



Subject:	Jubilee Gardens Update
Date:	9 January 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director City and Neighbourhood Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	Members will recall that benches in Jubilee Gardens were removed temporarily on 30 November 2017 in attempts to minimise the impact of high levels of anti-social behaviour in the area.
1.2	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the background to that decision and the subsequent reinstatement of the benches.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to consider the contents of the report.
3.0	Background

3.1	Members will be aware that a number of city centre locations have had long standing issues with crime and anti-social behaviour, in particular on street drinking and criminal damage.
3.2	Jubilee Gardens has been impacted significantly by these issues in the last 12-18 months in addition to evidence of drug consumption, associated drug litter and public urination/defecation in the area.
3.3	These issues have been identified by Council Officers in the normal course of their daily duties, but there has also been regular contact from organisations in the area about the detrimental effect these issues are having on their users/clients.
3.4	PSNI had also raised concerns with Council regarding these issues in Jubilee Gardens and after a site visit with Council Officers a number of design out crime measures were identified, one of which was the temporary removal of the benches.
3.5	It was then arranged to have the benches temporarily removed to see if it would minimise the impact of the crime and anti-social behaviour taking place in the area and this took place on 30 November 2017.
3.6	Following concerns raised by some Elected Members about the decision and its potential impact on vulnerable people, particularly rough sleepers; a subsequent decision was taken to reinstate the benches and this took place on 14 December 2017.
3.7	Members may wish to note that Officers are working daily in the city centre with organisations supporting vulnerable people and at no point was Jubilee Gardens identified as an area where individuals were sleeping rough in the city. Following the concerns raised on social media with the removal of the benches, council officers consulted further with partner agencies, Belfast Chamber and Belfast City Centre Management who indicated their preference that the benches should not be replaced.
3.8	Members may wish to note that Officers have received one complaint about the instatement of the benches from an individual significantly affected by the issues. The complainant disagreed with the decision to reinstate the benches.
Partnership Working to Support Vulnerable People	
3.9	Members may wish to note in recent years, highly effective partnership working has developed between a range of organisations operating in the city centre supporting vulnerable people including NIHE, Extern, Welcome Organisation, De Paul, Salvation Army etc. 'Virtual Inter-Agency Teams' are working together operationally on a daily basis sharing information on vulnerable individuals and attempting to encourage those people in to support services.
3.10	The inter-agency working has resulted in a reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in the city centre. The 2016 Street Needs Audit identified an average of 11 people sleeping rough compared to a recent update on that Audit in December 2017 which identified 5 people sleeping rough.
3.11	NIHE who have statutory responsibility for homelessness have stated publicly that there are services, accommodation and support for anyone who finds themselves homeless in Belfast. Support organisations continue on a daily basis in their attempts to encourage individuals to avail of the services available for them and to move to a place of safety. However, some individuals

<p>3.12</p> <p>3.13</p> <p>3.14</p> <p>3.15</p> <p>3.16</p> <p>3.17</p>	<p>chose not to avail of that support.</p> <p>Members will also be aware that Belfast City Council and Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership have participated proactively in recent years in efforts to support vulnerable people and reduce homelessness and this work continues. Some examples of this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the tragic deaths of rough sleepers in the city centre, a number of Lord Mayor’s convened regular meetings with our city partners to give a priority focus to issues around homelessness. • A number of Lord Mayors have hosted a Christmas Dinner in City Hall for vulnerable and homeless individuals in the city, supported by NIHE and Council for the Homeless NI • Belfast PCSP provided funding to allow the Welcome Centre to provide extra outreach hours • Belfast PCSP part funds in partnership with the Public Health Agency a dual diagnosis addiction and mental health worker (Extern/Welcome Organisation) to assist vulnerable individuals in the city centre who have more complex needs <p>Environmental Improvements</p> <p>Members may wish to note that the design out crime recommendations were being considered as part of wider options for environmental improvements to Jubilee Gardens. The purpose of considering these improvements is to encourage positive use and activity in this area as part of the Council’s wider approach to open spaces in the city centre.</p> <p>Options are currently being developed and will be brought to Members for future consideration along with financial implications.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Costs associated with the removal and reinstatement of the benches in Jubilee Gardens were minimal and were covered from within existing City and Neighbourhood Services revenue budgets.</p> <p>Any financial implications associated with options for environmental improvements at Jubilee Gardens will be presented to Members at a future meeting.</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 as environmental improvement options are further developed.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>N/A</p>