



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Appropriation of land at Skegoneill Avenue
<b>Date:</b>	24 January 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects, Ext 6217
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager, Ext 3493

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<p>The site of the former Health Centre and Library at the bottom of Skegoneill Avenue was acquired by the Council as part of the arrangements associated with the development of the Grove Well-Being Centre. It had originally been envisaged the site would be incorporated with the adjoining Grove Playing Fields however after having explored a number of options the Parks and Leisure Department determined such incorporation was inappropriate. At its meeting on 5 December 2013 the Parks and Leisure Committee agreed to declare the site (as outlined red on the attached map – Appendix 1) surplus to Parks and Leisure requirements and further agreed that a report be brought to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in line with Standing Orders. It is envisaged by Parks and Leisure that the site should be appropriated to the Corporate Land Bank, and managed by Estates Management Unit. An extract from the minutes of the Parks and Leisure Committee is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.</p>
1.2	<p>The site extends to approximately 1 acre, is cleared of buildings and is surrounded by fencing on all sides. There are dwellings to the west of the site and dwellings facing the site on the opposite side of Skegoneill Avenue.</p>
1.3	<p>In 2013 Parks and Leisure Department encountered difficulties associated with conflicting priorities within the local community in relation to bonfire management on the site. The bonfire which was constructed fell outside the Council's bonfire management programme and for reasons around continuing inter-community issues Good Relations Unit have advised it may not be possible to bring it within the 2014 programme resulting in an unregulated bonfire site with ongoing associated unresolved community difficulties.</p>
1.4	<p>In terms of managing assets within the Corporate Land Bank the primary role of Estates Management Unit is to consider future development and disposal options whilst overseeing the management of such assets in tandem with the responsibilities of other relevant services. In respect of this site this will include consideration of alternative uses for the site which are likely to comply with the Council's title to the site, Planning requirements, the physical limitations of the site and the compatibility of any development with the surrounding land uses and</p>

	the Council's wider goals. The outcomes from the process could result in development of the site for Council purposes, its disposal for other appropriate purposes, or a combination of these uses.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	In order to reduce the prospect of anti-social behaviour on the site, including potential issues around bonfires, will require a corporate consultation process led by Community Safety/Good Relations Unit and involving local Elected Members, other local representatives and the PSNI. This consultation may result in a requirement to carry out some physical works on the site, which may include landscaping and potentially measures to provide interim use by the local community while the longer term use of the site is being considered.
2.2	The proposed transfer of this site from Parks and Leisure to the Corporate Land Bank does not include the transfer of any budget. Any future capital works are subject to normal approvals associated with the Council's Capital Programme.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Finance</u> Initial consultations with the local community may result in interim physical works being required at the site in order to reduce the prospect of anti-social behaviour on the land. The cost of such, as yet unquantified, measures is not presently known but there is currently no budget for any such works. Estates Management Unit may commission a Planning Assessment and a preliminary assessment of contamination risks associated with the site in order to inform decisions around future use. There is currently no specific budget to cover this and any cost would require to be re-aligned from within the existing Property and Projects departmental budgets.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> Staff from Estates Management Unit, Community Safety and Good Relations Unit would be involved in co-ordinating and dealing with the Council's response to site management issues until such times as a new use for the site is brought to fruition.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> This is a substantial site which, subject to Planning and other constraints, could present an opportunity for a range of developments. However, this potential can only be realised following resolution of the issues around establishment of the land as a bonfire site.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no current equality issues related to this report. A process associated with potential Good Relations issues is considered within the body of this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Committee is recommended to authorise the early commencement of a community engagement process by the Council's Good Relations Unit/Community Safety and their proactive involvement in this process, with a

	<p>framework developed by Good Relations/Community Safety and agreed by Parks and Leisure Department and Property and Projects Department prior to transfer of the site. Subject to this Committee is recommended to authorise the appropriation of the land outlined red on the attached map (Appendix 1) from Parks and Leisure Committee to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to be managed as part of the Corporate Land Bank, with a further report being brought back in due course in relation to any interim physical works and options for future use of the site and subject to the continued proactive involvement of the Council's Good Relations Unit/Community Safety towards addressing the community issues outlined in this report.</p>
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<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
<p>A further report to be brought back to Committee in 2014 regarding future site options.</p>	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p>Appendix 1 – Map showing subject site outlined red and adjoining Council owned land shaded yellow.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Extract from the minutes of the Parks and Leisure Committee of 5 December 2013.</p>	