



Subject:	Draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS)
Date:	20 th March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
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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 findings of the public consultation on the draft Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) and to seek their agreement on the proposed changes.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the update on the draft BOSS consultation process and agree the proposed changes and actions set out at Appendix 1 and the production of the final Strategy document.

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. 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>
3.2	<p><u>Consultation exercise</u></p> <p>Members are reminded that 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. The consultation process took place from 17th June until 20th September 2019. During the consultation period we received a total of 96 responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67 responses via Citizen Space • 16 hard copy questionnaire responses • 13 general written submissions <p>68 responses were from individuals, with 28 from groups/organisation.</p>
3.3	<p>During the public consultation period, Officers also attended six events across the city to raise awareness of the consultation and to get feedback from a wide range of users.</p>
3.4	<p>Given the level and detail of the responses, a report outlining the initial consultation findings on the draft BOSS was brought to the November 2019 meeting of this Committee. A detailed analysis of the responses has now been completed and a high level summary of these are outlined below. A document providing more detail on the consultation findings, with the Council’s response, including proposed changes and actions is attached as appendix 1.</p> <p>Members should note that analysis of the GBIP was undertaken by the Development Planning and Policy team and was taken through Committee in December 2019.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Consultation Findings</u></p> <p>In general the Council was commended for developing the strategy and there was widespread support for it. There were some general comments around timescales and a lack of detailed actions, but as Members are reminded, this is an overarching strategy with</p>

3.6	<p>headline actions and over the coming months detailed action plans will be developed under each of the Strategic Principles.</p> <p>A number of respondents thought that the BOSS should include more detail or further emphasis on certain issues, such as the duty to enhance biodiversity and the need to urgently address climate change. Many suggested additional wording or sought greater clarification. Many of such comments have merit and it is proposed to amend the wording of some sections accordingly. Nevertheless, such changes are minor in nature and do not represent any substantive change to the Strategy.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Vision</u></p> <p>Whilst 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the draft vision is appropriate, there were some suggestions around how it could be changed and it is proposed that the vision is reworded to the following (changes in bold):</p>
3.8	<p>By 2035... Belfast will have a well-connected, accessible network of high quality, sustainable open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives, works in and visits our city.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Strategic Principles</u></p> <p>Within the draft strategy seven strategic principles (SPs) have been proposed to provide the foundation and framework for achieving the vision and implementing the strategy, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the 7 strategic principles are the correct ones to achieve the vision ● 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the 7 strategic principles addressed their priorities

3.10	<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"> • 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP1: Provide welcoming shared spaces • 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP2: Improve connectivity • 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP3 : Improve health and well-being • 61% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP4 : Support place-making and enhance the built environment • 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP5: Increase resilience to climate change • 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP6: Protect and enhance the natural environment • 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were the correct headline actions under SP7: Be celebrated and support learning
3.11	<p>A range of comments and additional actions were suggested under each of the seven Strategic Principles (SPs), these have been collated and are detailed in appendix 1. Members should note that some of the comments/suggestions were cross cutting and appeared under several SPs e.g. partnership working. Where appropriate, suggestions will be considered within the detailed actions plans that will be developed under each of the SPs. Some of the comments/suggestions do not fall under the remit of the BOSS and where appropriate will be considered and implemented under the relevant strategy such as the new LDP or LBAP.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality screening and rural need analysis</u></p> <p>A draft equality screening and rural needs analysis were completed and were included within the consultation. Three detailed responses were submitted in relation to these, they will be analysed, and the screenings updated as necessary.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>Officers will update the draft BOSS as outlined in the document attached as appendix 1 (subject to Committee approval) and a final Strategy document will be produced. Over the coming months, Officers from across City and Neighbourhood Services will develop detailed action plans under each of the seven Strategic Principles and these will be brought to the People and Communities Committee.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Financial & 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>

3.15	<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.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Summary of key issues from the consultation findings and recommended response and actions

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