

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 8th October, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower, Bradley,
Bunting, Canavan, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie,
Maskey, McKeown, McLaughlin and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing
and External Affairs; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Cobain.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 4a, viz., Social Supermarket Fund Update, Councillors Canavan, M. Donnelly, Doherty and Verner declared an interest in that they were associated with organisations which had previously applied for funding under the terms of the Fund. However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items 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 took 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.

**Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) –
Proposed Annual Schedule of Charges 2025/26**

The Committee considered the proposed Annual Schedule of Charges for 2025/26 which had been prepared by GLL in relation to the Council's leisure centres.

The Committee noted the schedule of charges for 2025/26 and the rationale used in support of the price revisions. In addition, the Committee agreed to the following course of action:

1. that officers be authorised to create a 'Family Membership' pricing package aimed at single-adult families which would be at a lower rate than the current package available for two-adult families;
2. that a request be forwarded to GLL requesting that they consider sponsoring additional schemes aimed specifically at widening participation by children with additional needs within leisure facilities; and
3. that a report outlining plans for future capital development across the Council's leisure estate be submitted to a future meeting for the Committee's information.

**Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) –
Annual User Survey Outcomes 2024**

The Committee deferred consideration of the above-mentioned survey to enable a more detailed report to be submitted. It was noted that the updated report would provide additional detail on the survey outcomes, scoring matrixes and samples used. In addition, the report would include further demographic detail and also reflect user experience in a more qualitative and user-friendly manner; and would seek also to incorporate the views of those users who had not partaken in the survey electronically.

4G Pitch at Marrowbone Park - Usage Schedule

The Committee considered a report which outlined a number of proposals to manage pitch bookings at the above-mentioned site.

The Committee adopted the following recommendations as set out within the report:

- that the Crumlin Star first team would be afforded primacy for bookings on Saturdays from 1.00pm to 4.00pm;
- that, when a first team league match was arranged, or rearranged, by the league for a midweek date, Crumlin Star would be given primacy for that fixture and any bookings already made at by other clubs would be cancelled;
- that, on weeks when Crumlin Star did not have a home fixture on a Saturday afternoon, Shamrock FC would be afforded use of the pitch

for first team home league fixtures. (This had been agreed between the two clubs and with the Northern Amateur Football League who do not schedule home fixtures for Crumlin Star and Shamrock FC on the same weekend);

- that Cliftonville Academy be afforded primacy for daytime weekday use – during term-time only - by their academy; and
- that all of the above bookings to be paid for as per the Council's pricing policy.

Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group Update

The Committee considered a report which gave an overview of the outcomes of the meeting of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group, which had taken place on 2nd October.

The Committee agreed to the following course of action:

- that the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 2nd October be approved and adopted;
- that the Notice of Motion relating to burial fees be closed;
- that a memorial tree be planted in Roselawn Cemetery to mark the 150th anniversary of the Cremation Society; and
- that consideration of the section of the report under the heading 'Crematorium Budget – Income Generation' be deferred to November to enable Members to consider further the information outlined.

Matter Referred Back by the Council

Use of Botanic Gardens - Christmas Ice Experience

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, it had agreed, in principle, to grant the use of Botanic Gardens for the holding of the above-mentioned event. That decision was subject to a due diligence process being undertaken in respect of the applicant, the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed on the condition that the event organisers met all of the Council's pre-conditions.

At the meeting of the Council on 2nd October, that decision, on the proposal of Councillor Flynn, which was seconded by Councillor McKay, had been referred back to the Committee for further consideration. Accordingly, the Committee considered an updated report in the matter which had been prepared by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services.

After further consideration, it was,

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett and

Resolved - that the Committee agrees not to grant the use of the Botanic Gardens for the Christmas Ice Experience event for the several reasons outlined within the updated report considered.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Community Support Plan 2024/29

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in relation to the ongoing work in the drafting of a Council Community Support Plan for 2024/29. The Director of Neighbourhood Services outlined the principal aspects of the report and gave an overview of the outcomes of the research, public engagement sessions and surveys which had been undertaken. He explained that the priorities identified would help align the Plan with the Belfast Agenda, which would link also to service delivery and funding priorities. He gave an outline also of the next steps in the process, which would include further community and Elected Member engagement, with a view to the Plan being published in April 2025.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and noted further that two engagement sessions would take place to update the groups and individuals who had engaged previously on the emerging priorities. In addition, the Committee agreed:

1. that a draft overall framework (including outcomes) and further detail on the development of a new funding programme be submitted to the Committee's meeting in November, with all proposals being sourced from within existing resources; and
2. that the detail of the proposed priorities to be included within the Plan be approved.

Pavement Parking - Update on Notice of Motion

(The Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th October, 2023, had passed the following notice of motion, which had been proposed by Councillor T. Brooks and seconded by Councillor Nelson:

"That this Council notes that inconsiderate pavement parking affects everyone in Belfast, but disproportionately children, people with visual impairments, mobility aid users, neurodiverse people and people with prams or pushchairs; and therefore it is essential that the Council plays its full role in reinforcing the message that pavements are for people and it is never acceptable to park in a manner which forces people off a footway and into the road.

This Council acknowledges the challenges in solving this issue but resolves to work towards stopping vehicles from blocking pavements through inconsiderate or dangerous parking, including by undertaking a

public information campaign about the negative impacts of pavement parking in its forthcoming communications.”

The Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs reminded the Committee that the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) was responsible for pavement parking and enforcement, in conjunction with the PSNI. He outlined the steps which had been taken at a corporate level regarding the matter, which had included the Council’s involvement in a campaign entitled ‘Park with Us in Mind’, which had highlighted pavement parking and its effect on services, particularly bin emptying. He explained that the Council would continue to draw attention to the issue on a multi-agency basis as well as using corporate media channels to highlight the matter.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the Director’s comments in relation thereto. In addition, the Committee agreed that opportunities for further collaboration be sought, in conjunction with PSNI and DFI, and to highlight through digital channels the issue of pavement parking, as well as highlighting this subject in future editions of City Matters.

Operational Issues

Social Supermarkets – Update

Further to the Committee’s decision of 8th September, at which it had requested that an update report be submitted on the operation of the projects supported through the Social Supermarket Fund, the Committee considered a report in this regard.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Static Park Warden Pilot Scheme – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“**1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

1.1 To update Members on the ongoing Static Park Warden initiative including its recent expansion into Falls Park, and to ask Members to approve an extension until the end of the financial year.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and approve an extension to March 2025.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that at People and Communities Committee on 9th April 2024 (Appendix One) they received an update from officers on the ongoing Static Park Warden Pilot in place to reduce levels of anti-social

behaviour (ASB) in a number of parks. At that time 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'.

Key Findings – Pilot Period to Date

- 3.2 The Pilot has now been operational for 13 months and as of mid-September 2024 we now have a full complement of nine Static Park Wardens working across the 4 Pilot sites. ASB reporting statistics for the Pilot are now available for 12 consecutive months from September 2023 through to end of August 2024 for Dunville Park, Pairc Nui Chollann and Woodvale Park, and for a total of three months (June-August 2024) for Falls Park.
- 3.3 At April's Committee Members were advised that since the start of the Pilot there has been a 26% decrease in ASB incidences reported overall for the September 23 - February '24 'Pilot period' at the 3 park sites (61) when compared to data for the same months in the previous year prior to the Pilot commencing (82).
- 3.4 Further data recorded over the past six months in the three original sites show continued positive overall trends as a result of the Pilot. This includes a slight increase in figures for ASB reports for the Woodvale Park site. For Falls Park, since its inclusion in the Pilot scheme, incidences of ASB over past 3 months (June - August) have decreased by 68% from 65 to 21 reports when compared to previous 3-month period before expansion of Pilot into the park site.
- 3.5 ASB reporting trend for the original three park sites over the past 6 months of the Pilot period when compared to previous 6mth (also with the Pilot period) were as follows:
- 3.6 Dunville Park- incidences of reported ASB over past 6 months (March- August 2024) have decreased by 93% from 14 to 1 report when compared to previous 6-month Pilot period. Pairc Nui Chollann – incidences of reported ASB over past 6 months (March- August 2024) have decreased by 10% from 48 to 43 reports when compared to previous 6-month Pilot period.
- 3.7 Woodvale Park - incidences of reported ASB over past 6 months (March- August 2024) have increased by 17% from 12 to 34 reports when compared to previous 6-month Pilot period.
- 3.8 Members should note that evening programming (midnight soccer and other diversionary activities)

continue to take place with likely positive impacts on ASB at these locations; and that the Pilot continues to be supported by the Safer Neighbourhood Officers and the PSNI - with good working relationships in place ensuring improved response to ASB incidents at the sites.

- 3.9 With support from Continuous Improvement (CI), City and Neighbourhood Services Department are currently progressing a Park Warden review with focus on the requirements for/of the role, and that of the parallel SNO and Dog Warden functions. Over the coming months the findings from the Static Park Warden Pilot will feed into this review. This work is likely to take several months to progress and accordingly members are asked to approve an extension to the static warden pilot until March 2025.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 Should members agree to the extension it should be noted that the cost can be met from within existing CNS budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments

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

The Director of Neighbourhood Services answered several questions which had been raised by Members and the Committee noted the contents of the report and approved an extension to the scheme until 31 March 2025.

Proposal for Naming of New Streets

The Committee granted permission for the naming of the following four new streets in the city, namely, Black Ridge Row, Black Ridge Close, Black Ridge Park and Black Ridge Parade.

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signage

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplates, in Irish, at the following streets: Brookvale Street, Beechlawn Avenue, Linen Grove, Dawson Street, Jubilee Avenue, Thorndale Avenue, Woodland Grange and Grangeville Gardens.

In respect of the application for a second street nameplate at Wellington Park Terrace, the Committee, at the request of Councillor Bunting, agreed, despite the application meeting the threshold for approval within the policy, that it be deferred to enable further consultation to be undertaken with residents. It was noted that the application would be re-submitted for consideration in due course.

**Temporary Closure of Alexandra Park
Household Waste Recycling Centre**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the arrangements that would be in put place during the temporary closure of Alexandra Park Household Waste Recycling Centre to facilitate repairs to road surfaces and concrete bays. It was anticipated that the work would take place between 20th October and 10th November.

Noted.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Pitch Bookings at Sally Gardens Playing Fields

At the request of Councillor Garrett, the Committee agreed that officers would liaise with teams and service users at the Sally Gardens Playing Fields to ascertain the underlying reasons for recurring pitch cancellations with a view to enabling other teams and clubs to maximise use of the facility in the event of such cancellations.

It was noted that a report in this regard would be submitted to a future meeting.

Chairperson