

Parks and Leisure Playing Pitches Agreements Policy

Purpose:

This policy provides a framework to promote monitor and evaluate the Parks and Leisure department's commitments through partnership working to develop use of its Playing pitch sites.

It provides an outline of how the Department will support mutually beneficial partnership arrangements and balances public access with dedicated use e.g. sporting organisations across all playing pitch sites

The Council seeks to promote an Active Belfast supported by assets which are contemporary and fit for purpose and being used to their full potential.

Policy objectives:

This policy details how the department will promote monitor and evaluate its commitments to mutually beneficial partnership working to develop use of its Playing pitch sites. The specific objectives are to:

1. Provide a departmental framework for working with sporting organisations and clubs and;
2. Develop the management approach for dedicated use by not for profit sporting organisations of sites whilst safeguarding public use;
3. Implement 'agreements for use' through an enhanced Support for Sport grant aid;
4. Develop site based sports development plans;
5. Provide quality dedicated space for competitive sporting play.

Context:

The department currently has three main types of use on playing pitch sites. These are described for the purposes of this policy as:

Category of use	Purpose	Management arrangement	Methods of engagement
I. Public use	One off activities or matches.	Booking system and terms and conditions	Telephone contact Written contact User meetings
II. Restricted Public use	Competitive play at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amateur, • intermediate or • international level (as appropriate to the type of sport). Often block bookings made	Agreements for Use	Management boards/ fora League/ code meetings Park manager site meetings Telephone contact Written contact
III. 'Private' use controlled by club or applicant	Private activities e.g. by private members clubs	Lease	Written contact Telephone contact

This policy focuses on those Council owned sites where existing and/or future arrangements may result in restrictions being placed on public use and in particular outlines a method for working with sporting organisations and clubs with a view to more appropriately managing the sites falling within Category II on the above table.

Sites which remain open for Public use on a first come, first served, basis will continue to be managed through the agreed booking terms and conditions.

Existing sites which are leased to sporting clubs will continue to be controlled by the club and managed in accordance with the terms of the legal arrangements in place.

Restricted Public use:

For the purpose of this policy 'restricted public use' is defined as any regular play by a sporting organisation booked on an annual basis on a council site. At present it is mainly competitive play which falls into this category and both the definition and the policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the patterns of use.

Management of restricted public use:

The arrangements for restricted public use will be managed through a legal agreement entitled 'Agreements for Use'. Agreements for Use operate on a not for profit basis and will be open to any sporting organisation which can meet the eligibility and assessment criteria and where there are sites available to integrate their sports development plan into site management and delivery. Where demand becomes greater than the number of sites available the council may consider joint club/ team partnership arrangements or prioritise allocation according to the assessment scoring received for each proposal.

This policy applies to all grass playing pitches.

Agreements for Use are developed to support the Council's vision of an Active Belfast and to lead its delivery through partnership working. It specifically aims to ensure the Council adhere to its statutory responsibilities of providing public open space and it seeks to utilise the downtime on playing pitch sites through dedicated sports development plans.

The benefits of working with sporting organisations and clubs:

Arrangements with external organisations must deliver a mutual benefit for BCC and the organisation.

In general the Council will provide:

- An enhanced Support for Sport grant scheme to support the delivery of sports development plans according to the scale of the project and the site;
- the maintenance of each site to a quality standard which covers competition level;
- a fit for purpose booking system to manage bookings for all sites;
- opportunities to renew agreements;
- ongoing training and support opportunities through the Council's Club mark scheme for all sports development plans;
- opportunity for regular engagement with sporting organisations/clubs on the development of provision;
- opportunities to accommodate competition play on sites by agreement holders or other teams as organised by the governing body or leagues;
- replace repair and renew the physical fabric of the sites

An external sporting organisation or club entering into an 'agreement for use' will:

- Provide and complete a sports development plan of activities to improve use of the site in downtime;
- Ensure public access is achievable and safeguarded as part of the sports development plan;
- Man the sites including key holding duties for all activities in the sports development plan or competitive play (subject to specific legal arrangements);
- Prepare the pitches for activities e.g. erect goal nets and corner flags etc
- Adhere to the terms and conditions of funding and the standards of operation of the council;
- Regularly meet with council staff provide and attend relevant training to develop the use and site;
- Use the Council's bookings system to reserve the site for all activities and pay the appropriate hire charges to the Council

All agreements should ensure there is no advertising at the site without prior permission of the Council.

Eligibility

A sporting organisation/club or consortium of organisations may apply to enter into an Agreement for Use with the council. Business organisations, Individuals or statutory organisations are not eligible unless they are a partner in a social enterprise consortium. The terms of this will be set out in the relevant 'Agreement for use'.

A sporting organisation can seek an agreement for use where:

- It proposes to provide enhanced use of a council playing pitch
- Proposes to provide appropriate capital investment for a council owned asset

All successful applicants must deliver an active sports development programme to meet the needs agreed in the sports development plan. The plan should include a focus on wider community involvement in activities onsite and ongoing public access;

The tenure of the agreement is for up to 7 years. Exceptions may be appropriate where the scale of proposed capital investment warrants same. This is a matter for further consideration as part of the matrix to be developed around the Scoring Criteria.

The policy is designed to be equitable and transparent when developing partnerships and the Council will monitor the level of public assets and their availability through its annual stock inspections reports and the performance reports associated with each agreement. Public access is paramount for every agreement for use developed.

Exclusions

- This policy does not apply to any asset which operates city wide events or activities or is a regional sporting venue;
- Any 3/4g or proposed 3/4g proposals will be subject to scrutiny from a separate business model outside of this policy.

- The existence of an Agreement for Use must not preclude the Council from either planning to hold events on the site or from acceding to requests from other organisations who may wish to do so;
- It also excludes the City of Belfast Playing fields which should remain in direct council control as the public playing pitch hub.

Assessing applications

Where an application is for the active development of a playing pitch or site this will be assessed as a grant application using a revised Council's Support for Sport grants scheme.

A scoring matrix will be developed around the new assessment criteria and will be applied when considering any requests. If the application is successful the future use of the site will be managed through 'agreements for use' whether at an amateur, intermediate or international level.

An operational procedure will be attached to the policy when the revised grant scheme is completed.

Once an agreement is in place:

- partners will have to provide written monthly updates on use from and delivery of the Active Development plan validated by the site manager;
- Meet the site manager on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing development.
- Attend network meetings as appropriate;
- Complete recommended training provided by the Council or a third party to fulfil obligations;
- The 'Outdoor Leisure Unit will verify and manage all use and active development outcomes as a whole.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Booking reports provided and analysed on a monthly basis;
- Monthly review meeting on the roll out of the proposal includes the Active Development plan by the relevant manager and the partner/s.
- An annual review of the performance of social partnerships will be provided to Departmental Management Team (DMT) which is a self evaluation by the partner and an independent report from the relevant manager.
- An independent evaluation on all arrangements to be commissioned by year 5;

Renewal

A renewals process should be initiated by the partner before the 6th month of the final year of the partnership arrangement to allow handover if appropriate or smooth running of an existing partnership.