

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 4th April, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bower, Bunting, Canavan,
Cobain, M. Collins, M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly,
Garrett, Magee, McAteer, McMullan, Newton and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were recorded from Councillor Maghie and Verner.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th and 22nd March, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd April.

Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared an interest in item 2 (b) Community Support Programme (CSP) as they either worked for or were associated with an organisation in receipt of funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration:

- Councillor M. Donnelly – Upper Springfield Development Trust; and
- Councillor Canavan – Board of Springfield Charitable Association.

The Chairperson declared an interest in item 3 (c) Micro and Medium Grants 2023/23 as an organisation he worked for had applied for a grant, he left the meeting and the Chair whilst the item was being considered.

Councillor McAteer declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 (b) Requests for the use of Parks for 2023 as she had a relative who worked for the Belfast Mela and she took no part in the discussion.

Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the Members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion on the following 4 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding Reprofile Request

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding Reprofile Request.

The Committee noted the contents of the report, including the receipt of the Memorandum of Understanding and the revised uplifted amount of £406,228, and agreed the approach for reprofiling the costs in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund, as outlined in the report.

Community Support Programme

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Community Support Programme detailing the current budget limitations and the impact on the Council's grant allocations for 2023/24.

The Committee agreed to defer the report and refer it to the April meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and that, in the interim, officers would obtain legal advice on the proposed DfC approach.

Micro and Medium Grants Scheme 2023/24

(Councillor Bunting in the Chair).

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the results of assessments of the micro and medium grant applications.

The Committee agreed to defer the report and refer it to the April meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration to be given as to whether money could be allocated from the reserves, given the funding demand and number of applications and the very small amount now available to allocate.

(Chairperson, Councillor Murray in the Chair).

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Outstanding Accounts

The Director of City Services sought authority to write off an outstanding account. She advised the Committee that the department and Central Transactions Unit had made every effort to recoup the debt and the methods adopted had been in accordance with the Council's Accounting Manual procedures. The company had now entered compulsory liquidation.

The Committee granted authorisation for the outstanding account of £3,465 to be written off, in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

**Response received from the Department of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs re Deposit Return Scheme**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th February, it had agreed to write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs expressing concern at the delay in rolling out the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS).

In the response, the Permanent Secretary advised that the timescales had been informed by formal consultation on the most appropriate timeframe for delivery which had led to the decision that the DRS for England, Wales and Northern Ireland should commence from 1st October 2025.

Noted.

Committee/Strategic Issues

**Waste Collection Arrangements –
Easter Bank Holidays - (verbal update)**

The Director of City Services provided the Committee with an overview of the proposed waste collection arrangements for bin collections over the Easter holiday period.

Noted.

**GLL Community Engagement and
Underrepresented Target Groups Update**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services drew the Members' attention to the annual update on community engagement initiatives during 2022.

This included updates in relation to the following Programmes:

- Sport National Governing Body and Club;
- School and Youth;
- Community Outreach;
- Older Participant;

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- People with Disabilities;
- Woman and Girls; and
- Family Programming.

The Committee noted the update in relation underrepresented target groups and, at the request of a Member, agreed to include a more detailed breakdown of the data available in future reports, specifically in relation to Section 75 categories.

GLL service report for 2022

The Director of Neighbourhood Services drew the Members' attention to the annual GLL service report for 2022, as required within the terms of the leisure management contract and previously reported through the Active Belfast Limited Board.

The Members were advised that the document, which had been added as an appendix to the report, highlighted the key successes and challenges in 2022 with a focus on the four guiding principles at the heart of the business:

- Better People;
- Better Service;
- Better Communities; and
- Better Business.

The Committee noted the update.

**GLL current inclusivity programming
and future development plans**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide members with an update on current leisure centre inclusivity programming and future development/expansion plans including a specific update on engagement with Swimming Buddies.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- Consider and record receipt of the information update provided below.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 At the People and Communities committee on 6th December, Members requested that a report on inclusivity programming and future development initiatives be presented at its April meeting.

Members further requested on 2nd February 2023 that an update on the current relationship with 'Swimming Buddies' be brought back at a later date.

- 3.2 This report seeks to cover both updates and is based on management information provided by GLL.
- 3.3 GLL is a leading social enterprise. One of their core priorities is to ensure full access for all members of the community and to encourage more people to be more active, more often. CNS officers work closely with GLL to review provision and continue to improve facilities to ensure that our facilities and services are inclusive for all.
- 3.4 GLL is a leading social enterprise. One of the core priorities of GLL is to ensure full access for all members of the community and to encourage more people to be more active, more often. GLL continue to improve facilities and review programming to ensure our facilities and services are inclusive for all.

Outcomes and proposals

Memberships and customer initiatives

- 3.5 GLL offer an inclusive membership for people with a disability. The membership offers access to gyms, swimming pools and fitness classes at a discounted rate. There is currently 327 prepaid members accessing this option within Belfast.
- 3.6 BCC/GLL grant free of charge admission to centres for all carers when accompanying the person in their care. Carers can then support the person in their care in accessing the gym, pool or group exercise class.
- 3.7 GLL operates the JAM Card scheme which allows people with a hidden disability or communication barrier to tell others that they need a little extra time and understanding. The scheme was originally developed by and for those with learning difficulties and disabilities but has now expanded to include anyone with a hidden disability or communication barrier. GLL management and concierge staff are trained to operate the scheme within all Belfast centres.
- 3.8 Most of the new LTP leisure facilities include a 'Changing Places' facilities. These accessible changing/toilets were created to meet the needs of disabled children and adults with complex care needs who require carer support, specialist equipment and more space.

- 3.9 BCC centres currently provide 'Poolpods' in 8 pools across the city. These pool platform lifts have transformed pool access and are used by customers with a variety of mobility issues to safely access the water.
- 3.10 GLL in partnership with Belfast City Council provide services at our facilities to meet the physical and communications needs of people with disabilities, including those with impaired hearing.
- 3.11 GLL work with Technogym to provide accessible gym equipment. Machines such as arm bikes and cable crossovers can be utilised by participants with a variety of mobility and other physical disabilities.

Programming

- 3.12 Girdwood CH in partnership with Disability Sport NI provides a dedicated disability sports hub catering for a range of wheelchair-based sports and activities including Wheelchair Basketball, Powerchair Football, Boccia and New Age Curling.
- 3.13 Whiterock LC supports disability groups in Upper Springfield by offering sports and fun fitness sessions twice a week.
- 3.14 GLL supports the social enterprise 'NOW Group' in the delivery of a 'Let's Get Fit Now' programme in Falls LC. The programme offers participants with learning difficulties the opportunity to participate in tailored fitness classes and gym inductions.
- 3.15 GLL supports the Irish FA in the delivery of inclusive camps during holiday periods. These programmes have been delivered in Avoniel LC, Girdwood CH and Olympia LC. GLL will continue to work in partnership with the national governing body to support the ongoing development of these initiatives.
- 3.16 Ballysillan LC and Girdwood CH support the Northern Ireland Powerchair Squad in their preparation for participation in the 2023 World Cup in Australia. In January 2022, Ballysillan LC hosted the Irish FA Powerchair football All Ireland Championships with over 200 participants in attendance.
- 3.17 The swimming pool at Brook LC has been specifically designed to cater for those with sensory needs and those with wide range of disabilities. The programme includes specialist teaching sessions (delivered by GLL and independent user groups) alongside weekly 'quiet swims' currently attracting 20 to 30 participants in each session.

- 3.18 Brook LC also supports the delivery of 'Air Venture' inclusive sessions which are designed to meet the sensory requirements of participants. This provision has expanded to include a number of special needs schools and support their physical education delivery.
- 3.19 The Indoor Tennis Centre and Ozone Complex supports the delivery of wheelchair user sessions. This is delivered by a group called 'Spokes in Motion' and the centre team have established a long-term relationship with the programme. GLL staff have been trained to meet the specific needs of participants in this programme.
- 3.20 GLL lessons and courses are all inclusive with staff trained to be able to coach participants with both physical and learning disabilities. In cases of complex conditions participants are encouraged to avail of the one-to-one coaching support provided by GLL.
- 3.21 GLL's Healthwise team delivers chronic conditions (Cancer & Cardiac) and Musculo-skeletal rehabilitation programmes, whilst also supporting and hosting Diabetes and Strength & Balance programmes. Many of the referrals for these interventions are older people who often extend their initial intervention into ongoing continuation/retention programmes and ultimately on to full leisure centre memberships.
- 3.22 GLL deliver a number of active aging mornings across the city which include activities such as Danderball, Pickleball, Table Tennis, Boccia and Water Polo. These are being delivered at Avoniel LC, Falls LC, Girdwood CH, Lisnasharragh LC, Olympia LC and Shankill LC. GLL have plans in place to expand the programme in 2023.

Staff Training

- 3.23 Swimming Buddies have provided Autism Awareness training to the team at Brook LC to ensure they have the knowledge and understanding to deliver inclusive sessions in both the sensory pool and Air Venture environments.
- 3.24 GLL are considering a proposal from Swimming Buddies to deliver this CPD accredited training throughout the city. In addition, GLL are considering enrolling some of their swimming teachers onto the Swimming Buddies swimming teacher course with the view of establishing 'all abilities' specific swimming lessons within the current GLL Swim School programme. This could support the development of more

inclusive swimming lessons across the city at an affordable price.

- 3.25 All GLL staff will complete online Equality Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Training via the Flex Training portal. Centre management have been tasked with encouraging their teams to complete this training in 2023.

Swimming Buddies

- 3.26 Swimming Buddies is a commercial business that specialises in Autism friendly swimming lessons although this has now expanded to accommodate individuals with 'other abilities'. Sessions are currently being offered at Brook LC and the organisation is keen to expand into other areas of the city including other BCC pools. In addition to existing pool allocations at Brook LC, 30 additional lane hours have been offered at Falls LC, Olympia LC, Shankill LC, Whiterock LC and Templemore Baths. CNS and GLL senior officers are engaged in ongoing discussions with Swimming Buddies to explore opportunities to develop and expand services including, in addition to pool sessions, supported dry activities and staff training.
- 3.27 Andersonstown LC have also engaged with Swimming Buddies to explore opportunities for the delivery of inclusive waterslide sessions and will look to add these to the programme in 2023. This will include advice about how to deliver sessions and the delivery of CPD accredited training for GLL staff.
- 3.28 Pool programming is a challenging area of centre management. The service caters for many and varied pool user groups, often with competing demands and priorities. CNS works very closely with GLL to ensure that the principles set out in the Councils Aquatics Strategy are observed. Competing priorities include swim for all access (casual swimming), fitness lane swimming, competitive swim clubs, teaching lessons, schools swimming, specialist lessons for those with special needs, water polo, diving, aquarobics, canoeing, sub-aqua, triathlon, and many more.

Summary

- 3.29 Members are requested to consider and record receipt of the information update provided above.

Communications & Public Relations

- 3.30 None

Financial & Resource Implications

3.31 None

Equality or Good Relations Implications

3.32 None.”

During discussion, the Director provided the Members with a specific update on the Council’s engagement with Swimming Buddies. He advised that Council officers and GLL senior officers were continuing to engage with Swimming Buddies to explore opportunities to develop and expand services including, in addition to pool sessions, supported dry activities and staff training.

At the request of a Member, it was noted that, if operationally possible, every effort would be made to ensure that the three-hour session in the Brook Leisure Centre would continue.

The Committee noted the update provided and agreed that an update report on staff training, including timelines and allocated hours, would be submitted to a future meeting.

Public Access Defibrillator Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Members on changes to BCC’s list of defibrillators previously agreed through BCC’s Public Access Defibrillator Pilot Programme in 2016/2018 and a request for inclusion of two further locations on the list of priority sites for future provision.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the changes in regard to previously agreed defibrillator locations - the removal of the Woodlands Playing Fields and Ulidia Playing Fields defibrillator designations as ‘publicly accessible’, and the installation of Council’s device previously located at Ulidia Playing Fields to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.
- In response to a request from Edenderry Residents Association for Council to install and take on the management of an externally funded defibrillator device - to agree the inclusion of 2 further BCC sites on our ‘priority list for future public access defibrillator provision’

– Edenderry Village Playground and Hannahstown Village Playground given their unique status as rural villages within our Council boundary.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Between 2016 and 2018 Council successfully implemented a Public Access Defibrillator Pilot Programme through three phases which saw the installation of a total of 22 defibrillators at 14 of our parks and playing field sites across the city. Although the first two phases were funded internally, its third phase of 8 devices was made possible thanks to an external donation received from the family of the late Mark Murphy.

3.2 Following the success of the programme, at March 2018 People and Communities Committee, Members agreed a further list of 8 priority park/playing fields sites (as well as 8 Community Centres) to be the focus of any future provision as money became available.

3.3 Given the resource implications associated, not only with the purchase of devices (circa £1,400 per unit), and with their long-term daily management and maintenance to ensure ‘emergency ready’ at all times – the focus of the programme has continued to on sites that contain recreational facilities, and have significant public access or high footfall; with final agreement for installation at the sites agreed also being subject to officer identification of a suitable location with an electrical supply; and confirmation with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) that there are no other public access defibrillators in proximity.

3.4 Public Access Defibrillator Provision Programme (2018)

<u>Phases 1-3 Defibrillators Installed (BCC Parks /Playing Fields)</u>	<u>Agreed priority sites for future installation (BCC Parks/ Playing Fields)</u>	<u>Agreed priority sites for future installation (BCC Community Centres)</u>
-Victoria Park -Waterworks Park -Fullerton Park -Tullycarnet Park	-Dunville Park -Sally Gardens -Sir Thomas and Lady -Dixon Park	-Cregagh Community Centre -Dee Street Community Centre

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<p>-Boucher Road Playing Fields</p> <p>-Falls Park</p> <p>-Botanic Park</p> <p>-Grove Playing Fields</p> <p>-Cherryvale Playing Fields</p> <p>-Blanchflower Stadium</p> <p>-Wedderburn Playing Fields</p> <p>-Woodvale Playing Fields</p> <p>-Henry Jones Playing Fields</p> <p>-Woodlands Playing Fields*</p> <p>-City of Belfast Playing Fields</p> <p>-Ormeau Park</p> <p>-Orangefield Park</p> <p>-Shore Road Playing Fields</p> <p>-Suffolk Playing Fields</p> <p>-Strangford Playing Fields</p> <p>-Loughside Playing Fields</p> <p>-Musgrave Park</p> <p>-Ulidia Playing Fields*</p>	<p>-Blythefield</p> <p>-Dixon Playing Fields</p> <p>-Alderman Tommy Patton Park</p> <p>-Clarendon Playing Fields</p> <p>-Glenbank Park</p>	<p>-North Queen Street Community Centre</p> <p>-Ardoyne Community Centre</p> <p>-Hammer Community Centre</p> <p>-Highfield Community Centre</p> <p>-Morton Community Centre</p> <p>-Markets Community Centre</p>
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** Device no longer categorised as publicly accessible*

Removal of 'publicly accessible' designation for two Council defibrillators

- 3.5 Two of the previously installed defibrillators i.e., Ulidia Playing Fields and Woodlands Playing Fields, are no longer considered to be 'publicly accessible' given that site access is restricted to hours of bookings – and therefore we are now required to remove these sites from Council's list of 'publicly accessible defibrillators. Members should note that this will not impact the availability of devices at these locations as the intention is to retain the Woodlands Playing Fields in situ under continued Council management, and Rosario FC will continue to manage their own defibrillator onsite at Ulidia Playing Fields.

Relocation of Ulidia Playing Fields device to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park

- 3.6 The surplus Ulidia Playing Fields defibrillator has provided an opportunity for installation at a new location from our list of priority park and playing field sites. Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park in south Belfast has been selected as this new location following requests from the community for a device to be placed there after a recent medical emergency within the park, as well as officer's confirmation of a suitable location by the café at the Stables building.

Proposed addition of two sites onto list for future public access defibrillator provision

- 3.7 Members are asked to agree the inclusion of two further Council sites on the list of priority Council park/playing fields sites identified for future public access defibrillator provision, on availability of funding – Edenderry Village Playground and Hannahstown Playground and the widening out of the focus of the programme to date (i.e. sites demonstrating significant public access or high footfall) to include these two rural villages in reflection of unique peripheral locations within our council boundary.
- 3.8 A proposal to include these sites follows a request for the installation of a defibrillator at Edenderry Village Playground, with the device itself to be made available from Edenderry Residents Association. As one of the city's only two villages the rationale for a publicly accessible device is the location's lack of proximity to other publicly accessible devices (closest device 2 miles away by car). In addition, high footfall on Lagan Valley Park walking trails in and around the village are demonstrated by

adjacent Giants Ring historical monument and Minnowburn each welcoming over 190,000 visitors in 2021.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.9** Should members agree to the inclusion of the two rural sites Edenderry Residents Association will provide the defibrillator device. All other costs associated with this proposal are included within existing revenue estimates.

Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments

- 3.10** There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.”

The Committee:

- noted the changes regarding previously agreed defibrillator locations, the removal of the Woodlands Playing Fields and Ulidia Playing Fields defibrillator designations as ‘publicly accessible’, and the installation of the Council’s device that was previously located at Ulidia Playing Fields to Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park;
- agreed the inclusion of two further Belfast City Council sites on the ‘priority list for future public access defibrillator provision’ – Edenderry Village Playground and Hannahstown Village Playground, given their unique status as rural villages within the Council’s boundary; and
- agreed to submit a report to a future meeting that would give consideration as to how the Council could liaise with other community groups and organisations to work together towards facilitating the provision of more publicly accessible defibrillators, both from a funding and location perspective.

Operational Issues

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

As at least fifteen percent of the total numbers of persons surveyed in the street were in favour of the proposal to erect a second street nameplate in Irish at Lake Glen Drive, Lagmore Dale, Iris Walk and Abyssinia Street the Committee approved the applications.

Events in Parks

The Committee considered requests seeking permission for the use of various parks and facilities during 2023, as follows:

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- Belfast Mela – Botanic Gardens – 26th and 27th August and the associated pre and post set-up dates, as per the report;
- Lantern parade – Alexandra Park – 27th and 28th October and the associated pre and post set-up dates, as per the report ;
- Chinese Language School – Ormeau Park – 4th June 9.00 a.m. – 7.00 p.m.; and
- Gospel Van Ministry – Ballysillan Park – 20th August – 3rd September, 7.00 p.m. – 9.00 p.m. daily.

The Committee granted authority to each of the applicants for the proposed events on the dates outlined and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services:

- to negotiate a fee where appropriate which recognised the costs to Council and endeavoured to minimise any negative impact on the immediate area and take account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Manager; and
- to negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:
 - the promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction; and
 - the promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service, including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence

The Committee further delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to consider and approve any similar requests whilst the Council was in recess during the Local Government Elections. It was noted that, where necessary, the Director would liaise with the Chief Executive.

The Committee noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position, in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Team and the Director undertook to establish at what stage this corporate piece of work was at and report back to Committee accordingly.

**Service Level agreement with Department of Justice
for Fireworks and MSER inspections by BCC officers**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Service level agreements have existed for many years with the Department of Justice (DOJ) setting out arrangements for BCC employees who are authorised by DOJ to act as agents in carrying out inspections of premises storing items under the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations (NI) 2006**

(MSER). Such premises typically store fireworks or air bag components. The most recent version was signed by BCC following Committee approval in 2016.

1.2 The service level agreement has been amended to increase the fees payable to Councils by Department of Justice for inspections carried out for storage of fireworks and items being stored to which the MSER Regulations apply. No other significant changes have been made to the SLA.

1.3 The service level agreement is a common document which applies to all District Councils in Northern Ireland, and there is agreement across Councils at technical level via EHNI that Councils should seek approval to sign up the updated SLA to enable cost recovery via updated fee charges to the Department of Justice.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Agree that Council sign up to the revised service level agreement with the Department of Justice for Fireworks and MSER enforcement by BCC officers.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The service level agreement covers training, authorisation/warranting of Council employees to enforce the relevant fireworks and MSER legislation and the working procedures and arrangements between DOJ and BCC.

3.2 The SLA also covers the fees to be paid by DOJ to BCC for the service provided and the invoicing arrangements for recoupment of fees. As the previous SLA was agreed in 2016, the revised SLA has increased the fees payable to Councils by DOJ to address increased costs being incurred by Councils for carrying out this work.

3.3 In the Belfast City Council area, prior to the Covid Pandemic there were typically in the region of 20-25 Fireworks displays inspected per annum. This number has reduced slightly over the past 3 years, however could return to pre-covid levels in the future. There are 18 premises currently registered to store explosives such as fireworks and air bag components

Finance and Resource Implications

- 3.4 This work is carried out on a full cost recovery basis and is included in existing work programmes.

Asset and Other Implications

- 3.5 None

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.6 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation as outlined at section 2 of the report.

Pre-loved Toys Scheme Christmas 2022

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the outcomes from the pilot, pre-loved toys scheme operated at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in the run up to Christmas 2022. The aim of the initiative was to ease the burden on families during the current cost of living crisis, increase reuse and reduce waste going to landfill during this period.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the outcomes from the pilot and the key lessons learned going forward
- Approve that the Christmas pre-loved toys scheme should continue as an annual event until further notice.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Members will recall that in November 2022, delegated authority was granted to the Director of Resources & Fleet to operate a pre-loved toys scheme at the Council’s Household Waste Recycling Centres in the run-up to Christmas. This followed a Members motion previously raised on this matter.
- 3.2 The scheme was a clear example of a circular economy project, seeking to reduce waste while at the same time delivering social benefits to the local community. It was operated in 2022 as a trial

initiative with a view to assessing its value and learning lessons for future potential schemes. The evaluation report is included as Appendix 1.

- 3.3 Donations were accepted at the Council's four recycling centres from 9 November – 11 December and distributed back into the community through a range of charity partners. Some items were resold at affordable prices through charity shops but the majority were gifted free of charge to households in need. East Belfast Mission (EBM), the organisation which currently collects the majority of re-use materials from the Household Recycling Centres, operated as the lead partner and co-ordinated with other charities.
- 3.4 The appeal was supported by a communications campaign and attracted an overwhelming volume of donations. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) paper was created for the Customer Hub and site staff to respond to any queries from members of the public.

Outcomes

- 3.5 Most of the items were processed by East Belfast Mission who provided the following feedback/ estimates:
- Thirteen van loads of toys were collected from the HWRCs
 - This translated to approximately 2,500 bags/boxes distributed by EBM (there was an unquantified but much lesser amount distributed through the other partners who had less capacity)
 - Around 700 families benefitted and over 2,000 individual children were given at least one full bag of toys which would have been valued at £40-50 if new
- 3.6 If each bag of toys weighed 3kg (conservative estimate), the items distributed through EBM alone equate to 7.5 tonnes of items reused and diverted from disposal.
- 3.7 While toys vary in their material construction, one study¹ showed that the carbon footprint for the lifecycle (from material extraction to eventual product disposal) of a typical plastic toy was 1.8kg CO₂ eq/ kg. On that basis and assuming that 50% of the donated toys were of plastic construction, this scheme has avoided around seven tonnes of CO₂eq compared to buying new.

Evaluation

¹ Robertson, Madeline R. and Klimas, Christie (2019) 'A Playful Life Cycle Assessment of the Environmental Impact of Children's Toys,' DePaul Discoveries: Vol. 8: Iss. 1, Article 7. Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/depaul-disc/vol8/iss1/7>

- 3.8 The scheme attracted significant positive media attention and was an overwhelming success in terms of the public response and the number of local families and children who were helped.**
- 3.9 The initiative also connected multiple Belfast organisations and businesses in formal and informal volunteering roles to benefit the local community. It would have been impossible to deliver the scheme without this network of help.**
- 3.10 However, the short notice for planning the scheme, and the significant volume of donations, meant that a number of aspects were unforeseen which created challenges for all parties concerned. This can be mitigated by a suitable planning window to deliver this scheme and adopting the lessons learned in the evaluation report, subject to Members approval.**

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.11 It is envisaged that the minimal costs incurred through any future scheme can be met through existing resources.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments

- 3.12 There are no Good Relations or Equality implications associated with this report.”**

The Committee noted the update.

Update on Take 5 Benches

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that in June 2022, the Council had agreed the installation of sixteen ‘Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing’ benches across Belfast City Council Parks, with agreement that the locations would be identified in consultation with staff in Open Space and Streetscene (OSS) and Property Maintenance.

He advised that 16 existing benches in parks across the city had now been rebranded as ‘Take 5 benches’. They had been painted in bright colours and incorporated the ‘Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing’ messaging, along with a QR code linking to the PHA’s Minding Your Head website. Three of the benches could not be painted (as they were made of composite plastic and stainless steel), a plaque had been added to these benches which were located at Springfield Dam, Victoria Park, and Lagan Lands End.

The Committee noted that the benches were located in the following parks:

West Belfast	South Belfast
Dunville Park	Blythfield Play Park
Falls Park	Ormeau Park

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Springfield Dam	Botanic Gardens
Suffolk Play Park	Cherryvale Pitches

North Belfast	East Belfast
Glencairn Park	Lagans Land East
Ligoniel Park	Orangefield Park
Woodvale Park	Victoria Park
Waterworks	Belmont Park

The Committee noted the update and agreed that an additional bench be erected in Clement Wilson Park.

Chairperson