



Subject:	Draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS)
Date:	22 March 2019
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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	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) and to seek agreement to the publication of the draft strategy for public consultation.
1.2	The People and Communities Committee agreed the proposed approach to the development of the BOSS at its meeting in October 2016 and since then Belfast City Council appointed external consultants AECOM to support this work. The draft BOSS is a city level strategy and is the product of a collaborative working relationship with officers from the planning department and numerous engagement sessions with a range of internal and external partners and stakeholders at each stage of the strategy development process.

1.3	The BOSS and the audit of open spaces will be important for planning purposes and will help inform the Local Development Plan (LDP), deliver the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda, align to the Green and Blue Infrastructure plan (GBIP), inform area working and future area/ neighbourhood based plans and approaches and secure development contributions for investment in open spaces.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the draft BOSS attached to this report. • to publish the draft BOSS for a period of 12 weeks public consultation from May – July 2019.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) is an update of the previous Open Spaces Strategy – ‘Your City, Your Space’ completed in 2005, which led to many improvements and successes; through this strategy we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invested £150m in our open spaces network; • achieved 19 Green Flag Awards; • attracted funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and European streams; • increased numbers and participation levels at local events and outreach programmes; • constructed and developed the Connswater Community Greenway; • increased the number of friend’s groups within our open spaces; and • delivered a range of physical improvements across our open spaces network in partnership with the statutory, community and voluntary sector.
3.2	<p>Belfast City Council appointed AECOM to help prepare a new BOSS for the Council Area. The new Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) requires an updated open spaces strategy as part of its evidence base. The draft BOSS has evolved as a strategic document pitched at a city level. To help us produce this strategy we established a Strategy Advisory Group which was made up of external partners and stakeholders (statutory, community and voluntary organisations). We also set up an internal Strategy Oversight Steering group made up of officers from across the council to provide oversight and guidance. These</p>

groups created a long-term vision for the future of Belfast's open spaces in line with the aspirations of the Belfast Agenda and the LDP. Our vision, is that by 2035.

Belfast will have a well-connected network of high-quality open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives in, works in and visits our city.

3.3 In 2018, we carried out an open space audit which assessed open space provision, park and play area accessibility and future actions based on the city's growth strategy. Open spaces were mapped and classified across the city, which will also be used in the future to help us focus on areas of under provision or poor accessibility at a local/ neighbourhood level.

3.4 To make sure that existing and new open spaces are fit for the future, we established a suite of seven guiding strategic principles (SP), providing the roadmap and identifying opportunities for achieving the vision. Belfast's open spaces will:

- SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces
- SP2: Improve connectivity
- SP3: Improve health and well-being
- SP4: Support place-making and enhance the built environment
- SP5: Increase resilience to climate change
- SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment
- SP7: Be celebrated and support learning

3.5 We have identified a range of opportunities and headline actions that are currently underway or planned for our open space network across the city, over the next five years, which are aligned to the seven strategic principles above. The delivery of the headline actions will rely on existing budgets or sourcing external and partner funding over the life of the strategy. To help realise our vision, strategic principles and opportunities and deliver the headline actions, we will continue to work closely with our partners and stakeholders. We will regularly review progress of the delivery plan, complete a full review of the strategy in 2024 and agree the next phase of actions.

3.6 The current draft of the strategy is attached in Appendix 1. It is intended to use this as the basis for public consultation from May to July 2019. Any comments received during the public consultation period will be taken into account in finalising the BOSS and during this

	<p>time officers are happy to make themselves available to meet with members if required. A final strategy document will be presented to SP&R in September 2019.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.7 The delivery of the BOSS will rely on existing budget, working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders and sourcing external/ partner funding over the life of the strategy.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.8 The review of the BOSS identifies positive minor equality and good relations impacts and mitigating actions for some S75 groups. There are no rural needs implications arising directly from this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Draft BOSS (<i>please note that due to size limitations, the draft strategy attached is of low resolution quality and is available in high resolution quality upon request</i>).</p>