



Subject:	Positive Animation of Parks/Open Spaces
Date:	5 November 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City and Neighbourhood Services
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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	For Members information, previous People and Communities Committee requested regular updates on ongoing work to encourage positive animation of Council parks/open spaces as a way of deterring anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
1.2	This emerged as a result of ongoing concerns raised with Elected Members about the impact of anti-social behaviour and vandalism in parks/open spaces and the impact of this on the positive use and animation of these spaces in communities.
1.3	Ongoing review of reported anti-social behaviour and feedback from Elected Members identified a small number of parks, open spaces where it was agreed a co-ordinated focus with other statutory

1.4	<p>organisations, and communities would add value. These were Falls Park/City Cemetery, Orangefield Park/Avoniel Park, Marrowbone Park, Dunville Park and Ballysillan Park.</p> <p>Additionally, at full Council in March 2019, Elected Members requested regular updates to future People and Communities Committee on the ongoing work to positively animate these parks/open spaces and how Council managed ongoing vandalism.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report and support the ongoing work to positively animate parks/open spaces
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Ongoing review of local, regional and national best practice indicates that one of the most effective ways of addressing anti-social behaviour and vandalism is to positively animate parks/open spaces by creating a sense of ownership and empowerment amongst users. This includes young people, who often gather in parks/open spaces as a way to positively socialise. It is however, recognised that young people are often gathering in parks/open spaces at times when they are closed and particularly after dark which can create additional vulnerabilities for those young people.</p> <p>Ongoing review of reported anti-social behaviour, input from Elected Members and Council Officers has identified that the parks/open spaces, which are causing most concern in relation to serious anti-social behaviour at present, are Marrowbone Park, Falls Park/City Cemetery and Girdwood.</p> <p><u>General Animation</u></p> <p>Council Parks Outreach and Open Spaces and Active Living Teams work closely with local schools, youth and community groups throughout the year running positive events and activities in our parks/open spaces. This work helps create a positive relationship between participants and the parks/open spaces and increased respect and civic pride. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Education Sessions • Biodiversity Sessions • Park Life Schools Programme • Park Life Saturday Club • Family Fun Days • Growing Workshops • Historical and Cultural Guided Walks

- Community Clean Ups

Council also works with a range of external organisations who support Councils' objective of positively animating our parks/open spaces. These include community and cultural events, Park Runs and music events.

Targeted Animation at Current Priority Sites

Marrowbone Park Millennium Park

- 3.4
- City and Neighbourhood Services provides ongoing co-ordination to animate Marrowbone Park, with recent animation taking place over four consecutive weekends in late summer 2019. Combined efforts involved Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE), Ulster Rugby, Sustrans, Council Parks Outreach, Ardoyne GAA, Council Community Development and Council Sports Development. The event was called the 'Bonehills Takeover' and was aimed at promoting positive use of the park and to encourage families and young people to enjoy the park in a safe way.

- 3.5
- AYE supplied Outreach Youth Workers to engage with young people in and around the park to promote positive use of the park and address some of the risk taking behaviours. There was a range of events and activities planned including sports coaching; inflatables and a bicycle maintenance stand supplied by Sustrans to promote bike safety.

Falls Park / City Cemetery

- 3.6
- Council continues to coordinate the ongoing multi-agency response to Anti-Social Behaviour issues in the Falls Park and City Cemetery. This involves ongoing liaison with Elected Members, outreach/detached youth workers, PSNI and Translink to plan high visibility operations aimed at deterring anti-social behaviour. Additionally, Council has supported two requests from youth organisations to access the 3G football pitch to animate the park and divert young people into more positive activity such as a soccer tournament. This culminated in a football match between BCC Officers, youth workers and PSNI Officers to highlight the ongoing partnership approach to addressing ASB in the Park and Cemetery. This work all takes place at the times anti-social behaviour is most likely to happen.

- 3.7
- A recent request for use of the pitches over the next 6 weeks has been supported resulting in usage of the pitch on Friday/ Saturday evening by local youth providers.

3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members will be aware of the ongoing damage caused to War Graves in the City Cemetery. Council officers have met with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to discuss more proactive measures to deter such damage happening again. These measures have been discussed with senior PSNI Officers and will involve continued high visibility foot patrols (Council and PSNI) and maximising positive animation opportunities. Mobile CCTV has been deployed in the last two weeks and this will continue. Additional CCTV and lighting is also being considered but may not be feasible given the nature of the site. A site meeting with BCC's mobile CCTV contractor to scope out the work required will take place this week. Education Authority and community/voluntary youth workers have been briefed on the Councils' serious concerns about damage to the graves and are proactively working to ensure young people in the area do not become involved in this activity.
	<p><u>Girdwood Community Hub</u></p>
3.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girdwood remains one of our priority areas of focus with Council Officers providing high visibility patrols, including with PSNI (along with other priority sites). The site remains complex, however Council Officers continue to work with our colleagues within the PSNI, DFC, EA and community partners to review and evaluate interventions being delivered in and around the site.
3.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council also continues to provide a physical security presence with the purpose of deterring and dealing with ASB incidents inside the hub building. At present, this service is delivered 3 nights per week and we are currently engaging with the operator with a view of providing additional security across the Girdwood Site for additional visibility outside of the building and around the pitches.
3.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A site visit has been facilitated with the Department for Communities & PSNI to explore opportunities to design out areas being use as a 'run through' by planting additional mature trees to close these key areas. A landscape plan is currently being developed and costed and we hope to be in a position to progress this as a matter of urgency.
3.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional CCTV is currently being procured to provide additional coverage across the Girdwood site. The additional provision will be in the form of wireless CCTV and locations points have been identified in conjunction with the PSNI. The proposed solution will also allow for new CCTV cameras to be re-located should other areas around the site be identified as 'hot spot' or 'blind spots' areas.

Partnership Working

- 3.13 Promoting the positive use of parks/open spaces and reducing anti-social behaviour/vandalism is not something the Council can achieve in isolation and requires extremely high levels of partnership working. Partners involved include Council, PSNI, Education Authority, Youth Organisations, Community Organisations, Translink, local schools and other revenue programmes (e.g. Urban Villages, Fresh Start, and PEACE IV).
- 3.14 Officers continue to work with all partners to maximise effectiveness of interventions, reduce duplication, protect Council assets and improve the quality of life for park/open space users and communities in the wider vicinity. Some further examples of how that partnership working is being progressed are detailed below:
- 3.15
- Ongoing serious anti-social behaviour in the Springfield Park, Springfield Dam and Invest NI Site was causing serious concerns for residents in the area and presented a risk to the success of the PEACE IV Shared Spaces and Services capital investment in the area ('Springfield Necklace'). Officers from across the Council worked to develop a co-ordinated plan of operations and community support in the wider area which included:
- 3.16
- A pilot civic engagement project commissioned by PEACE IV and delivered by Clonard Youth Centre and Forthspring Inter-Community Group. Both groups are delivering on site outreach work to identify those involved with the anti-social behaviour and are engaging them in cross community programmes to reduce the risk those young people will become involved anti-social behaviour again. The pilot project will run until January 2020 and if evaluated as an effective model, is likely to be commissioned for a longer period.
- 3.17
- In partnership with the Education Authority and PSNI, Council has begun the process of putting systems in place in West Belfast to maximise communication and partnership working between organisations. In practice, this involves weekly joined up planning of resources around priority sites at an operational level to include what quantity of resources are available, what area those resources will operate in, what times they will operate and the sharing of contact details. This has been informed by a very successful model in East Belfast (East Belfast Youth Providers Forum). This model is currently being rolled out for North Belfast with an initial cross-sectoral workshop held on 22 October 2019, which will be followed up in November 2019 with a more detailed planning workshop.

Supporting Innovation

- 3.18 Members will recall from Committee in June 2019, Council was in the process of completing an externally funded (Department for Economy) project working with the SME sector (including community/voluntary organisations) on opportunities to use innovation and technology in encouraging positive use and deter negative use of parks/open spaces.
- 3.19 £100,000 was secured for Phase 1 and after a short period of field testing in five parks/open spaces across the city in June 2019 (2 weeks). The field testing for each SME was generally positive and following a multi-agency review process, the Department for Economy has issued a Phase 2 letter of offer for £125K for 20/21 financial year, with further funding available (subject to satisfactory performance during 20/21) for 21/22 financial year.
- 3.20 The overall aim of the project in Phase 2 has been slightly refocused taking in to account the Phase 1 experience. It revised aim is:
- “To help Belfast City Council manage safe, accessible and enjoyable parks and open spaces, whilst continuing to respect the privacy of our users”**
- 3.21 As in Phase 1, all SME's were subject to rigorous Data Protection and Privacy Impact Assessments and full legal compliance was in place throughout ensuring every individuals' right to privacy was respected and only data directly related to the project aim was gathered. Learning from Phase 1 has resulted in a new work stream within Phase 2, which will involve parks/open spaces users and communities near our parks/open spaces to become more involved with Council and the SME's at an early stage. The purpose of this early engagement is to better understand any concerns users and communities may have about the type of data, which is being, gathered, which will ultimately inform the Phase 2 Data Protection and Privacy Impact Assessments.
- 3.22 Party Group Briefings will be offered in November/December 2019 if Elected Members would like further detail and a Phase 2 progress report will be provided to Committee at the earliest opportunity after Phase 2 project close down in March 2020.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.23 Staff Resources

The above approach continues to support the values and principles of the City and Neighbourhood Services and wider Corporate Change Programme.

3.24	<p><u>Financial Resources</u></p> <p>All of the above work continues to be accommodated from within existing Council and (D) PCSP revenue budgets. The work is intended to maximise existing resources, reduce duplication and facilitate joined up decision making and resource allocation in the identified parks/open spaces.</p>
3.25	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None have been identified at present, however, this will monitored on an ongoing basis.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.