



<b>Subject:</b>	Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces
<b>Date:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2019
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director, City and Neighbourhoods Department
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ryan Black, Operational Director City and Neighbourhoods Services

<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>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<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</b>
1.1	Over the past year the City & Neighbourhood Services Department has received a number of requests from Elected representatives for a range of improvements to our Parks and Open Spaces. These include a notice of motion relating to the provision of artificial lighting in Parks and Water Refill points on Council property. We have also received request to provide re-cycling bins in Parks and to review the hours are Parks are open to the public.

1.2	If introduced all of these improvements have the potential to enhance and improve how we use our Parks and open spaces. However more work is needed to consider all the impacts from each and to estimate their cost. The views of users will also need to be gauged. This report is to update members on the range of requests received and to inform members of the framework within which these requests will be considered moving forward.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is recommended to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the contents of this report.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Our green and blue infrastructure including our Parks affects the quality of life for everyone in our city. It helps to define a sense of place and the character of our communities; provides important spaces for recreation with associated health and wellbeing benefits and strengthens the resilience of our natural environment to change. Protecting these assets and enhancing the benefits that they provide is therefore integral to the future of Belfast.</p> <p>3.2 This is a transformational time for our city, with the Belfast Agenda setting out shared commitments across public services to an ambitious vision to create a better quality of life for us all.</p> <p>3.3 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) sets the strategic spatial framework, vision and five strategic principles for the future delivery, management and enhancement of the whole green and blue infrastructure network; helping to meet the outcomes envisaged in the Belfast Agenda’s vision. It is supported by a number of other strategies which focus on specific sub-sets of green and blue infrastructure, such as the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS). As BOSS evolves this will inform and future site based plans including future infrastructure improvements and how are Parks and Open spaces will be used.</p> <p>3.4 In order for our Parks and Open Spaces to work effectively they will need to be well designed, regularly maintained and appropriately funded. This needs to be recognized and used to help attract sustainable funding to ensure the benefits from any future improvements are fully realized.</p>

3.5	<p><b>Provision of Artificial Lighting to our Parks</b></p> <p>We currently have approximately 300 km of road and pathways in our Parks and Open Spaces. To inform any potential lighting scheme a piece of work needs to be undertaken that will consider issues such as any impact on crime and ASB, any impact on landscape character and wildlife habitats and ultimately costings in relation to purchasing and installing the equipment and any associated revenue and maintenance trail.</p>
3.6	<p><b>Amending the Opening and Closing Hours of Parks</b></p> <p>Historically, our parks are open to the public from dawn to dusk. The gates in the majority of sites are opened and closed on a daily basis, by our park warden teams. Changing this has the potential to impact on park users and how we manage our parks. Issues such as Health and Safety, ASB and crime in the parks and neighbouring properties also need to be considered.</p>
3.7	<p><b>Water drinking Fountains/Refill Points</b></p> <p>Historically, water drinking fountains were common in parks but over time have been removed or decommissioned with the arrival of the domestic water supply. With changing trends new drinking fountains were installed in a number of parks around 7 years ago and are currently available in :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ormeau Park (x 2)</li> <li>• CS Lewis Square (x 1)</li> <li>• Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park (x 1)</li> <li>• Woodvale Park (x 1)</li> </ul>
3.8	<p>If we are to increase the numbers of water drinking fountains in the city, a feasibility needs to be undertaken to establish the best location, design and cost implications of new fountains to ensure that they are utilised to their full potential.</p>
3.9	<p><b>Recycling Bins in Parks</b></p> <p>Over the years, we have installed litterbins in all the key locations across the estate to facilitate the depositing of waste in the bins as opposed to on the ground. Currently there are minimal recycling bins in our Parks and Open Spaces. These bins are more costly than our normal street litter bins and past experience has shown that the recycling rates</p>

	<p>from them has been poor due to factors such as their location, contamination from dog waste and food waste and waste strewn from the bins by Seagulls and other birds.</p>
3.10	<p>Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) will provide a road map on how the public want to use our Parks and Open spaces over the next 10 -15 years. A public consultation exercise on the strategy has just been completed. The strategy proposes a number of strategic principles (SPs) and these will lay the foundation for future Action plans that will be developed for all our Public Realm.</p>
3.11	<p>If members wish to proceed with the improvements highlighted in this report more work is needed to establish the feasibility of each including some form of public consultation exercise. This work could then be used to inform BOSS and in particular any potential local plans for Parks and Open Spaces. Update reports can be taken back to committee.</p>
3.12	<p><b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>The costs of any of the improvements referred to in this report have not been included within existing budgets.</p>
3.13	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>There are no known Equality, Good Relations or Rural needs implications.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None