

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 02 March 2015

Portfolio:	Leisure and Community
Subject:	Play Area Refurbishment Programme
Report of:	Director of Community
Strategy/Policy:	Leisure Strategy
Corporate Objective:	Leisure for Health & For Fun

Purpose:

To agree improvement works and a 3 year refurbishment programme for the Council's play areas in the Borough.

Executive summary:

The Council has 43 play areas located across the Borough that are provided predominantly for young people up to the age of 13.

A strategic review of all the play areas has been undertaken to determine what works needed to be completed to bring all the play areas up to standard and to establish a programme of future priority improvements.

In addition there is a need to determine what financial resources will be required to deliver an ongoing programme of play area improvements in order to maintain current standards.

Ward Councillors were consulted on the results of the evaluation for play areas within their ward and in principle agreement was reached on when future improvements or refurbishments could be implemented.

Appended to the report is the 3 year play area priority improvement programme which can be funded from section 106 developer contributions collected for the provision of play and recreational facilities.

The draft version of the programme was presented to the January meeting of the Leisure & Community Policy Development & Review Panel and members endorsed the programme without any amendment.

Recommendation/Recommended Option:

That the Executive approves;

- (a) the 3 year play area priority improvement programme as detailed in Appendix A, to be funded from Section 106 contributions for the provision of play and recreational facilities; and
- (b) a budget of up to £50,000 for other improvements required to bring all play areas up to standard, funded from Section 106 for the maintenance of play areas.

Reason:

To facilitate the refurbishment of the Borough's play areas in order to maintain a good standard of play provision and to ensure play facilities remain safe, attractive and accessible to all children and young people.

Cost of proposals:

£775,000 funded from available Section 106 contributions for the provision of play and recreational facilities and £50,000 funded from Section 106 for the maintenance of play areas.

Appendices: **A:** 3 Year Play Area Priority Improvement Programme
 B: Complete Schedule of Play Area Improvements

Background papers: Report to Leisure & Community Policy Development &
Review Panel – 3 September 2014 – Open Spaces
Improvement Programme

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BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Briefing Paper

Date: 02 March 2015

Subject: Play Area Refurbishment Programme

Briefing by: Director of Community

Portfolio: Leisure and Community

INTRODUCTION

1. The Council has 43 play areas located across the Borough that are provided predominantly for young people up to the age of 13. These are managed and maintained by the Council's Streetscene team who also undertake weekly inspections to ensure that the facilities are safe and to address any repairs and maintenance that is required.
2. Every year major refurbishments are undertaken on a number of play areas and on occasions new play areas are provided. Over recent years these works have been funded from Section 106 Contributions collected by the Council for the provision of play and recreational facilities. The programme of improvements is reported to the Executive annually but the decision on which play areas to include has been largely ad-hoc without any strategic consideration.
3. In September 2014 responsibility for delivering the programme of play area improvements was transferred to Leisure & Community. The intention being that a strategic review would be undertaken of all 43 play areas to determine a priority programme of improvements and refurbishment for both the short and long term.
4. The purpose of the review being to determine what works needed to be completed to bring all the play areas up to standard and to establish a programme of future priority improvements. In addition there is a need to determine what financial resources will be required to deliver an ongoing programme of play area improvements in order to maintain current standards.

STRATEGIC REVIEW

5. In in order to determine the current condition and suitability of all of the boroughs 43 play areas, an evaluation model was developed and a site visit was made to each play area, which was then assessed in accordance the criteria in the model as follows:

- a) The current condition of the play area and safety surfacing;
 - b) The ancillary features being provided i.e. fencing, benches and bins;
 - c) The number of pieces of equipment being provided, including the age it was suitable for and if any play items were inclusive or suitable for wheelchair users;
 - d) If the play area was accessible to visitors in wheelchairs and buggies;
 - e) Where the play area was located i.e. was it overlooked by houses or buildings and how secure it was.
6. In addition to site assessments, residents were encouraged to take part in a consultation exercise to help identify what was important to them when visiting a play area. 240 residents completed an online questionnaire and the results indicated that a good mix of equipment, suitable for different ages and abilities was the most important consideration.
 7. Ward Councillors were then consulted on the results of the evaluation for play areas within their ward and in principle agreement was reached on when future improvements or refurbishments could be implemented.
 8. This information was then used to produce a 3 year play area priority improvement programme. The draft version of the programme was presented to the January meeting of the Leisure & Community Policy Development & Review Panel and Members endorsed the programme without any amendment.

IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS

9. Whilst the review determined which play areas have the greatest need for major refurbishment and will therefore require attention over the next 3 years, the review process has also identified some other less extensive improvements required to maintain the standard of provision.
10. As part of the assessment carried out on each play area, officers not only considered the age and condition of the equipment, but also its overall appearance. This identified 20 other play areas that would benefit from a “mini makeover”, i.e. the painting of equipment, fencing and seating to help improve its overall condition until such time it features in the improvement programme for a complete refurbishment. A list of the play areas that will receive such works is set out in Appendix B and all works will be completed by June 2015.
11. In addition to the “mini makeover” improvement works, any missing play equipment items will also be reinstated by June 2015.

SAFETY SURFACING PROGRAMME

12. In spring 2013, a survey was completed to assess the current condition of play area safety surfaces. The survey revealed that the safety surface in some of the Council’s play areas were worn and reaching the end of their useful life, although

the equipment was still providing a good play environment for children.

13. The main issue arising from worn safety surfacing is the increasing risk of a child slipping on the smooth surface and colliding with the equipment and causing an injury.
14. In order to reduce this risk a safety surface replacement programme was introduced and the first phase of safety surfacing repairs and replacements was carried out in autumn 2014.
15. The timetable for delivering future play area refurbishments may on occasion need to be altered slightly to take into account when safety surfacing repairs become urgent, and can instead be addressed as part of the overall play area refurbishment works.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

16. In addition to the 43 play areas, the Council provides play equipment that is predominantly provided for young people aged 13 years and over. This includes skate parks, multi-use games areas (MUGA), teen shelters, football goals and basketball hoops. These have not been considered as part of this play area review and so a further assessment of this provision will be carried out during 2015.
17. The review will assess the condition of the existing provision but also consider the strategic provision in terms of establishing the suitability of current facilities and identifying areas of the Borough where there is a shortfall in provision. As with play areas, the funding for these facilities has come from Section 106 contributions collected by the Council for the provision of play and recreational facilities.
18. A 3 year play area priority improvement programme is set out in this report (Appendix A) and this can be fully funded from available Section 106 contributions for the provision of play and recreational facilities. However, beyond this period it is likely that there will be insufficient contributions available, in some areas of the Borough, to fund new provision or improvements and refurbishments of existing play facilities.
19. This situation has arisen due to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which has largely replaced section 106 contributions as the mechanism for collecting funds from development for infrastructure improvements.
20. There is an opportunity to seek CIL contributions to fund play areas however, unlike with Section 106 contributions, CIL is not collected specifically for play areas. Therefore any bid has to be considered against other infrastructure requirements such as highways, education and health provision.
21. In order to maintain the current standard of play provision in the Borough it's estimated that a minimum of four play areas will require refurbishment every year. Therefore alternative sources of funding will be needed to maintain the standard of existing play area provision and to deliver any new facilities required.

22. The Council's adopted Core Strategy states that for new residential development the Council will expect provision of children's play equipment where existing provision is inadequate. The standard set is 14 pieces of equipment per 1,000 1-12 year olds.
23. However, applying this standard causes an issue in terms of inadequate provision of play facilities for new development. Therefore, in consultation with officers in Strategic Planning consideration will be given to establishing new standards for the provision of play and recreational facilities.

CONCLUSION

24. A comprehensive review of the Council's 43 play areas has been undertaken and has identified both a short and long term play area improvement programme, which has involved consultation with residents and feedback from every Fareham Borough Councillor.
25. The short term 3 year play area priority improvement programme and other minor repairs that have been highlighted can be funded from section 106 developer contributions collected by the Council for the provision of play and recreational facilities.
26. However, beyond this period there are insufficient S106 contributions available to fund longer term play area refurbishment programme and therefore consideration needs to be given to how the current standard of provision can be maintained.