



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	City Cemetery Improvement Programme
Date:	9 August 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure Services
Contact Officers:	Ricky Rice, City Parks Manager, South and West Belfast

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Concern was expressed by Committee about the maintenance of the City Cemetery. At the June 2012 Committee. Committee asked for a programme of maintenance to deal with any invasive species, reduce the amount of weeds within the edges and surrounds of the city cemetery and to ensure a regular programme of grass cutting continues throughout the rest of the grass cutting season.</p>

2	Key Issues
	<p>During the late spring and summer of 2012 the Cemetery experienced significant amounts of rainfall over a prolonged period. The cemetery relies on a programme of regular chemical weed control in order to maintain the 92,251 linear metres of edging contained within the cemetery. The sustained rainfall has significantly reduced the quality of the impact of the weed control chemical due to the requirement to have four hours of dry weather after application and many areas of the cemetery have required a second and third application of weed control to eliminate weeds.</p> <p>This is not unique to the City Cemetery as large parts of the City are also experiencing the same problem of prolonged inclement weather with many roads and footpaths showing signs of significant weed growth. In addition the warm and wet weather has provided ideal growing conditions for weed and grass to grow. Grass cutting machinery has struggled in the wet conditions to maintain the 219,598m² of grass cutting within the cemetery and while grass cutting has been maintained to an acceptable level there have been large areas of grass cutting that have been left with unsightly</p>

markings on the grass due to the wet conditions. Concern was expressed during late May about the amount of weeds surrounding the edges of graves and a decision was made to use two seasonal staff with a specific task to mechanically trim the edges of graves instead of cutting grass. This has been continuous since June 2012 and will continue for the rest of the grass growing period. Significant areas of the 92,251 linear meters of edging have been trimmed and as stated this will continue for the rest of the growing season as long term weather predictions indicate August will continue to be wet with prolonged spells of rainfall thereby reducing further options to apply chemical weed control.

Interim Action Plan July – October 2012

- Contractors have been employed to eliminate invasive weed species dependent on suitable weather conditions.
- Two staff have been allocated to continue trimming of edges of graves and surrounds until weather conditions improve to allow chemical weed control.
- The cemetery has been divided into areas with 11 staff allocated areas to maintain a regular grass cutting programme.
- Implementation of additional signage within City Cemetery is being progressed with Facilities Management Unit.
- The Monumental Safety Programme will be reviewed and recommendations brought forward upon completion of the review.
- Liaison with Commonwealth War Graves will continue throughout the next 12 months regarding improvements to the war graves within the Cemetery.

Work has been ongoing as part of the development of a Falls Park and City Cemetery Masterplan which was reported to Committee in April 2012. A number of improvements are being considered for example:

- Development of Allotments.
- Provision of adequate accommodation to replace existing staff facilities and service yard is being progressed.
- Provision of a decorative mural on cemetery wall.

Specific proposals will be brought to a future Committee as part of the Falls Park and City Cemetery Development Plan.

Concern has also been raised about the condition of the Blitz War Memorial at the City Cemetery. It has been established that this does not come under the remit of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and will need to be funded from existing maintenance budgets. A plan for refurbishment of the memorial is being developed.

	<p>A mural project has been proposed and developed to a point where costs have been estimated at £6,500. Appendix 1 provides an artist's impression of the wall. Design suggestions include covering the wall with a stained glass window style design using vibrant colours and incorporating images of a secular nature connected and respectful to the environment. It is proposed the projects will facilitate the involvement of local groups and community organisations and ensure the production of high quality professional artwork.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
	<p>There are no additional resource implications for maintenance being carried out at present as this work is included within the existing budget for City Cemetery.</p> <p>It is proposed that the cost of the mural is also funded from existing departmental budgets.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None

5	Recommendations
	Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

6	Decision Tracking
	Ricky Rice, City Parks Manager

7	Abbreviations
	None

8	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1. Artists impression of mural