



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
Subject:	Update on Windsor Park Stadium
Date:	14 December 2012
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects, Ext: 6217 Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks & Leisure Ext: 3400
Contact Officer:	Cathy Reynolds Estates Manager Ext 3493

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At its meeting on 22 June 2012 the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee received a report regarding the upgrade of the Windsor Park and Casement Park stadia. A report had previously gone to the Parks & Leisure Committee on 14 June on these stadia upgrades. Members were also updated on a report commissioned by the Council and undertaken by Deloitte on the potential added value and regeneration impact of the proposed stadia development.
1.2	In relation to Windsor Park, the report by Deloitte had highlighted the potential added benefits in considering the adjoining Windsor Park, Midgley Park and Olympia Leisure Centre sites strategically. One of their recommendations was on the basis that that consideration be given to creating a Sports Village concept incorporating Windsor Park, Midgley Park, Olympia Leisure Centre and Boucher Road Playing Fields.
1.3	The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 22 June agreed to the following: (i) Approval in principle for an access for construction traffic to the side of Olympia Leisure Centre onto Boucher Road. (ii) The Director of Property and Projects and the Director of Parks and Leisure progressing discussions with the IFA and Linfield regarding the potential projects which might add value to and improve the regeneration impact of the Windsor Park stadia development with a report to be brought back to Committee in due course. (iii) Undertaking a feasibility study in relation to the Windsor, Olympia and Midgley Park options in the context of the wider strategic review of leisure.
1.4	At a special meeting of the Parks & Leisure Committee on 12 November, the IFA provided a presentation on the Windsor Park development.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Officers have subsequently had various meetings with the IFA, DCAL and Linfield. Linfield are supportive of the potential for joint collaboration and are happy to explore options for a more integrated approach to the overall development of the combined sites, subject to various issues to be addressed. It was agreed to undertake a feasibility /options study taking into account the requirements of both BCC and Linfield. The IFA architects who are working on the Windsor Park project are undertaking this feasibility work, which has been scoped out by the Council, in agreement with Linfield, and should now take four weeks to complete.</p>
2.2	<p>The aim of the study is to consider the potential options for reconfiguration or redevelopment of the facilities on the overall site on a more collaborative basis in order to fully maximise the benefits. The physical, technical, planning, and financial implications of the various options are being assessed. Options to be considered range from an enhanced pedestrian access from Boucher Road to a central boulevard type entrance, as well as retention of the existing leisure centre or relocation of Council leisure facilities into the Windsor Park west extension.</p>
2.3	<p>On completion of this initial feasibility study further consideration will need to be given to the financial considerations and viability; cost benefit analysis of any proposed options; the outworkings of the Leisure Review and community and stakeholder engagement. A further report will however be brought back to Committee on completion of the feasibility study.</p>
2.4	<p>Members will be aware that Deloitte have been commissioned by the council to provide an expert view on the development of the framework within which the Council can take decisions on the renewal of the Leisure Estate. This work is nearing completion and will be reported on to both the SP&R and Parks and Leisure Committees in January. Clearly the realisation of the benefits of strategic opportunities such as the Stadia developments to provide better integration of services and provide value for money should form a significant part of any decision making framework going forward.</p>
2.5	<p>In regular progress meetings, the Deloitte consultants note that all stakeholders, including Members, stress the urgency of decisions to be made around the leisure estate. This is largely due to a number of imminent capital developments in the city, such as the stadia, and the political desire to provide integrated services for customers, as well as maximise value for money for rate-payers. They also note the expressed political aspiration to focus our assets to deliver outcomes which address the significant health inequalities in the city.</p>
2.6	<p>Members are already highlighting to officers that this presents the Council with both the opportunities and challenges of an unprecedented change management and capital asset re-development process over the next number of years. The planning application for Windsor Park is due to be submitted this week. Council officers have been involved in pre-application planning discussions with the IFA and the Planning Service as well as taking part in the consultation process for the development. One of the concerns of the Council was to ensure that Windsor, Midgley Park and Olympia were considered comprehensively. This is reflected in the design in that the west stand (Boucher Road side) which currently 'turns its back' on Boucher Road but it is now proposed that it will have a partly glazed fronted extension. This will provide an active frontage towards Midgley Park and Olympia which allows the sites to relate to each other in visual terms.</p>

2.7	DCAL's document: 'Regional Stadium Programme: Delivery of Community Benefits & Socio-Economic Returns' highlights the importance of maximising the delivery of a range of sustainable economic, social, equality and environmental returns as part of the overall stadium development. The Council's discussions with DCAL and the IFA have also focused on trying to maximise the community benefits in the development of the stadium and having regard to the wider area. IFA's proposals now include the provision of a significant community facility in the west stand and this forms part of their planning application. The detail around the future design, use and occupation of this space is still to be agreed. The feasibility study that is being undertaken in respect of the combined sites may however assist in determining this.
2.8	Part of the current planning application involves a construction access to the side of the Olympia Leisure Centre building. Detailed terms of this construction access are currently being agreed and will be brought back to Committee in the near future for approval.
2.9	There is a tight timeframe for the delivery of the stadium and the current programme envisages the submission of the planning application this week; tenders issued early February 2013; appointment of team at the end of May 2013 and construction works commenced in September 2013. There will, therefore be a limited window of opportunity for the Council to consider development of any integrated proposals in line with the stadium programme. However, it may be possible to future proof development options and it is important to ensure that the continued liaison between the Council, IFA Linfield and DCAL is progressed as expeditiously as possible.
2.10	In relation to the leisure estate review, any decision made by Committee at this stage on the Windsor and Casement re-developments, will be integrated into the Deloitte report recommendations, due to be presented to Committee in early 2013. In developing a transformation plan for the leisure estate, if Committee are agreeable, the stadia developments would be included in the first phase, in line with the DCAL timeline.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> Unknown at this stage. The feasibility study should provide an initial overview of potential financial implications.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> Staff resources, primarily from Property & Projects and Parks & Leisure.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> Unknown at this stage.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	None at this stage.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee is asked to note the update on the Windsor Park redevelopment; the ongoing discussions between the Council and the IFA, DCAL and Linfield and the feasibility study that is being undertaken to consider the potential options for a more integrated approach to the overall development of the combined sites at Olympia Leisure Centre, Midgley Park and Windsor Park. A further report will be brought back to Committee following completion of the initial feasibility study.

6	Key to Abbreviations
<p>IFA – Irish Football Association DCAL – Department of Culture Arts and Leisure</p>	

7	Documents Attached
<p>Appendix 1 – Location Plan</p>	