



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	John Hewitt Park (Alloa Street)
Date:	10 January 2013
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Walker, Departmental Portfolio and Programme Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee is asked to note that the Council has received an approach from URS consultants on behalf of their clients, the Department for Social Development, (DSD) regarding proposed works within the John Hewitt Park in Alloa Street.</p> <p>This is part of a series of public realm improvements being undertaken throughout Belfast. In essence, the local community wish to create a themed garden area within the playground. As members will be aware John Hewitt was born on Cliftonpark Avenue and the Committee recently agreed to rename the park. The conceptual design for the garden is based around John Hewitt's poem 'Hedgehog' (1952), Appendix 3. The first five lines of the poem will be engraved into the paving as indicated. A copy of the proposed layout is attached as Appendix 2. The cost of the works is estimated to be in the region of £65,000.</p> <p>Before the work can be progressed the Council's approval is required on a number of issues as outlined in the key issues section below.</p>

2	Key Issues
	<p>The Committee is asked to note the following issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In the first instance the approval of the Council is sought to permit the work to be undertaken on its land. DSD will appoint its own

	<p>contractors to undertake the work which is not included within the Council's Capital Programme.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The work will take approximately six weeks to complete. As the Department will require access to Council land to undertake the works, a licence is required, which will set out the regulatory framework within which the works will be carried out and will include a requirement to be completed to the Council's satisfaction. 3. The extent of the contractors compound is set out in Appendix 1; 4. Members will be mindful that these works will be undertaken immediately adjacent to an active playground. It is our desire to keep the playground open during the works and will require the contractor to take appropriate precautions to secure the site. 5. Whilst there are no terms and conditions attached to the funding, the Department has asked that the Council agree to undertake the maintenance and management of the garden and to include it within the Council's public liability schedule. Discussions with the parks manager indicate that the work can be absorbed within the existing resources and should be minimal outside of officer time. 6. Members are asked to note that the sculpture of the hedgehog will be 5m by 3m high (approximately 10 ft). Officers have expressed concern regarding its proximity to the playground, the landscape architect has incorporate a hedged buffer between the play area and the garden in an attempt to separate the two. Staff from Landscape Development Unit had proposed a railing around the playground, however, the cost of this would be prohibitive and would increase the Council's maintenance liability plus potential capital replacement in the future. 7. It is our understanding that the development of the scheme has been undertaken in consultation with the local community and that it does not conflict with a current proposal currently under consideration as part of the Local Investment Fund initiative.
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3	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p><u>Financial</u> The cost of the works will be met in full by Department for Social Development. The maintenance liability will be met from within existing resources. There will be no contractual obligations placed upon the Council to maintain or retain the proposed facility.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There are no additional human resource implications</p> <p><u>Assets and other implications</u> In view of the absence of legal obligations upon the Council in relation to future maintenance and/or retention of the developed facility, the Council will remain free to determine any future development proposals for the site, subject to any Committee approvals as may normally be required.</p>
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	<p>The scheme is understood to be supported by the local community and is intended to enhance the local physical environment.</p> <p>The scheme remains subject to Planning Permission and any other necessary statutory or regulatory approvals being obtained.</p>
4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality implications

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the carrying out of the work on Council land; 2. Approve the entering into a licence agreement to permit the works to be carried out subject to approval by Strategic Policy and Resources in line with Standing Orders; 3. Agree to absorb the maintenance cost and include on the Council's public liability schedule.

6	Decision Tracking
	A further report will be brought to Committee following completion of the works.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	DSD – Department for Social Development

8	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Map showing extent of proposed contractors compound</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Outline of the proposed scheme</p> <p>Appendix 3 – John Hewitt poem – ‘The Hedgehog’</p>