



<b>Subject:</b>	Draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS)
<b>Date:</b>	22 November 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of 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	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) and to provide an initial update on the findings of the public consultation on the draft strategy.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the update provided.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> Members are reminded that a report was brought to the March 2019 meeting of this Committee, which agreed the draft strategy and a 12-week consultation exercise on it.

3.2	<p><u>Background</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. Belfast City Council appointed AECOM to help prepare a new BOSS for the Council Area. The BOSS, including the data collected during its preparation, forms part of the evidence base for the Local Development Plan (LDP). The high level Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan also supports the LDP. 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.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Consultation exercise</u></p> <p>Given the linkages with the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP), it was felt that a joint public consultation exercise would be beneficial to maximise responses. The consultation questionnaire was designed to allow respondents to comment on either document or both. Members should note that the analysis of the GBIP is being undertaken by the Development Planning and Policy team and they will bring this separately to Committee.</p>
3.4	<p>The consultation process commenced on Monday 17th June and was officially launched by the Lord Mayor at an event in Grove Bowling Pavilion on Tuesday 18th June 2019. The consultation was due to end on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September (12 weeks), however towards the end of the consultation period, we received several requests from organisations asking for an extension to allow them to submit responses. To facilitate these requests the consultation period was extended by 2 weeks until 20th September 2019. During the consultation period we received a total of <b>96 responses</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67 responses via Citizen Space</li> <li>• 16 hard copy questionnaire responses</li> <li>• 13 general written submissions</li> </ul> <p>68 responses were from individuals, with 28 from groups/organisation.</p>
3.5	<p>During the public consultation period, Officers attended 6 events across the city to raise awareness of the consultation and to get feedback from a wide range of users. These events were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer Rose Fair - Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park</li> <li>• Sounds from Bank Square</li> </ul>

3.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer Fun Day - Mount Eagles</li> <li>• A World Of Rhythms - CS Lewis Square</li> <li>• Summer Fun Day - Waterworks</li> <li>• Pride - Village at Custom House Square</li> </ul> <p>Consultation was also undertaken with the Youth Forum and a group from Age Friendly Belfast. At all these events people were asked to fill in a brief postcard questionnaire of three questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you think of green spaces, which three words come to mind?</li> <li>• When you think of blue infrastructures, like waterways, which three words come to mind?</li> <li>• Do you have any suggestions on how to make our green spaces and blue infrastructure better?</li> </ul> <p>A total of <b>337</b> postcards were completed.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Initial consultation findings</u></p> <p>Members are advised that given the number of responses and the detail provided, it is taking longer to analyse the findings than originally scheduled. A detailed report will be brought to Committee in the coming months but initial high-level findings are outlined below.</p>
3.8	<p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>The strategy's vision, is that by 2035...<i>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.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>70%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the draft vision is appropriate</li> </ul>
3.9	<p><b>Strategic Principles</b></p> <p>Within the draft strategy seven strategic principles (SPs) have been proposed to provide the foundation and framework for achieving the vision, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces</li> <li>○ SP2: Improve connectivity</li> <li>○ SP3: Improve health and well-being</li> <li>○ SP4: Support place-making and enhance the built environment</li> <li>○ SP5: Increase resilience to climate change</li> <li>○ SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment</li> <li>○ SP7: Be celebrated and support learning</li> </ul>

3.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>80%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the 7 strategic principles are the correct ones to achieve the vision</li> <li>• <b>71%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the 7 strategic principles addressed their priorities</li> </ul> <p><b>Headline actions</b></p> <p>A series of headline actions were developed under each of the 7 strategic principles and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that these were the correct actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>73%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces</li> <li>• <b>70%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP2: Improve connectivity</li> <li>• <b>72%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP3 : Improve health and well-being</li> <li>• <b>61%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP4 : Support place-making and enhance the built environment</li> <li>• <b>74%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP5: Increase resilience to climate change</li> <li>• <b>75%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment</li> <li>• <b>67%</b> of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP7: Be celebrated and support learning</li> </ul> <p>The headline actions will be further developed following the finalisation of the strategy.</p>
3.11	<p><b>Equality screening and rural need analysis</b></p> <p>A draft equality screening and rural needs analysis were completed and were included within the consultation. The feedback provided will be analysed and the screenings updated as necessary.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>Officers will continue the process of analysing the consultation findings and will update the draft strategy as required. It is anticipated that the full analysis of the consultation findings and the final strategy will be brought back to this Committee early in the new year for consideration and approval.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>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>

3.14	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The final strategy will be subject to an equality screening and rural needs assessment in line with the Council's process.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None