



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Capital Programme - Update
Date:	23 October 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The Capital Programme for 2008/09 was initially presented to, and approved by, the SP&R Committee on 13 June 2008. This listed the projects which the Council considered as "Committed" and other proposals which were to be considered as "Uncommitted".

Several additional proposals have been approved as committed projects at subsequent SP&R Committees.

The financial resource implications of undertaking the committed proposals were presented to the SP&R Committee on 21 November 2008.

Key Issues

The capital programme for 2010/11 and Future Years is currently being developed to enable budget estimates to be prepared and it is anticipated that this will be presented to the Committee in November.

In the absence of any prioritisation or a capital financing strategy, a significant number of potential proposals remain uncommitted; however, two of these proposals have received offers of grant aid:

The Parks & Leisure Committee agreed in principle to the acquisition of lands for, and the provision of playgrounds at both *Eversleigh Street*, off My Lady's Road and *Sliabh Dubh*, off the Springfield Road at their meetings on 14 February 2008 and 9 October 2008 respectively, subject to external funding to cover all initial capital costs.

The SP&R Committee noted these decisions at their meetings on 19 September 2008

and 23 January 2009 respectively.

The Department of Social Development has since offered 100% grant aid for the *Eversleigh Street* proposal and has indicated that it may be in a position to offer 100% grant aid towards the costs of the *Sliabh Dubh* proposal subject to the outcome of contaminated land assessment of the site (which it has committed to fund).

The SP&R Committee is consequently asked to consider adding these two proposals to the list of “Committed” capital programme projects to enable them to be advanced, subject to confirmation of external funding to cover all costs incurred by BCC. Further details of these proposals are attached at Appendix A.

Resource Implications

The estimated gross cost of providing the playground facility at *Eversleigh Street* is £170k (with 100% capital grant aid anticipated);

The estimated gross cost of providing the playground facility at *Sliabh Dubh* is £250k, excluding costs associated with the contaminated land assessment (with 100% capital grant aid anticipated).

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee note the current issues outlined above and:

- 1 consider whether the playgrounds at *Eversleigh Street* and *Sliabh Dubh* should be included as “Committed” capital projects, subject to 100% external funding ;
and, if affirmative,
- 2 approve the invitation of tenders relating to the works (tenders to be evaluated in accordance with BCC procurement procedures, with awards to be made to the most economically advantageous offers based on cost and quality criteria).

Decision Tracking

It is anticipated that the work for to provide the playground facilities at *Eversleigh Street* and at *Sliabh Dubh* will commence this financial year.

Key to Abbreviations

Documents Attached

Appendix A1 – Further details of Eversleigh Street Playground proposal
Appendix A2 – Further details of Sliabh Dubh Playground proposal

Appendix A

Further details of the Eversleigh Street and Sliabh Dubh playground proposals

Extract from minutes of P&L Committee: 14 February 2008

Proposed Playground at Eversleigh Street

Relevant Background Information

The Committee will recall that it received a report at its meeting on 17 January 2008 regarding the provision of a play facility at Eversleigh Street in the Woodstock area. The report highlighted the concerns of Officers in regard to:

- Technical issues around the proposed location;
- The lack of a firm proposal regarding the development of the site; and
- Uncertainty around capital funding;

Members were sympathetic to the needs of the local area and requested that a meeting be held with local representatives and other statutory organisations involved to explore how the community might be supported in their desire for a play area.

A meeting took place on 31 January. The meeting considered a number of issues as outlined below:

Suitability of the site

At the meeting, Council Officers presented drawings to demonstrate that a typical play unit could not be accommodated within the site owing to space restrictions. However, Officers demonstrated that it would be possible to install individual elements such as a two cradle unit for toddlers; a roundabout; and a spring rocker; although the solution remains a less than ideal.

It was further pointed out that it would be necessary to commission a civil engineers report to establish the scope and cost of the work needed to provide a suitable surface for a play area for toddlers. The Council would not be in a position to commission such a report as it does not own the land and there has been no provision made within the estimates, it is estimated that the report could cost in the region of £5k-£10k. It is the view of Officers that it would be necessary to either raise the level of the ground at the bottom of the street, which would result in a drop of between 2-3m or lower the ground level at the top of the street, but this would mean install a ramp or steps to access the playground and would present further access issues. These issues and solutions would be explored by the engineering report. Council Officers could assist through way of advice to the Community in this matter on the preparation of a specification for the work.

Ownership of the land

The Housing Executive officials have again verbally indicated that the Executive would be willing to transfer ownership of the land to the Council at nil cost.

Funding

This issue requires further clarification. The Belfast Regeneration Office has indicated that it would not be in a position to meet the total cost of the scheme and indicated a

percentage figure of 49% of the total cost. BRO have indicated that their preference would be for an application from the Council. A further meeting has been arranged with BRO to consider this matter.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following points

1. The Council recognises the need for a facility in the area;
2. Officers remain concerned as regards location;
3. It will be necessary to commission an engineer's report to establish the extent and cost of the site preparation work needed;
4. It will be necessary to consider the implications of the engineer's report ;
5. The Housing Executive has intimated it would be willing to transfer the land at nil cost;
6. Members are asked to consider whether the land should be acquired in the absence of an agreed and funded project;
7. There remains uncertainty regarding the capital funding from BRO;
8. Should Members be of a mind to co fund the project it would set a precedent for other similar projects, currently under discussion; and
9. As the work is of a capital nature it would be necessary to put the project forward for consideration for inclusion in the Council's programme, which has been agreed for 2008/2009.

Resource Implications

Financial

The acquisition of the land will have revenue implications in terms of ongoing maintenance.

Human Resources

There are no significant human resource implications.

Asset and Other Implications

There is a need for a play facility to meet the needs of the young people in the area.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agree in principle to accept the acquisition of the land at nil cost from the Housing Executive on condition that:

1. It is used to provide a play facility;
2. An agreement can be reached on a scheme design; and

3. External funding is secured.

It is further recommended that the Council's contribution to the project will include:

- a. The management of the facility upon completion of the works including inspection for defects; routine maintenance and future equipment replacement as necessary; and
- b. Carrying the public liability insurance in respect of the facility"

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations, subject to notification, in accordance with Standing Order 60, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Extract from minutes of SP&R Committee: 19 September 2008

Proposed Acquisition of Land at Eversleigh Street

The Committee was informed that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 14th February, had agreed, in principle, to accept the acquisition of land at Eversleigh Street, off My Lady's Road, from the Housing Executive at nil cost but subject to:

- (i) the land being used to provide a play facility;
- (ii) an agreement being reached on the scheme design;
- (iii) external funding being secured; and
- (iv) the Council managing the completed facility and becoming responsible for routine maintenance and equipment replacement as necessary. In addition, the Council would be required to carry public liability insurance for the facility following completion of the works.

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee noted the acquisition of the land.

Extract from minutes of P&L Committee: 9 October 2008

Playground Provision – Eversleigh Street/Sliabh Dubh

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Officers from Parks and Cemeteries have been involved in discussions with local residents and other statutory agencies including Belfast Regeneration Office and Fold Housing Association. These discussions have centred on the need for a play area within the newly constructed Sliabh Dubh Housing Estate in West Belfast and for a similar facility in Eversleigh Street in the East of the City.

The Committee is reminded that at its meetings in January and February 2008 it received reports related to the provision of a playground at Eversleigh street in the Woodstock Road area. The Committee has agreed that the Council would seek the acquisition of the land from the Housing Executive at nil cost, would provide project management and design support to the community and would support the community in attracting external funding to meet the capital cost of the project.

The Committee is advised that a scheme has been prepared and the Department for Social Department (Physical Renewal Branch) has agreed to meet the capital cost of the work at Eversleigh Street (£192k).

Officers have been approached by local residents from Sliabh Dubh estate, Springfield Road, regarding the provision of a playground. Officers advised the residents that while the Council supports the need for play facilities for local children it was not in a position to meet the capital costs. Following further meetings between Officers from Belfast Regeneration Office, Fold Housing Association and the Council, the Department for Social Development agreed to meet the cost, estimated to be in the region of £160k.

The land is currently owned by Fold Housing Association which has agreed to transfer the land at nil cost to the Council.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note the following points:

1. Residents from the Eversleigh Street area have no access to junior play facilities;
2. Sliabh Dubh is a new housing estate in West Belfast, in excess of 200 units have been constructed with no play facilities. Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8) requires that play provision be provided where there are 100 new housing units, unfortunately this scheme pre-dates PPS 8;
3. The Department for Social Development has agreed to meet the capital cost of both projects (total cost is in the region of (£350k) on the basis that the Council agree to accept the transfer of land and undertake the management and maintenance responsibilities associated with playground provision;
4. Officers from Parks and Cemeteries are currently reviewing playground provision and will bring forward, to a future meeting, a draft framework to guide decisions as to playground provision. However, in both cases, Officers are satisfied that there is local need due to the lack of play areas in the vicinity of local housing.

Resource Implications

The Members have stressed that one of their key requirements in the new governance arrangements is to take control of the Council resources at a strategic level. In order for this to be done, it is considered that this section of the new reporting structure needs to be much more robust.

Financial

The Committee is asked to note that the capital cost of provision will be met by the Department for Social Development.

The schemes will have revenue implications. The acquisition will represent additional, stand alone, facilities, which will need to be inspected and cleaned. It is estimated that the cost of this will be in the region of £1,500 per annum per site. This does not take account of damage to the facility through vandalism or use.

Members are asked to note that the typical life expectancy of play equipment and the surface would be approximately 10-12 years, again depending on levels of use and abuse over time. Members should be aware that these items will require replacement in the future.

Human Resources

This project will require Officer time from the Landscape Planning and Development and the Estates Management Unit.

Asset and Other Implications

These projects will add to the Council land holding and will, upon completion, increase the number of playgrounds to 76.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. agree to acquire the land at Eversleigh Street and Sliabh Dubh at nil cost to the Council and authorise officers to enter into the necessary discussions and the appropriate agreements in respect of the land;
2. agree that Officers from Landscape Planning and Development continue to provide support to the communities and undertake the project management of the project;
3. agree to accept the management and maintenance responsibilities associated with the new facilities and to the inclusion of additional provision within the revenue estimates for 2009/10 and for subsequent future years;
4. agree that the facilities be added to the Council's insurance schedule;
5. agree that the Landscape Planning and Development Unit continue to manage the projects; and
6. agree that the projects be forwarded for inclusion in the list of capital projects at no cost to the Council."

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Extract from minutes of SP&R Committee: 23 January 2009

Land at Sliabh Dubh

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was notified that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 9th October, had agreed to the acquisition of a portion of land at Sliabh Dubh, off the Springfield Road, Belfast at nil capital cost and rent free for the purpose of providing a children's playground. The Committee noted also that the estimated cost of the playground would be £200,000 and the acquisition would be subject to the Council's Capital Projects Gateway process.

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