



Subject:	Authority to Review Football League Fixtures and assess feasibility of a winter break
Date:	6th March 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	To seek approval to engage with stakeholders and develop options for a winter break period during which time no grass pitch bookings would be available for league fixtures.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• permit officers to consult with stakeholders and develop options for a potential winter break in grass pitch availability.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> Council operates grass pitches through direct management, Facility Management Agreements and Partner Agreements. The seasonal nature of Association Football means

	<p>that the highest level of use is over the winter period. A significant proportion of these bookings are made by leagues which are supported by teams from across Belfast and beyond. Extended periods of winter weather often render pitches unplayable due to Health and Safety concerns or the requirement to protect the asset to the end of the playing season. Calling off pitches is the responsibility of Parks Management and match referees. Cancellations in advance impact on teams and leagues through cancelled bookings and rearranged fixtures, whilst cancellations on the day also add the expenses of unnecessary staff, payment of officials, travel for teams and officials.</p>
3.2	<p>Winter breaks are a common feature across Europe with different countries and their leagues implementing breaks of various durations. A winter break will require extending the playing season into the summer months, the impact of which will need to be investigated and taken into account, as all pitches require a rest period each year in order to sustain them from season to season.</p>
3.3	<p>Officers will engage with key stakeholders to assess the feasibility of a winter break and a report with recommendations will be brought to a future Committee.</p>
	<p><u>Financial Implications</u></p>
3.4	<p>It is anticipated that this options appraisal would be carried out within existing staff resources.</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.5	<p>None.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>