



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Multi User Games Areas
Date:	16 October 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Stephen Walker, Departmental Portfolio and Programme Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information
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The Committee is reminded that at its meeting on 13 February 2014 it received an information report regarding the Multi User Games Area (MUGA) Programme. This programme had previously been agreed through Strategic Policy & Resources (SP&R) at its meeting in January 2014.

The report highlighted that a MUGA is suitable for a variety of informal sports and that due to their nature the majority are accessible and free to use.

The report outlined that a number of refurbishments had been completed under Phase 1A of the programme; and outlined proposals for Phase 1B; these included Springfield Avenue (New Build); Annadale (New Build); and Clarendon Playing Fields (New Build). Members are asked to note that Navarra Place, located off the Whitewell Road was subsequently added to the list as a potential new build.

The report referred to the development of a refurbishment programme comparable to the Playground Improvement Programme; it also referred to the need to develop a policy framework which would form a basis for decision making regarding new build proposals.

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee in respect of:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phase 1B; 2. The refurbishment programme; and 3. The development of a policy framework
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2.	<p>Key Issues</p> <p><u>Update on Phase 1B</u></p> <p>Development work on Phase 1B is continuing. The current position in respect of each is as follows:</p> <p><u>Annadale:</u> A planning application has been lodged and work is continuing to regularise the land ownership. The land ownership matter will need to be resolved prior to work commencing.</p> <p><u>Clarendon Playing Fields:</u> Ground surveys have been commissioned and are underway. A design team has been appointed and detailed design work will now commence on the project;</p> <p><u>Navarra Place:</u> A survey has been carried out to establish the extent of underground services in place and the implications for development work. It is intended to facilitate a workshop with local residents to establish a concept plan for the site. This plan will inform the development of the project.</p> <p><u>Springfield Avenue:</u> Following representations from community representatives a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the nature of the facility required at this location. Members are asked to note that there is planning approval in place although there is a restrictive condition in place and further consultation with residents will need to take place regarding this.</p> <p><u>MUGA Refurbishment Programme</u></p> <p>A condition survey of existing MUGAs has been completed and a preliminary list of projects has been presented to the Oversight Board for consideration. A report will be submitted to SP&R for approval and an information report will be brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee to outline the Programme.</p> <p>Policy Framework</p> <p>Appendix A to this report sets out some high level parameters to inform the future provision of MUGA's. This is work in progress in terms of the technical elements around provision and construction. However at this early stage it is felt that Members should be given an opportunity to direct this work. At this stage the Committee is asked to consider its views on the following high level parameters of a MUGA:</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A MUGA is a hard-surfaced space set out for ball games such as football, basketball, tennis etc. The facility is accessible without booking and free to use. 2. It is intended primarily for informal use as kick-about areas or for other informal recreation, (with the opportunity for some programmed activities) and are not primarily developed for training purposes for local football teams. 3. It is acknowledged that a MUGA may not meet the needs of the local community in so far as there may be demonstrable demand for 3G surfaces to facilitate match play or training. It was proposed that where such a case is made consideration for investment should be in line with the Pitches Strategy and the accompanying baseline profile. It was proposed that these requests be subject to Capital Programme process. 4. MUGAs are typically managed by Council staff and opened, closed and inspected in a way comparable to playgrounds. 5. In order to ensure wide community use it is proposed that in future proposals for new builds that the business case should include a programme of activity which would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote its use to meet a range of health and well being indicators and encourage use by a wider demographic profile than anecdotally may be the case; and • Encourage greater community ownership of and involvement with the investment. 6. Consideration is given to establishing a minimum standard for a MUGA in terms of size, surface, fencing and lighting. 7. Consideration is given to establishing a catchment / hinterland area to help establish potential gaps in provision and inform investment decisions.
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial Implications</u></p> <p>This report is for noting and has no financial implications.</p> <p><u>Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no additional human resource implications at this time.</p>

4.	Equality Implications
	There are no equality implications
5.	Recommendations

	<p>The Committee is asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the update in relation to Phase 1B; 2. To note the current position regarding a draft refurbishment programme; and 3. Comment on the high level parameters sets out above; 4. Agree that Officers continue to work towards the development of a policy framework to inform future MUGA development.
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6.	Decision Tracking
	The policy framework will be presented to Committee at a later date.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	<p>MUGA – Multi Use Games Area SP&R - Strategic Policy and Resources</p>

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix A – Draft Framework

Appendix A – Draft Framework

This is a draft discussion to establish a framework within which requests for Multi User Games Areas will be considered and progressed.

MUGA definition:

A current definition for a MUGA is

A hard-surfaced spaces set out for ball games such as football, basketball, tennis etc it will normally be accessible without booking and free to use.

A MUGA would have the following characteristics:

1. It would have an artificial surface (normally bitmac or polymeric), and not natural turf or 3G surface;;
2. It is primarily intended for casual use, i.e. not bookable.
3. It should be of a minimum size such as 5 a side dimensions consistent with small sided games

Is a traditional MUGA surface what is needed?

MUGAs tend to be primarily focused on informal play, as kick-about areas or for other informal recreation, (with the opportunity for some programmed activities); however they are not primarily developed for training purposes for local football teams, although in the past, pre 3G developments, teams were happy to make use of these facilities. Recent developments have seen a number of MUGAs replaced with 3G facilities primarily to accommodate the training needs of local sports clubs and in the process potentially removing a local free to use asset.

It is acknowledged that a MUGA may not meet the needs of the local community in so far as there may be demonstrable demand for 3G surfaces to facilitate match play or training. It was proposed that where such a case is made consideration for investment should be in line with the Pitches strategy and the accompanying baseline profile. It was proposed that these requests be subject to Capital Programme process.

Management model for MUGAs

MUGAs are typically managed in a way comparable to playgrounds, they are opened and closed by the Park wardens and available for use on demand and in the majority of cases there is no charge for their use. One of the fundamental aims of a MUGA is to encourage a wide range of sports to be played. Over time this has been eroded and now the primary use is casual kick about. There is an opportunity to make greater use of such assets to include for example fitness classes.

In determining future build it is proposed that an integral part of the process and the business case include a programme of activity which would:

- Promote its use to meet a range of health and well being indicators and encourage use by a wider demographic profile than anecdotally may be the case; and
- Encourage greater community ownership of and involvement with the investment;

What size should a MUGA be?

There is no standard MUGA size; Funding bodies are more prescriptive and it is proposed that the Council also have a minimum size. This may of course present issues where for example there is insufficient land available and is something further consideration may need to be given to.

Target Audience

Whilst at the outset of MUGAs the idea was to have a facility which could be used for a wide range of sports and for a wide demographic spread anecdotally the main MUGA users tend to be young males in the 6-16 yr old age band; there are of course exceptions, but there is a lack of user information. This would again support the need to market and promote the use of existing MUGA's within the community.