary facilities <p>The Director has had an initial conversation with the Department of Education and they have indicated that they are willing to participate in the process of assessing applications. A meeting is currently being organised to discuss this in detail and to put the necessary arrangements in place.</p> <p>The timescale for the process is outlined in section 7 of the information and guidance pack and it is proposed that the application process opens on the 03 September and closes on the 07 December 2012.</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> 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.</p>

4.	Equality and good relations implications
	Policy Arc Ltd was appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy which has been subject to an EQIA.

	The full EQIA can be downloaded from the Council's website.
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5.	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to;- (i) note the update on the work taking place to implement the Playing Pitches Strategy; (ii) review and agree the draft process for the allocation of the £750k fund for capital enhancements to school pitches.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Actions to be completed by the Policy and Business Development Manager and a further report to be brought to Committee in November 2012

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	FMA's – Facility Management Agreements DEA – District Electoral Area

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Draft Information and guidance pack for applicants