

# Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 14th August, 2014

## MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McKee (Chairman);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Hendron);  
Alderman Rodgers;  
Councillors Beattie, Convery,  
Corr, Haire, Hanna, Hussey,  
Kyle, Mac Giolla Mhín, McNamee,  
Ó Donnghaile, Thompson and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;  
Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks  
and Leisure; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Robinson and Councillors Attwood, Cunningham, McCabe and Mullan.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th June 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 July.

### Declaration of Interest

In respect of Item 21, viz., 'Proposed Relocation of Moyard Playground', Alderman Rodgers declared an interest in that he was a member of the Belfast Education and Library Board.

### Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2014/2015

(Mrs. J. Wilson, Business Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report which provided an update on the Department's financial performance during the first quarter of the financial year for 2014/2015:

#### **"1. Relevant Background Information**

**The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed on 18 June 2010 that:**

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- the council would produce financial reporting packs for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and each Standing Committee on a quarterly basis
- the Budget and Transformation Panel would also receive monthly financial updates if there were any significant issues to report.

The reporting pack contains a summary dashboard of the financial indicators and an executive summary explaining the financial performance of the Parks and Leisure department. It also provides a more detailed explanation of each of the relevant indicators covering the year to date and the year end forecast position.

The style and layout reflect much of the discussion and feedback arising from the members' financial training at the end of September 2010. As we previously advised the committee, we will continue to develop the style and contents of the reports in liaison with members.

Central finance and our departmental management team have worked together to develop the information within this financial reporting pack.

**2. Key issues**

The current performance in quarter one of the Parks and Leisure department shows a -3.2% variance against the year to date budget; i.e. an under spend of £172k.

There are a number of key reasons for the under spend within the department as follows:

Direct Employee expenses are under spent by 3%. This relates mainly to a number of vacant posts within some units which have been delayed being filled due to ongoing recruitment processes or reviews. It is likely that this will remain as an under spend for the remainder of the financial year and is reflected in the forecast.

Utility costs are currently under spent by £51k or 6% however it is not expected to remain at this level as problems with the performance of CHP units continue to be an issue in Leisure.

Grants are under spent by 28% or £64K. As the centralised process for distributing grants is implemented it is hoped that the timing of the payment of grants will improve and any committed but unclaimed grant funds can be identified and redistributed in the second tranche of funding.

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Supplies and Services within the department are under spent by 20%. This expenditure relates to a number of programmes of work that are being developed and also programmes of work with external partners that are underway and are being monitored on a monthly basis.

Resurfacing of paths is £55k under spent, however the work is on schedule to be completed by the end of the year.

Compensation claims are £51k over budget in Parks and Cemetery Services. The timing of compensation claims is largely unpredictable however the department continues to work with Legal Services to improve the reporting of incidents and ensuring these are managed effectively.

Income for Leisure Centres is down on budget by £56k. Promotional activities around membership campaigns and summer schemes have been running for a number of weeks which may improve the overall performance as the year progresses.

Income from fees and charges at the Zoo is up £25k against budget. This is largely due to a successful Easter. Income at the shop has also improved and it is £12k up on budget. The shop will continue to be tightly managed and a trading account is in place for the shop and regular stock takes are in place.

At quarter 1 the department is forecasting a year end under spend of £50k due to many of the factors set out above. The departmental management team will continue to monitor the variances and take appropriate action as necessary. The financial reporting pack contains more detail on the financial performance in each of the services within the department.

**3. Resource Implications**

There is a year to date under spend of £172k (-3.2%) and a forecast under-spend of some £50k (0.2%) by year end due to issues set out above.

**5. Recommendations**

Members are recommended to note the above report and associated financial reporting pack.”

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The Business Manager outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered a range of Members' questions in relation thereto.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Partner Agreements Delivery Framework**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable briefings to be delivered to those parties who so wished to receive them.

**Green Flag Awards**

The Committee was reminded that the Green Flag Awards Scheme had been established in 1996 and was administered by Keep Britain Tidy, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Green Spaces organisation. The Assistant Director pointed out that twelve parks had received accreditation under the Scheme. She reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 8th April, 2013, it had agreed to recommend the Knocknagoney Linear Park, the Dunville Park and the Woodvale Park for assessment under the Scheme in 2014.

The Committee was advised that both the Dunville and Woodvale Parks had been awarded Green Flag accreditation, whilst the Knocknagoney Linear Park had failed narrowly to meet the standard. She indicated that the Department would submit the Knocknagoney Linear Peak for re-assessment in 2015, together with the Connswater Community Greenway.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Active Communities - Correspondence from Sport NI**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Active Communities (AC) is a Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) programme, delivered from April 2010 to March 2015, through 11 council groups/ consortia including BCC.**
- 1.2 In July 2014, SNI wrote to the Chief Executive (attached) and officers asking BCC to make a formal response by the end of August, regarding our position on their proposal to seek a 30% financial contribution from Councils to AC programme costs from April 2015. Sport NI has also asked for a contribution of £5.5K towards the development of a Regional Sports Facilities Management Strategy and a district level council report.**
- 1.3 As part of the ongoing programme evaluation process, a value for money (VFM) and compliance audit of the BCSDN AC**

contract was commissioned by the Council in May 2013. A report was completed by Cavanagh/Kelly Chartered Accountants in July 2013 and high level contract and management issues were considered by the Parks and Leisure Committee in October 2013. At the same Committee agreed to undertake an options appraisal on the future management and delivery of the AC programme, ahead of the contract renewal date from April 2015.

## **2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 From the period April 2010 – March 2014, Sport NI have invested over £1.6m in the AC programme for Belfast and the Council annually contribute up to a maximum of £50,000. This is currently managed in one of 3 ways:**

- Sub-contract to Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN);**
- Sub-contract to Disability Sport NI; and**
- Directly employing coaches through Leisure Services (participation).**

**The AC programme has proved to be a valuable coaching and community resource, which has led to high levels of participation in the city including under-represented groups, whilst providing opportunities for partnership working.**

**Quantifiable benefits include the delivery of 40,419 sessions, 44,500 coaching hours, involving 67,286 participants with 587,148 participations realised.**

- 2.2 There are a number of options to be considered when reviewing the delivery of the AC programme going forward in the context of the Sport NI request including:**

**Option 1: Do nothing and close the AC programme without 100% SNI funding;**

**Option 2: Continue ‘as is’ with BCSDN and 30% BCC funding contribution (estimated at £191,987, based on 2013/14 AC programme actual spend £639,958 including £75,104 management fee);**

**Option 3: Reduce the overall size of AC programme with BCSDN, within affordability limit determined by BCC;**

**Option 4: Bring the full management and delivery of the AC programme in-house to BCC in partnership with sports governing bodies and Disability Sport NI.**

A full analysis of the risks and benefits of each option will now be undertaken, to bring to Committee for its consideration, once the final Sport NI position is agreed.

### 2.3 Issue to note in response to SNI consultation

Sport NI is seeking the Council's commitment to exploring a 30% contribution to AC costs, as they consider options for the refresh of the programme. In response to SNI, there are a number of key issues to note:

- The programme is a very positive and the Council supports its continuation;
- This is a timely opportunity to integrate and align the positive outputs and outcomes of the AC programme into the emerging community plan;
- Any contribution will be a growth area for the P&L budget and it is difficult to determine affordability at this stage in the estimates process. Currently, no allowance has been made for such a contribution;
- An options appraisal will be undertaken to determine the most efficient 'fit-for-purpose' delivery model.

2.4 Sport NI is also seeking a contribution from Council in relation to the development of a local area facility plan. There are benefits in being party to this process, to ensure that the plan aligns to the Council's own objectives and priorities.

2.5 Officers will continue to work with Sports NI and determine a value for money option for consideration by Committee in due course.

### 3 Resource Implications

Financial: up to £5,500 contribution to Sport NI strategy document, available in existing revenue budgets. 30% contribution to AC programme to be determined

### 4 Equality Implications

There are no equality and good relations implications at this stage. Screening of any emerging proposal will be undertaken in the future.

**5 Recommendations**

- Agree the consultation response issues above;
- That officers undertake work to determine an affordable and value for money delivery model in light of the likely forthcoming SNI request for the 2014/15 programme costs; and
- Agree to the contribution of £5.5K to SNI towards the development of a Regional Sports Facilities Management Strategy and a district level council report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that a further report in this regard would be submitted for consideration in due course.

**Burial Lands at Dundrod – Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware that as part of the approach to cemetery and crematorium development we have been engaged in a process to identify a site for development as a new cemetery and that discussions have been ongoing around a potential site at Dundrod.

The site at Dundrod came to the Council through an expression of interest exercise which the Council initiated. This site was put forward by an agent acting on behalf of a business man who holds an option on the site. Officers from the Parks and Leisure Department, Legal Services and the Estates Management Unit have held a number of meetings with the party who holds an option on the site along with their agent. The Council is aware of who the landowners are but at this point have had no direct dealings with them.

A company, Carston Undertakings Ltd, has now been established and has taken over the option on the site. Carston Undertakings has commissioned a number of pieces of work around the development of the site and a delegation led by Strategic Planning made a presentation, on their behalf, to the Committee in June, outlining their proposals for the development of a cemetery on the site.

**2 Key Issues**

Members will be aware that in selecting a site for development as a potential cemetery there are several issues that needs to be considered. These include:

- **Hydro-geological conditions** – there are strict guidelines around the soil type and depth that are required and the potential impact on water sources in the area. NIEA specify the tests that are required to be carried out in relation to this and for the majority of cemetery developments they require Tier 3 tests to be undertaken which are expensive and take approximately 18 months to complete.
- **Access and traffic** – the Council need to ensure that any cemetery we develop is accessible 365 days a year and that satisfactory access arrangements are provided in accordance with relevant policies i.e. that accesses will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.
- **Planning assessment** – consideration needs to be given to the ease of obtaining planning permission and any issues that might impact on this such as archaeology, ecology and the fit of the development within the proposed location.
- **Affordability** – given the strict guidelines around cemetery development it is unlikely that a site will be found that does not require significant capital works to bring it to a standard that meets all the guidelines. The costs including the land acquisitions costs and the costs of any development works will have to be balanced against the percentage of the site which can be developed for burials and the number of burial plots that can be provided within the site.

Given the constraints around the development of a cemetery site and the potential costs the Council has commissioned a number of initial studies of the site at Dundrod. These are:

**1. Ground investigations undertaken by Glover Site Investigations Ltd (Oct 2011)**

A ground investigation was undertaken on the site to provide geotechnical information for input to the assessment of the suitability of the site for burials.

**2. Assessment of land for cemetery development, Dundrod, undertaken by McLorinan Consulting Ltd (MCLC) (July 2013)**

The main purpose of the screening assessment was to:

- Review previous site investigation works undertaken.
- Identify, in overview, whether the general geological and hydrological setting had the characteristics suitable for avoiding unacceptable environmental impact on groundwater and surface waters.
- Determine what level of additional data may be required to assess the risk to the environment if the overview indicated potentially suitable conditions. Undertake initial engagement with NIEA (environmental regulator) on site suitability prior to embarking on more detailed assessment.

**3. A Planning Report prepared by Fleming Mounstephen Planning (Sept 2013)**

The report provides a broad planning context and notes potential difficulties including access provision. A pre-application consultation was held with representatives from DOE Strategic Projects Division, Roads Service, Rivers Agency, NIEA Natural Heritage and NIEA Water Management Unit.

**4.A screening assessment of a potential cemetery development site with respect to access and sightlines undertaken by RPS (June 2014)**

This feasibility study considers the access and visibility arrangements that can be provided at the proposed development site and make recommendations on the acceptability or otherwise of the site in terms of access and visibility arrangements.

The above studies have all been completed and to ensure that the Committee is in an informed position to make a decision on this site we have commissioned URS, who have undertaken previous assessments for the Council in relation to our search for a new cemetery site to draw together all the findings of the previous four studies around the viability of the site and to provide a concise view on the constraints to developing the site to allow Members to make a decision on the options available.

This piece of work has not yet been completed and we expect to have the final report in late August. Officers will bring a report to the Committee meeting in September outlining the findings and making a recommendation on the way forward for this site.

A planning application for a right turn into the site has been submitted by the option holder and as a result local residents have become aware of the potential development of the site as a cemetery. A delegation of local residents, accompanied by their MP and a local Councillor, recently met with the Director of Parks and Leisure to raise their concerns about the proposed development. These concerns have also been picked up by the local media.

Members are advised that the Council has not entered into any contractual arrangements with the option holder regarding this site and nor has the Council made any commitment in terms of agreeing any acquisition terms for the site, including the purchase price. If the site is deemed to be viable for development as a cemetery and Members agree, the Council will enter into negotiations to ascertain whether the land can be acquired at a level of value which could be recommended for Council approval.

Members will also be aware that the Committee has agreed that its preferred position for the future provision of cremation services for the city is the redevelopment and refurbishment of the City of Belfast Crematorium at Roselawn. Officers have been working on bringing this project forward and are currently in the process of commissioning an economic appraisal to consider the options. Members will be kept updated on this project as it progresses.

## **5 Recommendations**

**Members are asked to note the contents of this report.”**

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Playground Improvement Programme 2014/2015**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1 Relevant Background Information**

**The 2013/2014 improvement works were complete by the end of March 2014 resulting in the following playgrounds being transformed;**

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- Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park
- New Lodge
- Clara Street
- Dover Street
- Taughmonagh
- Michelle Baird Memorial

A total investment of £740k improved accessibility and play value at each of the sites, providing new inclusive equipment, safety surfacing, boundary fencing, site furniture and landscaping works.

Members are also reminded that in June 2013 Committee agreed to a one year refurbishment programme at the following playground sites during this financial year:

- Stewart Street
- Queen Mary's Gardens
- Carnamore
- Lemberg Street
- Falls Park
- Cherryvale Playing Fields.

These sites were prioritised using independent inspections carried out by 'Play Services Ireland' in April 2013. A quality score for all 78 playgrounds was based on European safety standards BS EN 1176 & 1177. Inspection reports also continue to identify and prioritise repairs to existing equipment for ongoing maintenance purposes.

As in previous years Community Park Managers and Parks Outreach Managers will continue to assist with the distribution of information relating to playground improvements to members and local communities in the coming year.

Members should also note that this year's cycle of independent inspections have been completed in May 2014. Priority sites for the 2015 -2016 programme will be identified based on quality scoring and recommendations reported to Committee in the coming months.

**2     Key Issues**

For the 2014/15 programme the investment of £745k will be jointly funded from the playground budget and the Council's capital budget.

**Information regarding additional LGR sites**

Local Government Reform will see additional playgrounds transferred from Castlereagh and Lisburn in 2015. These will be inspected by our independent playground inspector and scored in accordance with our standard procedure along with the current list of playgrounds. Refurbishments will be based on scores arising from the independent inspection report. The playgrounds to be transferred are as follows:-

**Lisburn playgrounds:**

- White Rise, Lagmore
- Twinbrook
- Fullerton Park
- Areema
- Edenderry
- Jubilee Park
- Mount Eagles Park
- Sally Gardens

**Castlereagh playgrounds**

- Cregagh play area
- Roddens Crescent
- Clonduff Drive
- Carema Allen
- Belvoir Drive
- Tullycarnet Resource centre
- Tullycarnet Park

In addition there are a number of playgrounds attached to Community Services which are currently managed by the Development Department. It is proposed that these are also transferred to be included in the Parks and Leisure Playground Improvement Programme. If agreed a further report will be brought to Committee outlining the resource implications of this for the overall programme.

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial**

All refurbishment work will be funded through the Playground Refurbishment revenue budget 2014 -15 and from the Council's capital budget. The total investment will be £745k.

**4      Recommendations**

**Members are asked to note the playground sites to be refurbished this financial year and note that a further report will be brought to Committee setting out the refurbishment programme for the next three years.**

**Members are also asked to agree in principle to the transfer of Community Service playgrounds into the programme, subject to a report on the resource implications being brought back to Committee.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Boxing Sculptures - Update**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the capital-funded scheme which would oversee the erection of three boxing sculptures within the undernoted sites:

- The Cathedral Gardens – statue of Rinty Monaghan;
- The Dunville Park – statue of John Caldwell; and
- The Woodvale Park – statue dedicated to the boxers of the Shankill area.

The Committee agreed that the Council would manage and maintain the statues once they had been installed.

**Drumglass Park - Charity Live Musical Event**

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from Bachus Inns Ltd. seeking permission to host three open-air events in the Drumglass Park in September 2014. The Assistant Director reported that the events were to be held in conjunction with the Down’s Syndrome Association. She informed the Committee that, since the report had been issued, a further request had been made by the applicant to change the dates for the event to June, 2015.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the request to allow additional information to be provided on the Down’s Syndrome Association’s involvement in the proposed event and on any proposed consultation which would be undertaken with residents living adjacent to the park.

**Proposal to Develop the Blanchflower Playing Fields**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.      Background Information**

**The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of an emerging proposal from Harland and Wolff Welders Football**

club which would seek to develop Blanchflower Playing Fields into a modern playing field facility with Harland and Wolff Welders at its centre.

Harland and Wolff are seeking a lease from the Council in relation to the playing fields at Blanchflower. The Club has preliminary proposals which would, if realised, deliver:

1. A new home stadium for Harland and Wolff Football Club which would be IFA Premiership Standard;
2. Clubhouse facilities including changing rooms, medical room, gymnasium and media room;
3. The Clubhouse would also include a Boardroom and function room with kitchen facilities for the preparation of food;
4. 4 additional 3G artificial turf pitches with ancillary structures including floodlighting, additional changing, and car parking.

The project is at an early stage in its development and lacks detail at this time. The club has however established a Steering Group to manage the project. The Club wishes to engage with the Council both as the landowner and also a potential funder of the project.

The Club has initiated a series of discussions with sports clubs and organisations from with the Greater East Belfast area and has indicated that there is interest from these groups to use such a facility should one be developed.

The Club acknowledges that this is a significant project to undertake and recognises that it will require significant levels of funding from a variety of sources. The Club also acknowledges that the development may need to be undertaken in a phased manner to reflect the availability of resources.

The Club is seeking the Council's support to move this project forward and has requested that an Official representative from the Council join the Steering Group in an advisory capacity.

2. **Key Issues**

The Committee is asked to consider the following points:

1. Harland and Wolff Welders is a well established Football Club and also manages a successful Social Club;

2. The proposal in relation to Blanchflower Playing Fields is in its early stages and will require significant planning and funding to be fully realised;
3. The Club recognises that the proposal goes beyond its own aspirations and needs and seeks to provide much needed modern facilities in East Belfast;
4. Through discussions with representatives from the Club and elected Representatives from the area, Officers are satisfied that the Club is aware of the ambitious nature of the project and is seeking to move forward in a structured and professional manner;
5. A business plan to demonstrate the feasibility, deliverability and sustainability of the proposal has not yet been produced but will be undertaken by the Club;
6. The Club wishes to engage with the Council throughout the process and involve the council in the development of the project.

3. Resource Implications

Financial Implications

The financial implications are unknown at this time.

4. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report and agree:

1. To support the proposal in principle on the grounds that it would enhance the facility and enhance provision in sporting facilities in East Belfast;
2. Agree to nominate a Council Officer to provide advice and guidance to the Steering Group; and
3. Agree to receive a presentation from the Club at a future date following completion of the business case and the firming up of proposals, costs and potential sources of funding.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Winter Warmer Events

The Committee agreed to grant the free use of the Andersonstown and Ballysillan Leisure Centres, together with the Indoor Tennis Centre at the Ormeau Park, for the hosting of four ‘Winter Warmer Events’ during October and November. It was noted that the events were being co-ordinated by the Council’s Healthy Ageing Co-ordination Group in conjunction with the Leisure Participation Unit.

**Northern Ireland Street League – Funding**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

**NI Street League is a charity working with homeless people and marginalised groups in Northern Ireland through the medium of football. Their activities are principally focused in Belfast and their aim is to use football to reach some of the most marginalized people in our society. Using football as a hook they then provide education, training, and volunteer opportunities.**

**In October 2014 the charity is bringing the NI Homeless Football Team to the Homeless World Cup in Santiago Chile and 10 teams from Belfast are attending. In order to do so they have acquired a cocktail of support from several organizations and via fundraising from for example IFA, NIHE, Extern and comic relief.**

**The Parks and Leisure department has been approached to help with the overall funding for this event and the shortfall of £4400.**

**Advice from the Legal Services Manager has indicated that as a general rule district councils do not have any legal power to contribute to the funds of charitable organisations. The only exception to that general rule being where an application for financial assistance is made under criteria which the Council has in place in relation to the incurring of expenditure for special purposes under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 section 37 (previously known as section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.)**

**The Act permits the council to make any payment for any purpose which in its opinion is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to:**

- a) the council;**
- b) the district or any part of its district; or**
- c) the inhabitants of its district of any part of its district.**

**The amount of money available under Section 37 is subject to an annual cap and in determining whether any payment should be made the Council must ask whether the benefit would be commensurate with the payment to be made.**

### Key Issues

- The NI Street League has made a request to the Council for a financial contribution to the Homeless World Cup event
- The project is principally focused on reaching excluded communities in Belfast; changing peoples' lives, creating role models, and using sport to improve the quality of life in the city. The benefits include: breaking out of homelessness and maintaining independence, reducing crime, physical and mental health improvement, accessing training/education/employment/volunteering, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, tackling sectarianism and racism, developing role models and sustainable communities. These outcomes have been evidenced via two evaluations (2012, 2014), which are available on request, and in feedback from stakeholders.
- Should the Committee be minded to make a contribution to the trust, given its charitable status, the contribution would have to be made under Section 37 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
- An assessment of the request against the criteria agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee in 2004 has indicated that the request would bring a direct benefit to the inhabitants of Belfast.
- It is proposed that the Committee seek the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to make a contribution of £4,400 to the NI Street League under Section 37 Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011. If agreed it is considered that the benefit obtained will be commensurate with the payment made.

### Financial

The proposed £4,400 can be accommodated within the current Section 37 limit and if approved will be provided through existing departmental budgets

### Equality and Good Relations Implications

Given the focus on tackling sectarianism and racism, it is anticipated that this project will have a positive impact on promoting equality of opportunity and good relations.

### Recommendations

The Committee is asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Council agree to make a contribution of £4,400 to the NI Street League and resolve that the expenditure be approved under Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would bring direct benefits to the inhabitants of the district and that the direct benefits would be commensurate with the payment made.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### Ozone Indoor Tennis Arena – Upgrade

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Background Information

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the timetable and implications of the work scheduled to upgrade the flooring and lighting provision of The Ozone Indoor Tennis Centre. Additional upgrade works have been scheduled for the lighting within the laser quest facility and some minor refurbishments have been planned for the reception area. The planned upgrade to the tennis flooring surface will result in the arena attaining a two star standard under the International Tennis Association (ITA) grading system.

2 Key Issues

The planned works are scheduled to commence on Monday 13th October 2013 with a completion date of Friday 16th January 2015. The budget allocation is as follows -

Tennis surface upgrading - £70,000

Tennis hall lighting upgrade - £75,000

Laser Quest lighting upgrade - £25,000

Laser Quest exterior wall repairing – financed within existing budgets

Reception area painted and some floor resurfacing – financed within existing budgets.

It will be possible to maintain a reduced level of customer provision within the facility during the upgrade period however the tennis courts and climbing wall will have to close at this time. The climbing wall forms part of the

extended tennis hall and the flooring surface of this area will also be renewed as part of the project. Furthermore, the health and safety considerations pertaining to general customer access, dust, noise and glue based adhesive have resulted in a recommendation to close the climbing wall for the duration of the upgrade.

The Laser Quest facility, whilst, being upgraded with a new lighting system, will only be subject to minimum duration closures which will be mutually agreed between local management and property and projects colleagues. The works connected with the lighting upgrade are expected to be primarily undertaken during scheduled down time within the Laser Quest facility.

The Reception area will be painted and some flooring replaced. A closure of this area is not required. Similarly, the fitness suite and changing areas will operate as normal.

### **3 Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

Income during the equivalent period (13th Oct 2013 – 16th January 2014) was recorded as being:

Climbing - £15,246  
Tennis courses - £13,174  
Tennis casual - £25,302

In addition, it is envisaged that approximately 200 Boost members may avail of the option to freeze their memberships during this time. Based upon the present charges of £26 or £13 per month an estimation of a further £11 310 of lost income would need to be noted.

Total projected lost income of £51,858. It should also be noted that the newly improved lighting system within the tennis hall is expected to generate approximately £10,000 of efficiency savings on an ongoing annual basis.

#### **Human Resources**

All affected staff to be briefed accordingly. Due to the reduced service provision some staff will be afforded the option of taking annual leave or temporarily transferring to other council leisure facilities.”

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The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to the partial closure of the Indoor Tennis Arena from 13th October till 16th January as outlined within the report.

**Playgroup Building at Ormeau Park**

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it renew, with effect from 1st July, 2014, the lease between the Council and the tenant at the above-mentioned property for a further 5-year period with the rent to be set at £3,880 per annum.

**Grampian Avenue Play Area - Licence Renewal**

The Committee was reminded that the former Client Services (Parks and Amenities) Sub-Committee had, in January 2000, agreed to acquire a portion of land at Grampian Avenue for the development of a park and associated play facilities. The Director reminded the Committee that the Council had entered into an initial four-year licence agreement with the Department for Regional Development and Helm Housing Association for the land, which had lapsed in April, 2006. Thereafter, the Council had renewed that licence on a month-to-month basis. The Director reported that, after re-evaluation, it had been deemed appropriate to seek to extend the terms of that licence over a longer-term period.

The Committee agreed to extend the licences with both the Department for Regional Development and Helm Housing for the land at Grampian Avenue for a period of 5 years, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Beechvale Farm – Leasing to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute**

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it renew the current lease between the Council and the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute for a further 5-year term from 1st December, 2014, with the rent to be set at £8,000 per annum.

**Licence Agreement - 155-157 Newtownards Road**

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it would enter into a licence agreement with the Department for Social Development (DSD) until the period ending 31st March, 2015, to enable the Council to develop a 'pocket park' on a vacant site at the above-mentioned location as part of the Renewing the Routes Programme.

The Committee noted also that the site would transfer from the DSD to the Council in April, 2015, and agreed that, during the interim period, the Council would manage and maintain the park subject to funding being obtained from the DSD.

**Pitches Strategy - Musgrave Park Proposals**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**1. Background Information**

The Committee is reminded that as part of its Pitches Strategy it was agreed that Musgrave Park would receive investment to provide a 4 room changing pavilion. In addition, the Committee has been previously authorised:

1. The inclusion of a reception room within the changing pavilion, on condition that it receives planning approval and the cost is met by St Brigid's GAC or other external funding source; and
2. The extension of the existing training pitch up to full championship size, on condition that planning approval is received and the funding is secured external to the Council;

In the course of ongoing discussions with St Brigid's GAC the Club has indicated a willingness to invest to enhance the facility through (a) the erection of security fencing which would be intended to minimise unauthorised use of the pitch; and (b) to install floodlighting which would facilitate flexible use of the pitch during the winter months to support the playing of end of season championship games and training and (c) to provide a path around the pitch area.

**2. Key Issues**

The Committee is asked to note the following:

1. Planning permission has been received, albeit with lighting restrictions, for the agreed works and also the proposed additional works as outlined in this report; although the approval is conditional on the floodlighting not being used between April and October each year;
2. St Brigid's currently has a Facilities Management Agreement which has just short of 13 years remaining;
3. The investment represents a desire by the Club to enhance the facility;
4. The Club has indicated that it is prepared to make the investment subject to acceptable costs being provided;
5. The works will be undertaken as part of the contract for the construction of the changing pavilion and will be delivered to an acceptable standard;
6. Whilst the facility is subject to a Facilities Management Agreement the asset remains under the ownership of BCC; therefore should the Council agree to permit the investment to go ahead, the Council will assume

maintenance responsibilities for the fencing, path and floodlighting.

3. **Resource Implications**

**Financial Implications**

The capital cost of the works will be met by St Brigid's GAC, however, the annual revenue costs plus future replacement costs will incur expenditure by the Council.

**Human Resource Implications**

There are no additional human resource implications

**Asset and Other Implications**

As indicated in the 'Background' the erection of the fencing will help to minimise unauthorised use of the pitch; the path will facilitate movement around the pitches. The floodlighting will help pre season training and facilitate end of season games. However, it will be important to ensure that the pitches receive adequate recovery time during the closed season to reflect the high level of use of this facility. It is therefore anticipated that the use of the pitches over the winter months will be minimal.

5. **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to agree to the provision of the additional works as outlined on condition that:

1. The costs of the works are met through sources other than BCC;
2. Any variation to the existing FMA will require approval by the Parks and Leisure Committee."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Ormeau Park - Amendment to Pitches Strategy Proposal**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. **Relevant Background Information**

The purpose of this report is to reconsider the proposal from the Pitches Strategy relating to Ormeau Park within the context of the emerging Leisure Transformation Programme.

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Members are reminded that within the Pitches Strategy it was agreed that the Council would provide a 3rd generation artificial turf pitch with fencing and floodlighting and a changing pavilion at Ormeau Park.

In line with that decision a planning application has been lodged with the Planning service and this is currently receiving consideration. At a recent meeting with the Planning Service concern was expressed about the location of the proposed pitch and the pavilion.

Following discussion the location of the pitch was accepted on technical grounds, however concern remained over the location of the pavilion. Planning Service indicated that it would prefer the new pavilion to be located immediately adjacent to the Ozone Building.

Members will be aware that the Leisure Transformation Programme has been developed and adopted, post the Pitches Strategy. Under Leisure Transformation it is intended that the management of our Leisure assets transfer to a Trust Model.

As work on Leisure Transformation continues on the development of a specification, it is proposed that the development of a new pavilion be delayed and that Officers explore the extent of the works and associated costs of refurbishing part of the Ozone to accommodate the addition of the 3G pitch.

It is intended that work on the construction of the 3G pitch be continued with a view to completion in 2015.

**2. Key Issues**

The key issue for the Committee at this time is that there is likely to be a time delay in the construction of the 3G pitch and the delivery of the changing facilities.

**3. Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to agree that the construction of a stand-alone changing pavilion at Ormeau Park be deferred at this time and that the construction of the 3G pitch be progressed.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Marrowbone Millenium Park - Playing Pitch**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

The Committee will be aware that the Marrowbone Millennium Park has recently benefited from the construction of a 3G artificial turf pitch. Members will recall that as part of the terms and conditions of the funding from Sports NI the Council is required to provide the management model for the new pitch with a view to transferring it to the community.

To facilitate this process, as previously reported, Council Officers are working with representatives from the Ardoyne Youth Providers Forum (AYPF) to develop a programme of use for the facility and to support the building of capacity within the community to enable it to manage the facility in the future. Emerging from ongoing discussions with the Group a number of issues have emerged which require Committee approval, the purpose of this report is to present these issues to Committee for decision.

**2 Key Issues**

There are a number of number of issues to be considered by Committee as detailed below:

**Ball stop netting and anti climb sheeting**

Post completion of the capital works AYPF has requested the following:

- a) An additional ball stop netting to the high level fence to be erected to further minimise the potential for balls to escape out of the facility; the estimated cost of this is in the region of £ 17,000.
- b) Metal sheeting to be erected over the entrance gates which are currently being used to climb into the facility for unauthorised use. The estimated cost of this is in the region of £1,700.

The costs will be accommodated within the existing maintenance budgets.

**Provision of Dug outs**

The group has requested the Council's permission to install dug outs on adjacent to the 3G pitch for use during matches. The cost of this will be met through the Ardoyne Youth Providers Forum – Sports Sub Group.

It is proposed that permission be granted providing the dugout is in good condition and properly installed and maintained by the group.

**Use of active communities' coaches**

The Committee is reminded that there is provision for free use of a facility, providing it does not result in displacement, where the activity is part of the active communities programme. This provision currently relates to Leisure Centre facilities.

It is proposed that this be extended to include the 3G facility at Marrowbone, work is on going to develop an active communities programme for the facility.

**Proposed launch event**

The facility has been operational since April 2014 with an official photo shoot and press release at that time. However the Forum has asked for permission to hold a day long opening event at the Park itself. This would provide for a range of family based activities through the Millennium Park including use of the 3G pitch. The intention is that this would be held on 7th September 2014.

The cost of the event is estimated to be in the region of £5,000 and the Forum has asked if the Council would agree to meet the cost.

It is proposed that permission be given to hold the event on condition that the Forum meets the Council's requirements under its event management plan in consultation with the Community Parks Manager.

It is not proposed that the council accedes to the request to meet the total cost of the event as there is no budget for such events. However as for other sites it is proposed that the Community Parks Outreach Manager for the area works with the group to deliver this event.

**3 Resource Implications**

**Financial**

The additional cost is estimated to be approximately £18,700 and will be accommodated within the existing maintenance budget.

**Human Resources**

There are no additional human resource implications at this time.

**5 Recommendations**

**5.1 The Committee is asked to agree**

1. To the erection of the ball stop netting and metal sheeting providing funding can be secured from within existing budgets;
2. To the installation of dugouts providing the costs and maintenance are met through the Forum and that the equipment is to a good standard and properly installed;
3. To extend the active communities scheme to include the 3G pitch at Marrowbone and permit free use where the activity is part of the programme and does not result in displacement;
4. To hold a launch event in the park on condition that the requirements of the event management plan are met in consultation with the Community Parks Manager, providing funding is secured externally.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Proposed Relocation of Moyard Playground**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

Members may be aware that the Council provides a standalone playground and small kick about area within the Moyard Estate on land leased from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

The existing location is isolated from the main body of the estate and has been used as a gathering point for local youths who engage in anti social behaviour and at times the

facility has been subjected to vandalism with equipment being damaged and fires set.

The location is not ideal for a playground, however, this is an area lacking in accessible open space and options are limited.

Council Officers have recently been approached by local community workers and elected representatives from the area with a view to relocating the existing playground. The proposed location is on a former school site. The school has been demolished and is now a vacant site with potential for development.

The Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) has indicated a willingness to invest in the development of a mini pitch which would be aligned to and managed through the adjacent Matt Talbot (Vere Foster) Youth Club. In addition, the Board has indicated a willingness to lease part of the land to the Council with a view to the potential relocation of the playground and casual multi user games area.

Council Officers would agree that the new proposed location would provide improved access. The proximity to the residential housing and to the Youth Club provides improved opportunities to encourage greater use of the asset.

## 2. Key Issues

There are a number of issues for members to consider:

1. The existing playground location is isolated and subject to regular anti social behaviour; it has been recently inspected and there is evidence of damage to the wet pour throughout the playground, swings have been removed and the mesh fencing has been badly damaged.
2. The playground is not included in the current financial years' refurbishment programme; however, the current condition would anticipate its inclusion in 15/16 with an estimated budget of £150,000.
3. The proposed new site presents a more favourable location for such a facility and is likely to attract greater use;
4. At this point in time the cost of providing a replacement facility is not known, no detail has been worked up, and would be subject to further consultation and site investigation;

5. Should the Council wish to progress this option the project would need to be included on and funded through the Capital Programme and would be subject to capital Programme Process applied within Council;
6. The existing playground is located on a site which is currently leased from the NIHE and it would be intended that this lease be surrendered, the NIHE has indicated that it would look sympathetically at a request to surrender of the lease.

3. **Resource Implications**

**Financial Implications**

The financial implications are unclear at this time, at this time the only source of funding would be through the Capital Programme;

**Human Resource Implications**

There are no additional human resource implications

4. **Equality Implications**

There are no equality implications.

5. **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to consider the report and to determine whether it wishes to further explore the possible relocation of the playground on condition that:

1. There is evidence of support from the wider community regarding the relocation;
2. Terms and conditions attached to the acquisition of any land from BELB are acceptable;
3. The scope of the works and potential cost of relocation be clarified; and
4. There is agreement from the Housing Executive to accept the surrender of the land on which the existing playground is located”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Falls Park Gate Lodge**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

**Members may recall that the Gate Lodge, which is located at the main entrance to the Park at 512 Falls Road, is included within the Falls Park Masterplan and is included on the Capital Programme as an emerging project.**

**A short piece of work was commissioned to establish options with which to inform a decision on how best to move forward. This report sets out the current position.**

**The Gate Lodge was built in 1879, although it is not currently listed. It has a total floor area of 115 square metres over two floors; this includes an extension which post dated the original construction. It was originally configured as a ranger's lodge and consisted of a lounge, living room, kitchen and bathroom on the ground floor and three bedrooms on the first floor. The lodge was damaged by fire in 2000 and has remained unused since that time. The building was secured and galvanised metal sheeting was placed over the roof to protect its structural stability. As a result the building remains intact and is structurally sound, subject to a more extensive survey.**

**Following a quotation exercise, a consultant was appointed to undertake an options appraisal which would:**

- Review the condition of the building;**
- Identify potential future uses of the building; and**
- Establish potential options**

#### **Condition of the property**

**A condition survey of the property was completed which concluded that the structural integrity of the building remained intact and could be refurbished. These findings were mainly based on observation and it may be necessary for a more detailed survey to be undertaken at a future date.**

#### **Preliminary Consultation**

**To establish potential uses of the Gate lodge some preliminary consultation was carried out at a local level. In general the main points emerging were:**

- 1. The Gate Lodge should be refurbished and brought back into use;**
- 2. The future use should complement the park and be accessible to the community;**

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- 3. The primary function should be to promote the park and be a focal point of reference for information about the park including planned events and activities;**
- 4. The Gate Lodge should be refurbished as a flexible building to enable it to be responsive to seasonal and community variations in demand;**

**In addition to the general points above, a number of more specific suggestions were put forward:**

- a) The provision of a café area;**
- b) A genealogical resource within the building;**
- c) Additional car parking;**
- d) The provision of a soft play area for toddlers;**
- e) Office accommodation for local groups working within Falls Park such as the Friends of Falls Park or Feile an Phobail;**

**Given the location of the Gate Lodge there was a strong sense that the Council should bring the building back into use and to promote its use and that of the park not only for the local community but also for visitors to the city and residents from all parts of the city. Within this context the above suggestions are indicative of a desire to establish Falls Park as an open space of value and importance.**

**In addition to the suggestions around potential future use, it was suggested that there may be an opportunity, at the appropriate time, to consider community management of the asset once it has been refurbished possibly through seeking expressions of interest from suitable groups or organisations.**

#### **Identification of Options**

**Several generic options were considered as a means to providing a sense of direction in moving forward with the project.**

##### **Option 1 – Demolition**

**Option 2 - Council to renovate building for its own administrative purposes;**

**Option 3 – Council renovates and extends the building and manages it as flexible community facility;**

**Option 4 – Council invites expressions of interest from 3rd party investors; and**

**Option 5 – Council refurbishes and extends existing building, specifies end use for building and seeks a 3rd party to manage it;**

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Following discussion with the Falls Park Masterplan group options 3 and 5 were considered the most appropriate at this time.

It should be noted that any proposal may be subject to obtaining planning permission.

**Proposed way forward**

It is proposed that, in principle, the Council agree to refurbish the original building, demolish the existing extension and construct a new extension which would be fit for purpose and would meet the emerging needs of the park and the community it serves. It is suggested that the additional 140 sq metres could potentially be used as a 70 sq m flexible space and a further 70 sq m for a café area; however, this is open to further discussion. A total space of 220 sq m would be provided.

**Other considerations**

As part of the overall Masterplan for Falls Park, consideration is being given to the construction of an integrated Service Depot which would merge the existing Depots at Falls Park and the City Cemetery in to a single facility. The existing Depot at Falls Park is located immediately adjacent to Falls Gate Lodge and it is suggested that any refurbishment of the Gate Lodge be aligned to the new Service Depot with the potential to incorporate the existing service depot footprint within the refurbishment plans for the Gate Lodge.

In addition, members may be aware of the Rapid Transit proposal for the City. It has been highlighted that the Rapid Transit development may have implications for the existing entrance to the City Cemetery. At this point the exact implications are unclear, further consideration of this is required however, it may be necessary to reconfigure the entrance to the cemetery and the location of the Cemetery Office.

**2. Key Issues**

The main issues for the Committee to consider are:

1. The Gate Lodge is currently included on the Capital Programme as an emerging project; no further action is required at this time;

2. The existing Gate Lodge is structurally sound and there is evidence of local support for its refurbishment and its being brought back into use;
3. The project is linked to the proposals for the Service Depot and the two projects should be aligned;
4. Clarification is also required in relation to the implications of the Rapid Transit proposal vis-à-vis the entrance to the City Cemetery which could require Capital investment.

3. **Resource Implications**

**Financial Implications**

The financial cost requires further work around the scale and scope of the proposed refurbishment.

**Resource Implications**

There are no additional human resource implications

**Asset and Other Implications**

The refurbishment of the Gate Lodge and its subsequent return to use would enhance the offering of the park and offers the potential to make a positive contribution in meeting local community needs.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Proposal to Acquire Land and Upgrade Facilities  
at Navarra Place - White City**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on a proposal emerging through the North Belfast Area Working Group relating to facilities at Navarra Place in White City.

This is a small area off the Whitewell Road which runs adjacent to the Serpentine Road at a community interface. The land is currently owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). White City has a community centre and a small play area which, while in good condition is limited, and is mainly designed for young children. The playground was put in place by the Council in partnership with the NIHE who provided the monies for the project.

At the North Area Working Group it was proposed that consideration be given to how the facility could be upgraded. A series of meetings have been held with some residents from the area, local elected representatives and the NIHE. Emerging from the discussions was a proposal that:

1. The Council acquire the land from NIHE;
2. The Council facilitate a discussion with local residents to consider options to upgrade the facility to include a junior and senior playground and possibly a small kick about area (MUGA);
3. The Council consider placing this proposal as an emerging project under its Capital Programme.

**2. Key Issues**

Members will recall that they noted in February that the SP&R Committee had agreed to progress a MUGA Programme under its Capital Programme. It was highlighted that a series of condition surveys to inform a rolling programme of refurbishments would be undertaken which are currently underway and that an update on the MUGA Programme, including a proposed rolling programme for refurbishments, will be brought back to Committee later in the year.

However in the interim there is now an opportunity to acquire the site at Navarra Place which could be suitable for the development of a MUGA. Members are asked to note that this proposal was considered by the SP&R Committee at its meeting on 22nd June where approval was given to officers to proceed with the acquisition of land at Navarra Place from the NIHE and to consider this proposal under the emerging MUGA Programme.

The Committee is asked to note the following points:

1. The existing playground is limited and there is scope to enhance the facility;
2. There is no evidence of vandalism or anti social behaviour around the existing playground and it remains a respected asset by the residents;
3. NIHE has indicated a willingness to transfer the land to the Council for the purpose of providing a play area;
4. The cost is not yet known as no design work has been undertaken and this will be taken forward by Parks & Leisure and Property & Projects staff;

5. Preliminary site investigations are currently ongoing to determine any issues with the land that would present a risk to the Council should it wish to proceed with development – such as the presence of utilities underground;

Members are also asked to note that work is ongoing with the Department of Justice and the Council's Good Relations Unit to remove an interface wall and replace it with palisade fencing and an appropriate mural. This project is at an advanced stage.

3. Resource Implications

Financial Implications

The capital cost for the works are currently being scoped out and will be brought back to the SP&R Committee in due course to move through the Stage Approval process as agreed for all capital projects.

Human Resource Implications

There are no additional human resource implications

Asset and Other Implications

This work would greatly the quality of life for children and young people in the area and would provide a facility for children from adjoining streets to enjoy.

4. Equality Implications

There are no equality implications

5. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to -

1. note that the Strategic Policy and Resources has given approval to officers to proceed with the acquisition of land at Navarra Place from the NIHE subject to satisfactory site investigations being completed and subject to Terms and Conditions being reached with NIHE on the basis that the land may be suitable for the development of a MUGA facility as part of the MUGA Programme;
2. Agree that Council officers facilitate a discussion with residents from the area to develop and agree a concept

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**plan for the site. This will be brought back to Committee with a view that this is recommended to the SP&R Committee”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Enhancement Work to City Cemetery Walls**

The Committee was advised that the Department of Social Development had made £273,000 available for the undertaking of enhancement work to the walls of the City Cemetery. The Committee was apprised of the extent of the work, which would entail the installation of lighting and preservation work to the walls. The Director advised the Committee that once completed the Council would maintain the lighting scheme and pay the associated electricity costs, which were estimated to be in the region of £1,000 per annum.

The Committee granted approval for the work to be undertaken at the City Cemetery.

Chairman