



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Update on Playing Pitches Strategy & £750K Fund for Schools
Date:	15 November 2012
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1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the Playing Pitches strategy, its recommendations and actions plans were agreed by Committee through a number of its meetings over the last year.
1.2	Since then officers across the Council have been working to implement the playing pitches strategy and its associated action plans and Members recently requested more regular updates on ongoing progress.
1.3	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 change to the maximum and minimum amounts to be awarded under the £750K for Schools fund, which was agreed as a key sub-objective of the Capital Investment strand of the strategy.

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> <p><u>Capital Development – 3G pitches and changing facilities</u> Planning and discussions around the physical development and specific locations of the new pitches and changing facilities are progressing. We have identified preferred locations within each of these sites. In August</p>

we appointed a design team and work has commenced on the commissioning of the necessary ground surveys to inform construction and they have designed a standard template for a facility with four changing room. The next step is to produce outline drawings for each of the sites and these will be issued for consultation with end users. Following this we will submit applications to the Planning Service and we hope to start this process in the New Year.

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 review work to date earlier this year. The proposed future partnership arrangements framework and draft policy is the subject of a separate report to the Committee.

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. We have also run a number of Try it days and Olympic themed events.

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.

At its meeting in August this Committee agreed the draft application process for the £750k for schools. Within this process it was agreed that due to there being a limited amount of money available and based on practice elsewhere, that there would 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. Since Members agreed this position, officers have been liaising with partners in BELB to obtain feedback on the proposal and obtain accurate contact information for schools. The feedback from BELB is that whilst they welcome the fund they have suggested that that it is unlikely that the upper threshold proposed will be

	<p>sufficient for the schools to undertake the actual capital enhancements needed to their pitches. Our partners have also confirmed that there are limited sources of funding available from BELB or the Department of Education. Based on the discussions it is now suggested that schools would need a minimum of £70k and that the maximum should be £150k to cover the costs of doing the capital enhancements we are suggesting such as floodlighting or resurfacing.</p> <p>The implication of changing the minimum and maximum levels of award to £70,000 and £150,000 is that the number of schools benefiting from the award will decrease to between 5-10 schools. However there is a risk that if we do not increase the limits as suggested we will not get any suitable applications to the fund and therefore will not achieve the outcomes sought from the investment in the schools estate. It is therefore recommended that the minimum level of the award is increased to £70,000 and the maximum level is increased to £150,000.</p> <p>It is now proposed that the fund opens for applications on the 10 December 2012 and closes on 29 March 2013 and the findings of the assessment of applications will be brought to the May 2013 Committee meeting for a decision on which applications should be approved.</p> <p>A copy of the revised draft Information and guidance pack for applicants is attached as appendix 1.</p> <p><u>Development of a Memorandum of Understanding</u> One of the actions within the Playing Pitches Strategy is for the Council to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DENI, BELB and CCMS regarding the opening up and development of recreational facilities at schools for wider public use. Initial discussions have taken place with the education partners and it is proposed that a group is set up with representatives from the Council and the education partners to take forward the development of the MOU.</p>
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3.	<p>Resource Implications</p> <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>
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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.
5.	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) note the update on the work taking place to implement the Playing Pitches Strategy; and (ii) agree the minimum and maximum level of grants that will be awarded under the £750k fund for capital enhancements to school pitches be changed to £70,000 and £150,000 respectively.
6.	Decision Tracking
	Actions in relation to the £750k fund for schools to be completed by the Policy and Business Development Manager and a further report to be brought to Committee in May 2013. An update report on the capital build element will be brought to Committee in January 2013.
7.	Key to Abbreviations
	BELB – Belfast Education and Library Board DENI – Department of Education Northern Ireland CCMS – Council for Catholic Maintained Schools MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Draft Information and guidance pack for applicants