



Subject:	Castle Arcade – Alleygates Proposal
Date:	7 th February 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Assistant Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department Alison Allen, Safer City Manager

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main issues
1.1	Members will recall that proposals to consider alleygating in Castle Arcade were considered on 9 th February 2016 and on 2 nd December 2014.
1.2	Further to Members’ consideration, the decision was deferred with a request for Officers to engage with the main street based outreach services in the city centre for their view on the proposal, recognising the importance of considering the needs of those vulnerable individuals who are often in the Arcade. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current situation in Castle Arcade.
2.0	Recommendations
	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the contents of the report;• Authorise the commencement of the formal statutory and community pre-consultation in respect of alleygates proposed at Castle Arcade without prejudice to a final decision by Council on whether to formally proceed.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware of ongoing concerns on the part of Council, PSNI and businesses around increasing levels of criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and environmental crime in the Castle Arcade area primarily during the night.
3.2	The extremely high levels of criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and environmental crime at this location have been affecting businesses in the area for over three years, with escalation of the issues taking place since the closure of British Homes Stores.
3.3	On a daily basis, businesses, shoppers and tourists in that area are exposed to broken windows, bins set on fire, graffiti, drug litter and urination/defecation.
3.4	British Home Stores were severely affected by the issues (with repair/cleansing costs for them estimated at £20,000 per annum) and they had requested the Council's assistance for the installation of alleygates as a means of alleviating the issues.
3.5	Their request for assistance extended to the installation of an alleygate at either end of Castle Arcade to be opened/closed at agreed times so as not to impact on legitimate users of the Arcade during the day.
3.6	Since the closure of British Home Stores, further requests for assistance have been made to Council from a solicitors firm in the area expressing continuing concern about the impact of these issues on businesses, shoppers and tourists in the area.
3.7	Belfast City Centre Management have also expressed concern at the ongoing issues in Castle Arcade and escalation since the closure of the building formally occupied by British Home Stores. Their concern extends to the negative impact the ongoing issues in the Arcade may have on any potential future tenants for the building previously which could further impact on the economic vibrancy of that location.
3.8	When Committee last considered the request for assistance from British Home Stores, the company had offered to cover the manufacture and installation costs of the alleygates. This offer of financial assistance is no longer in place as British Home Stores has closed down, however, the Department for Communities have indicated they would be willing to consider a funding application to cover costs associated with the manufacture and installation of the alleygates.

3.9	At last consideration of this issue, Committee recognised that the small number of individuals who may be perpetrating these issues may also have vulnerabilities e.g. homelessness, addictions or mental health issues.
3.10	Committee therefore requested that Officers engage with the main service providers in the city (Welcome Centre, Council for the Homeless and DePaul). These providers have now indicated their support for the proposed alleygates at Castle Arcade, but fully support the wishes of Members to ensure appropriate support is in place for those individuals with vulnerabilities.
3.11	<p>The service providers have therefore indicated they would be willing to provide the following support Council if a future decision was taken to install alleygates in Castle Arcade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A mini survey to be conducted to identify who is using Castle Arcade at night (to be conducted before any alleygate would be installed); - A notice period to be given to those individuals identified as using Castle Arcade at night; - A proactive outreach approach to be provided offering support and accommodation to the identified individuals.
3.12	<p>The organisations have further recommended that if a future decision was taken to install alleygates in Castle Arcade, signs should be erected in the vicinity providing information on support services for vulnerable people and how to access accommodation.</p> <p><u>Legal Considerations</u></p>
3.13	Members will be aware that the legislative authority for making a gating order is through the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (NI) 2011 and that District Councils are responsible for the delivery of the associated legal process. However, Councils do still require the approval of Transport NI to make a gating order.
3.14	Should a decision be taken in the future by Council to install alleygates in Castle Arcade, Council would require the permission of Transport NI before it could proceed.
3.15	In order to ascertain levels of need and to better understand stakeholder views for any proposed alleygates, Council undertakes a full statutory and stakeholder pre-consultation exercise.

3.16	<p>This exercise takes place before any formal proposal to make a gating order is submitted to Council. This pre-consultation does not constitute any formal commitment on behalf of Council to proceed with alleygates.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.17	<p>Costs associated with the formal statutory and stakeholder pre-consultation exercise can be covered from within existing City and Neighbourhood Services revenue budgets.</p>
3.18	<p>An 'in principle' application will be made with Members authority to the Department for Communities for funding to cover the costs of manufacture and installation of alleygates in Castle Arcade. This is to ensure that Members could fully consider the financial implications at a future Committee meeting along with the results of the pre-consultation exercise.</p>
3.19	<p>There are no further financial implications for Council at present.</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.20	<p>An equality screening exercise will be undertaken on the proposal to install alleygates in Castle Arcade, due to the potential impact on individuals with high levels of vulnerability.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.