

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

- 4.1 As the awarded contracts will be for services which include support for Peace III-funded activities, tendering will be in accordance with any necessary council and European Regional Development Fund requirements.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is recommended that Committee:

1. Approves the necessary tendering exercises to be undertaken for contracts for a term of up to three years; and grant delegated authority to the Director of Parks and Leisure to award the successful tenders.
2. Agrees to the development of Growing Communities Strategy which includes community gardens throughout the city and will include details of the resources and funding required.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Resurfacing of Multi Sports Games Area at Waterworks

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

The Committee is reminded that the Council constructed a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in the Waterworks Park in 2001. The pitch measures 80 metres by 40 metres, is constructed with a synthetic polymeric surface, ball stop fencing and floodlighting. As part of the funding agreement the council entered into a facilities management agreement with the North Belfast Play Forum (the Forum) to manage the MUGA. The council allocates an annual management fee of £11,650 to the Forum to support the on-site maintenance of the pitch. In addition to managing the facility on our behalf the Forum is responsible for engaging with the local community to encourage the use of the facility.

The facility is widely regarded as being highly successful in attracting a high volume of users - in the region of 70,000 per annum. It is opened 7 days a week from 10am to late evening; in addition opening hours are extended at the weekend to accommodate midnight soccer.

In April 2009 the top surface of the pitch was re-laid costing £34,000.

The Council has been made aware through the North Belfast Play Forum that a funding opportunity has presented itself to upgrade the pitch to a 3G surface. The funding is through Biffaward which is a multi-million pound fund which awards grants to community and environmental projects across the UK. The fund's money comes from landfill tax credits donated by Biffa Waste Services. Biffaward is managed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) on Biffa's behalf. The estimated cost of the upgrade would be in the region of the £60,000, Biffaward would provide a maximum of £50,000 leaving a shortfall of £10,000. The Forum has asked that the Council consider meeting this short fall.

The Forum has highlighted that participation and usage figures for the facility have declined over the past 12 months with local sporting clubs preferring to use the more modern 3G playing surfaces elsewhere. It is the view of the Forum that without the upgrade the facility will run down. The Forum maintains that the additional investment would ensure that it can offer competitive facilities at a competitive price and sustain its long run of success in the area.

It is estimated that the construction work would take approximately 2 weeks and there would be no disruption to park users during construction as separate access is available on site.

A licence agreement with North Belfast Play Forum to facilitate the closure and completion of the works would be necessary.

The surface will need to be marked for the following games to be played:

- soccer
- hurling
- gaelic football
- hockey

2. Key Issues

The Committee is asked to consider the following points:

1. The Waterworks facility has been a success and has become a model for midnight soccer across the City.
2. There has been relatively little investment in this facility over the years other than routine maintenance and resurfacing works.

3. Changes in technology and users expectations have combined to challenge the sustainability of the current provision.
4. In 2009 consideration was given to the installation of a 3G surface however it was believed that the polymeric surface would be adequate.
5. There are ongoing maintenance problems with drainage and pooling which restrict the use of the facility during winter and periods of heavy rain.
6. There is no provision in the estimates for this work to be carried out in 2012/123 budget estimates, however subject to the successful grant award this amount could possibly be secured from the review of other maintenance programmes.
7. Members will be aware of proposals under the pitches strategy and other projects which will increase 3G pitch provision in that particular area of North Belfast. Within the next 18-24 months 3G pitches at Solitude (soccer), Cliftonville Playing field (GAA), Marrowbone (soccer), Ballysillan (soccer), Boys Model (soccer), St Malachy's College (GAA/soccer) may be constructed however the Waterworks provides a unique facility which attracts a wide range of socially deprived and excluded groups and it is contended that its natural catchment would continue to support the facility should the up grade go ahead. The Forum has become a hub for sports initiatives and sports development in the North of the city and beyond. The lack of a 3G surface at this facility would have a serious impact on the vitality and relevance of this site to young people, families and the wider community.

3. Resource Implications

Financial Implications

The costs of replacing the polymeric surface to the 3G pitch will be £60,000. The Council is being asked to provide £10,000 of the total cost as referred to at point 6 above. Annual maintenance costs for the 3G surface will be £3,000 compared to £2,500 for the polymeric, this can be provided from within the 2012/13 budget provision. The cost of the facility management agreement is currently provided for within the revenue budgets. The project is dependent on the Forum securing funding of £50,000 from Biffaward.

Human Resource Implications

There are no additional human resource implications.

Other Asset Implications

This work is necessary to secure the continued use of this well used facility.

4. **Equality and good relations implications**

None.

5. **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to note the above report and consider the recommendation to agree to support the project to the amount of £10,000 subject to the successful award of grant funding from Biffaward.”

The Committee noted the report and adopted the recommendation to support the project in the sum of £10,000, subject to the successful award of grant-funding from Biffaward.

Chairman