

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 9th April, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bell, Black, Bower, R. Brooks, Bunting,
Cobain, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Kelly, Magee, Maghie,
McAteer, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Canavan.

Minutes

It was reported that the minutes of 12th March had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th April, subject to the following amendments:

XL Bully Restrictions announced by DAERA Minister

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the Council agreed to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, to enquire as to what impact the legislation would have on local councils and animal welfare charities, and what resources would be allocated to deal with those impacts.

Blanchflower Stadium – Preferential Use Agreement

The Council agreed that the Committee's decision, that officers would look to work with local community-based football clubs to develop an allocation model which was fair and equitable for all users, to ensure that all clubs would get fair access to pitches throughout the week, would be brought back to the Committee for further consideration. As this is subject to call-in it will be considered at the May meeting of Committee.

Requests for Events in Parks

The Council agreed that the Committee's decision to grant authority to the applicant for the proposed Finaghy Cultural Festival would be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for reconsideration.

The minutes of the meetings of 12th March were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to additions/amendments as outlined above.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Doherty and M. Donnelly declared an interest in agenda item 3 (e) Social Supermarkets 2024/25 as they worked for organisations that had applied for funding and they removed themselves from the meeting during consideration of the agenda item.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following item is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were advised that content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Difficult to Access Streets Update

(Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet provided the Members with an update on the progress made regarding the planning and launch of a pilot scheme to challenge inappropriate parking in streets that had been identified across the city, this was a collaborative scheme with the Council, the Department of Infrastructure (DfI) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The Committee was reminded that it was the intention, via the initiative, to introduce targeted measures in identified areas where parking was of particular concern in relation to the Council Waste Collection Services being able to collect bins on the day of collection. Following liaison with the various stakeholders, a launch date of the 6th May had been agreed, and the Members were provided with an overview of the proposed measures, areas to be targeted and a timeline for the pilot.

The Committee was advised that the plan would involve:

- an 18-month rolling and overlapping plan of education and enforcement;
- 6 target areas covering between 60 and 70 streets;
- each area being targeted three times over the 18 months for a period of 6 weeks each time;
- an agreed media and comms exercise in relevant areas and potentially across the city;
- raising awareness through lettering of both residents and owners of illegally parked cars; and
- joint and coordinated PSNI / DFI enforcement through Neighbourhood Policing Teams and DFI mobile enforcement units.

The Members noted that a communications plan had been compiled to ensure that the pilot was shared on the relevant social media platforms and also directly with the residents of the specific streets to be targeted.

Following discussion during which several queries were addressed by the Director, the Committee agreed the operational roll out of the plan, the accompanying communications plan, and the commencement date of 6th May for the pilot.

Committee/Strategic Issues

GLL 2024 Business Improvement Plan

The Committee was advised that, under the terms of the leisure contract between the Council and GLL, GLL was required to provide an Annual Business Improvement Plan for the following year. This report had previously been presented through the Active Belfast Limited.

The Members noted that, as the contract was now under direct Council control, this and future annual service reports would be presented through the People and Communities Committee.

During discussion clarification was sought on the following matters and it was agreed that the Committee would be updated in due course:

- whether there was an intention to extend the installation on EV charging points to more leisure centres in the city;
- when the café at Templemore Baths would be reopening as there was currently only a vending machine option;
- how many summer scheme places were allocated through the leisure centres in the city; and
- how the placement and location of university placement students was agreed.

The Committee noted the annual GLL 2024 Business Improvement Plan available [here](#).

**Leisure Services Community Engagement
and Underrepresented Target Groups**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide members with the annual update for 2023 on community engagement and underrepresented group focused promotional activity.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested:

To consider and record receipt of the information provide below and at Appendices 1 and 2 attached. CNS officers will be in attendance to respond to any queries raised by members.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Under the terms of the leisure contract between BCC and GLL, GLL is required to provide an annual report on community engagement initiatives for the preceding year. This annual service reports will be presented through the People and Communities committee.

GLL is a leading social enterprise. One of GLL’s core priorities is to ensure full access for all members of the community and to encourage more people to be more active, more often. CNS works closely with GLL to encourage community outreach and regular participation amongst traditionally underrepresented target groups.

GLL employ a Regional Business Manager (RBM), whose key focus is to drive participation and usage, ensuring more people from every background are regularly and meaningfully engaged and taking part in sport and physical activity.

In support of this the RBM manages a team of three Community Sport Officers, a team of ten Health Officers and one Group Exercise Coordinator. All members of the team have work programmes designed to deliver on strategic objectives with a focus to increase participation in both the mainstream and underrepresented groups.

GLL is committed to support community access offering varied opportunities delivered in centres that are accessible, affordable, and non-inhibiting.

GLL re-invests through the GLL Sport Foundation that provides and sustains support for talented individuals.

53% of Belfast GLL members benefit from concessionary charges thereby helping to remove affordability as a barrier to participation.

3.2 Outcomes and proposals

Sport National Governing Body (NGB) and Club Programmes

GLL continue to support a number of Sport NGBs in the delivery of their holiday programmes, grassroots events and performance programmes. Holiday camps were delivered by the Irish FA and Ulster Badminton. In addition to this GLL worked with Peace Players International, British Fencing and Ulster Boxing in the delivery of coaching workshops throughout the summer months.

All Ireland water polo league events are hosted regularly at Lisnasharragh LC and the venue has also hosted a number of Ulster Swimming Galas. Ulster Boxing competitions are regularly welcomed to centres including Girdwood CH, Ballysillan LC, Brook LC and Whiterock LC. Shankill LC hosts the Northern Ireland Futsal Federation league for both males and females and in the Autumn, began hosting Northern Ireland Fencing competitions. NGBs regularly deliver coach education courses at BCC leisure centres.

BCC leisure centres, programmed by GLL, host over 200 local sports clubs and performance squads. Leisure centres in Belfast are utilised for club and performance training and service a variety of local and regional competitions. Gaelic games, boxing, fencing, football, futsal, rugby, tennis, table tennis, cricket, basketball, baseball, netball, softball, dodgeball, swimming, water polo and martial arts are amongst the sports allocated essential training facilities for programme delivery.

School & Youth programmes

GLL works with local Primary and Post Primary schools to provide facilities to support physical education delivery. Over 80 schools accessed school swimming lessons accounting for an allocation of over 5,000 programmed pool lane hours in 2023.

Centres facilitated a number of primary and secondary school end of term celebrations in June. Schools were able to access a variety of junior products and swimming pools across the city to celebrate the conclusion of their academic year.

GLL have expanded their Holiday Scheme programme to now deliver in Easter, Summer and Halloween. In total 80 supervisors and instructors were recruited to deliver the programme during the three holiday periods. Twelve centres in total delivered the programme over the three holiday periods. Programmes varied from a traditional holiday activity scheme model and others delivering sports specific models. Football, Gaelic games, gymnastics, basketball, swimming and tennis were offered as sports specific schemes. GLL worked in partnership with Ulster GAA, Ulster Badminton, Northern Ireland Fencing, Ulster Boxing and Peace Players International to support coaching sessions throughout the holiday scheme programme. In total the GLL Holiday Scheme catered for 2,766 children which represented 81% of the spaces offered. Additional detail is provided in Appendix 1.

GLL delivers a lessons and courses programme currently focused on swimming, gymnastics, tennis and climbing. Throughout 2023 over 5,500 children have been enrolled on swimming lessons, 40 in diving lessons, 220 in tennis lessons, 160 in gymnastics sessions and 50 in climbing lessons. In the coming year (2024) GLL plan to expand the swimming programme to cater for 6,500 children weekly, 65 in diving, over 250 in tennis, over 250 in gymnastics and 65 in climbing.

Brook LC has engaged with a number of Special Needs schools to offer the Air Venture product to support with Physical Education delivery. This combined with the sensory pool has resulted in 30% of all Brook Leisure Centre programming being an inclusive offering.

Community outreach

In 2022 GLL established community engagement leads in each centre to drive local engagement projects but also support citywide initiatives. In December twelve centres supported the Cash for Kids Mission Christmas. Over 700 gifts were donated with an estimated value of £10,000.

GLL continue to partner with 'Menshed' by offering space at Girdwood CH, Brook LC and Whiterock LC where the focus is on improving mental health for men.

GLL have supported a number of mental health charities and initiatives in the form of awareness and fund raising.

The Colin Autism Support Group uses Brook LC for parents of children with autism and other learning disabilities.

Avoniel and Andersonstown hosted open days for community organisations to promote their work to customers within the centres.

The Belfast Community Sport team delivered an outreach event to Ulster University Sports Studies students in October at Girdwood CH. This event saw over 80 students participate in a variety of sports and activities. GLL also presented employment opportunities within Belfast highlighting student placement opportunities and their trainee manager scheme.

Older Participant Programmes

At the end of 2023 30% of all Belfast pay and play and prepaid members were aged 60+. Council continues to provide free of charge access for over 60's before 11.00am Monday to Friday.

GLL delivers a daily programme of activities targeted at and suitable for older people. The programme expanded month on month throughout 2023. Belfast benefits from a citywide pool programme that ensures there is always Swim for Fitness (lane swimming) and Swim for All (family casual swim) options available every day across the city. GLL continue to deliver an introductory physical activity programme suitable for members looking for a lower intensity/low impact workout.

GLL deliver a number of active ageing mornings across the city which include activities such as Danderball, Pickleball, Table Tennis, Boccia and Water Polo. These are being delivered at Avoniel LC, Falls LC, Girdwood CH, Grove WC, Lisnasharragh LC, Olympia LC Ozone, and Shankill LC. GLL have plans in place to expand the programme in 2024.

On Friday 29th September Girdwood CH hosted the Better Club Games. Six centres were represented and a total of 50 participants took part in seven sports/activities throughout the day which included Pickleball, Table Tennis, Badminton, Bowls, Boccia and a selection of physical challenges. Additional information is provided in Appendix 2.

GLL deliver chronic conditions (Cancer & Cardiac) rehabilitation programmes, whilst also supporting and hosting Diabetes and Strength & Balance programmes. Many of the referrals for these interventions are older people.

Strategic partnerships and working groups (attended by CNS and GLL) are well established around chronic conditions pathways to ensure collaboration with key organisations such as Public Health Agency, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and charitable partners.

Girdwood CH partners with Chest, Heart and Stroke Association in offering weekly low intensity exercise along with arts and crafts.

People with disabilities

GLL supports the NOW group (Social Enterprise) in the delivery of a 'Lets Get Fit Now' programme in Falls LC. This programme offers participants with a learning disability the opportunity to participate in tailored fitness classes and gym inductions.

Belvoir Activity Centre in partnership with Disability Sport NI provides a dedicated disability sports hub catering for a range of wheelchair-based sports and activities including Wheelchair Basketball, Boccia and New Age Curling. Ballysillan LC also supported the Northern Ireland Powerchair team in their World Cup preparations as well as providing training space for the Trailblazers club.

Whiterock LC supports disability groups in Upper Springfield by offering sports and fun fitness sessions twice per week.

The GLL Sport Foundation in Belfast currently supports 2 disabled and Paralympic athletes. Athletes benefit from financial awards of up to £1,250 which will contribute to their individual coaching, travel, competition, and equipment costs.

Brook LC has a swimming pool specifically designed to cater for those with sensory needs and those with wide range of disabilities. The centre runs six weekly 'quiet swims' currently attracting approximately 20 to 30 participants in each session. GLL engage with Swimming Buddies, an organisation that specialises in Autism friendly swimming lessons. Currently sessions are being offered throughout the week at both Brook LC and Templemore Baths. Brook LC also supports the delivery of Air Venture inclusive sessions which are designed to meet the sensory requirements of participants.

Women and Girls

47% of all current Belfast members are female (16,719).

In partnership with Irish FA, GLL provide female only football sessions at five centres across the city through the IFA Shooting Stars Programme.

GLL have supported Netball NI in the delivery of their social netball programme and are also in discussion about the potential for Lisnasharragh LC to become a regular training base for the senior international squad.

GLL supports 64 female athletes through the GSF programme (51.2%) to enable them to compete at national and international level in their respective sports.

GLL works in partnership with WISPA in the delivery of female only classes (aqua aerobics, yoga, Pilates and circuits) at Avoniel LC, Belvoir AC, Brook LC, Olympia LC, Shankill LC and Whiterock LC

Brook LC delivered an after schools multisport and fitness programme for girls and also works in partnership with local GAA clubs to deliver a 'Gaelic for mothers' programme.

Family programming

GLL have created a balanced programme of activities across all centres allowing families to participate. For example, a 'basic group exercise offering' which permits junior members to exercise with older family members.

Junior group exercise classes have been introduced into the group exercise timetable and GLL plan to expand this programme in 2024 subject to the availability of qualified staff.

Adult and Child gym sessions have been added across the city which permits children as young as 9 to attend the gym as long as they are accompanied and supervised by a parent/guardian.

Junior and family products such as water slides, Surf Belfast and the Aqua Play at Andersonstown LC, Air Venture at Brook LC and Aqua Splash at Lisnasharragh LC are all meeting the demands of families, particularly over the weekend and holiday periods.

Birthday parties are offered at all centres and represent good value for money. Provision includes bouncy castles, climbing wall, sports (indoor and outdoor) along with the new products mentioned above.

Wet centres provide family fun pool sessions, with floats and inflatables, as part of their weekly programme.

Brook LC offers weekly pool parties and family aqua aerobics sessions.

GLL continue to provide a citywide family membership which was first launched in August 2021. At the end of December 2023 there was over 400 family memberships across Belfast which equates to 1,982 members.

Summary

- 3.3 To consider and record receipt of the information provide above and at Appendices 1 and 2 attached. CNS officers will be in attendance to respond to any queries raised by members.

Communications and Public Relations

- 3.4 None.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5 None.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.6 None.”

Several Members welcomed the update and during discussion a Member highlighted the need for officers to continue to liaise with Elected Members and GLL to enhance and strengthen the leisure provision offered throughout the city to those people with additional needs.

The Committee noted the GLL Holiday Scheme Programme Report 2023 available [here](#) and Better Club Games Report 2023 available [here](#).

GLL Service Report 2023/24

The Committee was advised that, under the terms of the leisure contract between the Council and GLL, GLL was required to provide an Annual Service Report for the preceding year. This report had previously been presented through the Active Belfast Limited. The Members noted that, as the contract was now under direct Council control, this and future annual service reports would be presented through the People and Communities Committee.

The Committee noted the Annual GLL Service Report for 2023 available [here](#).

Consultation - Rethinking Our Resources: Measures For Climate Action and Circular Economy in NI

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the launch of a public consultation by DAERA on ‘Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI’

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are requested to:

- note the contents of the report,
- agree the upcoming workshop to formulate a Belfast City Response on the key items within the consultation.
- Agree to support a request via the Council Waste Forum for a time extension to consider a full and proper response to the consultation.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 On 7th March. 2024, The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) published a consultation titled ‘Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI’ seeking views of key stakeholders

3.2 DAERA stated that the purpose of the consultation is to work towards meeting legal requirements and the statutory targets contained within the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 and the Waste and Contaminated Land Order (NI) 1997.

3.3 DAERA stated that they wanted to hear the views of stakeholders on proposals designed to improve the quality and quantity of household and non-household municipal recycling, reduce food waste, and cut landfill rates with a view to developing policy options.

3.4 They noted that the consultation also covered proposals on the implementation of recycling for businesses, (also known as the non-household municipal sector), which is now included in the legal definition of municipal waste in legislation through amendments made by the Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2020. DAERA have positioned this consultation in relation the relevant legislative context as follows;

‘The EU Circular Economy Package (CEP), which the UK committed to prior to EU exit, was transposed into domestic legislation in December 2020 via the Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. This amended the content of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and introduced a range of targets including a municipal waste recycling target of 65% by 2035 (with interim

targets of 55% by 2025 and 60% by 2030) and municipal waste landfill target of 10% or less by 2035.

- 3.5 This legislation also extended the definition of ‘municipal waste’, to include waste collected from sources other than households where the waste is similar in nature and composition. This means that most businesses, public sector and third sector organisations are now in scope of this revised definition. In addition to these targets, we also have a new recycling target arising from the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, which requires Northern Ireland to achieve a 70% waste recycling rate by 2030’.
- 3.6 This consultation has been much anticipated by those involved in Waste Management. Since publication, BCC officers have been reading and understanding the content of the consultation. It is their view that this is potentially the most important consultation in relation to the future collection recycling and treatment of waste for many years. The findings and outcomes of the consultation will determine the future government direction of travel in terms of the management of Waste and will be a major influencer in the subsequent Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy to be developed later in 2024 by DAERA.
- 3.7 The consultation is open for 12 weeks, and consists of 26 distinct proposals split into 2 areas.
- Part 1 - Proposals 1 to 12 - to improve commonality in collections from households.
 - Part 2 - Proposals 13 to 26 - to improve recycling of Non-Household Municipal Waste

Over the 26 proposals consultees are asked to put forward views on over 100 separate questions.

The 26 proposals are outlined and detail the considerable complexity of the consultation - a link to the full suite of consultation documentation is here; <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/rethinking-our-resources-measures-climate-action-and-circular-economy-ni-consultation>

- 3.8 There are concerns from officers across the 11 NI Councils that the 12 week consultation period is too short to answer this consultation properly and there is a proposal being raised at the Council Waste Forum on 12th April to agree to make a request from all Councils to DAERA for an extension to this deadline, to allow for consideration and appropriate governance arrangements for every NI council to be carried out properly. BCC officers would request that the People and Communities Committee support this proposal for a time extension.

- 3.9 That said, and without an extension currently being granted, in order to complete as full and considered response as possible, officers would propose to run a member's workshop, in the City Hall from 12.00 – 2 p.m. on Thursday 18th April. The workshop will be designed to gain consensus with members on the consultation response and in particular on identified key topics. Officers will then endeavour to formulate a draft response for the May Peoples and Communities Committee meeting for approval and subsequent submission to DAERA at the end of May.
- 3.10 Should members wish to attend this workshop, Officers would encourage Members to familiarise themselves as much as possible by referencing the link above.

Financial and Resource Implications

None

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

None.”

Several Members welcomed the opportunity, given the importance of the consultation, to participate in the proposed workshop and agreed that this would provide a forum for more detailed discussion.

Following a query, the Director of Neighbourhood Services undertook to liaise with the Member directly regarding the use of single use plastics and whether the Council planned to increase its number of water refill points at pitches.

The Committee agreed:

- that a workshop be convened for Members of the Committee, in the Lavery Room, on Thursday, 18th April from 12.00 noon – 2.00 p.m. to enable the Members to participate in helping formulate a Belfast City Response on the key items within the consultation;
- to support a request via the Council Waste Forum for a time extension to the 12-week consultation period to give adequate time for Councils to consider the consultation and prepare a full and detailed response; and
- that a letter should also be sent on behalf of the Council directly seeking a time extension to the 12-week consultation period.

Social Supermarkets 2024/25

(Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, and Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer Community Provision, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the outcome of the recent open call for applications to the Social Supermarket Fund.

The Members were advised that, subsequent to the report being issued, the Department for Communities had since released £104,000 of the funding, this was on a 25% basis.

The Members discussed at length options to enable payments to be made to organisations as quickly as possible, however, following discussion:

The Committee agreed to defer the report to the April meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources to enable officers to prepare additional information in advance of the meeting and also agreed to write to the Department for Communities to reiterate the need for funding to be made available to Councils and to highlight the essential services that Social Supermarkets offered to local communities and to seek additional funding.

Operational Issues

Requests for Events in Parks

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Committee is asked to note that Council has received several requests from event organisers to host events across several city park locations in 2024 and these include.

- **Live at C.S. Lewis Square – C.S. Lewis Square**
- **Outdoor Church Service – Waterworks Park, Woodvale Park and Marrowbone**
- **Twilight Walk – Barnetts Demesne**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to grant authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted and to delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure the following:

- I. If appropriate negotiate a fee which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Councils Commercial Manager.**

- II. Negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' & take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:
- The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction.
 - The promoter carrying out appropriate resident & community engagement
 - The promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence.

Please note that the above recommendations are taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Key Issues

- 3.2 If agreed, the event organiser or promoters will be required in advance of the event to submit an event management plan for approval by the Council and all relevant statutory bodies. This will include an assessment of how the event will impact upon the surrounding area and measures to mitigate these impacts.

3.3 Live at C.S. Lewis Square – C.S. Lewis Square – Thursday 25 to Monday 29 July

- 3.4 Belfast City Council has received a request from Eastside Arts to host a two-day music event followed by a free family funday at C.S. Lewis Square in July. The events are due to be part of this years upcoming East Side Arts Festival and will have a Live Band that will perform on the Friday night followed by an Electronic music event on the Saturday. Both of these events will be ticketed.

- 3.5 The funday on the Sunday will be a free event aimed at families to attend throughout the day. It will include arts & crafts along with market stalls.

- 3.6 The Key Dates are as follows:

Set up - Thursday 25 July 2024 – 8 am onwards.

Live Band - Friday 26 July 2024 – 7pm to 11pm

Electronic Music - Saturday 27 July 2024 - 3pm to 11pm

Family Funday - Sunday 28 July 2024 – 12pm to 4pm
De-Rig - Monday 29 July 2023 – 12pm

3.7 Outdoor Church Service – Woodvale 16 June, Marrowbone 23 June & Waterworks 23 June

3.8 Belfast City Council has received a request from The Ark Church Belfast to host three separate outdoor services in Belfast parks in the month of June. These locations are Woodvale Park, Marrowbone & Waterworks Park. These services have previously taken place in 2022 but had not taken place last year. The group wish to be granted permission to allow them to take place again this year.

3.9 The services are expected to attract around 200 attendees at each service. The service will include live songs of praise that will be played over speakers. They plan on having gazebos in place at each park to use as a cover in the event of bad weather.

3.10 The purpose of their request is to be able to carry out their services outdoors in the hope that it will reach new people. Each event will have stewards at them to ensure no issues occur and the group will be providing their own bins to ensure all litter is removed from the site.

3.11 The Key Dates are as follows:

Woodvale Service 16 June 2024

Set-up - 6pm
Service - 7pm - 8.30pm
De-Rig - 9pm

3.12 Marrowbone & Waterworks Service 23 June 2024

Set-up - 6pm
Service - 7pm - 8.30pm
De-Rig - 9pm

3.13 Twilight Walk – Barnetts Demesne – Friday 27 September 2024

3.14 Belfast City Council has received a request from 26 extreme to host their annual Twilight Walk at Barnetts Demesne on Friday 27 September 2024. The walk will be a circular route, starting and ending at the Belfast Activity Centre. After the walk ends, there will be music with food available to buy for the participants, the radio station U105 will be in attendance and a gazebo, all within the grounds of the Belfast Activity Centre. At the end of the evening there will be a speech by a Marie Curie nurse, and a firework display the fire work display will go over the grounds of Barnetts Demesne with the event coming to a close at 10pm.

- 3.15 The event organisers are anticipating around 1000-1500 walkers for this event, passing down past Malone House to the Lagan towpath, then back towards Mary Peters' Track, up around Queens' University's playing fields and back to the Belfast Activity Centre.
- 3.16 There is no formal charity collection on site, but Marie Curie will put out collection buckets should participants want to donate on the night. There is also a fee of £20 per person for participants in the walk. Marie Curie will pre-register participants for the walk, and registration will also be available on the night. This event has happened in previous years with no issues occurring due to this.
- 3.17 The Key Dates are as follows:
Set up - Friday 27 September – 8am to 4pm
Event - Friday 27 September – 5pm to 10:30pm
De-Rig - Friday 27 September – 10:30pm to 11:55pm
- 3.18 **Financial and Resource Implications**
- 3.19 There are no known financial or resource implications at this stage,
- 3.20 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**
- 3.21 There are no known implications.”

Following a query regarding the proposed events at the Waterworks Park, Woodvale Park and Marrowbone Park, the Member was advised that the organiser had held similar services in 2022 without issue.

A Member highlighted that the update report was still outstanding regarding the status of the ongoing review into the framework and policy for Events and asked officers to pursue this matter with the Council's Commercial team.

The Committee adopted the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Static Park Warden Pilot Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Members on an ongoing pilot static park warden initiative focused on addressing ASB in 3 park sites in the city.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and to agree subject to budget to extend the pilot until the end of the September 2024 and to agree that Falls Park is included as an additional site for the pilot.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Belfast City Council have the responsibility to maintain and keep our public parks safe for citizens and accessible for all.

3.2 Members will recall that a report on ‘Anti-Social Behaviour within BCC Parks’ was tabled at People & Communities Committee on 10th January 2023 overviewing ASB in our Parks over a 3-year period. This report set out mechanisms and roles responsible for reporting ASB and highlighted factors contributing to an inconsistent capturing of data on ASB resulting in limitations on data available in determining patterns and hotspots.

3.3 At Member’s request at this meeting a further report was tabled at P&C the following month (7th February 2023, entitled ‘Anti-Social Behaviour - update on previous interventions and initiatives in parks’, exploring a number of approaches successfully undertaken in our parks to alleviate ASB for potential future implementation, budget and resources depending. This included dedicated warden/attendant and animation in Dunville Park and Divis Back Path which encouraged community ownership of these parks.

3.4 Strategic Policy and Resource Committee on 24th March 2022 agreed to the reallocation of £220,254 to made available for the delivery of a ‘pilot project replicating model used in Dunville Park to reduce levels of ASB in parks’. It was further noted that the resources should be directed to those parks in the city already identified at January P&C Committee as having high levels of reported ASB – to include Dunville Park and Pairc Nui Chollan’ with additional parks to be included.

'Static' Park Warden Deployment

- 3.5 Members will be aware that Council's existing Park Warden Teams are located in each quadrant of the city and carry out an important role in our parks and open spaces which are not limited to addressing ASB issues. They are deployed, as required, to provide a targeted response in parks with identified ASB issues during their working hours which reflect the standard 'dawn to dusk' opening hours of our parks.
- 3.6 Following risk assessment for the new warden roles, and recognition that posts were for a specific initiative to tackle ASB – it was confirmed that the pilot 'static' wardens must work in pairs at all times and as a result of this that the employment of a total of 6x wardens was possible, limiting the pilot to 3x park sites citywide.
- 3.7 Woodvale Park was added to Dunville Park and Pairc Nui Chollain as the focus for the pilot initiative. Operational working hours for the new wardens were also agreed on the premise that an afternoon/evening and a weekend focus would allow them to better target ASB. Hours of operation at these 3 sites Wednesday to Sunday 3pm – 11pm each day, except Sunday with an earlier finish time at the earlier time of 10.30pm.
- 3.8 It was agreed that the newly recruited staff for the pilot would be operationally managed during the pilot period through OSS area teams. 6 Park Wardens began in August and following a short induction were placed in the 3 parks in September 2023. The pilot has now been in operation for 7 months.

Key Findings – Pilot Period To Date

- 3.9 The Pilot has been operating since the start of September 2023 and ASB reporting statistics are now available for the 6 consecutive months of September through to end of February 2024. Key findings from data recorded over this period, based on an evaluation framework drafted at the Pilot's initiation, are set out below:
- 3.10 Since the start of the Pilot there has been a 26% decrease in ASB incidences reported overall at the 3 park sites when compared to the same months the year previous (Sept 22- Feb 23). 61 ASB incidences were reported during the September - February 'Pilot period' compared to the figure of 82 for same period the year previous. This includes a slight increase in figures for ASB reports for the Woodvale Park site.

- 3.11 ASB reporting trend for each park over the Pilot period when compared to same 6mth period the previous year (monthly average) was as follows:
- 3.12
- Dunville Park - monthly average reports decreased from 6.8 to 2.3 (41 previous year and 14 during Pilot period)
 - Woodvale Park- monthly average reports increase from 1.2 to 1.8 (7 previous year and 11 during Pilot period)
 - Pairc Nui Chollan monthly average reports decreased from 8.5 to 6. (*Note opened in November 2022 totals not comparable as data is available for 4 months in previous period only*)
- 3.13 Members should note that evening programming (midnight soccer and other diversionary activities) have also been taking place during the pilot period and have very likely have had a positive on ASB at these locations.
- 3.14 During the pilot period, members should note that there has been an increase in reported ASB in some park/playground sites in the vicinity of the pilot sites. Breakdown of reporting increase in each park as follows:
- Falls Park - ASB reports up from 51 to 66 (29 % increase)
 - Ohio St playground - ASB reports up from 5 to 9 (80% increase)
- 3.15 Given the impact of the pilot at the 3 sites chosen and the ongoing issues particularly at Falls Park members are asked to consider extending the pilot to cover Falls Park and to note that if they agree to this the number of static wardens will increase by 3 to ensure operational requirements of the pilot at that site can be met.
- 3.16 Members should note that the Park Warden pilot has been supported by the Safer Neighbourhood Officers and the PSNI. Good working relationships have been developed which have ensured and improved response to ASB incidents at the sites.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.17 Based on forecast spend for the pilot initiative there are funds to continue until early June 2024. There is no available budget for the Pilot going forward beyond this time. Should members agree to the extension it should be noted that this will be funded from within existing budget estimates.
- 3.18 Members should note that subject to support from Continuous Improvement (CI) the City and Neighbourhood Services

Department is planning to review the park warden function. This pilot will be used to inform this review.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessments**

3.19 There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.”

Several of the Members welcomed the work that had been done to date and asked that their thanks be extended to the staff for the efforts that they had put in to developing the initiative.

The Committee agreed, subject to budget, to extend the pilot until the end of the September 2024 and that Falls Park be included as an additional site for the pilot.

Dual Language Street Signage Proposal

The Committee agreed the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at St Johns Avenue, Tullagh Park, Corrina Park, Orient Gardens, Brookvale Avenue, Oakhurst Avenue and Suffolk Crescent and agreed to defer consideration of the decision to erect a Dual Language Street Sign at Sunningdale Park North and Ben Madigan Park South until those applications already received to date had been processed.

Proposal for Naming New Streets

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of five new streets in the city, Blackthorn Place, Blackthorn Grove, Blackthorn Crescent, Black Ridge Drive and Black Ridge Grange

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Renaming Suffolk Community Garden - Councillor Kelly

Councillor Kelly agreed to submit an application seeking to have Suffolk Community Garden renamed through the Council's normal procedure and officers advised that a report would be submitted to Committee in due course.

Dilapidated Buildings - Councillor R. Brooks

Councillor R. Brooks referred to the detrimental impact that derelict and dilapidated buildings were having on local communities, citing local examples in East Belfast. In recognising the Council's commitment made in the Belfast agenda to address dereliction it was agreed that the Council would write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) urgently seeking the Minister to bring forward a Dilapidation Bill.

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, it was agreed also to write to the Department of Finance and Department for Communities seeking the allocation of a package of funding to assist councils to more effectively tackle the problems associated with dilapidation.

It was further agreed that officers would submit a report to a future meeting detailing the number of derelict buildings on arterial routes throughout the city.

Communication Boards - Councillor Bunting

At the request of Councillor Bunting, it was agreed that officers would submit a report to a future meeting providing an update in respect of communication boards which had previously been trialled in a number of Council parks.

Chairperson