



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Partner Agreements Policy and Process
Date:	24 February 2015
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Maria McAleer, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>The Committee is reminded that at its meeting in October 2014 it approved the next steps in relation to the consultation on partner agreements as set out in the report to this Committee in August 2014. That public consultation process commenced on the 4 November 2014 and concluded on the 27 January 2015. The process included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An online consultation and downloadable questionnaire on the policy and process. Approximately 51 unique downloads of this questionnaire occurred with a marked increase in viewings of the relevant website around the time of public meetings and during last two weeks of the consultation and seven formal written responses were submitted.• Three public meetings advertised in local press and on the Council's website. Approx 30 club representatives including those from incoming council areas attended these meetings.• Social media posts on both Facebook and messages on Twitter.• Presentation and discussion of the policy and process at the council's equality consultative forum during the public consultation period. <p>Members will also recall that the October 2014 Committee report on Partner Agreements informed members that recommendations would be brought back to this Committee outlining which grass pitches sites should be publically advertised as part of the implementation of the Partner Agreements process.</p>
2	Key Issues

Consultation findings

As outlined, an extensive public consultation process was undertaken and this was independently facilitated. The keys findings from the consultation process and the Council's proposed response to them are outlined in the following table:

Key finding	BCC response
The overall consensus is that the Partner Agreements policy and process are generally welcomed and the correct way to proceed . The general response to the proposed policy objectives, proposed benefits, responsibilities and criteria was well received. There were some caveats expressed re the criteria as outlined in a further point. Only one respondent, who provided a written response, suggested the whole process was completely unnecessary and over complicated.	Council welcomes the feedback received and based on the consensus are not proposing any changes to the draft policy and process as previously agreed by Committee. There one exception to this is a change to the matrix which will be detailed in a further point.
General concerns were expressed that existing users may be disadvantaged or possibly edged out by new entrants. Some existing users felt that perhaps they lacked capacity to complete the applications process and may not have the access to funds which new entrants may have.	We acknowledge these concerns and within the application process we have built in support from the Leisure Development Unit for all applicants, which will include existing FMA holders. There is no requirement for applicants to pay for assistance.
A similar concern was expressed that local knowledge of the clubs and local community needs might not be adequately assessed or given weight in a competitive process. This also relates to the issue of usage and what is realistic in terms of widening participation, without disadvantaging current clubs and members.	We acknowledge this issue and to address this point we are suggesting that the scoring matrix be amended to allow us to recognise where maximum usage is being achieved. We will also identify what the actual maximum usage is for each site to assist us in the assessment process. A copy of the proposed amended matrix is attached as appendix 1.
Some concern was expressed as to how Council will guarantee that the proposed in house system of bookings will be effective flexible	We acknowledge these concerns, however we continuously work to ensure that our pitch booking system is fit for purpose . As part of

and responsive.

this process we engage with our users to get their feedback to allow us to improve the system to meet their needs.

Members should note that all aspects of the Partner Agreements will be subject to **annual monitoring and management reporting** and that an independent evaluation of all arrangements will be undertaken in year five.

It is recommended therefore that based on the findings of the consultation Members should adopt the final policy, a copy of which is attached as appendix 2.

Selection of sites for inclusion in the process

Members will be aware that there is limited funding for the implementation of this policy and it is therefore recommended that a phased approach to the inclusion of sites is adopted. This will allow us to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to make any necessary changes before it is further rolled out. It also provides us with the opportunity to obtain the additional resources required to roll it out. The following phased approach is suggested:

Phase	Sites to be included	Timescales		
		Site Selection	Advertise	Commence
1	Current FMA sites as outlined below	February 2015	April 2015	September 2015
2	Suitable sites that come in under LGR	Autumn 2015	Spring 2016	September 2016
3	Any other suitable Council owned site	Autumn 2017	Spring 2018	September 2018

In order to identify pitches for inclusion in Phase 1, the following criteria have been applied:

- site is not subject to exclusion under the policy;
- site is fit for purpose and has council owned changing facilities on it.

Members will be aware that there is a range of agreements operate across our facilities. Some of these agreements have not yet expired and therefore cannot be considered for inclusion at this point. Excluding these, the following playing fields have been identified for inclusion in Phase 1:

- Tommy Patton Playing Fields
- Dixon Playing Fields

- Ulidia Playing Fields
- Orangefield Playing Fields
- Loughside Playing Fields
- Shore Road Playing Fields
- Woodlands Playing Fields.

As partner agreements are aimed at grass pitches only, the agreement for the Woodlands site will exclude the 3G pitch. The 3G pitch will come under the Joint Management Agreement as part of the funding agreement for the GAA's £1.1 million investment in the Pitches Strategy.

Next Steps

The proposed next stages in the implementation of this policy are:

Timescale	Action
March 2015	Post consultation workshop (for potential applicants)
April 2015	Public advertisement of expression of interest for Partner Agreements (opening applications to new programme). This will include a further information workshop delivered by officers
June 2015	Applications to close and assessment by officers commence
August 2015	Assessed applications report to be presented to Members for approval and award of Partner Agreements
Sept 2015	Following receipt of signed terms and conditions new Partner Agreements in place at relevant sites

3	Resource Implications
	<p>Financial: This policy will be supported through an enhanced Support for Sport Grant aid fund which will be funded through the existing FMA payments for the 6 selected sites which total £88,921 per annum</p> <p>Human Resources: Ongoing officer time from a range of officers across the department will be dedicated to implementation and ongoing management in the medium to long term. Sport development officers have provided and will provide support to potential applicants and partners throughout the process in the form of applicant workshops in March and April 2015 and other information opportunities.</p> <p>Asset and Other Implications: The new partner agreements will impact on the future management of assets. Legal services will continue to provide advice on this for Committee's consideration.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
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	The policy is being screened in line with the Council's existing equality screening process and the indications are that it will be screened out with mitigating actions. The mitigating actions are around increasing participation amount underrepresented groups including females, people with disabilities and those from an ethnic minority background.
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5	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the final policy and the amended scoring matrix, based on the consultation findings; and • Agree the proposed phased approach to the advertising of sites for inclusion in the process including the selection of the six sites to be included in phase one.

6	Decision Tracking
	A report detailing the outcome of the implementation of phase one of the process will be brought to Committee in August 2015.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	<p>FMA - Facilities management agreement EOI – Expression of interest</p>

8	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Proposed Scoring matrix Appendix 2 – Final Partner Agreements Policy</p>