



Subject:	Positive Animation of Parks/Open Spaces
Date:	4 June 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services Ryan Black, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Alison Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager (West)

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	For Members information, previous People and Communities Committee requested regular updates on ongoing work to encourage positive animation of Council parks/open spaces as a way of deterring anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
1.2	This emerged as a result of ongoing concerns raised with Elected Members about the impact of anti-social behaviour and vandalism in parks/open spaces and the impact of this on the positive use and animation of these spaces in communities.

1.3	Ongoing review of reported anti-social behaviour and feedback from Elected Members identified a small number of parks and open spaces where it was agreed a co-ordinated focus with other statutory organisations and communities would add value. These were Falls Park/City Cemetery, Orangefield Park/Avoniel Park, Marrowbone Park, Dunville Park and Ballysillan Park.
1.4	Additionally, at Full Council in March 2019, Members requested an update to a future People and Communities Committee on the ongoing work to positively animate these parks/open spaces and how Council managed ongoing vandalism.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report and support the ongoing work to positively animate parks/open spaces
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p><u>Positive Animation of Parks/Open Spaces</u></p> <p>Ongoing review of local, regional and national best practice indicates that one of the most effective ways of addressing anti-social behaviour and vandalism is to positively animate parks/open spaces by creating a sense of ownership and empowerment amongst users. This includes young people, who often gather in parks/open spaces as a way to positively socialise. It is however, recognised that young people are often gathering in parks/open spaces at times when they are closed and particularly after dark which can create additional vulnerabilities for those young people.</p>
3.2	<p><u>General Animation</u></p> <p>Council Parks Outreach and Open Spaces and Active Living Teams work closely with local schools, youth and community groups throughout the year running positive events and activities in our parks/open spaces. This work helps create a positive relationship between participants and the parks/open spaces and increased respect and civic pride. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Education Sessions • Biodiversity Sessions • Park Life Schools Programme • Park Life Saturday Club • Family Fun Days

- Growing Workshops
- Historical and Cultural Guided Walks
- Community Clean Ups

3.3 Since 1 February 2019 over 100 events and activities have taken place in Council parks/open spaces to positively animate those spaces.

3.4 Council also works with a range of external organisations who support Councils' objective of positively animating our parks/open spaces. These include community and cultural events, Park Runs and music events.

3.5 Targeted Animation

In addition to general animation taking place across a range of parks/open spaces in the city, a targeted programme of animation is delivered in those priority parks/open spaces as identified at 1.3. Characteristics of these programmes of animation are:

- Takes place at times when anti-social behaviour is more likely to take place e.g. weekends, school holidays, evenings
- Takes place in those priority parks/open spaces
- Is integrated with and adds value to existing youth and community provision around these parks/open spaces (including post primary schools)
- Targets those most at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour
- Ensures appropriate arrangements are in place to manage any safeguarding or general vulnerability issues

3.6 Specific examples of targeted animation since 1 February 2019 in priority parks/open spaces include:

- Detached Youth Outreach
- Late night youth diversionary activities in 3G facilities
- Evenings youth and community events

3.7 Vandalism

Officers regularly review requisitions for repairs at parks/open spaces due to vandalism, criminal damage or arson. There has been a marked reduction in serious vandalism, criminal damage or arson at all parks and open spaces, however, there remains a small number of more serious and persistent issues in West Belfast.

3.8	<p>Unfortunately, Council does not have a system in place at present which formally records the reason a repair has been requested i.e. as a result of vandalism and the associated cost. However, this will be specified in to the new system which is to be procured in the coming months.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Partnership Working</u></p> <p>Promoting the positive use of parks/open spaces and reducing anti-social behaviour/vandalism is not something the Council can achieve in isolation and requires extremely high levels of partnership working. Partners involved include Council, PSNI, Education Authority, Youth Organisations, Community Organisations, Translink, local schools and other revenue programmes (e.g. Urban Villages, Fresh Start, PEACE IV).</p>
3.10	<p><u>Supporting Innovation</u></p> <p>An opportunity presented itself in 2018 for Council to avail of Department for Economy funding to work with the SME sector (including community/voluntary organisations) on opportunities to use innovation and technology in encouraging positive use and deter negative use of parks/open spaces.</p>
3.11	<p>£100,000 was secured for Phase 1 which has worked with five SME's to develop prototype options which will be field tested for a two week period only in five parks/open spaces across the city during June 2019. Subject to satisfactory field testing, an 'in principle' application for Phase 2 funding was submitted to the Department for Economy for further development of maximum two of these prototypes. Initial indications are a further £100,000 is likely to be made available during 19/20 and subject to satisfactory monitoring a further £125,000 during 20/21. Phase 2 is designed to work proactively in partnership with communities and other users of parks/open spaces around the further development of the technological solutions. If a formal letter of offer is received, further briefings can be provided for Elected Members either by way of Party Group or Area Working Group on the roll out.</p>
3.12	<p>Data capture has been and will continue to be a part of the technology development. However, data is only gathered where it will give important insight in to how parks/open spaces can be more effectively animated. Additionally, all SME's have been subject to rigorous Data Protection and Privacy Impact Assessments with full legal compliance.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>

3.14	<p><u>Staff Resources</u></p> <p>The above approach continues to support the values and principles of the City and Neighbourhood Services and wider Corporate Change Programme.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Financial Resources</u></p> <p>All of the above work continues to be accommodated from within existing Council and (D)PCSP revenue budgets. The work is intended to maximise existing resources, reduce duplication and facilitate joined up decision making and resource allocation in the identified parks/open spaces.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None have been identified at present, however, this will monitored on an ongoing basis.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	N/A