

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 5th December, 2017

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Sandford (Chairperson);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Copeland);
Aldermen Rodgers and McKee; and
Councillors Armitage, Beattie, Corr, Corr Johnston, Garrett,
Heading, Lyons, Magennis, Milne, McCusker, McReynolds,
Newton and Nic Biorna.

In attendance: Mr. N. Grimshaw, Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director;
Mrs. S. Toland, Assistant Director; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor Nicholl.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th November and the special meeting of 13th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th December.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were reported.

Request to Present - World Health Organisation Europe

The Committee agreed that Ms. Kosinska, Focal Point in the World Health Organisation Europe for Healthy Cities, would present at the January meeting.

Presentations

County Antrim Boxing/Funding for Boxing

The Committee was reminded that it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of County Antrim Boxing.

Accordingly, Mr. M. Scott, Mr. G Storey MBE, representing County Antrim Boxing, and Mrs. C. McAuley, Ulster Operations Manager, representing the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA), were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Scott provided the Members with an overview of the Boxing Strategy 2012-2022 and detailed the many past accomplishments and successes that had been achieved through the strategy. The representative advised that Boxing was now regarded by many as one of Belfast's most successful sports.

Mr. Storey provided the Committee with his views on the success of the boxing strategy and the need to support it going forward.

The Committee was then provided with an overview of the funding for the strategy and the representatives asked the Council to consider meeting the following funding requests

- further investment of £49k from Belfast City Council to sustain a boxing programme within Belfast until the end of the financial year 2018/19; and
- that the Council reinstate funding, resources and employees back to the previous £200k per year in order to continue with the strategy.

The representatives then addressed a number of questions, during which, a number of Members voiced their support for the boxing strategy and welcomed the achievements made in the sport since its introduction.

At this stage in the proceedings officers then referred the Members to the details contained within the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council developed a 10-year Boxing Strategy for Belfast in 2013. The strategy was devised in partnership with the Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA), the Ulster Boxing Council (UBC), the County Antrim Boxing Board and Sport NI (SNI).**
- 1.2 The boxing strategy was initially funded for 3 years with a total budget of £600,000. The timing of the delivery of the Strategy resulted in the funding which was due to end in March 2016 extending into a 4th year with the programme ending on the 31st March 2017.**
- 1.3 Funding was requested at the People and Communities Committee in March 2017 and they awarded £24k support for support funding. A further request for recurrent funding was considered at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June 2017 in relation to funding of £101,000 each year for the next 3-4 years. The decision was to award £45k in 2017/18 only.**

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the request from the Board for in year funding of £49k

3.0 Main report

3.1 A request has been accepted for the County Antrim Board to present to People and Communities Committee this month. Subsequent to this request Officers have received a report from the Board requesting further investment of £49k from Belfast City Council to sustain a boxing programme within Belfast. See Appendices 1 and 2.

3.2 The agreed non-recurring financial support for the implementation of the Amateur Boxing Strategy ended on 31st March 2017 and no further recurring provision has been made for 2018/19. Boxing clubs and the governing body are able to access the support that is available to all sporting clubs through the Leisure Development Unit.

3.3 Financial Implications

The request for in year funding of £49k can be provided from within departmental underspends. However, any recurrent funding for subsequent years would have to be considered as part of the rate setting process and there is no recurrent funding provided for in 2018/19 departmental budgets.

3.4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

The strategy was equality screened in line with the Council process.”

Following discussion, the Committee agreed:

- in year funding of £49,000 would be awarded to the County Antrim Board which had been identified from within departmental underspends; and
- the committee agreed ‘in principle’ to support future funding to support the remainder of the Boxing Strategy and deferred consideration to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to enable it to be considered as part of the rate setting process.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives and they left the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the following report 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 Committee meeting during discussion of this item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Community Development Grants Programme 2018/2019

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in respect of the budget for the Community Development Grants Programme for 2018/19 and the key issues that the Members needed to consider.

The Committee:

- agreed to offer contract extensions for 2018/19 and to permit officers to engage with funded organisations on that basis; and
- noted that any offer of funding would be fully dependent upon formal confirmation of the Council's contribution and receipt of Department of Community (DfC) allocation towards the Community Development Grants Programme.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Waste Collection Update

The Director provided the Committee with an update regarding the waste collection service which included a detailed update in respect of the following key areas:

- customer call handling and management interventions; and
- the waste collection improvement plan.

The Committee noted the Waste Collection update and that the next update would be submitted to the April meeting.

Department for Communities Letter of Variance for Council Community Support Programme 2017/2018

The Committee was reminded that, in preparation for the introduction and roll-out of Welfare Reform, the Department for Communities (DfC) had supported front-line advice organisations via grant-aid and capacity development.

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Service advised that the Council currently administered an annual grant programme of £931,765.00 with levered

income via the DfC's Community Support Programme to five Advice Consortia covering east, north, west and central Belfast for generalist advice services.

In addition to this annual grant, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 17th February, had agreed to the allocation of £100k to the Belfast Advice Group towards the provision of a city-wide tribunal service for 2017/18. To date, the Council had been the sole provider of grant-aid support for the tribunal service. The £100k allocation was just under half of the projected total costs to provide the service in 2017/18.

The Director reported that the Belfast Advice Group had indicated that the funding was due to run out in December and that they would no longer be in a position to provide the service if additional funding was not found. At its meeting in November, the Belfast Advice Group had endorsed a proposal that should funding become available via in-year allocation the priority for this investment would be the provision of the tribunal service. He advised that the cost for the provision of the tribunal service for the period December 2017 to March 2018 was estimated at £59,900.00.

The Committee noted that the in-year allocation as per the Council's Letter of variance was £61,103.00.

The Committee:

- accepted the additional in-year grant as outlined in the Letter of Variance; and
- agreed the allocation of the in-year grant of £61,103 to the request made by the Belfast Advice Group, endorsed by the five Advice Consortia members, for the provision of the City Wide Tribunal Service to the end of March 2018.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Tropical Ravine Update

The Members were reminded that the Tropical Ravine in Belfast Botanic Gardens had received Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) of £2.3m. A jointly funded project between the HLF and Belfast City Council had been carried out to the Ravine to safeguard the future of the Tropical Ravine and its significant plants collection.

The Assistant Director advised that construction works had now been completed and interpretation/re-planting works had commenced. She stated that it was anticipated that visitors to the Tropical Ravine would increase and that the facility would have a significantly higher profile than it did previously. It was therefore felt that the previous regime of casual opening and closing would no longer be appropriate and it was suggested that the facility should open daily from 10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m. The Committee noted that these opening times could be reviewed subject to demand.

The Committee was advised that an Activity Officer had been appointed prior to the reopening, this officer would undertake programme planning and preparation and recruit and train volunteers. The Committee also noted that a position of Botanic (Bot) Crew had been developed, this position would be responsible for the opening and closing, cleaning and day to day operation of the facility. The resource would be supplemented with volunteers who would support events and activities and provide information on the conservation and educational

elements of the Tropical Ravine. The volunteer resource would be engaged through Belfast City Council's volunteer scheme and would be central to the HLF scheme that allowed for training and support for volunteers.

The Assistant Director advised that part of the programme of use for the facility included the hire of the venue for events and hospitality. She explained that it was anticipated that this would generate additional income for the facility and repeat visits to the Tropical Ravine.

A number of the Members welcomed the reopening of the facility and also praised the work of the Friends of Botanic Group and staff at the facility. It was noted that the Friends of Botanic Group provided support to the Council and undertook to source grant funding that would not be available to the Council.

The Committee:

- noted the provisional date of 9th February, 2018 for the reopening of the venue (to be confirmed with the Heritage Lottery Fund);
- noted the arrangements to operationalize the building; and
- agreed that a site visit should be arranged to the Tropical Ravine in advance of the official reopening and requested that staff at the facility and Friends of Botanic Group be invited to attend.

Playground Maintenance and Inspections

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the improvements made in the inspection/maintenance and management of playgrounds and how the Council is striving to make all playgrounds as inclusive and accessible as reasonably practicable.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **consider the update set out in the report and to note the positive collaborative work between C&NS and Legal Services to address risks associated with a growing culture of litigation related to our parks.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** The Council's playground portfolio has increased significantly over the past number of years to 99 playgrounds and this has occurred primarily as the result of Local Government Reform in 2015 when the Council took on the ownership and maintenance of an additional 15 playgrounds from Lisburn and Castlereagh Council. In addition to this, other new playgrounds have been added to our playground portfolio as part of environmental improvement projects such as the Connswater Community Greenway scheme.

Playground Inspections

- 3.2** City and Neighbourhood Services has been reviewing the way in which the Council's playgrounds are inspected. Previously the Council recorded playground checks by way of a paper inspection sheet for each individual playground, each day of the year however this method of recording playground inspections proved to be very labour intensive, but yet the Council is legally obligated to archive this information for up to 21 years from the inspection dates.
- 3.3** Our Department has since introduced a digital system for playground inspections which has been operating for the last two years. The new hand held digital system allows Playground Inspectors to undertake checks on every individual piece of playground apparatus along with the ability to attach multiple photographs. This new paperless inspection system has proven to be very successful and has removed the cumbersome task of archiving paper inspection sheets. In addition to this, the new digital inspection system allows our Playground Inspectors to electronically send Priority one repair requests directly to Facilities Management along with photographs of the defective equipment. This new method on inspecting playgrounds and generating instant repair requests has greatly increased the turnaround time for the more urgent repairs.
- 3.4** In addition to our own in-house playground inspections, our Department employs an independent Playground Inspector to inspect all our playgrounds on an annual basis, ensuring that all our playgrounds comply with the European safety standards BS EN 1176 & 1177. The independent inspection reports are also used to identify and award an overall '*Quality Score*' for each individual playground which assists when deciding where we recommend allocating the annual capital budget for the following year's playground refurbishment programme.

Playground Repairs

- 3.5 Our Playground Inspectors have been equipped to undertake their own small scale minor repairs and maintenance operations which has reduced the amount of work requests going to our colleagues in Facilities Management and helps maintain the quality of service. Monthly meetings continue to be held between C&NS and Facilities Management which allow us to review and monitor on-going/outstanding repairs.

Playground signage/Frequency of Inspections & Accessibility

- 3.6 We have recently reviewed the playground inspection programme. To inform this, over a period of time we reviewed playground usage and repairs and developed a risk profile for each playground. We undertook a benchmarking exercise with Birmingham City Council, as they had devised a specific risk assessment criteria for playgrounds which looked at the size of the Park and where the playground was situated as well as any history of previous vandalism etc. (See Appendix 1 – risk assessment used by Birmingham City Council to categorise frequency of playground inspections). We undertook a similar exercise in collaboration with our Park Managers and Playground Inspectors using the Birmingham City Council's model and established our own recommended frequency of playground inspections (See Appendix 2 – BCC proposed frequency of playground inspections).
- 3.7 As part of this process Legal Services carried out a vital challenge role and endorsed the approach as one which would help defend future public liability cases. Legal Services also asked us as part of our ongoing review to look at *playground signage*, in particular how we communicate the appropriate age range for items of equipment to parents and users. It would be our intention to roll out the new signage and revised inspection frequencies by the end of March 2018.

Accessible playground equipment

- 3.8 We currently have an ever increasing element of accessible playground equipment in all of our playgrounds, however we acknowledge there is much more work to do to make them even more inclusive. That said we continue to install playground equipment that is challenging, fun to use and inclusive for everyone (See Appendix 3 – some examples of inclusive playground equipment)

3.9 Finance and Resource Implications

None.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The process in this report will be subject to the Council's existing equality screening process."

A Member welcomed the positive work being undertaken and requested further detail in respect of the number of claims made.

A further Member sought clarification as to how locations for new playgrounds within the City were agreed.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- noted the positive collaborative work between City and Neighborhood Services and Legal Services to address the risks associated with a growing culture of litigation relating to Council parks;
- agreed that officers would submit a more detailed report in respect of claims to a future meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel; and
- agreed that officers would submit a report to a future meeting in respect of playground provision, detailing the criteria as to how sites for new playgrounds were identified.

Fullerton Park Cricket Equipment Storage Request

The Assistant Director advised the Committee that a request had been received from Dunmurry and Cooke Collegian's Cricket Club seeking permission to erect a fenced area in Fullerton Park for the storage of equipment.

The Committee noted that works had been carried out at Fullerton Park which included an artificial cricket wicket and an upgrade of the pitches. The two cricket clubs that currently used the park as their home venue wished to apply to the Alpha Landfill Communities to purchase cricket nets and screens to improve their game and if this was successful a storage area would be required for the equipment.

The Committee was advised that due to the current levels of anti-social behaviour it would not be possible to leave the equipment out overnight and the size of the equipment would preclude the use of a container, therefore, the alternative suggested was the construction of a fenced area.

The Committee granted approval to erect a fenced area in Fullerton Park for cricket equipment storage, subject to:

- the named clubs meeting any planning requirements and receiving funding from the Alpha Landfill Communities Fund; and

- agreed that the Council would assume maintenance of the fence.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Quarter 2 Finance Report

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services summarised the contents of the report which presented a Quarter 2 financial position for the People and Communities Committee, including a forecast of the year end outturn. He advised that the detail included the Quarter 2 position for the Committee which showed an under-spend of £675k or (1.7%) of the budget, with the forecast year end position being an under-spend of £603k (0.8%) which was well within the acceptable variance limit of 3%.

The Director advised that the main reasons for the Committee under-spend related to vacant posts across a number of services, the receipt of additional income and the timing of grants and programmes.

The Committee was advised that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 24th November, had agreed that given the year-end departmental underspend was within 0.5% of the approved budget it would not be considered for re-allocation.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Parks Events Small Grants Scheme

The Committee considered a report which outlined the decisions taken by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, under delegated authority, regarding the Parks Events Small Grants applications received in Tranche 2 for events taking place in parks between 1st October, 2017 and 31st March, 2018.

The Director advised that a total of 10 applications had been received for the grant and reported that these had been assessed by the Open Spaces and Active Living Unit (OS&AL), 4 applications had met the criteria for an award to be made and 6 had been unsuccessful.

The Committee noted that an Independent Assessment Panel had reviewed a sample (20%) of the applications and had been satisfied with the scoring and application of the criteria for the grants and had approved the recommendations for awards.

Accordingly, the Partnership noted the list of 4 organisations, as set out below, which had been approved for funding totalling £10,541.00, under the delegated authority of the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services.

Appendix 1 - Parks Events Grant Applications 2017/18, T2

Successful Applications

Organisation	Project Name	Venue	Date	Ward (most Beneficiaries)	Amount Requested	Amount Awarded
Poleglass Community Association @ Sally Gardens	Safe Communities	Sally Gardens Play Area	15 February 2018	Collin	£2,945.00	2,907.00
St. Luke's Family Centre	SEN Play Community Fun Day	Drumglass Park	3 November 2017 (date change from 27 October 2017)	Collin	£2,535.00	1,634.00
Families of The Waterworks	Waterworks Monster Mash	Waterworks	28 October 2017	Oldpark	£3,000.00	3,000.00
New Lodge Arts	North Belfast Lantern Festival	Alexandra Park	29 - 30 October 2017	Oldpark	£3,000.00	3,000.00

Operational Issues

Street Naming

The Committee approved the naming in respect of Grey Castle Manor, Off Church Road, BT6.

Public Access Defibrillator Pilot Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide further update to the Committee on the progress OF the public access defibrillator pilot programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- note the update on the pilot programme; and
- approve the proposed locations for the third phase of the public access defibrillator programme – Ormeau Park (depot area), Orangefield Park, Shore Road Playing Fields, Suffolk Playing Fields, Strangford Playing Fields, Loughshore Playing Fields, Musgrave Park and Ulidia Playing Fields. This is subject to the identification of a suitable location with an electrical supply and confirmation with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) that there are no other public access defibrillators within a short distance;

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Update on first and second phase of public access defibrillator provision

Members will be aware the Council has been undertaking a public access defibrillator pilot programme. As part of this programme defibrillators were initially installed in 6 parks in May 2016, namely:

- Victoria Park
- Waterworks Park
- Fullerton Park
- Tullycarnet Park
- Boucher Road Playing Fields
- Falls Park

3.2 A second phase of installation took place in September 2017 across a further 7 Council sites, namely:

- Grove Playing Fields
- Cherryvale Playing Fields
- Blanchflower Stadium
- Wedderburn Playing Fields
- Woodvale Playing Fields
- Henry Jones Playing Fields
- Woodlands Playing Fields

3.3 Installation at Botanic Park and City of Belfast Playing Fields is also due to take place as part of the second phase. The installation at Botanic Park has been delayed due to the ongoing project at the Tropical Ravine. The installation at City of Belfast Playing Fields has been delayed due to vandalism of the defibrillator cabinet (see below).

3.4 Deployment

To date there are no records of any of the installed defibrillators having actually been used since the beginning of the pilot programme.

3.5 Damage/vandalism to Defibrillators

There have been a number of vandalism incidents to the Council's public access defibrillators during this pilot programme.

3.6 An incident involving the defibrillator at Waterworks Park resulted in the unit's paediatric pads having to be replaced, in addition to ancillary equipment (towel, razor etc). A number of incidents in Fullerton Park have resulted in the defibrillator being retrieved from the local PSNI station and on another occasion being damaged beyond repair (the defibrillator has since been replaced free of charge by the local manufacturer). The City of Belfast Playing Fields cabinet was damaged beyond repair before the defibrillator could be installed. A decision has now been taken to relocate the cabinet and defibrillator within the Pavilion building, which is accessible to the public while the park is open.

3.7 An additional two defibrillators have had to be temporarily withdrawn from service at Woodvale Playing Fields and Falls Park due to issues with the cabinet opening mechanisms. Discussions are ongoing with the Supplier to have these cabinets repaired or replaced and the defibrillators re-instated at the earliest opportunity.

3.8 Management

A number of local staff have been trained in the use of the defibrillators and further training is planned. Staff have also been trained and appointed to monitor the condition of the equipment on a regular basis.

3.9 Third phase of public access Defibrillator Provision

At the People and Communities Committee meeting on 13th June 2017, the Committee was informed of a donation of £5,408 from the family of the late Mark Murphy.

3.10 The Committee agreed to a third phase of installation across a further 8 Council sites, using the donation to cover the cost of buying the 8 defibrillators. The Committee was informed at the same meeting that the Murphy family had requested that one of the defibrillators was installed in Cherryvale Playing Fields as it is located close to the family home and is extensively used by many of the friends and families who have supported them in their fundraising. As Cherryvale Playing Fields was one of the agreed sites for the second phase this request and the erection of a plaque at the defibrillator in Cherryvale Playing Fields to acknowledge the donation was agreed at this meeting. The plaque was

unveiled and received positive media coverage on 19th August 2017.

3.11 During this pilot programme, the focus for public access defibrillators on Council sites has been on recreational facilities and those sites with significant public access or high footfall. Continuing with this focus on recreational facilities and recognising the specific reference to sports facilities within the Community Resuscitation Strategy and the Murphy family's wishes, the next phase of provision would be proposed for:

- Ormeau Park (depot area)
- Orangefield Park
- Shore Road Playing Fields
- Suffolk Playing Fields
- Strangford Playing Fields
- Loughshore Playing Fields
- Musgrave Park
- Ulidia Playing Fields

3.12 The provision of defibrillators at these sites would be subject to the identification of a suitable location with an electrical supply and confirmation with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) that there are no other public access defibrillators within a short distance.

3.13 Financial and Resource Implications

The cost of 8 defibrillators for the third phase of the programme will be covered by the donation from the Murphy family. It was anticipated that costs associated with the cabinets and installation of the defibrillators would be covered by the funding already allocated to the second phase of defibrillator installation, however all funding allocated to the second phase has been used. The costs associated with cabinets and installation for the third phase of the programme and ongoing vandalism will be met by the 2017/2018 Parks Service budget.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The Council's Good Relation Unit have advised that proposals for extending the deployment of defibrillators will have a positive effect on the Health and Wellbeing of people who work, live and visit Belfast and that this is a positive equality action."

A Member highlighted that defibrillators were not available in the Council's community centres and requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting regarding the potential of extending defibrillator provision. He suggested that consideration be given to funding this programme of works from any in-year departmental underspend.

The Assistant Director advised that this would be considered and a report would be submitted to a future meeting.

Several Members made a number of suggestions as to where the defibrillators could be located and it was agreed to defer consideration in respect of the locations to the Area Working Groups.

The Committee noted that the location would be subject to the identification of a suitable location with an electrical supply and confirmation with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) that there were no other public access defibrillators within a short distance.

The Committee:

- approved progression to the third phase of the public access defibrillator programme and agreed that discussion regarding the location of the defibrillators would be undertaken through the four Area Working Groups, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee; and
- agreed to assess the potential of extending defibrillator provision to other Council assets and that proposals would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Operational Delivery of Off Street Car Parking Enforcement of Penalty Charge Notice Processing

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To brief members on options for the future delivery of off-street car park enforcement, cash collection, machine maintenance and penalty charge notice processing from 1 November 2019 to 31 October 2022.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- **agree to the renewal of the Agency Agreement with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for the provision of off street car parking enforcement and penalty charge notice processing for a further period of 3 years from 1 November 2019 until 31 October 2022**

3.0 Main Report

3.0 Background

3.1 Members will recall that the Transition Committee on 9 December 2015 agreed that Belfast City Council enter into an Agency Agreement with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to provide Off Street car parking enforcement and Penalty Charge Notice Processing (PCN) following the transfer of the Off Street car parking function under LGR. Under LGR 30 car parks transferred from DfI to BCC, 17 of which were charged and 13 non-charged. This Agency Agreement initially covered the period 1 April 2015 to 31 October 2016 and given the short term of the agreement it was agreed at the People and Communities Committee of 6 September 2016 that BCC would agree to an extension the Agency Agreement with DfI by a further 3 years taking the agreement up to 31 October 2019. This was consistent with the decision a taken by the other 10 Northern Ireland regional Councils.

3.2 Following the decision by Councils to continue with the Agency Agreement for the 2016-2019 period, the NI Regional Off-Street Car Parking Group, which each of the 11 Councils is represented, recommended to SOLACE, the appointment of consultants to investigate and assess the future delivery options associated with enforcement and PCN processing. AECOM were subsequently appointed via the SCAPE Framework for procurement.

3.3 DfI have confirmed for procurement reasons they need to establish by start of January 2018 if individual Councils wish to extend the Agency Agreement beyond Oct 2019.

3.4 Following consultations with Councils, DfI and service providers, AECOM has completed an analysis of the PCN Income (Estimated-vs-Actual); Comparisons of Traffic Attendant Billed Hours; Private Sector estimated costs; PCN Processing Costs; the experience of Parking Partnerships in English Councils; Council staff costs associated with alternative options; Collaborative Delivery; and Pay on Foot calculations.

3.5 Seven options were considered by AECOM:-

- 1. Renew contract with DfI/NSL.**
- 2. a)Privately Delivered Service excluding debt collection.**
- 3. b)Privately Delivered Service (alternative provider) excluding debt collection.**
- 4. Conversion to Pay on Foot (all charged car parks).**
- 5. Partial conversion to Pay on Foot and remainder DfI Pay & Display.**

6. Bay sensors and Automatic Number Plate Recognition enforcement.
7. Camera Monitoring and manual enforcement.

3.6 AECOM's produced a report the executive summary (Appendix 1) concluded that:

- Overall, DfI's provision and operation of car park management and the Pay and Display enforcement system offers value for money and that it is considered to be reliable, of good quality and a safe system in terms of delivery and customer confidence together with the advantage of being part of a single enforcement system for on and off-street public sector car parking;
- By engaging with the private sector as part of this study, it is considered that some of the individual elements such as PCN processing could theoretically be delivered at a lower cost than the current arrangement. However, overall, private sector provision of a Pay and Display system may be more expensive given the uncertainties associated with debt collection and the additional staffing resources that may be required by Councils in relation to managing parking and debt collection;
- Any transfer to a private provider may incur transfer costs;
- Councils with Pay on Foot systems operated by DfI may make considerable savings by changing their operating systems, but this requires further investigation by the parties involved;
- Some larger car parks with significant income from parking charges may benefit from conversion to Pay on Foot barrier systems which may also increase income if removed from the Agency Agreement and operated by Third Party providers. Such systems could potentially provide live parking data;
- For many of the car parks operated by Councils, Pay and Display systems are considered the most economically viable option at this time”;

- 3.7** The above conclusions apply to the regional 11 Council combined operation, however, as the implications will vary for each Council there is a need to consider each option from a Belfast perspective. Using the estimates within the AECOM report and officers conclude that options 2(a), 2(b), 6, and 7 would not likely be economically advantageous at this time over current arrangements or provide value for money to Belfast City Council.
- 3.8** Options 2(a) and 2 (b) require Councils to retain the existing P&D-based system with a private sector service provider largely replicating the service provided by Dfl with the exception of debt collection. Each Council would be required to employ additional staff and there would be additional costs incurred through the provision of a “clamping” pound and the necessary resources to operate it 6 days per week. Based on AECOM figures it is unlikely that these options would be economically advantageous to the Council.
- 3.9** Options 6 and 7 represent significant change over the current arrangement, it is estimated that both options would realise less surplus than the current arrangement with Dfl and can be discarded from consideration. However, advancement in technology may make both options more attractive in the future and they should be reviewed in the future.
- 3.10** Options 4 and 5 considered the conversion of the car parks from the current Pay and Display to a Pay on Foot barrier system and predicted some increased profitability based additional income and the £60K+ per car park initial capital investment being paid back over a 10 year period. These options fail however to take cognisance of fact that 5 of our current charged car parks are held on short term leases with no security of tenure and many of the remaining charged car parks are, consistent with our parking strategy and city regeneration strategy, at risk of redevelopment including for example as part of the York Street interchange. Therefore significant capital investment, particularly considering the assumptions made with respect to increased income, may not be appropriate at this time across many of our car parks.
- 3.11** It should also be noted there is a high degree of uncertainty with the estimates provided by AECOM as they were unable to segregate the costs of certain services; the number of additional staff and associated costs to Councils in alternative models; and therefore the definable potential savings did not reach the required deminimis level to give confidence to terminate the Agency Agreement with Dfl.

- 3.12 Officers agree with AECOM's conclusion that *“Overall, Dfl's provision and operation of car park management and the Pay and Display enforcement system offers value for money and that it is considered to be reliable, of good quality and a safe system in terms of delivery and customer confidence together with the advantage of being part of a single enforcement system for on and off-street public sector car parking.”* Whilst some individual Councils may benefit from changes to the systems currently operated and Belfast may benefit from converting some car parks to Pay on foot Barrier Systems, considering the long term uncertainty around the availability of individual car parks, the figures presented by AECOM would suggest it is likely that the current arrangements provide the most economically advantageous model at this time for the majority of the Councils car parks.
- 3.13 Members are therefore asked to consider extending the Agency Agreement with Dfl for a further 3 years up to end of Oct 2022 with the option to remove individual car parks to trial Pay on Foot barrier systems in some of our owned, higher turnover car parks unaffected by redevelopment proposals. Additional car parks could be converted to pay on foot should those trials prove to be economically advantageous.
- 3.12 Officers will continue to monitor changes in technology and associated costs that would allow other options to be further explored for potential future consideration.
- 3.15 **Financial & Resource Implications**
- Should Members agree to the recommendation that BCC renew the Agency Agreement with Dfl, the contract costs are likely to be in close proximity to existing costs and there are no major foreseen additional resource implications.
- 3.16 Additional capital expenditure (approximately £60K per car park) will be required to trial and convert some car parks to Pay on Foot barrier systems with the assumption, based on AECOM estimates, to more than recover costs over a 5 year period. Subsequent reports shall follow to progress this aspect.
- 3.17 **Asset & Other Implications**
- None
- 3.18 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**
- None.”

Following a query, the Assistant Director undertook to update the Member directly regarding the phased approach to updating the signage throughout the car parks.

The Committee authorised the renewal of the Agency Agreement with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for the provision of off street car parking enforcement and penalty charge notice processing for a further period of 3 years from 1st November 2019 until 31st October 2022.

Age Sector Platform Belfast Pensioners Parliament

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Age Sector Platform seeking the Council's support with the Belfast Pensioners Parliament 2018. A proposal had been received seeking a contribution of £3,000 and the use of The Great Hall, which would be used to host the event, for a day during March 2018.

The Assistant Director advised that the Age Sector Platform represented a strong unified voice for older people in Northern Ireland. It had a membership of individuals and older people's groups across Northern Ireland and represented approximately 200,000 people.

The officer reported that the Belfast Parliament event would be attended by up to 100 older people and stated that it would be a mutually beneficial event with Belfast City Council that would complement the Belfast Agenda and Age-friendly Belfast Programme.

The Committee agreed to contribute £3,000 and the use of the City Hall to Age Sector Platform to support the Belfast Pensioners Parliament in March 2018.

Parklife Education Programme - Evaluation

The Assistant Director advised the Committee that the ParkLife Education Programme used and promoted the Council's parks and open spaces as a resource for outdoor learning. She advised that it had been in operation since 2007 and she outlined the three main elements of the Programme, as follows:

- supervised sessions provided to 42 Primary Schools in Belfast. School children walked to their local park to learn about nature, the environment and parks' heritage. The Programme had direct links to the curriculum and was delivered to Key Stage 2 children;
- Saturday Clubs were held on a monthly basis in 6 parks across the City and children, along with their families, participated in themed activities; and
- educational sessions were held with 10 community groups in the local parks with activities tailored to suit the needs and abilities of each group.

The officer reported that an evaluation of the Programme had been undertaken between September 2016 and June 2017 by Queens University Belfast and the Members were advised that a copy of the Evaluation document was available here

The Assistant Director advised that based on the findings presented, the report recommended that:

- learning outdoors through the ParkLife Education Programme was a very positive experience for children and should be regarded as an example of good practice;
- the Programme should continue to be delivered in its current model so that many more children could participate and benefit from it; and
- the Council should consider sharing its learning from the Programme and the report with other Councils and organisations.

In relation to future research, the report recommended that:

- the evaluation should be repeated at a later date to increase the sample size, to examine the Programme in more depth, build a larger evidence base and take into account potential further outcomes not previously considered; and
- a qualitative study, such as focus groups, with the children should be incorporated in the evaluation to enable a deeper analysis of their understanding of the Programme and its impact on them.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and the ongoing success of the ParkLife Education Programme; and
- endorsed the ParkLife Evaluation report including key findings and recommendations and agreed to support the related publicity for the report that was scheduled to take place in January 2018.

Dog Friendly Badging Scheme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 12th September, at the request of Councillor McDonough-Brown, the Committee had agreed to investigate the introduction of an opt-in badging scheme that would indicate which premises in Belfast were dog-friendly.

The Assistant Director advised that officers had since undertaken web based research and established that there was a number of on-line resources dedicated to the promotion of dog friendly facilities, including 'Dugs'n'pubs', 'Bring Fido', 'The Kennel Club' as well as TripAdvisor.

The Committee was informed that officers from the Council had held discussions with colleagues from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) who had advised that it maintained a webpage of pet friendly activities, including details of pet-friendly accommodation, dog walks and dog-friendly restaurants.

The officer reported that Hospitality Ulster had offered to support the proposed scheme and to contact bars and restaurants in Belfast with a view to generating awareness and knowledge of how relevant businesses might participate in the scheme. Hospitality Ulster had also offered to assist with the marketing of the scheme.

It was highlighted that, whilst a number of non-accommodation premises had signed onto the TNI listings, there was no appropriately branded badge for the

business owners to display. It was noted that a scheme could either be progressed regionally by the TNI or by Belfast City Council locally.

The Members were advised of the following three key strands of the scheme, as follows:

- social media and website – each business could market its pet friendly facilities and events using its own social media platforms, the Tourism NI website and the Belfast Welcome Centre;
- industry information and marketing – in collaboration with Hospitality Ulster, the Council could provide bars and restaurants across Belfast with information regarding TNI's established processes and how business owners could, if they wished, opt into the scheme; and
- branding and badges – the Council could consider assisting with the design, production and distribution of appropriate and agreed branded badges at the participating premises, subject to partners' supported agreement. The Council would not be responsible for managing such a scheme but would assist with promoting it.

The Committee authorised officers to continue to liaise with other organisations and noted that an update would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Dog Statistical Returns (DAERA)

The Committee noted that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) was to commence publishing statistics on its website on the Dog Warden's enforcement activities undertaken by all Councils in accordance with The Dog (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.

Noted.

Request for the use of Ormeau Park

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from Cancer Research UK seeking permission to hold a Race for Life 'Pretty Muddy' event at Ormeau Park on 1st September 2018 from 10.00 a.m. The organisers would require access to the park on 31st August from 9.00 a.m. to set-up for the event and would be on site until 10.00 p.m. on the day in order to dismantle the event. The Committee was further advised that the organisation had advised that it wished to make this an annual event based on the success of previous events at this location.

The Committee approved the Cancer Research UK event at Ormeau Park on 1st September 2018 and all subsequent annual 'Pretty Muddy' events at this location, subject to the completion of the appropriate Event Management Plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organiser:

- resolves all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- meets all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and
- agrees to consult with the adjoining public bodies and local communities as required.

Proposed Visit of the Royal Horticultural Society Bulb Committee to the City of Belfast Spring Flower Show in 2019

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group (NIDG) requesting that the Council would join with them in extending a joint invitation to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Bulb Committee to attend the City of Belfast Spring Flower Show which would be held in Barnett Demesne in 2019.

In the correspondence the NIDG had indicated that the RHS Bulb Committee might be interested in holding its late Daffodil Show in Belfast in an effort to spread and increase its influence beyond London. It was noted that the RHS rarely held its shows outside of London and for Belfast to host this event would be a great boost to local horticulture and recognition of the unique and historic and current position that Northern Ireland holds throughout the world as a centre specialist for daffodil breeding.

The Committee agreed that:

- the Council and the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group (NIDG) extend a joint invitation to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Bulb Committee to attend the City of Belfast Spring Flower Show to be held in Barnett Demesne in 2019;
- the Council would provide the hospitality associated with the proposed visit. It was estimated that this would cost approximately £2,244.00 and would be met from within existing budgets; and
- Council officers would attend meetings with the RHS Shows Manager and the NIDG to make the necessary preparations and arrangements for the visit.

Dog Control in Open Spaces

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To inform Members of proposals for public consultation in relation to options for controlling dogs off leads in our parks and Open Spaces. A number of ideas will be put to the public to gauge opinions and allow for any creative responses to be considered. The consultation process is to inform options and no decisions have been made in terms of implementation.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- approve the process outlined and agree to bring a report to committee for approval.

3.0 Main report

3.1 A sizeable percentage (approx. 20%) of park users are dog walkers; this was evidenced in the SOPARC¹ surveys carried out in 2015 in conjunction with QUB. One of the objectives of the Council is to promote responsible dog ownership and dog control within our parks assets in order to provide spaces that are safe and welcoming for all users.

3.2 Currently 'dogs off lead' in our outdoor facilities is enforced under BCC bye-laws as follows:

'A person having charge of a dog shall keep the dog on a lead and under proper control, and restrained from giving reasonable cause for annoyance or alarm to other persons'

3.3 Any person convicted of this offence will be liable to a £500 fine.

3.4 In order to promote responsible dog ownership and not simply through enforcement, BCC engage in awareness raising activities, partnership working with schools, community groups and outside agencies working across the Council. Therefore, the enforcement powers available under the bye-laws simply provide a useful additional tool to the ongoing work of the Council in seeking to address all dog related issues across the city.

3.5 The Council are seeking to balance the interests of those in charge of dogs against the interests of those affected by the activities of dogs, bearing in mind the need for people, in particular children, to have access to areas where dogs are kept under strict control, and the need for those in charge of dogs to have access to areas where they can exercise their dogs without undue restriction.

3.6 As a background, The Clean Neighbourhoods Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which became law in Northern Ireland on 01 April 2012 contains a range of legislative

¹ SOPARC is a methodology developed with QUB to measure use of parks and open spaces.

measures to improve the quality of the local environment by giving district councils additional powers to deal with a range of issues including dogs.

- 3.7 In terms of dog related issues, the legislation allows us to introduce four dog control orders as below:
1. Prohibit dog fouling
 2. Make it an offence to allow dogs off lead in designated areas;
 3. Exclude dogs from designated areas; and
 4. Limit the number of dogs that one person can be in control of at any one time.
- 3.8 Number 1 and 4 above have been implemented by the council, however we are seeking to implement measures outside of the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Legislation and use existing byelaws, complemented with additional measures agreed through a public consultation process, to control dogs off leads in our sites in a balanced way that meets the needs of all of our users.
- 3.9 Feedback received from a consultation exercise carried out in 2012 in relation to dog control in Parks, highlighted the requirement for facilities that allow dogs to exercise off lead. To inform decisions on future initiatives it was proposed to run a pilot project in North Belfast to introduce a dog enclosure in Grove Playing Fields.
- 3.10 The pilot project has been in operation for over a year and the dog enclosure has now become a permanent feature of the park and continues to grow its user base as we adapt and improve the facility through ongoing feedback and engagement with our customers.
- 3.11 The information gained from the consultation exercise helped us to better understand all the issues and complexities around the dog issues in Parks and has assisted Council officers to consider options to assist with dog control in parks.
- 3.12 Officers have identified a number of options to provide dog owners with areas in parks where dogs can be allowed off leads. If agreed the new arrangements would be supported by enforcement powers that would be implemented by our Warden Service as required.

3.13 Two options have been identified as operationally viable:

1. The Introduction of additional dog enclosures in the following areas.

- East Belfast – Orangefield Park
- West Belfast – Falls Park
- South Belfast – Clement Wilson Park

3.14 The proposed dog enclosures would be modelled on the successful enclosure in Grove Playing Fields. The fenced enclosure creates no doubt or confusion with regards to where dogs are allowed ‘off lead’ at all times in that particular open space.

2. Time zoning system – this option allows for dogs to be off lead and exercise in the entire park, or designated areas of the park, but only at certain times of the day. E.g. One hour am and one hour pm. This option provides a potential solution for those users who are unable to visit the local ‘dog enclosure’ either on a particular day or on an on-going basis due to mobility issues or other reasons.

It is proposed that this option would be more beneficial on condition that option 1 is implemented in tandem, as both options complement each other in providing facilities for dogs off lead at all times within a neighbourhood.

It is proposed that the ‘Time Zoning System’ will be piloted in our 17 Green Flag accredited sites across the city for one year with a further report being brought back to committee in early 2019 after all relevant data and statistics from the pilot have been analysed.

3.15 Proposed Time Frame

Timeframe for implementation:

Consultation on proposals	Feb-Apr 18
Committee approval	May 18
Implementation of new enclosures by	Sept 18
Review of new measures	Sept 19

3.16 Financial & Resource Implications.

The installation of fenced enclosures in the three sites listed above will cost in the region of £15k each. These costs will be met through area revenue budgets.

3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

The Committee agreed to the proposals for public consultation in relation to options for controlling dogs off leads in Council parks and open spaces and noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Pollinators

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Milne raised:

“The Council should recognise the value of pollinators, which contribute an estimated £600 million to the UK economy by enabling food production. In the past few years pollinator numbers have declined, which not only has an economic cost with regards to food production, but is also detrimental to biodiversity. The negative impacts of neonicotinoid pesticides are well documented, and are a contributing factor towards the fall in pollinator numbers. The UK government’s declaration to commit to the EU’s further restrictions of neonicotinoid pesticide applications, even in the event of Brexit, is therefore welcome.

I would request that the Committee agrees to write to the European Commission outlining Belfast City Council’s support of the further EU restrictions on neonicotinoid pesticide applications and also write to the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) detailing both support for the proposed restrictions and agreement that such restrictions should be retained in the event of Brexit.

Additionally, I would request that the Committee agrees to further improve local biodiversity outcomes by investigating the feasibility of increasing and improving habitat provision for local pollinators, as outlined in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (2015-2020).”

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Milne addressed the Committee and explained the detail behind the reduction in the number of pollinators and the detrimental impact that had already been made in respect of food production, the economy and biodiversity.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- agreed to write to the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) detailing the Council’s support for

the proposed restrictions and its agreement that such restrictions should be retained following Brexit; and

- noted that the Council was currently preparing a Local Biodiversity Action Plan in conjunction with the Council's Local Development Plan.

Matters Referred Back from Council/Notices of Motion

Notice of Motion – Not-For-Profit Energy Company

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Council on 4th December, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Attwood and seconded by Councillor Milne, had been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council notes that the Scottish Government and a number of local authorities have established not-for-profit energy firms in search of new revenue, to restore faith in public services and tackle fuel poverty.

The Council notes that the first and best-known publicly owned energy companies, Robin Hood Energy in Nottingham and Bristol Energy, have given consumers, particularly those on low incomes, more choice and the option of a supplier whose only job is to secure the lowest price for consumers.

The Council agrees to explore the potential benefits of establishing a Belfast City Council owned not-for-profit energy company to tackle fuel poverty in Belfast.”

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Notice of Motion - Homelessness

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Council on 4th December, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McCusker and seconded by Councillor O'Neill, had been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council notes the concerns around the lack of suitable provision for families and individuals who present as homeless, requiring temporary accommodation. With an increase of 32% in the number of people presenting as homeless in the past five years and a recent report that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) strategy at reducing homelessness has had limited success, the Council calls on NIHE to undertake an urgent review of the current provision. The Council also notes that we still have rough sleepers in the city and calls on all organisations, including the Council and NIHE, to meet urgently to ensure their needs are being met as the weather conditions continue to decline.”

Councillor McCusker outlined his concerns in relation to the growing homelessness problem in the City and stated that he would welcome a meeting with

Housing Executive representatives prior to Christmas in order to discuss homelessness and possible temporary accommodation over the Christmas period.

The Chairperson advised that due to the busy schedule of meetings it was unlikely that a meeting would be able to be facilitated within such a short timeframe and it was suggested that Councillor McCusker could, if he so wished, arrange to meet the NIHE himself.

A Member highlighted that the next quarterly Special People and Communities Committee with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to address housing issues was scheduled to take place on 31st January, 2018 and stated that the Member could raise his concerns in relation to homelessness at this meeting. He also advised that the special meetings had been poorly attended and encouraged greater attendance at future meetings.

The Committee noted the motion and agreed that homelessness would be added to the agenda for the Special Meeting of the People and Communities Committee (Housing Issues) on 31st January 2018.

Chairperson