



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Alexandra Park Steering Group – next steps</b>
<b>Date:</b>	8 August 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks & Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Caroline Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager

<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Under the Peace III Programme, Groundwork NI was awarded funding to deliver the Reconciling Communities through Regeneration programme. In consultation with the Council and the local community, Alexandra Park was chosen as a specific project with a budget allocation of £50,000 towards physical regeneration work. Parks and Leisure Committee formally endorsed the project in June 2009.
1.2	Following this, a Steering Group was formally established to improve usage and develop regeneration proposals for the park. The proposals were developed with representatives from the Council, the Department of Justice, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the Police Service of Northern Ireland and subsequently approved by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting in November 2010.
1.3	The Steering Group's action plan included a consultation process to gauge opinions and install an access point in the interface barrier running through Alexandra Park. In April 2011, Committee authorised the installation of a gate in the wall to be opened during the summer period for a pilot period, which was subsequently extended in January 2012.
1.4	Committee will recall at its meeting on 11 August 2011, further approval was granted for a funding agreement between Groundwork NI and the Council for the continued involvement of Groundwork NI in Alexandra Park up to December 2012. Groundwork NI continued to work with the Alexandra Park Steering group ensuring the delivery of a programme of activities which meets the Council and departmental aims with regards to good relations, anti-social behaviour and shared space.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Throughout the project, it has been acknowledged that the Steering Group,

supported by the Parks and Leisure Committee, has developed a new vision for the park. This has attracted positive media coverage and, importantly, positive feedback from park users and local residents.

The 12-month agreement between Groundwork NI and the Council finished at the end of March 2013. Since then, the group have continued to meet chaired by Ciaran Shannon on an interim basis. The group continue to monitor the implementation of the development plan, based on the consultation exercise in 2010.

In facilitating the Alexandra Park development plan, parks management made arrangements to open the pedestrian gate on Alexandra Park Avenue. Following reports from local representatives of incidents of anti-social behaviour in the park, the gate was closed again in order to facilitate dialogue and find a mutually agreeable way forward.

In subsequent consultation with local elected representatives, a compromise position was agreed in which the gate would be opened at the same times as the gate in the interface barrier. Parks management would continue to review this arrangement with the Police Service NI, and allocate additional warden resource as deemed necessary. This arrangement has been in place throughout July and there has been no unusual spike in anti-social behaviour reports.

In the context of feedback from Members, as well as the conclusion of the agreement with Groundwork NI, it is suggested that it is now timely to undertake an independent review and examine the next steps for the Steering Group. Whilst acknowledging the important and positive work undertaken by local communities in the regeneration of the park to date, there is also a need to regularise the arrangements within the Council's business planning processes. This is particularly important in the context of the management pilots at Woodvale and Dunville Parks as well as wider area/community planning developments.

The terms of reference for the independent review are proposed as:

1. To independently review with relevant stakeholders the successes and areas of improvement for the Alexandra Park regeneration process
2. To scope a management structure, business planning and management approach, which balances community ownership and public accountability, based on good practice elsewhere
3. To make recommendations going forward (partnership principles; resourcing; terms of reference; etc.) for consideration by Parks and Leisure Committee.

The stakeholders for the review would include:

- Local elected representatives
- Existing steering group members
- Groundwork NI

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and Leisure officers</li> </ul> <p>To supplement the review officers will assess the options for the pedestrian gate in Alexandra Park Avenue including the current location. In addition the conditions of the fence adjacent to the Orange Hall will be reviewed and repairs carried out as necessary.</p> <p>The recommendations from the review would be brought forward to Committee in October for its consideration.</p>
--	--

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p>Financial: Up to £3,000 for an independent facilitator to support the review process. Provision has been made for this within existing budgets.</p> <p>Human Resources: None at present</p> <p>Assets and Other Implications: None at present</p>

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality Implications</b>
	<p>Any revised approach emerging from the review will be screened in line with the council's equality obligations.</p>

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>Members are asked to agree the terms of reference for the review and to agree to the pedestrian gate at Alexandra Park Avenue remaining open in line with the arrangements for the opening of the gate in the interface barrier until the review is completed.</p>

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	<p>An update report will be brought to Committee in October 2013.</p>

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	<p>None</p>

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>None</p>