



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Improvement Agenda
<b>Date:</b>	16 June 2008
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
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### Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members with regard to the ongoing Improvement Programme in the Parks and Leisure Department and to remind them that the first Members Focus Group will take place between 12pm – 2pm on Tuesday 17 June.

### Relevant Background Information

The last update report on the Departmental Improvement Programme was presented to the Committee on 14 February 2008.

In that report I outlined that I had been working with the current Departmental Management Team, Business Improvement Service, Human Resources and the Core Improvement Team to develop an improvement agenda that would lead to the creation of a Department that can more effectively contribute to the Council's vision for Belfast becoming a better place to live in, work in and visit.

### Key Issues

The work of the Transition Board (established in September 2007) is still ongoing and the Board meets monthly to monitor and manage progress against the action plans. An update on each of the Transition Board's agreed priorities is outlined below:-

#### Creation of Departmental Planning Framework

Following the development of the Departmental and Service level VCMs the Department is in the process of agreeing a list of key activities and appropriate performance indicators for its Departmental Plan 2008-09 (the draft Plan will be

submitted for review and approval to the Special Committee Meeting on 23 June). The Policy and Business Development Manager has been in post since mid-April and will develop a Unit to provide assistance across the Department to facilitate the planning, development and coordination of policy, performance management and business development activities.

#### Business planning processes

External support was engaged to help facilitate the development of robust, systematic and consistent planning processes linked to appropriate performance management frameworks and work was commenced in April. This work will develop over the next number of months (and years) until all business planning, performance management and financial management are integrated within a cycle that leads to effective business delivery.

#### Performance Management

Once Committee has approved the draft Departmental Plan for the current year, the Department will commence the development of an appropriate performance management process, linked with the business planning processes and the corporate performance management processes so that staff and Members alike can clearly monitor and review improved service delivery.

#### Financial Management

The Department has a budget of approximately £30m per annum. We are working at present to ensure that sound estimating processes are in place and that budget monitoring is carried out routinely within the performance management arrangements of the Department. The arrangement for managing capital spend is also an important element of the work within this workstream and this also links with the developing Council approach to managing capital. Work is underway with the Core Improvement Team to implement the Council's new arrangements for capital projects.

#### Developing Management Capacity

This area of work is linked to the Council's developing human resources strategy. In particular the element related to the development of a workforce development plan. The key elements within this project are:

- clarification of roles and responsibilities for managers;
- development of, as part of a Council wide project, management competencies;
- assessment of managers against competency framework; and
- provision of individual and team development opportunities.

A tender for appropriate support for the first phase of this work was published in April and an appointment has just been made, with work due to commence in the next number of weeks.

#### Communications

The Department continues to make efforts to improve internal communication. To ensure the effective delivery of services and to help create high levels of motivation and morale, it is important that staff at all levels feel that they are being communicated with both by receiving information and having opportunity to be

listened to. The actions within this workstream include:

- the establishment of an Employee Forum for regular communication and feedback with the Director;
- the organisation of a number of staff focus groups;
- the development of a regular department communications bulletin;
- the development of a share point intranet service.

The Department has appointed a Lead Communicator who will take up the position on 1 July and will be based in Directorate to ensure that the communication needs of the Department are effectively managed and coordinated.

At this Committee's meeting in February, it was agreed that a Members Focus Group would be established to ensure that Members have the opportunity to input their experience and opinions into the developing improvement agenda. A Members focus group has been arranged for 17<sup>th</sup> of this month.

### Structural Issues

At the Committee meeting in September 2007 Members granted authority to the Director to progress a number of staffing proposals. The following changes are in the implementation phase:

- *Policy and Business Development Unit*  
The posts of Policy and Business Development Manager and one Policy and Business Development Officer are in place, with two further officers and a Lead Communicator due to join the Unit over the summer months.
- *Leisure Operations Manager*  
The post of Leisure Operations Manager was also recruited and in place from April.

### Business Support

A review of the Departmental Business Support is underway. This review will look at the arrangements for managing finance, human resources, business systems and processes as well as general business support. Discussions with managers and staff have been ongoing and further reports will be brought to the Committee on this issue in due course.

### Parks and Cemeteries Service

The priority for the next phase of the improvement agenda remains the Parks and Cemeteries Service.

In May, an independent consultant/advisor was appointed for a fixed term to help manage the change programme within the Parks and Cemeteries structure. The main focus of this assistance is to;

- (i) manage the day to day operations of the Parks and Cemeteries Service in an interim capacity and to analyse current working arrangements;
- (ii) make recommendations to the Director of Parks and Leisure on future functional delivery;
- (iii) lend his expertise to assessing the resources that are necessary to ensure that the Council can deliver more effective and efficient services as well as contribute to the Council's wider strategic objectives.

This change agenda will be the main agenda item for discussion at the Members Focus Group meeting on 17 June.

This work is being supported by the Business Improvement Service and will also bring together a number of ongoing reviews within the Parks and Cemeteries Service, e.g. It will be a requirement of any permission that the organisers liaise with the Councils Health Department and comply with all statutory requirements Parks operations review, Parks service review and the review of Parks business support.

#### Overtime and Absence Management

Principles and protocols have been agreed for authorising and managing overtime across the Department. Leisure Services continue to make good improvements in the management of absence. This is achieved by sound application of the agreed processes. An additional dedicated resource was provided in Parks and Cemeteries a number of months ago to manage the consistent application of the process and this is beginning to demonstrate results.

#### General Issues

In addition to the work outlined in this report the Business Improvement Service are supporting the improvement agenda by conducting a number of reviews into business practices and structures. As previously stated these are being managed by the Transition Board through its overall programme of work.

### **Resource Implications**

#### Financial

No further implications at this stage beyond those already sanctioned by Committee.

#### Human Resources

There will be ongoing human resource implications given the scale of the improvement agenda. There is a considerable commitment require from managers and staff in the Department.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of this update report and to attend the Focus Groups scheduled for 12pm – 2pm on 17 June, diaries permitting.

### **Key to Abbreviations**

None.

### **Documents Attached**

None.