



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Acquisition of Land at Blythefield Open Space, Belfast.
Date:	14 March 2008
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Improvement, Ext. 6217.
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Relevant Background Information

At its meeting on 14 February 2007 the Parks and Leisure Committee (copy attached as Appendix 2 to this report) agreed to the terms of acquisition of a portion of land (approximately 0.32 acres as shown shaded blue on the attached map - Appendix 1) adjoining Blythefield Open Space. The acquisition is essentially a surrender of part of lands leased by the Council to BELB on a 99 year lease dated 29 September 2000. The current acquisition is for the sum of £16,000 which is based on an apportionment of the price of £32,500 paid by BELB to the Council on grant of the 2000 lease.

The main purpose of the acquisition is to provide an access route and car parking in connection with the development of a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and changing accommodation on the Council's Blythefield site. The MUGA and changing accommodation are being 100% funded by DSD. Funding in respect of the access and car parking is to be privately funded. A further use for the lands being acquired could be to provide a site for the development of a privately funded community facility by the Sandy Row Community Trust. If this community facility is to proceed it would be subject to terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and a suitable agreement to be drafted by the Director of Legal Services. Such terms would be reported to Committee for approval in due course.

If the Council do not acquire the land from BELB the DSD funded scheme could possibly continue, but with reduced pitch size in order to accommodate parking and access on-site. Failure to acquire the land would inevitably delay delivery of the scheme and such delay could jeopardise the provision of DSD funding.

Key Issues

- The acquisition of the 0.32 acres of land from BELB will be at a cost of £16,000 to the Council.
- The lands proposed for acquisition are adjoining existing Council lands and will help facilitate the development of a (DSD funded) multi-use games area and changing accommodation on the Council's existing site.
- If this land is not acquired then the size of the proposed MUGA will require adjustment to accommodate car parking and access within Councils existing site, this would delay the project and delay could jeopardise the DSD funding.
- A portion of the 0.32 acres proposed for acquisition could subsequently be leased to Sandy Row Community Trust to allow construction of a privately funded community facility. Any agreement to proceed with this element would be subject to a suitable rent and lease terms being agreed and approved by Committee.

Resource Implications

Financial

- The acquisition of the subject lands will cost £16,000. This is essentially an apportionment of the amount BELB paid to the Council for the land in 2000.
- The construction of the access road and car parking on the land being acquired remains subject to receipt of private funding.
- In the short term the maintenance of the access and car parking to be developed on the acquired land could fall to the Council. However maintenance responsibility for part or all of the acquired land could subsequently be passed to Sandy Row Community Trust under the terms of a lease and a small amount of rent (possibly in the region of £850 per annum) could be generated from any lease arrangement between the Council and the Trust.

Human Resources

- No additional human resources required.

Asset and Other Implications

- Recovery of 0.32 acres from BELB and its development at nil cost to Council to facilitate purposes which fall within the Councils statutory functions would be advantageous to both the Council and the local community. The MUGA and changing accommodation remain subject to the availability of private funding for the provision of an access road and car parking, without which the current scheme would be unable to proceed. Should the scheme not proceed the Council will in any case have acquired 0.32 acres of open space on favorable terms in this inner city location.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to approve the acquisition of 0.32 acres of land (shaded blue on Appendix 1 to this report) from BELB for the sum of £16,000 as previously approved by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 14 February 2008.

Key to Abbreviations

- BELB: Belfast Education & Library Board
- DSD: Department for Social Development
- MUGA: Multi-Use Game Area

Documents Attached
Appendix 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Area shaded blue identifies the 0.32 acres proposed for acquisition from BELB.- Area shaded green identifies Council owned adjoining land and location for the MUGA and changing accommodation. Appendix 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Extract from the Minute of the Parks and Leisure Committee of 14 February 2008.

APPENDIX 2