



<b>Subject:</b>	Review of Pitch Allocation
<b>Date:</b>	10 May 2016
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services Department
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director Elaine Black, Policy and Business Development Officer

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	Members are reminded that the People and Communities Committee at its meeting in December 2015 agreed that a review of grass soccer pitch allocation through block bookings be undertaken. This report presents the findings and recommendations of the independent review of Council's current grass soccer pitch allocation (block bookings).
1.2	The review informs the future allocation process to manage block pitch bookings to: (i) Align the parallel allocation processes historically in place and inherited with the boundary change, and; (ii) Specifically consider the management of allocations where sites are in demand or new requests for pitches received with a draft criterion to support equitable allocation of soccer grass pitches on a block booking basis.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the contents of the report and agree the next steps as outlined in the report.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	This report presents the findings and recommendations of the independent review of Council's current soccer grass pitch allocation for block bookings.

3.2	The general need was identified due to growing interest in generally accessing pitches and with competing interests in sites particularly those recently upgraded. Council also seeks to ensure its provision is effective and equitable to efficiently address the City Outcomes through sport.										
3.3	The report considered the current allocation arrangements, supply and demand, existing management options and presents the future recommendations to generally manage soccer pitch allocation (block bookings). It also specifically considers how to manage requests for additional or new allocation from leagues or multiple requests for a specific site through the use of matrices.										
3.4	A desk based research and direct engagement with clubs and leagues (survey and consultation meetings) and Members as well as a benchmarking with neighbouring councils was completed as part of the review process.										
3.5	<p>The full report is enclosed in Appendix 1 and the key findings are outlined in the following table:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="261 1034 1442 2024"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="261 1034 1442 1102"><b>Table 1: Review of pitch allocations report – key findings</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="261 1102 512 1169">a) <b>Current allocation</b></td> <td data-bbox="512 1102 1442 1169">- There are 10 soccer leagues of which there are 4 youth and 6 adult leagues and who use approximately 54 and 66 pitches respectively.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="261 1169 512 1424">b) <b>Breakdown of the leagues</b></td> <td data-bbox="512 1169 1442 1424"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Of the 6 adult leagues approximately 24% of their membership is registered as Belfast based teams.</li> <li>- The highest level is in the Belfast and District League where the majority are Belfast based teams.</li> <li>- The 4 youth Leagues have a total of 714 teams registered of which 410 (57%) are thought to be Belfast based.</li> <li>- All the Down Area Winter League (DAWL) teams that access BCC pitches are Belfast based.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="261 1424 512 1688">c) <b>Supply and demand</b></td> <td data-bbox="512 1424 1442 1688"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is underuse of pitches allocated and analysis of usage figures show that average pitch usage across all Leagues and all pitches was: September – December 2014      59% September – December 2015      36%</li> <li>- There is a decline in one adult league and a substantial growth of seasonal small sided youth games.</li> <li>- Women’s Football fixtures are generally casual bookings.</li> <li>- The level of casual bookings is unlikely to be outstripped by demand.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="261 1688 512 2024">d) <b>Booking allocation process</b></td> <td data-bbox="512 1688 1442 2024"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leagues are generally satisfied with the present approach to allocating to leagues who book fixtures for all their teams.</li> <li>- Historically one league (DAWL) does not book its fixtures for its teams and the individual teams playing in it have been allowed to block book pitches. The number of teams associated with this league increased as a result of the boundary changes under RPA.</li> <li>- During consultation this was of general surprise to the other leagues that this disparity existed.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Table 1: Review of pitch allocations report – key findings</b>		a) <b>Current allocation</b>	- There are 10 soccer leagues of which there are 4 youth and 6 adult leagues and who use approximately 54 and 66 pitches respectively.	b) <b>Breakdown of the leagues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Of the 6 adult leagues approximately 24% of their membership is registered as Belfast based teams.</li> <li>- The highest level is in the Belfast and District League where the majority are Belfast based teams.</li> <li>- The 4 youth Leagues have a total of 714 teams registered of which 410 (57%) are thought to be Belfast based.</li> <li>- All the Down Area Winter League (DAWL) teams that access BCC pitches are Belfast based.</li> </ul>	c) <b>Supply and demand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is underuse of pitches allocated and analysis of usage figures show that average pitch usage across all Leagues and all pitches was: September – December 2014      59% September – December 2015      36%</li> <li>- There is a decline in one adult league and a substantial growth of seasonal small sided youth games.</li> <li>- Women’s Football fixtures are generally casual bookings.</li> <li>- The level of casual bookings is unlikely to be outstripped by demand.</li> </ul>	d) <b>Booking allocation process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leagues are generally satisfied with the present approach to allocating to leagues who book fixtures for all their teams.</li> <li>- Historically one league (DAWL) does not book its fixtures for its teams and the individual teams playing in it have been allowed to block book pitches. The number of teams associated with this league increased as a result of the boundary changes under RPA.</li> <li>- During consultation this was of general surprise to the other leagues that this disparity existed.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>e) Management options</b></p>	<p>- A number of management options as outlined below were considered for <i>workability, acceptability, manageability, and affordability</i>.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="523 219 1380 898"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rank</th> <th>Option</th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Option 4</td> <td>Pitches allocated by Leagues through an agreed process.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Option 6</td> <td>Pitches allocated to teams by an external organisation.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Option 5</td> <td>Pitches allocated to teams by youth Leagues and adult clubs/teams through an agreed process.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Status Quo</td> <td>The majority of pitches are allocated to teams by the Leagues; a small number of pitches are allocated by the Council.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5=</td> <td>Option 2</td> <td>Pitches allocated to teams by the Council on a lottery/luck of the draw basis.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5=</td> <td>Option 3</td> <td>Pitches allocated to teams by the Council through an agreed process.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>Option 1</td> <td>Pitches allocated to teams by the Council match by match on a first come first served basis.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>- As the table above outlines the highest ranking options were that leagues or another umbrella body took responsibility for the bookings.</p> <p>- League only booking is the current position for most of the leagues and is the recommended position moving forward.</p> <p>- The option of keeping the status quo did not rank highly as it promotes a dual booking process and presents a disparity of service.</p> <p>- The remaining options relating to teams did not score highly in particular to workability and affordability.</p> <p>- A matrix with the following criteria has been developed to allow us to deal with requests for additional pitches from existing leagues or requests from pitches from leagues not currently using BCC pitches: <i>league is recognised by the governing body, the level of Belfast based teams in their league, governance, outstanding debt and previous season's allocation usage.</i></p>	Rank	Option		1	Option 4	Pitches allocated by Leagues through an agreed process.	2	Option 6	Pitches allocated to teams by an external organisation.	3	Option 5	Pitches allocated to teams by youth Leagues and adult clubs/teams through an agreed process.	4	Status Quo	The majority of pitches are allocated to teams by the Leagues; a small number of pitches are allocated by the Council.	5=	Option 2	Pitches allocated to teams by the Council on a lottery/luck of the draw basis.	5=	Option 3	Pitches allocated to teams by the Council through an agreed process.	7	Option 1	Pitches allocated to teams by the Council match by match on a first come first served basis.
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<p><b>f) Operational management</b></p>	<p>- During the engagement with stakeholders there was feedback on a range of operational items which have been shared with the responsible officers for further action.</p> <p>- The main headlines were a disappointment in the pitch playability and the booking line, however positive feedback on the customer service provided by officers of council.</p>																								
<p><b>g) Specific management of sites in demand/ new requests</b></p>	<p>- There are currently a small number of examples where sites are in demand or new pitches requested.</p> <p>- A matrix with the following criteria has been developed to allow us to make a decision where there are multiple request for a particular pitch: <i>home catchment, Clubmark status, outstanding debt, sports player pathway development and previous pitch use.</i></p> <p>- There remains the sporting option of a coin toss for decision making in cases where there is no difference in score.</p>																								
<p><b>h) Strategic direction and shared outcomes</b></p>	<p>- An outworking of the review is a need to sponsor partnership meetings bringing together the governing body, leagues and Sport NI.</p> <p>- This is to align items like supply and demand, the allocations process, pitches provision, rules and requirements, future investment to support the agreed shared outcomes sport and especially soccer can deliver for citizens in the city.</p>																								

3.6	<p><u>Key issues</u></p> <p>(i) <b>Strategic direction and shared outcomes:</b> As mentioned it is critical that collaborative working is supported to align the development of soccer in Belfast to best contribute to the Belfast agenda outcomes. For example whilst Leagues expressed no desire to decide on sites where there is significant demand, there is a need for collaboration as many of the rules and regulations are set down by the sport and outside the circle of control for council when managing pitch provision and allocations. This approach may also support engagement with other councils to ensure complementary approaches to pitch provision as the nature of leagues (especially youth soccer) means they cover a wider geography than in the council boundary.</p> <p>(ii) <b>Future allocation process:</b> the recommended future management approach is to allocate directly through leagues only. There is one league not currently following this process therefore to support their transition to this it is proposed that they will be afforded the incoming year for the transition for full adoption in the 2017/18 season. If this does not suit their needs, individual teams can still book pitches on a casual basis. Currently the NI Women’s Football association (NIWFA) fixtures are booked individually on a casual basis by the individual teams. If an existing league requests additional pitches or a request comes in from a league not currently using BCC pitches, these will be assessed using the matrix as outlined in the report, a copy of which is attached as appendix 2.</p> <p>(iii) <b>Specific management of multiple requests for a pitch:</b> There are currently a small number of examples where there are multiple requests for a specific pitch. These will be assessed using the matrix as outlined in the report, a copy of which is attached as appendix 3. Where there is a tie an independent coin toss will be completed.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>It is proposed that the following next steps be undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That a meeting be held with both league secretaries and DAWL in the coming weeks to outline the findings of the review and the implementation process.</li> <li>• That the new process of all block bookings for grass soccer pitches being managed through leagues be implemented on a trial basis for the 16/17 season</li> <li>• That a transition period be afforded to the DAWL for the 16/17 season</li> <li>• That where there are requests for additional or new allocation from leagues or multiple requests for a specific site the draft matrices are used on a test basis.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That ongoing dialogue continues with key stakeholders including the governing bodies, leagues and Sport NI to ensure the future development of physical provision and its management and playability are strategically aligned to address the city wellbeing and good relations outcomes Members have agreed in the Belfast agenda.</li> <li>• That an ongoing review of the booking process and use of the matrices be undertaken during the 16/17 season allowing for any refinements to be made for full implementation in the 17/18 season.</li> </ul>
3.8	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The administering of this process will be met from existing resources. Additional human resources may be required to assess multiple requests for a specific site and this will be kept under review.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>An initial equality opinion has been provided by the consultant as part of the report and ongoing engagement is planned with the relevant stakeholders. The process will be equality screened in line with the Council's equality process.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
4.1	<p>Appendix 1: Review of grass soccer pitches allocation process report</p> <p>Appendix 2: Matrix to be used where requests for additional or new pitches from a league</p> <p>Appendix 3: Matrix to be used where multiple requests for a pitch</p>