



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Falls Park and City Cemetery Master plan – update on the development of the allotment site.
Date:	13 February 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Ricky Rice, City Parks Manager Karen Anderson-Gillespie, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>A report was presented to Committee on the 11 October 2012 outlining a number of short, medium and long term proposals, as part of the Falls Park and City Cemetery Master plan. One of the short term proposals made reference to a potential allotment site adjacent to the Whiterock Leisure Centre. An initial environmental survey has indicated the area is suitable for a total of 25 allotments.</p> <p>Officers have been working with partnership organisations to deliver a programme of work as part of the Master plan and 'Growing Communities' strategy. The Public Health Agency (PHA) has expressed an offer in principle to fund the development of the allotment site and to pilot the combined use by private individuals and community groups/ schools from the local residential area.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of this element of the Master plan and to seek authority to accept PHA's in principle funding award subject to internal legal advice.</p>
2.	Key Issues
	<p>Belfast City Council has a long history (30+years) of designing, implementing, managing and facilitating 'Grow your Own' provision within Belfast. Currently the council provides a total of 240 allotment sites across five locations in Belfast: Ballysillan, Belmont, Blythefield, Annadale and Musgrave and a number of community garden facilities across Belfast.</p>

	<p>Demand for allotments currently outweighs supply and research indicates that this is likely to increase. Waiting lists for allotments are long and turnover is minimal. The pilot proposes to develop 25 allotments including 19 for private/ individual use and 6 for community/ school use. Many community organisations have been actively involved in the Whiterock community garden to date, gaining vast knowledge and skills in food growing. Community allotment provision will enable more people to use the space, and benefit from the food grown, while creating more sustainable growing activities for the community/ schools and giving them a greater sense of pride and ownership.</p> <p>A local allotment waiting list currently exists for residents, community groups/ schools following an 'expression of interest' exercise carried out in 2010. A master allotment waiting list for all sites across the city is currently being collated by the department. As part of the funding agreement, the PHA have outlined conditions to be followed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotments are allocated to residents/ community groups/ schools from the local residential area i.e. within 1.2km mile radius catchment area/ approx 10/15 min walk; • The allotment site combines both individual and community/ school use; and • The PHA funding is recognised via signage and associated literature. <p>On this basis it is proposed that we undertake an exercise to identify current interest among local residents within the catchment area, using the existing list as a starting point. If there are a greater number of names than plots available, these will be added to the master list.</p> <p>There are significant benefits to be gained by combining both individual and community growing facilities from the local residential area, including improvements to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health by increasing the accessibility and availability of fresh fruit and vegetables; • Mental health and wellbeing by giving people the opportunity to be physically active and engage socially; • Poverty levels by addressing some of the food security issues by increasing accessibility to and availability of inexpensive, locally grown fruit; • Social isolation issues by increasing community engagement in sustainable activities and building community cohesion; and • Green space development by enhancing biodiversity in an urban environment.
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> The PHA has agreed in principle to fund the development of the allotment site. This will cost approximately £70,000 and will include drainage, footpaths and watering point for allotment holders. The council will be responsible for the implementation, management and maintenance of the allotment site.</p>

	<p><u>Human</u> There will be no additional human resources required at this stage.</p> <p><u>Asset and other implications</u> None at this stage.</p>
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4.	Equality Implications
	There are no equality or good relations implications anticipated at this stage.

5.	Recommendations
	<p>It is recommended that the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the content of the update report; and • Grant authority to accept the PHA grant award subject to an agreement being drawn up by Legal Services.

6.	Decision Tracking
	All actions will be completed by the City Park Manager and a progress report will be brought to Committee in due course.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	None