



<b>Subject:</b>	Anti-Social Behaviour in Parks/Open Spaces
<b>Date:</b>	9 January 2018
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City and Neighbourhood Services
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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	Further to discussion at People and Communities Committee on 17 November 2017, Members requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Detail proposals as to how the City's parks and open spaces could be better animated which might help act as a deterrent to vandalism; and</li><li>▪ Look at the best practice of other local authorities and include potential budget options.</li></ul>
1.2	Members will recall that Council provides ongoing operational preventative measures, the purpose of which is to address anti-social behaviour, namely mobile CCTV and front line staff resource (Safer Neighbourhood Officers, Park Wardens and Alcohol Enforcement Officers). These measures continue to be provided with a focus on weekend evenings and school holidays when anti-social behaviour can be most challenging.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the contents of the report and consider the recommendations.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
3.1	<p>Members will recall that Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership commissioned a number of pieces of work in early 2017 with the aim of better understanding the emerging culture of large groups of young people gathering in parks/open spaces and moving around those spaces (transient young people).</p>
3.2	<p>The following work was undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation with 11 organisations across the city working with young people and those who have a knowledge or understanding of the issues surrounding ‘transient youth’</li> <li>▪ Consultation with 450 young people over 4 weekends across two locations known for having issues with anti-social behaviour i.e. Lagan Walkway and Falls Park</li> <li>▪ Best practice review (local, national and international) on working with young people deemed at risk of getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour and/or deemed ‘transient’.</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>The following learning has been gathered from this work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many of the young people want to gather in this way with their friends and socialise without the parameters of structured youth provision</li> <li>▪ Young people say they feel safe socialising in this way</li> <li>▪ Only a small number of the young people in any group are causing issues, however, the wider community are often intimidated by the size of the gatherings</li> <li>▪ Whilst young people say they feel safe in these gatherings, there is evidence of their vulnerability to more serious offences e.g. drug dealers and sexual assault</li> <li>▪ Drug and alcohol abuse is leading to the worst of the anti-social behaviour with contributory factors such as boredom or little for young people to do at the weekend</li> <li>▪ Social media and the positive changes in the city in terms of ease of movement, make it easier for large gatherings of young people</li> <li>▪ Diversionary activities are extremely limited in their long term impact and can actually geographically displace the issues. The focus needs to be on engaging young people in longer term developmental activities</li> <li>▪ No youth work organisation can engage effectively with a young person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The only focus at that point is harm reduction and keeping the young person safe</li> <li>▪ The resource pressures on youth organisations trying to address these issues is having a</li> </ul>

detrimental impact on their ability to assist

- Parents need to be made aware of the impact of this behaviour on communities. This includes where young people are travelling from outside Belfast to participate in these gatherings
- Improvements need to be made in the partnership working required to address this issue to include; information sharing, operational co-ordination, communications and roles/responsibilities
- Raising awareness of the impact of these behaviours on communities should be done in as positive a way as possible so as not to demonise young people which would only serve to worsen the issues
- Youth ownership and empowerment in parks/open spaces is more likely to facilitate their positive engagement in the space
- The commissioning of youth based services should be outcome rather than output focussed.

#### **Future context**

3.4 Members will recall that whilst anti-social behaviour can be a concern at a range of parks/open spaces across the city, it is most persistent and prevalent in a smaller number.

3.5 Members will also be aware that Council's convening role in community planning, the learning from the locality planning pilots, other localised interventions and the emerging work being developed around 'area working' can provide a platform for a more integrated, holistic and sustainable approach to addressing concerns around the most challenging parks/open spaces.

3.6 It is important to consider that, whilst the park/open space may be the core area of concern, there are wider areas of influence around that core area that need to be considered. This is particularly important in ensuring wider community assets (physical and people) are given their place in the partnership response. It is important that any work we take forward in our parks and open spaces allow us to integrate those services that can demonstrate the potential to operate more effectively at a local level in the context of our change programme being undertaken through the City and Neighbourhood Services Department.

3.7 Members should also note that Council is not the only stakeholder in this discussion and whilst it is important that in the short term Council demonstrates leadership in integrating its services and investment around this issue and that the significant opportunities available through other partners and programmes of work are capitalised on. For example:

- **PEACE IV** is planning for significant capital and revenue investment in some key public spaces across the city with key objectives being children and young people and shared space.

- **Urban Villages** has already committed and is planning for more capital and revenue investment designed to mobilise communities for positive civic stewardship, with some of the investment focussed on young people.
- **The Fresh Start Executive Action Plan** and associated budgets provides an opportunity to commission services designed to prevent vulnerable young people becoming involved in paramilitary activity and examining the systemic issues contributing to this.

3.8

As part of any work that is being taken forward, we should also be mindful of wider programmes that are being delivered in the immediate vicinity of our parks and open spaces. Where there are current opportunities within current resources, the Council can play a lead role in working with partners, including community and voluntary sector and residents, to align what is already on offer in local areas.

3.9

As well as developing this approach in our parks, to further help achieve our goals identified in the Belfast Agenda, we are also availing of the opportunities that currently exist through current and planned capital and revenue investment in specific areas. Members have approved that we develop this approach initially in the Springfield area, to lead on developing an emerging area planning model for delivering against the priorities identified in the Belfast Agenda by integrating a range of programmes and services and associated staff resources.

3.10

Officers are currently working up more details around this work and will come back to Members to further consider how this work can be developed in other areas across the city by aligning Council revenue and capital programmes and, where possible, partners' programmes to maximise opportunities and inform how we develop a coordinated area planning approach.

3.11

It is important to note that this will be resource intensive for the Council in terms of co-ordination and alignment of resources, therefore we must ensure that both this area planning work and the offer to address issues in parks and open spaces through integration and animation is resourced in a meaningful way and we do not dilute what is on offer because we try to cover all areas.

**Recommendation**

3.12

Taking all of the above in to account as well as developing the Council and wider response to these issues in a sustainable way but delivering meaningful outcomes for communities the following actions are recommended between January 2018 and December 2018.

Members are asked to consider prioritising a park in the East and West of the city to build this way of working as it will require both internal and external change. Additionally, this way of working will help inform structure and governance as the wider community planning and area working

3.13	<p>conversation develops with Elected Members and longer term approaches can be considered in this context.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Animation/Programming</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A year-long schedule of animation and programming to be developed to encourage positive use of the selected parks/open spaces.</li> <li>▪ This would primarily but not exclusively focus on weekend evenings and school holidays in the first instance and would prioritise use of existing council assets in the parks/open spaces e.g. bowling pavilions or as close to the parks/open spaces as possible</li> <li>▪ Council services to align in populating this schedule in the first instance (Community Services, Good Relations, Community Safety, Sports Development, Parks Outreach etc)</li> <li>▪ Local community and youth providers to be encouraged to populate the schedule with their existing programming</li> <li>▪ Education Authority to be encouraged to populate the schedule with their existing programming</li> <li>▪ Gaps in the schedule to be filled by further commissioning of services. That commissioning should focus on services that can demonstrate the ability to engage the young people in longer term developmental work</li> </ul>
3.15	<p><u>Operational Co-ordination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation with stakeholders to clarify roles/responsibilities and final clarification issued to wider group of stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Commitment to effective inter-agency tasking and co-ordination needs to be secured at both a citywide/local level as well as reactionary/future proofing</li> <li>▪ The existing East Belfast Youth Providers Forum to test how local and community youth organisations can support more effective tasking and co-ordination and how resources can be maximised</li> <li>▪ Further development in the emerging Youth Providers Forum around Lenadoon to include the Falls Park and wider West Belfast area.</li> <li>▪ Initiation of Youth Providers Forums in North Belfast and South Belfast</li> </ul>
3.16	<p><u>Awareness Raising</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Further development of partnerships with post primary schools across Belfast seeking co-operation with communication with parents and pupils regarding wider community impacts and risks of anti-social behaviour</li> <li>▪ Inter-Agency correspondence on this issue to be issued through schools/youth groups to parents and pupils</li> <li>▪ Engagement with organisations who advocate and lobby for young people in the development of messaging to maximise impact e.g. Children’s Commissioner</li> </ul>

<p>3.17</p> <p>3.18</p> <p>3.19</p> <p>3.20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Further development of the emerging integrated community safety schools programme for consistent and clear messaging to young people. This programme is already in development through Belfast PCSP and is intended to be ready for roll out in 2018.</li> </ul> <p><u>Strategic Horizon Scanning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mapping exercise of all strategic capital and revenue opportunities around the selected parks/open spaces to facilitate better alignment and maximise investment, using opportunities where there is similar work being undertaken as part of the development of our area planning model.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p><u>Staff Resources</u></p> <p>Whilst the benefits of partnership working are acknowledged and evident, the above approach will still require significant changes in ways of working both internally and externally. It is therefore suggested that Members consider this approach in a small number of parks/open spaces initially (potentially East and West) to allow for a focussed and meaningful approach in the first instance, with the intention of widening the approach at a future date.</p> <p><u>Financial Resources</u></p> <p>All of the above recommendations can be accommodated within existing Council and (D)PCSP revenue budgets. The recommendations are intended to maximise existing resources, reduce duplication and facilitate joined up decision making and resource allocation in the selected parks/open spaces.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality or Good Relations implication at present, however, this will monitored on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>