



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	River Terrace update
Date:	24 February 2015
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officers:	Caroline Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In December 2013, P&L Committee considered a report on a request from St John Vianney Youth Centre to explore the option of establishing a community garden in River Terrace. At that time, Committee recommended the further investigation of the potential for the development of a community garden in River Terrace with a further report to be brought to Committee in due course. It agreed that part of the £50,000 of capital funds allocated to South Belfast could contribute to the build of a community garden at River Terrace.
1.2	It is also noted that in 2006 a contamination report was carried out on the site which highlighted contaminants are present, in the high risk category. Soil samples were taken from a small section of the site along the railway line, the environmental consultant therefore recommended that additional testing is undertaken which is dispersed evenly across the full extent of the site.
1.3	As the land is owned by the Department of Social Development (DSD), work has been ongoing to provide a licence for the land to Council ownership with the appropriate agreements and insurances in place. There has been some engagement with local communities, although this has been limited due to access to the land and the constraints regarding the growing season.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The formal discussions to grant access to the land are now planned to conclude by the beginning of March. It is now proposed that the immediate actions are undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do an immediate clean-up on the site and remove any fly-tipping;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine if any patching/replacement of pathways is needed; and - Insert the site into the East Area maintenance programme to include regular grass-cutting and litter picks.
<p>2.2</p>	<p>It is vital that all stakeholders and interested parties be involved and lead the process to develop a sustainable community space, with the strong sense of local ownership needed for a successful garden.</p> <p>The following steps with local stakeholders/ residents / interested community members to determine the next step in the development of River Terrace as a growing space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - March 2015 Stakeholders to engage in formalised workshops. These workshops will identify the stakeholder’s main priorities for the growing space including the strengths and weaknesses of this space for the community. - March 2015 Work in partnership with the stakeholders to consult with the residents adjacent to the site - April – May 2015 Open invitation to attend a presentation and workshop on community gardens, to include site visits. - May 2015 Working group to be established. Results of previous workshops and consultation to be analysed with group. - June 2015 to February 2016 In collaboration with the working group, a programme of initial community engagement will be developed and may include community clean ups/ environmental and educational workshops/ neighbourhood activity days. How the community decide to utilise the space within these months will influence the design brief for this site. - November 2015 Landscape Planning and Development Unit to develop a design based on the working group aspirations and the communities capacity. - December 2015 – February 2016 construction of community garden to be undertaken by Council contractor, subject to capacity shown by the community to be involved in the construction of the community garden as a form of skills development. - March 2016 – growing activities to commence.
<p>2.3</p>	<p>As noted above, the contamination survey reported that it is a grossly contaminated site and in the high risk category. Further survey work would be required if there is any site disturbance or earth re-modelling recommended and there is no estimate for remediation costs. A cost for this work can be ascertained following a further detailed site investigation. This would like require a funding bid to maximise value for money.</p>

3	Resource Implications
	<p>Financial: An immediate allocation of £20,000 is available for the project.</p> <p>Human Resources: The Community Parks Outreach Manager will work with the community to establish a core group and increase participation in the garden in line with the Growing Communities Strategy.</p> <p>Asset and Other Implications: The transfer of this land will result in the Council gaining an additional asset with associated maintenance implications.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	There are no implications at this stage. However equality and good relations factors will be taken in to account in any activities delivered at the community garden or through the project.

5	Recommendations
	Members are asked to agree the proposed community engagement programme.

6	Decision Tracking
	All actions will be completed by officers from the Community Parks Outreach team and the Landscape Planning and Development Unit.

7	Abbreviations
	None

8	Attachments
	None