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**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

2nd August, 2018

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item(s) will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 4.30 pm on Tuesday, 7th August, 2018.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

- 4** (o) Dog Control in Parks (Pages 1 - 4)

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Subject:	Dog Control in Parks
Date:	7 August 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Director of Neighbourhood Services

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	The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views on the control of dogs within parks and cemeteries and to present a phased approach to dealing with the issues around this.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree the proposed phased approach as outlined in this report.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	Dog walkers are one of the biggest users of our parks particularly at off peak times in the morning and evening and they are also year round users in all weather conditions.

3.2	<p>However the perception among many dog owners is that they can let their dogs off their leads in our parks to exercise and this has caused conflicts with other park users and a growing number of complaints. Dog fouling is also an issue and some dog owners when they let their dogs off the leads are not aware of them fouling and therefore do not clean up after them.</p>
3.3	<p>There has been previous attempts to deal with this issue and a dog off lead enclosure has been developed in Grove Playing Fields. This facility is well used and there are proposals to pilot 3 further areas across the city in Falls, Orangefield and Clement Wilson Parks.</p>
	<p><u>Link to the Belfast Agenda</u></p>
3.4	<p>The control of dogs within our parks and open spaces fits under Living Here within the Belfast Agenda and feeds into the workstream 'Maximise the benefit of our natural and built environment'.</p>
	<p><u>Dogs in cemeteries</u></p>
3.5	<p>Under the Cemeteries Rules and Regulations dogs are not permitted in cemeteries and there is some signage to this effect. Whilst this is complied with by users in the majority of our cemeteries, as most are closed or as in Roselawn there are very few dog walkers, there is a significant issue in the City Cemetery. Given the location of the cemetery within a built up area and adjacent to Falls Park, many local residents treat the cemetery as a park and use it to walk their dogs. As is common across all our parks, the majority of dogs are allowed off leads by owners and there is a high level of dog fouling. Staff currently receive numerous complaints around this issue and in particular about instances of dog fouling on graves, which is a very emotive issue for the families involved.</p>
3.6	<p>Cemetery staff have been in discussions with colleagues in enforcement around co-ordinated enforcement operations against dog fouling in the City Cemetery and they are currently exploring options as to how these can be undertaken.</p>
	<p><u>Proposed approach</u></p>
3.7	<p>Given the emotive nature of this issue and the number of dog walkers who use our parks, it is proposed that the following phased approach be adopted.</p>

3.8	<p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An education and awareness campaign is rolled out across the city, targeted at hotspots, emphasising that our parks are shared spaces and that dogs need to be kept on leads - That off lead dog enclosures are piloted in Falls, Orangefield and Clement Wilson Parks - An enforcement campaign is undertaken in City Cemetery to combat dog fouling and to raise awareness that dogs are not permitted in cemeteries.
3.9	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enforce the bye laws around dogs off leads in parks and open spaces - Enforce the rules around no dogs in cemeteries - Introduce Dogs Control Orders to allow us to prohibit dogs from certain areas and to create zones where dogs would be allowed off leads at certain times.
3.10	<p><u>Timescales</u></p> <p>Subject to Members' agreement the timescale for the initial phase of the proposed approach is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commence education and awareness campaign - autumn 2018 - Develop dog off lead enclosures in 3 further parks – autumn 2018 - Commence enforcement campaign re dog fouling in City Cemetery – immediately. <p>It is proposed that these activities would be monitored for effectiveness for 12 months and an analysis undertaken of the findings which would be used to inform the introduction of Phase 2. A report on the effectiveness of Phase 1 will be brought to committee in advance of progressing to Phase 2.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are financial implications in relation to the educational and awareness campaigns and the development of dogs off lead enclosures, but these will be met out of existing resources.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.12	<p>There are no implications associated with this report. The introduction of any new Dogs Control Orders would be screened in line with the Council's processes.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None

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