



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Community Capital Programme – Relationship with Sport NI
Date:	11 October 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Walker, Departmental Portfolio Programme Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee will recall that it has, between December 2010 and August 2012, received a series of reports regarding the Community Capital Programme which is a funding scheme administered by Sport NI. The programme was targeted at small groups, clubs and organisations and was encouraged them to apply for funding of up to a maximum grant of £245,000 for projects which would encourage greater participation. Council's and other public authorities were ineligible to apply.</p> <p>A report was presented to Committee in December 2010 regarding several requests from sporting clubs / groups who had applied to Sport NI for the funding. The Committee was initially informed that there had been 4 applications in respect of Council land; these were Marrowbone millennium Park; Mountain Bike Trail at Barnett's Demesne; Hammer Open Space and North Queen Street Playground. The North Queen Street Playground Application was subsequently not progressed by Sport NI. A subsequent report was brought in January 2011, this set out some further details and asked the committee to support the projects in principle subject to further discussions.</p> <p>Sport NI dealt directly with the applicants and during the process of assessing their applications provided them with key milestones at which they would assess their state of readiness to deliver the schemes for which they had applied for funding.</p> <p>In August 2011 a report to Committee highlighted that Sport NI had three main issues that it needed addressed to enable them to assess the applicants state of readiness, these were:</p>

1. Security of tenure;
2. Short fall funding; and
3. Planning approval was required (if necessary)

At this time the applicants asked the Council to assist them with the security of tenure of the sites in question. The remaining issues relating planning consent, design, funding etc were matters for the applicants to address. The Committee agreed at the time to enter into an appropriate legal agreement with the sporting clubs and groups to enable them to draw down the funding providing the issues regarding statutory approvals and funding were addressed.

Following representation on behalf of some of the applicants, a report was brought to the November 2012 meeting of the Committee and subsequently to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It was agreed that a total of £375,000 would be set aside to provide financial support to the three applicants to enable them to meet some or all of the short fall in the funding.

In the interim Council Officers continued to meet with the applicants and Sport NI as necessary to address the issue around security of tenure. The outcome of this was that the council entered into lease arrangements in respect of the Hammer Open Space and the Marrowbone Millennium Park and a management agreement in respect of the Mountain Bike Trail at Barnett's Demesne. In addition, Sport NI required a Deed of Dedication which tied the Council to the asset and the facility in the event that the applicant was unable to deliver the facility for the required 10 year period.

In January 2012 the Council was made aware that there was a further application which had been on hold by sport NI and which had now been activated, this related to Shore Road playing fields, a report was brought forward in February 2012 and again in August 2012 on this. In May 2012, Officers became aware of another application in respect of Cairn Lodge Boxing Club. In both cases, security of tenure was required in the form of a lease and a deed of dedication. However, in both cases whilst the model used in relation to the previous applications would have been generally applicable, there was insufficient time to put the agreements in place within the deadline set by Sport NI. Both of these applications were subsequently unsuccessful in drawing down funding. Not just because of the security of tenure issue but because of match funding and planning consent issues.

Members are also asked to note that the Marrowbone project was also unsuccessful owing to the applicant being unable to convince Sport NI regarding match funding and the absence of planning approval.

The two projects at the Hammer Open Space and the Mountain Bike Trail are still being progressed although there has still been no letter of offer from Sport NI.

In conclusion, the scenario as outlined has been less than satisfactory and the purpose of this report is to seek to ensure that these types of situation do not arise in the future.

2	Key Issues
	<p>This scenario raises a number of important issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applications for funding can be made in respect of Council land without the prior knowledge or consent of the Council; 2. Sport NI's relationship is with the applicant and there is an uneasiness within it about formally liaising with the Council on matters relating to an individual application; 3. At times the Council may be unaware of the applicants requirements until quite late in the process which results in inadequate time to consider the options for support objectively, to protect its interests and to meet the actual requirements of the funding body. For example the discussions and drafting of legal agreements can take months to complete; 4. The implications for the Council can change throughout the process as the capacity of the applicant is open to further scrutiny. For example the ability of the applicant to meet any financial shortfall. Their ability to appoint, manage and pay for external design team consultants to undertake the necessary works to obtain planning consent and to prepare detailed drawings and documentation necessary for tender. These can be technically demanding and costly exercises and at times they are undertaken by groups and clubs with ambition and aspiration but lacking in the necessary resources to deliver them. <p>To ensure that the Council is better placed to deal with such situations in the future the following measures are proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council, through the Director of Parks and Leisure, write to the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure and Sport NI outlining the difficulties with the current approach and requiring that a process be developed to ensure and that when an application is received from a group and the asset belongs to the Council that the Council is notified of the application. Sport NI should ensure that a copy of the application should be forwarded to the Council together with the details of the funding requirement and the associated terms and conditions. Sport NI should be required to outline the assessment process for the application and timeline including key milestones. • In addition it is further proposed that the Council inform the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Sport NI that it requires a formal liaison mechanism to be established to consider any applications and the implications for the Council. This would also serve to monitor progress in line with the requirements of both the funding body and the Council. It would also allow Sport NI and the Council to consider the capacity of the group to take the project forward and how the project should be moved forward from a technical point of view. This would inform the Council's decisions on the level of support to give to individual applicants.

3	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> There are no financial implications.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There are no additional human resource implications.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> There is no doubt that the securing of external funding can support the delivery of improved service provision in local areas, however, the report has highlighted that the situation can place the Council in a difficult position and can result in the loss of assets for a period of time. In addition, the situation can result in projects requiring Council financial support and this could impact on other projects already in the system.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	There are no equality implications.

5	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to provide guidance to the Director on the issues raised and to agree to write to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Sport NI in the terms outlined in the report.

6	Decision Tracking
	Director of Parks and Leisure.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	DCAL – Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
	SNI – Sport Northern Ireland

8	Documents Attached
	None