



Subject:	Update on two planned consultation exercises - Forthmeadow Community Greenway Opening Hours and Opening Hours Pilots (4 park sites)
Date:	Tuesday 14 th January 2025
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Operational Director of Resource, Fleet and OSS
Contact Officer:	Eiméar McCullough, Lead Officer - OSS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Some time in the future

Never

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☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members on the agreed programmes for Forthmeadow Community Greenway's opening hours consultation exercise and Opening Hours Pilots consultation exercise for 4 Belfast Parks.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to note the content of the report. .
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will recall that at P& C Committee on 4 th June 2024 [see Appendix 1] officer's advised of intention to progress a consultation exercise to obtain views on the opening hours of the Forth Meadow Greenway. Officers also advised that a separate consultation exercise on Opening Hour Pilots at 3 park sites (Ormeau Park, Falls Park, and Woodvale Park) would also take place. At that meeting Members requested that consideration be given to including Belmont Park in this exercise.

3.2	<p>This report sets out key dates for both these exercises, the first of which is commencing imminently. It is anticipated that an update on both consultations and associated recommendations will be brought back to Members at the start of the new financial year for consideration.</p> <p><u>Forthmeadow Community Greenway Opening Hours Consultation</u></p>								
3.3	<p>The key dates of this consultation exercise are set out below. Activities include an online survey (Yoursay) and drop-in information sessions which will be promoted via social media and posters in the local areas which will include QR codes linking to the survey. In parallel key community stakeholders will be encouraged to feed into the process and parallel engagement with PSNI will also take place.</p>								
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3.5	<p>Both the online survey and information sessions will provide an opportunity to inform residents and users on the gates proposed for 24/7 opening in each section of the Greenway and capture their views - including any other suggestions relating to the opening hours of individual gates they have.</p>								
3.6	<p><u>Opening Hour Pilots - Background</u></p> <p>An Opening Hour Pilot initiative exploring extended 24-hour summer opening hours at 3 parks sites in the city (Ormeau Park, Falls Park and Woodvale Park) was initially agreed at in 2020 however was not delivered as planned due to the COVID pandemic and recovery period due to restrictions impacting officer's ability to carry out consultation at that time as well as internal resourcing pressures. [see Appendix 2 & 3]</p>								
3.7	<p><u>Opening Hour Pilots (Woodvale Park, Falls Park) Consultation</u></p> <p>The key dates of this consultation exercise are set out below. Activities include an online survey (Yoursay) and drop-in information sessions which will be promoted via social media and posters in the local areas which will include QR codes linking to the survey. In parallel key community stakeholders will be encouraged to feed into the process and parallel engagement with PSNI will also take place. Members should note that the opening hours consultation for Falls park will build upon the FMG consultation.</p>								
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3.9	<u>Ormeau Park & Belmont Park</u> <p>Although both Falls Park and Woodvale Park now benefit from sufficient lighting infrastructure on their path networks Ormeau Park & Belmont park do not. Members are reminded that the installation of any new lighting infrastructure would require significant capital investment, and that any requests for lighting scheme that may emerge through programme of work must be directed through to Council's Capital Programme for progression through standard stages.</p>	
3.10	<p>Members will recall however, that a unique opportunity presents to consider synergies with the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) forthcoming delivery of a pedestrian/ cycle bridge over the Lagan River over the next few years, connecting the adjacent river back to the city centre via the Gasworks, in tandem with other anticipated cycling network improvements.</p>	
3.11	<p>Despite the absence of lighting within Ormeau Park & Belmont Park officers are confident that progressing this consultation will provide a valuable opportunity to gather community and stakeholder views on the potential introduction of park lighting and how it would be used; as well as initial views on potential gate/route options that could be lit and potential extension to opening hours. The outcome of the consultation will inform any capital scheme that may be considered for development in the future; along with ecological studies of the Parks.</p>	
3.12	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> <p>There is currently no revenue for animation to support the introduction of extended opening hours of the Forthmeadow Community Greenway. Furthermore, it is not clear at this stage what the budget implications would be in relation to any future extended opening pilot however it is anticipated will come at additional cost to the Council. These costs are not currently in revenue or capital estimates. Following the consultation phase a report to Members will provide further information on this.</p>	
3.13	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u> <p>There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.</p>	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached	
	<p>Appendix 1 – 11th June 2024 P&C Report, Parks Opening Hours Pilot and Forthmeadow Community Greenway Consultation</p> <p>Appendix 2 - 3rd March 2020 P&C Committee report, 'Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces - Opening Hours Pilot'</p> <p>Appendix 3 - 10th Nov 2020 P&C Committee report, 'Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces'</p>	