



Subject:	GAA Joint Management Board Partnership Agreement & Issue Raised in Advance Re – Sally Gardens
Date:	Tuesday 7 October 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Operational Director, City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Paddy McGrattan, Leisure Development Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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☐

Call-in

Yes

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No

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Is the decision eligible for Call-in?
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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a request from Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association for a one-year extension to the existing Partnership Agreement with Belfast City Council.
1.2	To respond to the issue raised in advance regarding cancellation of bookings at Sally Gardens pitch.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the existing Belfast City Council – Ulster Council GAA Partnership Agreement is extended until 16 October 2026.
2.2	That members note the content of the report regarding ongoing work to reduce cancellations to a minimum and maximise utilisation of the Sally Gardens pitch.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Partnership Agreement</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council entered into a Partnership Agreement with Ulster Council GAA which provided priority access to bookings in support of sports development outcomes. The Agreement covers floodlit synthetic GAA facilities at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherryvale Playing Fields • Cliftonville Road Playing Fields • Woodlands Playing Fields • Sally Gardens
3.2	To oversee the Partnership agreement a quarterly Joint Management Board meeting involves representatives from Ulster Council GAA, County Antrim GAA, County Down GAA and Belfast City Council.
3.3	The role of the Joint Management Board is to regulate the use of the playing facilities and to oversee the proper use and sharing of the facilities to maximise the community benefit through the Sports Development Plans for each site.
3.4	The Agreement holders present a six-monthly programme of use, which demonstrates the GAA sports development outcomes within each of the sites and these bookings are prioritised. Access to the sites outside the programme of use is in accordance with normal booking procedures.
3.5	On 28 August 2025, Council received a formal request on behalf of Ulster Council GAA, County Antrim board GAA and County Down board GAA seeking a one-year extension of the current Partnership Agreement.
3.6	A one-year extension of the current Agreement will allow the existing booking/prioritisation model to continue until a future model is agreed through the Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy and the Pitches Strategy.

3.7	<u>Cancellations at Sally Gardens</u>
3.8	Committee of 8 th October 2024 asked officers to liaise with teams and service users 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
3.9	<p>Analysis of the most recently completed Programme of Use at Sally Gardens, 1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025 revealed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54 cancellation requests were received • 13 cancellations were made, cancelling a one hour booking slot for the following three months. • Three cancellations reduced an initial five hour booking to two hours. • Five cancellations reduced an initial two hour booking to one hour. • 33 full pitch bookings were reduced to half-pitch bookings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 bookings were recorded as no show following receipt of information from facility management.
3.10	<p>Contact with bookers who cancelled or did not attend for booking provided only one reason for not-attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary making the booking had not confirmed the booking with coaches and players
3.11	Following this matter being raised through the Joint Management Board, the Antrim County Board representative relayed to all relevant clubs the importance of bookings being fulfilled and the negative impact of cancellations on usage of the facility.
3.12	<p>Booking Procedures.</p> <p>Existing procedures enable bookers to cancel at two full working days' notice without financial penalty. Bookings requested with less than two full working days' notice are declined except under exceptional circumstances. This approach limits the ability of pitches booking service to market availability of pitches or accept last minute bookings following short notice cancellations. Review of booking procedures, cancellation deadlines, penalty for cancellation and no-show, booking deadlines will be considered under the review of the pitches strategy and new booking system.</p>
3.13	<u>Financial Implications</u>
3.14	There are no financial implications related to this report
	<u>Equality Impact Assessment</u>
	None
4.0	Appendices
4.1	None