



Subject:	Play Services Rental Agreement for Benview Residents Association
Date:	3 rd June 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan – Operational Director, Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Israel Hontavilla – Community Services Unit Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Committee will recall that, at its meeting on 6th May, it had agreed to defer, for a period of one-month, consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable further engagement to be undertaken between officers and locally Elected Members in respect of the rental agreement. The report, as presented, is set out for Members' information. Accordingly, the Committee is requested to consider the extension or expiry of the current rental agreement with Benview Residents Association.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That committee considers the extension or expiry of rental agreement with Benview Residents Association.
3.0	Main Report
	Background
3.1	Belfast City Council's Play Service operated from six core centres in 2024 - 2025, additionally providing external projects for 18 schools, 8 community outreach programmes and one ethnic minority location. All play service delivery is child centred with all data held in compliance with General Data Protection Regulations removing concerns for parents/guardians.
3.2	<p>Benview Residents Association</p> <p>Belfast City Council entered into an informal agreement with Benview Residents Association (BRA) in 1997. A formal agreement was put in place on 1st January 2003 for an initial term of three years. This agreement has been extended in two-year periods since then. The rental agreement to Benview provides Play Service with access to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storeroom. • Outdoor space for a container. • Office space Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00. • Main Hall for activities on Mondays, Tuesday, Thursday from 13:30 to 16:30.
3.3	The Play Service pays Benview Residents Association a rental amount of £4,225 for this access and locates a Play Team and part-time cleaner in an office. Council is also required to pay £800 rent to BRA to provide a short summer scheme in the centre.
3.4	Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Play Service operated from two Council owned buildings and three rental venues. To improve service provision the Play Service began the process to locate all staff within Belfast City Council building to ensure a standardised approach to staff facilities, programme design and implementation and outreach provision.
3.5	This approach has enabled the service to design and deliver targeted programmes working closely with local schools, service providers, residents and voluntary groups on the most impactful days and times. This targeted approach has resulted in Play Teams creating increased connections with local communities, increasing the overall outputs of the Play Service and improving outcomes in line with the Belfast Agenda.

3.6

Play Service engaged with officers from across the Department to identify under-utilised buildings which could be transformed into Play Centres. In 2022 Play Service agreed access to new venues at under-utilised Downshire Hall, Botanic Bowling Pavilion and Woodvale Bowling Pavilion. They terminated two of the three historical rental agreements and fully re-located two teams to re-purposed buildings with supporting outdoor spaces at Downshire Hall and Botanic Bowling Pavilion.

3.7

Full daytime access and control of the buildings enables the Play Service to programme services in line with local need. Hours delivered and attendance increased by 27% (average). The financial resources that were allocated to the rental agreements were re-invested in direct service delivery.

3.8

At the end of 2022, Play Service advised Benview Residents Association that they were considering re-locating the team based in Benview to Woodvale Bowling Pavilion in line with the new delivery model.

3.9

This change enabled the relocation of Belfast City Council staff to both an office and play facility within our owned facilities whilst having increasing service provision. The Play Service currently provides seven weekly sessions, to other organisations in their facilities, where we provide staff free of charge to deliver a wide range of programmes targeted to the needs of the children and group. Play

3.10

The Play Service recognises that the delivery of their after-school and summer programmes is highly appreciated by residents. It also recognises that BRA delivers similar after-school and summer scheme services in their building themselves. At the start of 2024, after conversations with BRA, a one-year extension was agreed to provide the organisation with sufficient time to identify alternative sources of income or delivery models to suit their requirements. This notice period will expire on 1st July 2025.

3.11

The Play Service has relocated its office space and staff to Woodvale Play Centre, has made arrangement for removal of the storage container and continues to provide after-schools programming at Benview three afternoon’s each week.

3.12

Belfast City Council would like to continue our work with Benview Residents Association where we will continue to deliver an afterschool and summer scheme service to children. This service would be in line with our outreach service across the City where we provide staff to deliver a high-quality play experience to children with no cost to an organisation or charge incurred by Belfast City Council.

3.13

The table below illustrates the financial support which Benview Residents Association received from Council in 2024 – 2025 and what it will be offered by Council in the 2025 – 2026 financial year, based on the decision on this report.

Funding	2024 - 2025	2025 – 2026 incl. rental	2025 – 2026 excl. rental
Community Summer Scheme	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500
Revenue Grant for Community Buildings	£20,623	£41,246	£41,246

	Play Service Rental Agreement	£4,225	£4,225	£0
	Rent of room for summer scheme	£800	£800	£0
	Total amount	£28,148	£48,771	£43,746
3.14	Belfast City Council has received a request from Benview Residents Association for an extension of the current rental agreement for a period of 5 years. Members are asked to consider the request with the consideration that the Play Service no longer requires office space, outdoor space for a container and does not pay other organisations while delivering services at their facilities.			
3.15	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> This decision will either continue with a rental agreement or enable improved service delivery through re-allocation of resources.			
3.16	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> There are no equality or good relations implications from the implementation of this decision.			
4.0	Appendices			
4.1	None.			