

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 6th February, 2018

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Sandford (Chairperson);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Copeland);
Aldermen Rodgers and McCoubrey; and
Councillors Armitage, Baker, Carson, Corr Johnston,
Heading, Lyons, Milne, Murphy, McCusker, McReynolds,

Nic Biorna, Nicholl and Pankhurst.

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 Councillors Corr, Magennis and Newton.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declaration of Interest

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Copeland) declared an interest in agenda item 1 (d), viz., Marie Curie Northern Ireland - Request to Present to Committee, in that she volunteered for the Charity.

Request to Present to Committee

The Committee agreed to invite representatives of Marie Curie NI to present at a special meeting of the Committee on its case for a whole society approach to end of life care.

Matters Referred Back from Council/Motions

Motion - Dementia Friendly City

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Council on 1st February, the following motion, which had been proposed by the High Sheriff (Councillor Howard) and seconded by Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Copeland), had been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council supports making Belfast a Dementia Friendly City and, by doing so, would envisage each business and transport provider signing up to having a Dementia Champion and to take part in Dementia awareness training.”

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

Notice of Motion - Support for People with Anaphylaxis

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Council on 1st February, the following motion, which had been proposed by the Councillor Nicholl and seconded by Councillor O’Neill, had been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council commits to seeking ways to better support people with anaphylaxis living within and visiting the City, including by considering ways to help raise awareness of the condition and reviewing support and facilities available for them in Council amenities.”

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

Notice of Motion - Provision of Water Refill Points

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the Council on 1st February, the following motion, which had been proposed by the Councillor Milne and seconded by Councillor Kyle, had been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council notes that many cities in the UK and Ireland are taking action against plastic waste by implementing free water refill points. Notably, Bristol has been implementing a very successful refill scheme since 2015, and London has recently pledged to increase the availability of water refill points to help limit the amount of recyclable waste sent to landfill.

Not only will increasing the provision of free water refill points help reduce plastic waste, but increased access to water can contribute towards people living a healthier lifestyle.

The Council, therefore, agrees to assess the feasibility of implementing a bottle refill initiative. Additionally, it will write to the Belfast Chamber of Commerce seeking to determine whether local shops and businesses can work together to provide access to public drinking water. This could potentially increase footfall within local businesses and even further improve the public relations impact of our business community.”

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

Committee/Strategic Issues

Minutes of Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group

The Assistant Director advised that, at the meeting of the Strategic Cemetery and Crematorium Working Group held on 29th January, the following key items had been considered:

- the lifting of heavy coffins;
- update in relation to the water infrastructure at Roselawn Cemetery;
- update in respect of the preferred options for the Crematorium Development; and
- discussion regarding poor attendance at meetings of the Working Group.

Following a query from a Member, the Democratic Services Officer undertook to clarify directly with the Member the protocol around the Independent Member attending the Working Group.

The Committee:

- approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group held on 29th January;
- agreed that the Chairperson would write to the Party Group Leaders highlighting the lack of attendance over the last two years at the Working Group and suggesting that the Party might wish to consider reviewing its Membership in an endeavour to ensure cross-party participation at future meetings; and
- noted that Party Group Briefings were being offered on the proposals in respect of the Crematorium options, as agreed at the January meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Request for Special Workshop for Committee Planning 2018/19

The Committee agreed to hold a strategic planning workshop on 27th February, from 12.00 noon - 2.00 p.m. (venue to be confirmed) to review the achievements of the 2017/18 Committee Plan and to consider the priorities to be included in the Committee's 2018/19 Plan.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

North Belfast Hills Greenway Project Partnership

The Committee was advised that Ligoniel Improvement Association was seeking the Council's formal support of its application for a Heritage Lottery Fund Great Places application for its North Belfast Greenway Project.

The application was for £250,000 to promote and develop community activity and participation along the walking route from Ligoniel, through Ligoniel Park, across

the Cavehill to McArt's Fort and down to Belfast Castle. This would involve developing interpretation and extending the historical exploration of significant features along the route.

The Assistant Director advised that Ligoniel Improvement Association's application for the North Belfast Hills Greenway project had been shortlisted in the first round and was now one of five finalists.

The Committee noted that both the Belfast Hills Partnership and Cavehill Conversation Campaign had endorsed the project.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to enter into a Partnership Agreement with Ligoniel Improvement Association, in support of its funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Great Places for its North Belfast Hills Greenway Project. This would be subject to consultation with Legal Services and the Property and Projects Department and the agreement of terms with the City Solicitor.

Comber Greenway Update

The Committee noted that the Comber Greenway had been constructed in 2008 and was currently under the ownership of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). It was 6.5 miles long and passed through three Council areas, namely, Belfast City Council (3 miles), Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (2 miles) and Ards and North Down Borough Council (1.5 miles). It was the only greenway in Northern Ireland in the ownership of DfI.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th January 2017, it had agreed that the Council would request to meet with DfI officials to try and establish the Department's commitment to the greenway within its strategy. It had also agreed that officers would aim to create a Steering Group with the DfI and the other relevant Councils to try and develop costed plans for the Comber Greenway that would identify contributions and responsibilities.

The Assistant Director advised that officers from the three Councils had since met and the Comber Greenway Steering Group (CGSG) had been established.

The officer then drew the Members' attention to the proposed Terms of Reference for the Steering Group. She advised that the anticipated outcome for the project would be the production of an options appraisal for the future of the Comber Greenway, this would have to be considered and agreed by all three of the Councils.

The Committee agreed to the Terms of Reference for the Comber Greenway Steering Group, subject to agreement by Legal Services.

Temporary use of Ballysillan Bowling Pavilion

The Assistant Director advised that a request had been received from Ballysillan Swifts Football Club seeking permission for the temporary use of Ballysillan Bowling Pavilion from which to deliver a programme of events for younger people. The officer advised that the proposed programme would be aimed at building capacity and

addressing antisocial behaviour problems and she stated that it would benefit from being located within the local community.

The officer detailed that access to the pavilion would be required for evening and weekends on a temporary basis and a key holding agreement would be drawn up between the Club and the Council, subject to the proposal being agreed and the club being able to meet the requirements of the agreement.

The Committee approved the request from Ballysillan Swifts to have temporary free use of Ballysillan Bowling Pavilion, to provide a programme of events for younger people, which would help build capacity in relation to sporting activities and help tackle the issue of anti-social behaviour in the area.

Installation of temporary structure in Victoria Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 In 2014 the Council secured funding of £11.7m from Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) under Peace III for the construction of the Girdwood Hub and associated environmental works. As part of the project Belfast City Council purchased a temporary marquee structure through a budget uplift provided by SEUPB as part of the Peace III allocation. The purpose of the temporary structure was to animate the outdoor space in Girdwood Park and complement a programme of outdoor activity and a series of seasonal events. Consultation with key stakeholders recognised the need for outreach and detached youth work to address nuisance and anti-social behaviour on the site and it was agreed that the temporary marquee structure could provide a base from which to engage with the local community. The current position however at Girdwood Community Hub is that key stakeholders and youth practitioners are not yet in a position to provide the support required to successfully manage the structure as a long term feature in Girdwood.**
- 1.2 In March of 2017 the marquee was erected at Girdwood Community Hub for the first birthday celebrations. The use of the structure was very successful, it's size provides an impressive central point for activities and event information; and in inclement weather will provide much needed shelter for activities. As a result, Council officers have been tasked with finding a suitable alternative home for the structure so that the investment from SEUPB is utilised accordingly.**
- 1.3 Council officers have discussed a number of different locations for the placement of the temporary structure and at this stage the rose bed/grassed area next to the bowling pavilion in Victoria Park is the preferred option. There is**

consensus that the structure could be put to good use at the park for both weekly and annual events that are held there.

- 1.4 If this proposal is approved, then further consultation will take place with the various user groups and community organisations in partnership with the Connswater Community Greenway team. In partnership BCC will develop a programme of animation to support the positive use and engagement of this asset in line with the council's strategic outcomes. We hope to develop a diverse programme of activities and interventions to suit a wide audience including local communities and visitors. It is anticipated that once the structure is operational that further opportunities will also arise as a result of community engagement and changing needs therefore as issues in the community may arise we will be able to develop some flexibility into the programme.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to;

- Give approval for Council Officers to continue to engage with community partners and stakeholders to design a robust programme of activity that will enhance the work of the Connswater Community Greenway and will also include youth detached and outreach work particularly targeting hard to reach young people. Following commitment from community partners and agreement around programme delivery Council will move to install the temporary structure at Victoria Park.
- 3.1 The structure is 21m x 12m in size and although considered a temporary structure can be erected and left on site for a considerable time. There will be a requirement to carry out some grounds works to level the site and make it suitable to house the structure and safe to host public events thereafter.
- 3.2 There are 2 desirable locations available within Victoria park. The final decision will rest with Council officers but will take into consideration suggestion and recommendation from partner organisations who will be responsible for a large part of the programme delivery.
- 3.3 To ensure the successful management of the structure and associated programmed activity a budget will be required to support the events and activity programme. It is anticipated that Council will make resources available but that partner organisations will also contribute through their own funding arrangements.

3.4 Financial & Resource Implications

Landscape design, groundworks and installation is estimated in the region of 40K.

Utility costs at this time are unknown but it is anticipated that costs will be met from the existing utility budget for the park.

3.5 Asset & Other Implications

To situate the temporary structure at Victoria Park may require an application to planning.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no implications at this stage. However, equality and good relations factors will be taken into account with regards programme design and delivery in Victoria Park.”

Following a query, regarding whether it would be possible to relocate the marquee structure to other parks in the City, the Assistant Director advised that whilst this was a temporary structure, due to its scale, there would be limitations to transferring it to other suitable locations. She highlighted that the proposed relocation, including landscape design, groundworks and installation was estimated to cost in the region of £40k.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Orangefield Park - Proposed Feasibility Study

The Assistant Director advised the Members that the East Area Working Group had recently considered a request, from both Bloomfield Football Club and Cycling Ireland, that the Council consider making a capital investment at the grounds of Bloomfield Football Club and the adjacent outdoor velodrome in Orangefield Park, in order to make the area a more usable space for both clubs. The Working Group had requested that the potential of the proposals be assessed further.

She advised that, whilst there was no current budget for such a project, there was a limited amount of capital finance available to support capital proposals, however, to access this funding, all projects had to go through the three stage approval process for capital projects. It was noted that it was important that these proposals be considered within the context of the emerging thinking around area planning, projects that were currently underway and/or planned investments in the area and emerging proposals. She advised that, as this would be a capital project, it would have to be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in its role as investment decision maker.

The Committee noted that at this stage there were no costs associated with the proposal and it was not an agreed Council project, furthermore, neither Club had funding for the proposed projects. The Members were advised that Sport NI intended to open a Multi Facilities Fund in 2018, this would target sites that offered at least four

sporting facilities and the proposal could potentially make an application through this fund. More details would not be available until spring 2018.

The Committee recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in its role as investment decision maker, that the upgrade of Orangefield Park be considered as part of the Parks Improvement Programme which was an existing Stage one project on the Capital Programme. It was noted that this would enable it to be assessed in line with the Council's three stage approval process for all capital projects and would allow it to be aligned with the emerging area planning discussions and other planned and/or emerging capital investments within the area.

Waterworks Park - Management arrangement with Families at the Waterworks

The Committee was advised that the Council had entered into a Facilities Management Agreement with the Families at the Waterworks on 1st January 2005. This agreement had set out the respective responsibilities of both the Families and the Council, it had been for an initial period of six years, extended for a further six years and had terminated on 31st December 2017.

The Assistant Director advised that the management agreement related to the use of the upper pond for fishing and also allowed for the use of a container on the site. She reported that the Families continued to make use of the facility and sought to encourage greater use of it on a cross community basis and inter-generationally, however, the standard of the existing facilities were inadequate to meet the aspirations of the group.

The officer reported that representatives of the Families had met with Council officers and advised that they were seeking additional funding through the ALPHA fund to enable them to add to the existing storage facilities and to provide a space that would support them in delivering educational programmes to local groups who might wish to learn more about fishing and related activities. It was noted that a report would be submitted in due course to seek any necessary approvals.

The Assistant Director also advised that, despite regular maintenance, there was an ongoing issue regarding the presence of invasive species and weeds within the top pond at the facility. She highlighted to the Members that recent reservoir legislation required the Council to carry out works to ensure that the waterways remained safe and fit for purpose. A hydraulic assessment had been carried out in 2016, this had included the upper and lower ponds at the Waterworks and Alexandra Park. The officer reported that the required works were currently on the capital programme as an emerging project and highlighted that further work was required. At this stage, the ponds would have to be drained and it was proposed that the treatment of the invasive species would also be undertaken at this time.

The Committee:

- agreed to extend the existing agreement on a month by month basis, not to exceed March 2019 without seeking further consents;
- agreed to review and revise the existing agreement, in consultation with the relevant fisheries authority and the Families;

- noted the need for works to the waterways under the Reservoirs legislation and that an environmental assessment was underway and agreed that these works be aligned;
- noted that the Families at the Waterworks, if successful, would seek an appropriate licence agreement to locate the building on Council land within the existing compound; and
- noted that a further report would be submitted in due course.

Operational Issues

Affordable Warmth - Consultation Response

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is engaged in a partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme (AWS). The scheme aims to address fuel poverty for the most vulnerable households in the city.

1.2 This report provides an update on the scheme and contains a response to a consultation on the scheme issues by the DfC.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- 1. Note the contents of the report and**
- 2. Agree the contents of the response to the consultation to be submitted to the DfC by 16th February as subject to council ratification in March.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 In the report brought in November 2017 members were updated on the progress of the scheme including proposals made by the DfC, the number of referrals provided to the NIHE and the ongoing pressures to deliver the service given the significant amount of self-referrals being made to the scheme. Members agreed that the scheme should continue to be fully funded by the DfC on an 11 council model.

3.2 Subsequent to the committee meeting it was agreed at the full Council meeting in December that the council would write to the Head of Fuel Poverty within the DfC requesting

an urgent meeting to discuss the funding arrangement for Belfast. This letter was sent on 21st December 2017, but at the time of submitting this report, no response had been received.

The current position with the scheme is as follows:

3.3 Referrals sent to NIHE 2017-2018

The target number of referrals for January – March 2018 reduces to 30 per month and the team is endeavouring to process as many referrals as possible during this period. The DfC have confirmed that in order to manage the NIHE budget and ensure no underspend they will take additional referrals from councils that can provide them. It was hoped that this could be discussed with DfC officials at the meeting mentioned above.

	Target	Actual
April	25	25
May	25	25
June	25	25
July	40	40
August	40	27
September	40	24
October	40	44*
November	40	25
December	40	23

***Note:** in official figures 13 surveys from September are included in October as they were transferred on Monday 3rd October.

3.4 The Service has received 1493 calls from July 2017 (on average 52 per week) regarding the scheme and is working to call back those on the backlogged waiting list. When we receive the details from a phone call we assess if the person is likely to be eligible for the scheme, and prioritise their case on the basis of need. The current live cases are collated as follows:

3.5 Number of high priority cases currently being processed (these are mainly those with no heating due to boiler issues): approximately 40 cases. This number fluctuates on a weekly basis based on calls made and prioritised accordingly based on the circumstances including age and health issues.

Number of case confirmed eligible but lower priority (these include new windows, insulation and radiators): approximately 550.

Number of lower priority cases awaiting call back to determine eligibility: approximately 300

- 3.6 The need within Belfast is clear due to the number of self-referrals received which are eligible for the scheme. The overall referral targets set are inadequate to meet this need and the associated funding for the AW team means that the reduced level of staff cannot visit the number of properties required to process referrals and cannot return calls in a timely fashion regarding queries.
- 3.7 As outlined previously, with the reduction in funding for a business support staff member for the team, the additional calls are impacting on the existing business support teams within the Service. Measures have been introduced to assist in streamlines calls to alleviate the situation in the short term, as a stop gap measure. This will have a knock on impact on existing service delivery for the wider Building Control Service. The Service is also compiling the costs absorbed by the council including this business support assistance, in order to document the support that the council currently makes to the running of the scheme.
- 3.8 Given the interest and number of calls, we are having to manage customer expectations in terms of timeframe for response as we balance this with the ability to carry out site visits. It will be the case that people who are eligible for the scheme will have to wait some time for measures while those in greater need are considered.
- 3.9 In the absence of confirmation of funding for next year the financial estimates for 2018-2019 include the same funding we have received for this current year. Given the uncertainty we will also have to put staff on notice as we did last year.
- 3.10 It is hoped that further clarification will be given by the DfC at the next managers meeting which is due to be held in mid-February.
- 3.11 Consultation on Affordable Warmth Scheme

THE DfC released a consultation document on certain aspects of the scheme with a response date of 18th February. This included four proposals:

3.12 Proposal 1 The Department proposes that one installer, managing the installation of all measures to the household, becomes the preferred delivery method.

- We would welcome any changes that would improve the householder experience and application process, however would need to see more detail on how this delivery method would work in practice.
- It has proved difficult for householders to engage with contractors for the range of measures. Additionally the building regulation application process has suffered from multiple or duplicate applications, resulting in additional administration and refunding of fees.

Proposal 2 The Department proposes to raise the income threshold to £23,000 for households with more than one person and reducing it to £18,000 for all single person households.

- The current threshold for all households is £20,000.
- Strongly agree with the increase to £23,000 but strongly disagree with reducing the threshold for single person households.
- The experience of the AW team would indicate that there are some multiple occupancy households that would fall just outside the current £20,000 threshold, including single parent families.
- We would also have concerns that reducing the threshold for single occupancy households could disadvantage more elderly householders.

Proposal 3 The Department proposes that Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance are removed from the calculation of income for the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

- Strongly agree that these benefits are removed as in many cases they take households over the income threshold and makes them ineligible for the scheme.

Proposal 4 The Department proposes the removal of age-related and disability-related eligibility criteria from the boiler replacement element of the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

- Strongly agree with the removal of these criteria as providing high efficiency boilers is key to addressing the amount spent on fuel and this would assist a wider group of homeowners.
- It is noted that the disability and age related issues should be a consideration where prioritisation of referrals is required.

It should be noted that if these proposals are implemented it is likely that there would be more households eligible for the scheme, increasing the number of self-referrals, and therefore the funding for the scheme would need to reflect this change.

The full proposed response to these proposals is available on mod.gov

3.13 Financial & Resource Implications

DfC have indicated that a business case is being prepared which would propose a further five year lifespan for the scheme. However, no formal confirmation of funding has been received for 2018-2019. For planning purposes the financial estimates include £73,000, the same figure received for 2017-2018, to cover salary costs. If formal confirmation of funding is not forthcoming, the Service will be required to follow procedure within the Fixed Term Contract policy and potentially place employees on notice. Further discussions may be required to assess the financial risk if the Council continue to employ staff in order to deliver the service.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or good relations issues.”

The Assistant Director reminded the Members that the Council, at its meeting on 4th December 2017, had raised its concerns regarding the impact of fuel poverty on the citizens of Belfast and had requested a meeting with the Department for Communities to discuss the current funding allocation. Subsequently, a meeting had been arranged for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, along with any Members of the Committee who wished to attend, with Mr. M McDermott, Head of Fuel Poverty and Private Sector Grants on 14th February at 2.00 p.m. in the Conor Room to discuss the Affordable Warmth Scheme, with a pre-briefing at 1.30 p.m.

A Member requested that the draft response include reference to the significant cost of childcare on many household budgets over the income threshold.

The Committee:

- noted the scheduled meeting with the Department for Communities to discuss the Affordable Warmth Scheme;
- endorsed the draft response to the Department for Communities in respect of the changes to the Affordable Warmth Scheme, subject to the insertion of the following additional point “Belfast City Council would also request that consideration is given to the cost of childcare which is a significant expense for many households over the income threshold”; and
- agreed that it be submitted by the required deadline of 16th February, on the basis that it was subject to Council ratification in March.

Proposal for a Dual Language Street Sign

The Committee approved the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at St. Galls Avenue.

Not-For-Profit Energy Company Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To consider a motion in relation to the establishment of a not-for-profit energy company which, in accordance with standing orders, was referred to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 4th December 2017.

1.2 The report provides Members with background on not for profit energy companies and suggests next steps around the options for establishing a Belfast City Council ‘not-for-profit energy company’.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- agree that the options for establishing a Belfast City Council ‘not-for-profit energy company’ are explored within the development of relevant strategies including Belfast’s Sustainable Development Framework and a city energy programme.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

At the meeting of the Council on 4th December, the following notice of motion was proposed by Councillor Attwood and seconded by Councillor Milne:

“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.”

- 3.2 Initial research has shown that there is a growing interest in the area of alternative energy suppliers and the benefits it can bring including tackling of fuel poverty. The Council has considered this issue previously and in March 2013 a report was brought to the former Health and Environmental Services Committee on the issue of Collective Switching. Collective switching is when a large group of people, known as a community or closed group, uses its collective purchasing power to negotiate its own tariff with energy suppliers. This was as a result of a Council Motion agreeing that an investigation be conducted exploring possibilities for the introduction of a ‘collective switching’ scheme in Belfast. Members agreed that the collective switching scheme was not feasible locally and it was not progressed at that time.
- 3.3 Officers have also explored options around community energy schemes but potential legal issues were identified with the Council getting involved in these schemes and they have not been progressed. However, this is an evolving area and there have been new developments since this work was undertaken, so there may be merit in revisiting some of this work.
- 3.4 In addition, the Belfast Agenda has identified a key workstream to ‘Develop a city energy programme’ and it would be expected that this would include consideration of some of these new developments.

Examples of work going on elsewhere

- 3.5 There are good examples of work going on elsewhere in the area of energy supply. These include examples where Councils have established not-for profit energy companies: Robin Hood Energy was established by Nottingham City Council in September 2015 and Bristol Energy was established in the autumn of 2015 by Bristol Council.
- 3.6 There are also examples of where the issue of tackling fuel poverty is being tackled within wider energy projects which look not just at the provision of affordable energy but also at ensuring secure and sustainable energy.
- 3.7 It is also clear however that given the different energy market conditions in Belfast that some of these projects may not be

directly transferable and further exploration is required to determine the relevance and application to Belfast.

Next steps

- 3.8 Elsewhere issues around energy are linked to the Sustainable Development Agenda, Belfast's Sustainable Development Framework is due to be reviewed and there is potential to include exploration of the options around not for profit energy companies within this.
- 3.9 As previously mentioned within the Belfast Agenda one of the workstreams under city development is 'Develop a city energy programme' and part of this is to tackle fuel poverty. It would be possible therefore to consider this issue within this piece of work.
- 3.10 Given the breadth of considerations required it is recommended therefore that the options for establishing a Belfast City Council 'not-for-profit energy company' are more fully explored within the development of relevant strategies including Belfast's Sustainable Development Framework and a city energy programme.
- 3.11 **Financial & Resource Implications**
- There may be expenditure on expert advice and consultancy fees as this issue is further explored. Any support required will be procured in the line with Council's process and will be met within existing resources.
- 3.12 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**
- Any future developments would be required to equality screened in line with the Council's process."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Potential Sponsorship of open spaces and roundabouts

The Assistant Manager advised that the Council had been approached by representatives from local communities who were keen to assist in the improvement and maintenance of their local verges, roundabouts and open spaces. In addition, officers involved in the Belfast in Bloom Competition, a campaign to encourage residents and business owners to add flower and colour to their homes and businesses were also keen to engage with potential sponsors with a view to enhancing the entries to the competition.

The officer detailed that, as the Members would be aware, many cities, towns and villages already engaged with local businesses with a view to seeking financial

support to enhance their local areas and it had proven to be a popular way of seeking additional revenue.

Following a query from a Member regarding the protocol around any advertising/sponsorship, the Assistant Director advised that, if the sponsorship proposals were to be progressed, policies and guidelines would have to be established regarding what would be permitted.

A further Member stated that it was essential that the various statutory agencies all played their role in the maintenance of these open spaces.

The Committee granted officers authority to engage:

- with statutory agencies, public and private companies with a view to seeking agreement regarding obtaining sponsorship to improve and enhance roundabouts, open spaces and to stimulate civic pride in local community spaces; and
- with statutory agencies with a view to seeking agreement for local communities to take responsibility to enhance and assist with the maintenance of open space and verges within their local community.

Update on Castle Arcade

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Members will recall Committee consideration in February 2016 of a request to commence the formal and statutory pre-consultation for possible alleygates in Castle Arcade. The purpose of the proposed alleygates was to address ongoing criminality and anti-social behaviour in Castle Arcade.

1.2 At that meeting, a number of Members stated that they felt the erection of alleygates at this location would not be an effective solution to the issue and whilst they recognised the ongoing concerns around crime and anti-social behaviour, concern was also expressed around the potential for displacement of vulnerable people who used the Arcade.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to

- **approve the proposed regeneration and environmental improvement approach to increasing the footfall in Castle Arcade and reversing the physical decline of the area.**

3.0 Background

- 3.1** Members will be aware that Castle Arcade is a partially covered entry running between Castle Lane and the corner of Cornmarket and Castle Place. The Arcade is part of the wider Belfast Entries network of narrow alleyways in the city centre around which the city of Belfast developed and was an entrance in to the old Belfast Castle in the city centre. The Arcade has lost its historical character unlike some of the other entries in the city centre and in recent years the area has become disused by workers, tourists and shoppers.
- 3.2** The Arcade has also become associated with graffiti and criminal damage, drug related incidents, begging, assaults, street drinking, public urination/defecation, and rowdy behaviour. Additionally, a number of the individuals known to frequent the area are thought to be vulnerable due to being homeless and/or having addiction/mental health issues.
- 3.3** Police are called daily to the area with the calls ranging from low level ASB to serious assaults and the area is an ongoing priority for police in the city centre. Police do not report any difference in the number of calls they receive before and after the closure of the anchor tenant in the area British Home Stores (BHS), however, there is no doubt the closure of BHS has further reduced the footfall in the area and contributed to the overall feeling of degradation.
- 3.4** There is a sizeable cost to Council as part of its city centre street cleaning operation in attempting to minimise the issues in the Arcade

Stakeholders

- 3.5** A significant lobby developed in 2015 from British Home Stores and Belfast City Centre Management around the cost of these issues to the economic prosperity and vibrancy of the area. This culminated in a proposal by British Home Stores to pay for the installation of dusk to dawn alleygates in the area and to take responsibility for opening and closing these alleygates.
- 3.6** At that time, Council People and Communities Committee did not consider alleygates the appropriate response to the issues in the area and that remains the position to date.

The issues highlighted above remain with the solicitors' firm in the Arcade reporting a further deterioration in the

seriousness of what is taking place in the area and pushing for action, despite Council's additional street cleaning efforts in the area.

3.7 Additionally, Outreach Services supporting vulnerable people in the city centre are aware of the challenges at this location and are committed to working with the Council to address these challenges in a constructive manner.

3.8 The Department for Infrastructure which owns the main thoroughfare and is responsible for street lighting in the Arcade is committed to working with Council as well as Department for Communities which has a statutory remit around the public realm in the city centre. It is within this context, that Officers were asked to consider what alternative measures (other than alleygates) may be appropriate.

3.9 Challenges

There are a number of environmental, social and economic challenges contributing to the current situation in Castle Arcade. They are:

- Existing lighting not working well
- Generally poor and inadequate lighting which does not create a feeling of safety or vibrancy
- Broken windows theory which argues that if small events are ignored, the lack of care and ownership leads to an ongoing downward spiral of conditions and invites ever worsening crime conditions and opportunity
- The practical challenges of maintaining the cleanliness of the Arcade when Council is only responsible for the main thoroughfare and not the buildings on either side
- The loss of the anchor tenant in the main retail premises in the area
- The lack of activity in the area and the wider city centre after 6pm
- The vulnerability of the individuals known to frequent the area
- The concentration of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area

3.10 Opportunities

There are also a number of opportunities which if harnessed could provide a platform for gradual improvements in the appearance, footfall and overall vibrancy of the area. These are:

- The Belfast Agenda and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy which focuses on making the city centre a prosperous but shared and inclusive space
- The central location of Castle Arcade and its proximity to large volumes of people on a daily basis
- The historic nature of Castle Arcade which is largely unknown to the large volumes of people using the area
- The opportunity to redefine the narrative and visual impact of Castle Arcade as a platform upon which to encourage new tenants to the old BHS retail space and to improve the wider area
- The strong partnerships which exist between statutory organisations, businesses and voluntary organisations operating in the city centre

3.11 Risks

Police reports, feedback from elected members and businesses in the area, along with the continuing demands on Council's street cleansing operations indicate that some action is required to manage the following risks:

- Ongoing decline and impact of this on wider city centre
- Impact of decline on likelihood of new tenants for the old BHS retail space
- Risk of serious injury or fatality
- Risk of displacement of vulnerable people to other locations in the city centre
- Lack of agreement on way forward
- Reputational damage if any interventions are not managed sensitively

3.12 Status of Vacant British Home Stores Retail Unit

Officers met with the managing agents of the empty BHS Retail Unit in January 2017 who advised that the owner has authorised them to appoint contractors to take forward a strip out and refit of the retail units. That work is due to commence in Spring 2017 with a view to being completed in a maximum of 18 months ready for prospective tenants.

- 3.13 The managing agents have also appointed architects to work on the redesign of the retail unit and to work up some improvements to the façade of the building. The architects were present at the meeting with the managing agents and general commitment was secured from both parties to work with Council when developing and implementing plans to ensure they benefitted the wider Castle Arcade area and worked towards establishing a strong and vibrant identity for the area.

3.14 Regeneration and Environmental Improvement Plan

Actions to address the challenges, take advantage of the opportunities and minimise the risks are provided on mod.gov for Members consideration. The identified objectives are:

- To reverse the ongoing decline of Castle Arcade
- To increase footfall in Castle Arcade
- To re-define the identity of Castle Arcade as an asset

3.15 This Plan has been developed involving a range of Council services including Community Safety, Landscape Development, Property and Projects, City Centre Regeneration, Belfast Health Development Unit, Economic Development, Cleansing and Community Services.

3.16 Financial & Resource Implications

Initial costs associated with short and medium term actions are minimal and can be met from within existing revenue budgets and match funding will be sought from partners to support the longer term regeneration of the area.

3.17 The action to improve the quality and effectiveness of lighting in the Castle Arcade on a temporary basis will cost a maximum of £10,000. This cost can be met from within existing departmental revenue budgets and Department for Infrastructure has agreed to provide access to power at no extra cost as their contribution to the short term improvements in the area.

3.18 The Department for Communities, which owns the wall mounted historical murals in the Arcade, has agreed to remove and restore/replace the murals within its existing budgets as a contribution to the short term improvements in the area.

3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or Good Relations implication at present, however, this will be monitored on an ongoing basis as environmental improvement options are further developed.”

The Committee approved the proposed regeneration and environmental improvement approach to increasing the footfall in Castle Arcade and reversing the physical decline of the area.

Belfast Castle Mountain Biking

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report in respect of Mountain Biking at Cavehill to enable officers to undertake more consultation with the various stakeholders and to attend Party Group Briefings. It was further agreed that the matter be forwarded to the North Area Working Group for consideration, following which, a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee.

Belfast Mela - Request for use of Botanic Gardens

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report outlines a proposal from ArtsEkta to deliver an outdoor event, Belfast Mela, a multicultural festival for approximately 20,000 people, in Botanic Gardens. If, from a logistical point of view, Botanic Gardens is not suitable, ArtsEkta have requested to hold the same event in Ormeau Park. The event will take place on 26 August, 2018, from 12noon – 6.00pm and will require the closure of all or a substantial proportion of the facility.

1.2 It is proposed that Council continues to provide financial support to the event (up to £20,000) given the positive economic impact it has for the city, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Approve this proposal from ArtsEkta to deliver an outdoor event, Called Belfast Mela, in Botanic Gardens. If, from a logistical point of view, Botanic Gardens is not suitable, ArtsEkta have requested to hold the same event in Ormeau Park.**
- The event will take place on 26 August, 2018, from 12noon – 6.00pm and will require the closure of all or a substantial proportion of the facility.**
- To provide financial support to the event (up to £20,000) given the positive economic impact it has for the city, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.**
- Agree that the appropriate legal agreements for each programme, including bond arrangements are prepared to the satisfaction of the Town Solicitor;**
- Agree that Event Organisers are required to meet all statutory requirements and responsibilities including**

Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, Food Safety and licensing (including for the sale of alcohol, where required);

- Agree the timely payment of the agreed charges and bonds as required in the legal agreements; and
- Agree that Event Organisers shall consult with public bodies and local communities as necessary.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Over the past number of years, the Council has established a successful partnership with the organisers of Belfast Mela. This type of event is well-received by audiences and significantly add to the attractiveness of the Council's parks and open spaces.
- 3.2 The partnership has delivered a diverse range of events which have had wide appeal for local communities, as well as attracting significant numbers of tourists and visitors to Council assets.
- 3.3 This year the Council has received a request from the Director of ArtsEkta to use Botanic Gardens for the Belfast Mela on 26 August 2018.
- 3.4 It is proposed that Council continues to provide financial support to the event (up to £20,000) given the positive economic impact it has for the city, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.
- 3.5 As a condition to funding, it is recommended that ArtsEkta is requested to facilitate community engagement and taster events in other local neighbourhoods, to build the audience from across the city. Specific locations could be identified in conjunction with the Community Parks Outreach team, ensuring a spread across the city.
- 3.6 In particular, the Mela organisers have highlighted the imminent completion of the Tropical Ravine and they are working with the Outreach team, in order to profile this city heritage venue as part of its launch.
- 3.7 In relation to facilitating the event itself, the key issues are:
1. In this particular instance the Council has received a request for use for Upper and Lower Botanic Gardens for the Belfast Mela on 26 August 2018 from 12.00noon to 6.00pm;

2. The event will require the closure of all or a substantial proportion of the facility, and restricted access to the general public;
3. The proposed timescale from set up to take down of the event is from 20st August to 29th August 2018 inclusive in Botanic Gardens;
4. ArtsEkta has requested permission to collect an entrance fee in the region of £5 per adult / child and access will be restricted to ticket holders only;
5. The event shall be subject to the preparation of an event management plan which shall cover all aspects of management including health and safety, access and will comply with the current events policy; and
6. A legal agreement will be provided by Legal Services which due to the nature of the events will include a bond for reinstatement costs.
7. If logistically the event cannot take place in Botanic Gardens, the organiser has requested to hold the same event in Ormeau Park.

3.8 Consultation by ArtsEkta will be undertaken with other local stakeholders such as Queens University, Lyric Theatre, local residents groups and the Friends of Botanic Gardens.

- An occasional licence will be applied for by the organisers for the sale of alcohol and an entertainment licence for the period of the event;
- This application will be supported by an Event Management Plan and will be subject to the organisers liaising with Council officers and meeting all statutory, legal and Health and safety requirements;
- Organisers will also be required to reinstate all Council property to its original condition after use. Organisers will be reminded that the current ground conditions and location of this event may have to change due to adverse weather conditions.

3.9 A legal agreement will be provided by Legal Services which, due to the nature of the events, will include a bond for reinstatement costs.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

3.11 Finance

Up to £20,000 to support the event, from existing Council revenue funds.

3.12 Human Resources

Staff may be required to work additional hours to cover the events outside normal hours and this will be charged to the hirer, in line with the process adopted in previous years.

3.13 Asset and Other Implications

Council officers will liaise with organisers in relation to the potential environmental impact of these events, and ensure that the legal agreements appropriately reflect the level of risk.

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The Events Policy for Parks and Leisure facilities and venues was previously screened. It is anticipated that this type of events will deliver a positive impact for equality and good relations.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Mary Peters Track - Management Arrangements

The Committee was advised that Athletics Northern Ireland (ANI) currently managed the Mary Peters Track as part of a contract that had been awarded 4.5 years ago.

The Assistant Director informed the Members that the contract was due to terminate on 30th June 2018, as a result of this, a new tender was being prepared and was scheduled to be released in late February 2018. The officer reported that, as June was one of the facilities busiest months, it was felt that it would be an inappropriate time to terminate the existing contract.

The officer confirmed that officers had been in contact with ANI and it had agreed to continue the management of the facility until 31st August 2018.

The Committee granted permission to extend the existing tender, which was due to terminate on 30th June 2018, for a two-month period to ensure a more appropriate date of 31st August 2018 for any potential handover of the management of the facilities at Mary Peters Track.

Support for Mary Peter's Trust and Commonwealth Games

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Mary Peters Trust seeking the Council's financial assistance to help support the work of the Trust for the 2018/19 financial year.

The Assistant Director detailed that an agreement was in place to co-ordinate funding allocations between the Mary Peters Trust, GLL Sports Foundation and Support

for Sport individual grants in order to avoid duplication. She stated that it was suggested that a contribution of £5,000 be made to the Trust, which was in line with contributions from previous years.

The Assistant Director reported that a request had also been received from the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council (NICGC), seeking financial support to assist in the costs associated with sending the Northern Ireland team to the Commonwealth Games, which would be held in Australia during April.

The Committee:

- agreed to provide the amount of £5,000 to the Mary Peters Trust which provided significant financial support for developing talented athletes from Belfast; and
- agreed to provide the amount of £15,000 to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council (NICGC) in support of the team attending the 2018 Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast, Australia.

Request for Approval of World Celtic Spey Casting event at the Waterworks Park

The Assistant Director advised that a request had been received from the Families at the Waterworks Fishing Club to support the third year of the Celtic World Spey Casting Invitational Challenge Event at the Waterworks Park.

The officer advised that the event would bring world class fishermen from all over the globe to Belfast, with over fifty competitors and 250 spectators estimated daily.

The Committee noted that the event would greatly enhance cross community relations and promote the Waterworks Park as a shared space.

The Committee agreed:

- to host the event on 18th – 20th May 2018 at the Waterworks Park, subject to completion of the appropriate Event Management Plans and on the condition that the Event Organisers meet all statutory requirements, including Public Liability Insurance and provide relevant Health and Safety documentation and Risk Assessments; and
- to provide additional funding up to £7,500 to host the event, to assist with the following:
 - £2,000 towards medals, gifts and trophies;
 - £2,000 towards the cost of daily lunches and hosting a reception at the Belfast Castle;
 - £1,000 for a compere for both the event and the competition;
 - £1,000 for bouncy castles for family engagement;
 - £500 for toilet hire;
 - £500 for first aid provision; and
 - £500 for the transport of International Competitors.

Live Here Love Here Campaign

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 inform members on the progress of the Live Here Love Here Campaign (LHLH) to date and to propose further support for the campaign.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- Note the progress made with the LHLH campaign to date and the benefits in collaborating in a wider behavioural change campaign.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

At a meeting of the Health and Environmental Services Committee on 6th February 2013, a report relating to the Council committing funding to the proposed Civic Pride Programme was considered. Committee agreed to commit £41,000 per annum of the Council’s existing anti-litter campaign budget to the project for a 3 year period, subject to appropriate funding from other agencies. On 7th August 2013 the Committee was updated and advised that the commencement of the project was delayed. Committee agreed that the Council would continue to support the campaign for 2014/15 and 2015/16. On 8th December 2015, the People and Communities Committee agreed that Council’s funding for the project would continue for the third year 2016/2017.

3.2 The ‘Civic Pride Programme’ has subsequently been re-branded as ‘Live Here Love Here’ (LHLH) and has been developed by a partnership of organisations including Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (formally Keep Northern Ireland Tidy), the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs and local Councils. Last year additional supporters, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Choice Housing came on board, and this year, McDonalds and Coca Cola have contributed to the project.

3.3 In year 4 of the campaign (2017/18), 9 councils supported the programme, 2 more than the previous year)

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon
- Belfast City Council
- Derry and Strabane District Council
- Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Mid Ulster District Council
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

3.4 The programme is made up of three elements: a media campaign; a volunteering support programme and; a small grants scheme. The aims of the LHLH programme are:

- To create a movement in the Northern Ireland community focused around the concept of Civic Pride;
- To effect behavioural change in the public and business community through the promotion of Civic Pride;
- To improve the quality of the built and natural environments in Northern Ireland;
- To continuously improve street and beach cleanliness in Northern Ireland;
- To promote and support local volunteers and volunteer networks to lead Civic Pride initiatives in their local areas;
- To increase opportunities for volunteering in Civic Pride Initiatives;
- To encouraging a sense of 'active communities' / local activism in Northern Ireland;
- To create a sense of ownership among local communities and individuals in waste reduction, waste management and recycling, use of green space;
- To promote public health through increased community engagement and community involvement in local and regional communities; and
- To encourage tourism through increasing the aesthetic appeal of the Northern Ireland landscape.

3.5 The LHLH Programme is managed by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. The small grants scheme was launched in September 2014 and the media campaign commenced in January 2015.

3.6 As well as an anti-littering message, the campaign also aims to improve the local environment by encouraging people to take action in their local communities through volunteering activities. The campaign consisted of local outdoor, bus and press advertising as well as Northern

Ireland wide TV advertising and digital activity within the participating Council areas

- 3.7** There are advantages to the Council in contributing to a collaborative approach to behaviour change campaigns. Previously the Council has developed and paid for its own TV campaign but as the advertisements were shown regionally all council areas received the benefit. In this collaborative approach, funding for the campaign is also being provided by other councils, DAERA and other agencies. In addition, community and other groups within Belfast have benefited directly through the small grants scheme, with £27,500 allocated to Belfast groups in 2017/18 including £7,000 allocated to Choice Housing and McDonalds' projects in the Belfast area this year.
- 3.8** Millward Brown Ulster was commissioned in 2015 to undertake quantitative research into the effectiveness of the small grant scheme. There was unanimous agreement across all groups interviewed that the funded projects helped to instil a feeling of civic pride among local people. These projects helped to make positive changes in the areas and in turn encouraged people to be more aware of the environment around them and to take pride and responsibility in their local areas.
- 3.9** The Live Here Love Here Campaign has achieved good progress towards its targets:
- **Awareness - Community engagement and involvement – the LHLH steering group set a target to achieve a 40% brand awareness of the Live Here Love Here programme across Northern Ireland. The most recent results in the market research to measure key impacts of Live Here Love Here showed (unprompted) brand awareness had increased on the previous year, achieving 23% in participating areas in 2016/17. Prompted recognition of Live Here Love Here advertising stood at 43% for TV and 27% for targeted social media. It is likely that the brand awareness will continue to increase given that the campaign is still ongoing and is mid-way through the 2017/18 media plan. On reflection the initial target was an ambitious given the level of funding for the campaign, which is Northern Ireland wide, and the DAERA target for 2017/18 is set at 24%.**
 - **Cleaner streets – achieve a reduction in the Litter Pollution Index of three % points by the end of year 3. The annual Litter Pollution Index (LPI) measurements available since the campaign media activity first commenced has shown a decrease from 17% in**

2014/15 to 15% in 2016/17. Over the same period dog fouling has decreased across Northern Ireland from 12% to 6%.

- Number of volunteers – e.g. to engage 50,000 volunteers in the Live Here Love Here programme within 3 years. The annual total number engaged has increased from 107,616 in 2015/16 to 112,834 in 2016/17. This figure looks set to increase again in 2017/18. Final figures for 2017/18 will be available in May 2018.

3.10 In Year 3, 2016/17; Total funding was £325,000

By engaging new partners in Year 4, 2017/2018; Total funding was £434,500

	LHLH Partners	
	2016/17	2017/18
Local Council's Support	170,000	273,000
Tourism NI	20,000	0
DAERA	70,000	91,500
Choice Housing	22,000	25,000
NI Housing Executive	20,000	20,000
McDonald's	0	25,000
TOTAL	325,000	434,500

3.11 Funding for year 5 (2018/19) £83,500 has been confirmed from DAERA. Continuation of funding has also been confirmed from Choice Housing (£20,000) and the NI Housing Executive (£20,000). In addition, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has received positive indications from a number of partners that they intend to support Live Here Love Here next year including, for the first time, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

3.12 In light of the growing awareness of plastics escaping into our oceans (est. 8m tonnes per annum) as highlighted by the recent documentary Blue Planet II, the restrictions on the exports of low grade plastics to China, and the UK

Government's recent publication of the 25 Year Environment Plan: A Green Future, which recognises the problems caused by litter and proposes new actions for England, the Council's ongoing support for the Live Here Love Here campaign is both timely and demonstrates its commitment to environmental improvement.

3.13 The original Committee report had agreed 3 years funding. In January 2017 this Committee agreed to extend this funding for a further year. Funding had been provided for the project in revenue budgets for this coming year 2018/19 to ensure delivery of the priorities and aims of the Council as outlined in the Belfast Agenda. This will also be on the proviso that all other contributors continue to fund the project to a level which makes the project viable.

3.14 Financial & Resource Implications

The cost of the council's contribution of £41,000 will be met from within the existing Cleansing Services anti-litter campaign budget for 2018/19, there will be no additional resource implications to the council.

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or good relations implications in this report."

The Committee noted the update provided.

Mobile Catering Concessions

The Assistant Director advised that the Council's former Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 8th August 2013, had agreed to establish pilot programmes in four parks through a public expression of interest process in order to gauge the uptake and assess if further mobile catering outlets should be provided in other locations. She advised that the department had since undertaken a review of the pilot.

The Committee was advised further that an expression of interest had taken place in April 2015 in relation to the above pilots, however, expression of interests had only been received for two of the four sites, namely, the Waterworks and Cherryvale. The terms of those agreements were now ending and the department had reviewed the level of income received and the level of administration required to manage the agreements. As a result, the department had launched an expression of interest process, based on a new approach, for a three-year period, to commence on 1st April, 2018. The sites identified in the original pilot were to be included as well as sites that had existing hot food and ice cream concessions, she advised that those included, but not exclusively, Belmont Park, Botanic Gardens, Cavehill Adventurous Playground, Cherryvale Park, City of Belfast Playing Fields, Drumglass Park, Dunville Park, Falls Park, Grove Playing Fields, Musgrave Park, Ormeau Park, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon

Park, Victoria Park, Waterworks and Woodvale Park. The officer explained that the submissions would be evaluated over the next few weeks for arrangements to commence at the beginning of April 2018.

Following a query regarding the proposed change to how the rental fees would be calculated, the Assistant Director undertook to update the Member directly.

The Committee agreed that any additional proposals for sites outside of the existing ones would be considered through the Area Working Groups and that a further report would be submitted to Committee in due course.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Japanese Knotweed

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor McReynolds raised:

“This council acknowledges the massive impact Japanese Knotweed is having in properties across Belfast and Northern Ireland; acknowledges that the matter remains civil in law; agrees that the Council must do more to assist individuals whose homes are negatively impacted upon; agrees to write to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to see if they would be content to co-fund a Belfast City Council 'not for profit' service to treat properties across Belfast.

I would therefore ask the Committee to consider assessing the feasibility of this request.”

With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor McReynolds addressed the Committee and outlined his concerns regarding the management and control of Japanese Knotweed across the City. He requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would consider options as to how the Council could, in conjunction with the NIEA, assist the ratepayers of Belfast with the removal of this highly invasive species.

The Assistant Director advised that the Council received regular enquiries and complaints regarding the presence of Japanese Knotweed on residential and commercial sites and on vacant land. However, she explained that the Council had no legislative authority to deal with Japanese Knotweed beyond its own properties and open spaces.

Several Members cautioned against the Council taking on any role in respect of Japanese Knotweed removal and highlighted the significant resource implications which the Council might incur should it agree to co-fund an eradication service.

A Member requested that, when considering this matter, officers would also consider alternative ways to treat Japanese Knotweed rather than herbicide injection which involved injecting the pesticide glyphosate directly into the stem. She explained that the long-term safety of this product was, as yet, unknown.

The Committee agreed that an update report would be submitted to a future meeting.

Signage at Cavehill Country Park – Councillor McCusker

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor McCusker addressed the Committee and outlined his request which sought the erection of signage at various locations which would provide contact information for people who were in distress.

The Committee noted the sensitive nature of the request and the ongoing work throughout the City to prevent suicides in public places. In addition, a number of the Members stressed the importance of ensuring that any measures taken in relation to this work were appropriate and proportionate and would not cause unnecessary fear or anxiety associated with any of the locations.

The Committee agreed that an update report would be submitted to a future meeting.

Chairperson