



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Pilot Dogs off lead enclosure at Grove Playing Fields - Update.
Date:	14 February 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Fintan Grant, City Parks Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members are reminded that at its meeting in May 2013 the Parks and Leisure Committee approved the pilot of a “dogs off lead” enclosure in Grove Playing Fields.
1.2	The pilot was proposed to help inform the implementation of further dog control orders such as; <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Excluding dogs from designated areas, and2. Requiring dogs to be kept on a lead in designated areas.
1.3	Public consultation highlighted issues raised about the need for facilities to allow dogs off leads and due to public response the consultation on the exclusions from lands order has been suspended to allow for further clarification and consideration of the issues raised. The “dogs of lead” enclosure was installed in Grove Park in June 2013 and has been in operation now for over 6 months. The area is 80 meters x 30 meters, secured by a ranch style fence and contains several bins and park benches. Appropriate signage was erected to reinforce four key rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No children under sixteen• Only two dogs per person• People must supervise their dog at all times• No food Permitted.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	The Friends of Grove Park and local residents were consulted prior to the

	<p>enclosure being installed and initially there were some concerns that the area would attract an element of antisocial behaviour and that the area chosen was not the most suitable area within the park. The Park Warden team increased patrols of the area to ensure any incidents of antisocial behaviour were managed efficiently and effectively. There have been no reports of anti social behaviour regarding the dog enclosure during the life of the pilot.</p>
2.2	<p>Two public meetings have taken place. The purpose of these meetings was to facilitate ongoing consultation and information sharing. The meetings have been well attended and public opinion and support for the dog enclosure has become more positive throughout the term of the pilot.</p>
2.3	<p>A user survey was carried out at month four and is attached at Appendix 1. The user survey was carried out by the Park Wardens who gathered both quantitative and qualitative feedback to assist in improving and evaluating the pilot and any future interventions.</p>
2.4	<p>In total 92 questionnaires were completed face to face with dog owners. The headline statistics and responses are detailed in the report attached at Appendix 2.</p>
2.5	<p>In summary 51% of users had a positive experience using the dog enclosure and this reinforces that 49% of users heard about the dog enclosure by word of mouth.</p>
2.6	<p>43% of users had a negative experience using the enclosure however if the user had a negative experience they often described features such as bad drainage and unsuitable pathways, typically things that can be made good.</p>
2.7	<p>The nature of the users experience also appears to be tied to the split between those with larger and those with smaller dogs. Many of those who have smaller dogs feel intimidated by larger animals with some reports of smaller dogs being attacked.</p>
2.8	<p>62% of users thought the enclosure was in the correct location within the park and for many of those who didn't once again the responses tended to be things that could be made good. Such as better paths and upgrading of seating.</p>
2.9	<p>At this stage it is recommended that engagement continues with users of the enclosure at Grove Playing Fields to determine what improvements can be made and the associated costs.</p>
2.10	<p>It is further proposed that assessments are carried out in each area and proposals brought forward to develop similar facilities across the city. Proposals will be brought back to Committee for approval.</p>

2.11	<p>Key learning points from the pilot are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to consult with Elected Representatives from the area, park users and in particular dog users to determine the location of the facilities • New facilities for dog users need to be promoted to maximise their use and benefits from the investment.
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3.	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> To date the dog enclosure has cost approximately £8,000. If Committee is minded to include the dog enclosure as a permanent feature within Grove Playing fields more appropriate paths, seating and fencing would need to be considered. Currently the cost for any upgrade has not yet been determined.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Human</u> There are no implications associated with this report</p>
3.3	<p><u>Asset and other implications</u> None</p>

4.	Equality Implications
	There are no equality or good relations implications anticipated.

5.	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continuation of the facility at Grove Playing Fields with further engagement with local users • The development of proposals for similar facilities across the city.

6.	Decision Tracking
	All actions will be completed by the City Parks Manager and the Community Parks Manager

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Dog enclosure user survey. Appendix 2 – Grove Playing Fields Dog Enclosure analysis report</p>