



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Review of Playing Pitches Strategy
Date:	24 February 2015
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
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1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Members are reminded that the Council developed a Playing Pitches Strategy for the period 2011-2021 which was agreed in February 2012. The strategy included action plans under 3 key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Objective 1 – Capital InvestmentObjective 2 – ManagementObjective 3 – Sports Development <p>This report is a progress update report on the implementation of the strategy to date and to commence the discussions around the next phase of implementation.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>The following outlines the progress that has been made in the achievements of the various actions under the 3 objectives and the multiple sub-objectives. A high level assessment has been made on the progress towards each of these and this is attached as appendix one.</p>
2.2	<p>Objective 1 – Capital Investment</p> <p>This objective is <i>to deliver and, working in partnership, enable a programme of capital development, enhancement and maintenance investments to address the shortfalls identified and protect existing playing pitches.</i></p> <p>It was agreed that the capital investment would include the development of a 3G pitch and associated facilities at 5 sites across the city. These would be hybrid to encourage the shared use of the space and maximise use at the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cherryvale Playing Fields• Woodvale Playing Fields• Falls Park

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ormeau Park • Cliftonville Playing Fields (GAA pitch only due to site limitations) <p>It was also agreed that the changing facilities would be provided or upgraded at 5 sites across the city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballysillan – new facility • Waterworks (Westland) – new facility • Musgrave Park – new facility • Victoria Park – upgrade of existing • Dixon Park – upgrade of existing <p>The design process is well underway with planning applications having been submitted for all of the sites and planning approval has been granted for 9 of the 10 sites. Work has commenced on 3 sites – Dixon, Waterworks and Cliftonville. The tender process is underway in respect of a further 5 sites and work is scheduled to commence on these sites by the end of the summer 2015. Work on the remaining 2 sites will be commenced by the end of 2015 with work being completed by summer 2016, subject to planning.</p> <p>A key element of this strategy is partnership working and to encourage the various sectors across the city to work together. The Council continues to work with its partners including Sports NI, governing bodies, leagues, clubs and the education sector. As part of this work, Ulster GAA are investing £1.1million in the capital investment that is happening at Cherryvale, Woodlands, Cliftonville and Musgrave and a Joint Management Agreement is currently being developed in relation to this investment.</p> <p>As part of the capital investment £750,000 was allocated to a fund for capital enhancements to school playing pitches to allow greater community use. After an application process 6 schools from across the city received funding, ranging from £73,000 to £150,000 for projects including the upgrade of surfaces and the installation of floodlighting. Work is ongoing and will be completed on all projects by the end of this financial year.</p> <p>There is also focus on Council-owned provision and an annual maintenance and refurbishment programme has now been put in place. To date drainage work has taken place at 4 sites in both 2013 and 2014. Further work is planned at 5 sites in the coming year.</p> <p>There has been a continued growth in small sided games at underage level and officers have held discussions with the various governing bodies around provision at this level. To date provision has been through the marking of full sized pitches and the provision of smaller portable goals. The refurbishment programme for 2015 has identified the potential to create a small sided pitch at Wedderburn and where other opportunities are identified these will be taken.</p>
2.3	<p>Objective 2 – Management</p> <p>This objective is <i>to implement and monitor a range of management options with community and statutory partners, so as to maximise people’s participation in team sports activity.</i></p>

One of the actions under this objective was the review of the existing Facility Management Agreements. This has been progressing with a proposal to move towards Partner Agreements which will bring the management and maintenance in-house and put the focus of clubs onto sports development activities (separate report to be presented to Committee).

Work is ongoing around the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches, the first stage of this is the development of a monitoring process for those schools who received funding under the £750k fund. This is currently being finalised and will be sent out to the schools in the coming months. We will then look at how we can adapt this framework to allow us to measure usage and participation of our new 3G pitches.

As part of a wider review of fees and charges and the implications of LGR on this, we have commenced the process of looking at the current charging arrangements for our pitches and the options of introducing other pricing models such as off peak or a reduced community rate. Once the options have been fully developed they will be brought to the Members for consideration.

The development of the pitches strategy was based on a baseline assessment of supply and demand that was undertaken in 2009/10. It was agreed that this would be reviewed two years from the implementation of the strategy. From the review, a number of key issues have emerged for Committee's consideration:

- In terms of supply of pitches there have been no significant changes in the number of pitches that are available across the city. However, the ongoing capital investments will impact on this;
- There has been a decrease in adult participation across sporting codes. One of the reasons for this is the growth in other physical activities such as cycling in this period, which are attracting people who would have previously played pitch sports. This has been confirmed anecdotally by sporting codes;
- There has been a dramatic increase in youth teams across sporting codes. This is a very positive outworking of the sporting codes' focus on their respective youth participation strategies, which will in turn sustain demand in the city in the adult leagues. Specifically, youth participation from 2009-2014 has grown as follows:
 - 22 mini soccer teams to 172 small sided games teams
 - 8 mini Gaelic games teams; this has increased to 128 Go Games teams
 - 12 mini rugby teams, this has increased to 31 mini rugby teams;
- An analysis of supply and demand relating to matches does not take into account requirements for pitches for training and informal use. Grass pitches are generally limited to competitive play, due to the restriction on level of usage, leaving synthetic surfaces to cope with demand for training sessions. This also displaces individuals who choose not to be part of formal clubs and leagues, potentially discouraging more people from being active; and
- In the short-term, there may be opportunity to temporarily re-designate/re-mark some adult pitches to become available for short-sided games, to accommodate the immediate demand for youth sports.

2.4	<p>Objective 3 – Sports development</p> <p>This objective is working in partnership, to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise people’s participation in team sports activity. This will include under-represented groups, such as females and those with disabilities.</p> <p>The Department through its Support for Sport programme has supported clubs through large grants to develop Games Development Centres. We also continue to work with the IFA around the development of small sided games through our support for two grassroots soccer development officers who are based in Ballysillan and Avoniel.</p> <p>The Leisure Development Unit through its programmes such as Active Communities and Try it days work with governing bodies and clubs to encourage underrepresented groups such as females and people with disabilities to get involved in pitch sports. They have also organised a series of events to encourage children and young people to get involved in different sports including London 2012 legacy events and the Lord Mayor’s Sport Day 2014.</p> <p>Work has commenced on the development of sports development plan templates which will be used in relation to the new 3G pitches. These will be rolled out on the completion of the capital works.</p> <p>Sports Development Officers are actively engaging with a number of the schools who received funding from the £750k fund to look at ways in which we can work with them to further increase community use of their enhanced facilities.</p>
2.5	<p>Next steps</p> <p>Officers will continue to progress the work relating to the capital investment element to ensure that this is completed by the summer of 2016. As each of the sites is completed sports development plans will be rolled out and usage will be monitored through the framework that is under development.</p> <p>Given the growth of small sided games at underage level it is proposed that a piece of work be undertaken over the coming months to identify full sized pitches that are currently underused and to explore the potential to established small sided games hubs across the city.</p>

3	<p>Resource Implications</p>
	<p>Financial: There are no financial resources associated with this progress report. £15.1m has already been allocated to investment in playing pitches.</p> <p>Human Resources: None</p> <p>Asset and Other Implications: The continued implementation of the strategy will result in changes to the type and number of Council’s playing pitches.</p>

4	<p>Equality and Good Relations Implications</p>
	<p>Members are reminded that the Playing Pitches Strategy was subject to an EQIA and its conclusions were included in the strategy. As part of this process, the Stage 7 monitoring review will shortly be undertaken.</p>

5	Recommendations
	Committee is asked to approve a further report is prepared on small sided games provision in the city and to explore the potential to establish small sided games hubs across the city, for consideration by Committee at a future meeting.

6	Decision Tracking
	There are no decisions associated with this report.

7	Key to abbreviations
	EQIA – Equality Impact Assessment GAA – Gaelic Athletic Association IFA – Irish Football Association

8	Documents attached
	Appendix 1 – Assessment of progress on achieving sub objectives