



<b>Subject:</b>	Dog Control in Parks and Open Spaces
<b>Date:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2017
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To inform Members of proposals for public consultation in relation to options for controlling dogs off leads in our parks and Open Spaces. A number of ideas will be put to the public to gauge opinions and allow for any creative responses to be considered. The consultation process is to inform options and no decisions have been made in terms of implementation.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• approve the process outlined and agree to bring a report to committee for approval.</li></ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	A sizeable percentage (approx. 20%) of park users are dog walkers; this was evidenced in the SOPARC <sup>1</sup> surveys carried out in 2015 in conjunction with QUB. One of the objectives of the Council is to promote responsible dog ownership and dog control within our parks assets in order to provide spaces that are safe and welcoming for all users.
3.2	Currently “dogs off lead” in our outdoor facilities is enforced under BCC bye-laws as follows: <b>“A person having charge of a dog shall keep the dog on a lead and under proper control, and restrained from giving reasonable cause for annoyance or alarm to other persons”</b>
3.3	Any person convicted of this offence will be liable to a £500 fine.
3.4	In order to promote responsible dog ownership and not simply through enforcement, BCC engage in awareness raising activities, partnership working with schools, community groups and outside agencies working across the Council. Therefore, the enforcement powers available under the bye-laws simply provide a useful additional tool to the ongoing work of the Council in seeking to address all dog related issues across the city.
3.5	The Council are seeking to balance the interests of those in charge of dogs against the interests of those affected by the activities of dogs, bearing in mind the need for people, in particular children, to have access to areas where dogs are kept under strict control, and the need for those in charge of dogs to have access to areas where they can exercise their dogs without undue restriction.
3.6	As a background, The Clean Neighbourhoods Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which became law in Northern Ireland on 01 April 2012 contains a range of legislative measures to improve the quality of the local environment by giving district councils additional powers to deal with a range of issues including dogs.
3.7	In terms of dog related issues, the legislation allows us to introduce four dog control orders as below:  1. Prohibit dog fouling 2. Make it an offence to allow dogs off lead in designated areas;

<sup>1</sup> SOPARC is a methodology developed with QUB to measure use of parks and open spaces.

	<p>3. Exclude dogs from designated areas; and</p> <p>4. Limit the number of dogs that one person can be in control of at any one time.</p>
3.8	<p>Number 1 and 4 above have been implemented by the council, however we are seeking to implement measures outside of the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Legislation and use existing byelaws, complemented with additional measures agreed through a public consultation process, to control dogs off leads in our sites in a balanced way that meets the needs of all of our users.</p>
3.9	<p>Feedback received from a consultation exercise carried out in 2012 in relation to dog control in Parks, highlighted the requirement for facilities that allow dogs to exercise off lead. To inform decisions on future initiatives it was proposed to run a pilot project in North Belfast to introduce a dog enclosure in Grove Playing Fields.</p>
3.10	<p>The pilot project has been in operation for over a year and the dog enclosure has now become a permanent feature of the park and continues to grow its user base as we adapt and improve the facility through ongoing feedback and engagement with our customers.</p>
3.11	<p>The information gained from the consultation exercise helped us to better understand all the issues and complexities around the dog issues in Parks and has assisted Council officers to consider options to assist with dog control in parks.</p>
3.12	<p>Officers have identified a number of options to provide dog owners with areas in parks where dogs can be allowed off leads. If agreed the new arrangements would be supported by enforcement powers that would be implemented by our Warden Service as required.</p>
3.13	<p>Two options have been identified as operationally viable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Introduction of additional dog enclosures in the following areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ East Belfast – Orangefield Park</li> <li>▪ West Belfast – Falls Park</li> <li>▪ South Belfast – Clement Wilson Park</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
3.14	<p>The proposed dog enclosures would be modelled on the successful enclosure in Grove Playing Fields. The fenced enclosure creates no doubt or confusion with regards to where dogs are allowed “off lead” at all times in that particular open space.</p>

	<p>2. Time zoning system – this option allows for dogs to be off lead and exercise in the entire park, or designated areas of the park, but only at certain times of the day. E.g. One hour am and one hour pm. This option provides a potential solution for those users who are unable to visit the local “dog enclosure” either on a particular day or on an on-going basis due to mobility issues or other reasons.</p> <p>It is proposed that this option would be more beneficial on condition that option 1 is implemented in tandem, as both options complement each other in providing facilities for dogs off lead at all times within a neighbourhood.</p> <p>It is proposed that the “Time Zoning System” will be piloted in our 17 Green Flag accredited sites across the city for one year with a further report being brought back to committee in early 2019 after all relevant data and statistics from the pilot have been analysed.</p> <p><b><u>Proposed Time Frame</u></b></p> <p>3.15 Timeframe for implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation on proposals Feb-Apr 18</li> <li>▪ Committee approval May 18</li> <li>▪ Implementation of new enclosures by Sept 18</li> <li>▪ Review of new measures Sept 19</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications.</u></b></p> <p>3.16 The installation of fenced enclosures in the three sites listed above will cost in the region of £15k each. These costs will be met through area revenue budgets.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></b></p> <p>3.17 None.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None.