



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Land at Slievegallion Drive
Date:	22 October 2010
Reporting Officer:	Mr Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects (ext. 6217)
Contact Officer:	Ms Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager, Property & Projects (ext. 3493)

Purpose

To consider the decision of the Parks & Leisure Committee of 14 October 2010 in relation to land at Slievegallion Drive.

Relevant Background Information

A report was taken to the Parks & Leisure Services Committee on 14 October 2010 regarding the site of the former Social Security Offices at Slievegallion Drive which adjoins Council owned land at Slievegallion Drive. A copy of the Parks & Leisure Services Committee Report is attached at Appendix 1, and a location map at Appendix 2.

The report sets out the various issues in relation to an initial expression of interest previously made by the Council to LPS in respect of this site, with a view to potentially developing this site together with the Council's existing land, for the purpose of a 3rd generation Gaelic hybrid pitch, changing facilities and car parking. This was on the basis that further detailed consideration would be required in terms of working up costs, ascertaining its strategic fit with the emerging Pitches Strategy and affordability and prioritisation within the Council's Capital Programme.

However, the NIHE via their nominated Housing Association is also interested in acquiring the site for social housing purposes and North & West Housing Association has been nominated to develop the site in the event that they can acquire the lands. DSD have indicated that funding would be available for site acquisition in this financial year although North & West Housing Association have indicated that as their acquisition would be subject to planning and appointment of design team etc it is essential that they commence this process within the next couple weeks.

Given the site's suitability for housing, LPS have confirmed that the value of the site will be based on housing value and not open space/recreational values. The indicative site valuation provided by LPS is £1M/£1.25M. It should also be noted that there are

considerable differences in level between the Council's land & the subject site, which would result in significant increased development costs & a requirement for retaining structures as well as ball stop & additional perimeter fencing.

Detailed costings to acquire & develop this site can only be prepared when there is more clarity on nature & specification of any facilities to be provided and an agreed valuation for the site. However, indicative figures at this stage would indicate a cost of circa £3.5/£3.7M which reflects that the land value will be based on housing land values; development of a 3rd generation hybrid pitch (with additional costs due to level differentials between the two sites), retaining structures, changing facilities, and demolition of the existing offices. In addition, empty rates would be payable in respect of the social security offices pending demolition.

LPS have advised that a Ministerial Briefing was held recently in respect of this site and following this it was agreed that, in light of the two competing interests, a timetable must be put in place to ensure that the decision making process of assessing which interested party has the greatest need is completed as soon as possible. LPS have advised that the Council are required to prepare a business case for the proposed use by 10 November and confirm that funding is available for the transfer this financial year. Both parties are to submit their business case and the Minister will have to agree which need has the greater priority. If no business case is available from the Council by 10 November its interest will be withdrawn and a transfer to the nominated Housing Association will be progressed accordingly.

Due to the tight timeframes no decisions have been made as to the suitability or prioritisation of this site as a potential Gaelic pitch and there is currently no identified funding for development of these lands.

The recommendation made to the Parks & Leisure Services Committee was on the basis that, given the current proposed site acquisition costs, the Committee inform the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that this does not represent a value for money proposition for pitch provision and that the expression of interest should, therefore, be withdrawn. In this scenario site acquisition and development of this land would not therefore be included as part of the Council's Programme.

However, at this meeting of the Parks & Leisure Services Committee on 14 October 2010, Members recommended that the Council's expression of interest should not be withdrawn.

Key Issues

- Site of former Social Security Offices at Slievegallion Drive, declared surplus by DFP, trawled to all public sector bodies by LPS. Adjoins Council owned land currently used as informal open space.
- Initial expression of interest made to LPS, with a view to potentially developing this site together with the Council's existing land, for the purpose of a 3rd generation Gaelic hybrid pitch, changing facilities and car parking.
- NIHE via their nominated Housing Association also wish to acquire land for purposes of social housing.
- Business Case to be submitted to LPS by 10 November, together with confirmation that funding will be in place this financial year.
- Indicative site acquisition and development costs are likely to be in the region of £3.5M /£3.7M.
- The subject site has not been prioritised as a Gaelic pitch in terms of the emerging Pitches Strategy and there is currently no identified funding in the Capital Programme for site acquisition or development of these lands. The acquisition and development of these lands would have to be considered as part of the

Council's Capital Programme, but a decision on this needs to be made prior 10 November when the Council are required to submit their business case and confirm that funding is in place.

- The report taken to the Parks & Leisure Services Committee advised that if the land value for the site was based on open space (recreational use) this would be a reasonable acquisition for future pitch provision, but given the site's suitability for housing and the LPS indicative valuation of £1M/£1.25M it does not appear to be value for money for pitch provision given the limited funds available for capital works. It should be noted that the valuation has not been agreed yet and will be subject to negotiations between LPS and the purchaser.
- The Parks & Leisure Services Committee, at their meeting on 14 October 2010, recommended, however, that the Council's expression of interest should not be withdrawn.

Resource Implications

Financial

Detailed costings to acquire & develop this site can only be prepared when there is more clarity on the nature & specification of any facilities to be provided and an agreed valuation for the site. However, indicative figures at this stage would indicate a cost of circa £3.5/£3.7M, with future ongoing maintenance and renewal cost implications. There is currently no identified funding in the Capital Programme for this proposal.

Human Resources

Staff Resource to progress any proposals.

Asset and Other Implications

The development of the subject land together with the Council's adjoining lands would result in an improved recreational facility for this area.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the decision of the Parks & Leisure Services Committee of 14 October 2010; and to indicate if they wish to have site acquisition & development of this site included as part of the Capital Programme on the basis that LPS are seeking confirmation that funding for the acquisition is available this financial year, with a business case to be submitted by 10 November 2010.

If Members decide that they wish to acquire the site and develop as a third generation pitch, this will have a £3.5m/£3.7m financial consequence which will require provision in the Rate to fund.

Decision Tracking

Director of Property & Projects to implement decision of the Committee by 10 November 2010

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Parks & Leisure Services Committee report 14 October 2010.

Appendix 2: Location Map