

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **10 September 2015**

Report of: **Director of Environmental Services**

Subject: **PLAY AREA INSPECTION REVIEW**

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform the panel of the recent history of defects and repair work carried out on the Council's play areas and to outline a revised inspection schedule based on known risk data.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes the contents of the report

INTRODUCTION

1. The opportunity to play creatively in high quality environments is essential to the development of children. Through their play they acquire skills and abilities which can be learnt in no other way. It is therefore important for the Council to continue to provide these facilities within easy walking distance of local residents to ensure all the children in the Borough have access to this development opportunity.
2. To achieve the above provision the Council maintains 45 sites that include play areas, outdoor gyms and skate parks. The sites are located throughout the Borough, mainly on Leisure and Housing land. Access to all of these unsupervised play areas is free and unrestricted.
3. As part of the Streetscene Operations Service, the Council's Grounds Maintenance Team is responsible for inspecting, maintaining and repairing the play facilities.
4. The Council has a duty under the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) to ensure the health & safety of users, so far as reasonably practicable, and also the Occupier's Liability Act (1957 – revised 1984) that requires that people can expect to be reasonably safe when using the Council's playgrounds.
5. To comply with the above legislation a full time play inspector/fitter, trained to Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) standard, is employed to inspect, maintain and undertake minor repairs to all of the Council's play area sites.

CURRENT INSPECTION SERVICE

6. The current play inspection schedule has been in place for a number of years. All the inspections are recorded and take place on a frequency between 1 and 4 occasions per week.
7. The frequency of inspection is based on a site usage assessment undertaken a number of years ago that is not held on record. The schedule results in 84 inspections being carried out each week or a total of 4,368 per annum.
8. The number of inspections undertaken leaves little time for the essential on-going maintenance and repairs that often need to be arranged around the availability of additional members of the grounds maintenance team that are needed to support the inspection service whilst repairs are undertaken.
9. Further pressure will be added to the service when new play facilities are completed at Coldeast and the proposed Titchfield nature area, in addition to any adoptions that may come forward from new developments around the Borough and also as the Welborne project develops.
10. The current schedule does not take into account any seasonal variation in site usage or the regularly updated information on the defect history and repairs undertaken at each site.

INSPECTION SERVICE REVIEW

11. In order to assess if the current schedule was fit for purpose data was analysed of all the defects recorded over the previous 30 months (January 2013 – June 2015) Appendix A.

12. The data demonstrates that a total of 867 defects were recorded during this time. Defects can be wide ranging from equipment wear and tear to surfacing and fencing faults, vandalism or even the clearing up of broken glass, graffiti, human vomit and faeces
13. The average number of defects recorded each month was 29 out of 364 inspections undertaken. The average defects recorded in the summer period March to October was 35 and this dropped to just 16 through the winter months of November to February.
14. The site with the highest number of defects recorded was Fareham Park with an average through the summer period of just over three defects a month. The lowest was Laurel Gardens that did not record a single defect throughout the 30 months of data analysed.
15. From the analysis of the data it was clear that most sites recorded a defect at a rate of less than one per month for the summer and winter periods. Therefore, a full inspection undertaken once per week should be sufficient to ensure that these sites continue to be safe and fit for purpose if continued on this frequency.
16. Sites that accrue an average of between 1 and 1.99 defects a month would need to be inspected on two occasions per week and sites that have an average defect rate 2 or higher would require 3 inspections a week.
17. Only two sites (Fareham Park and Stubbington) have recorded a higher monthly average than two defects and this only occurs during the summer months. Therefore, these sites would be inspected on three occasions per week during the summer period and reducing to one occasion per week through the less busy winter months.
18. Twenty of the forty five sites that fall below the one defect a month ratio are already inspected on a weekly schedule and therefore, would be unaffected by the new proposal as it is not planned to inspect any site less than a basic minimum of one occasion per week.
19. Nineteen sites would see a reduction to their current inspection frequency throughout the summer and winter periods whilst three sites would see an increase in the frequency during the summer period.
20. As previously stated in the report the current number of recorded inspections carried out each year is 4,368. Each record is completed on a sheet of A4 paper that is then scanned and saved onto the Council's electronic filing system.
21. The new proposal would reduce the amount of inspections by over 1,400 per annum. Not only would a saving be made on the amount of paper used but also the time taken to complete the sheets and for the Administration team to scan and save the documents.
22. The operatives time saved will help to absorb the impact of additional play area sites coming on line over the coming years and to also improve on the current response time taken to repair and maintain the existing sites.
23. Further efficiencies could be realised in the future by the use of mobile information technology to eliminate paper use almost completely and this will be explored further in the coming years.

RISK ASSESSMENT

24. Although it is proposed to reduce the frequency of play area inspections undertaken across a number of sites in the Borough there will now be a suitable risk assessment put in place for the operation that is robustly informed by the data collected from the inspection process.
25. A regular review of the rolling data will also be in place to ensure the schedule is updated and the frequency of inspections can be amended as and when appropriate.

CONCLUSION

26. The proposed new inspection schedule will continue to ensure the Council provides a safe place for children to play and will also help support the Council's evidence when required by ensuring that the procedures in place are appropriate to manage the risks involved at each site.
27. Officers from the department of Streetscene will work with the Council's insurers to develop and implement the new inspection regime at the earliest opportunity.

Background Papers:

None

Reference Papers:

None

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Mick Gore. (Ext 4823)

Appendix A

| PLAY AREA | TOTAL DEFECTS OVER 30 MONTHS | AVE DEFECTS SUMMER MONTHS | AVE DEFECTS WINTER MONTHS | CURRENT WEEKLY INSPECTION FREQUENCY | PROPOSED WEEKLY INSPECTION FREQUENCY SUMMER | PROPOSED WEEKLY INSPECTION FREQUENCY WINTER |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Fareham Park | 71 | 3.1 | 0.9 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Stubbington Rec. | 49 | 2.05 | 0.8 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Longacres | 44 | 1.95 | 0.5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Park Lane | 48 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Priory Park | 35 | 1.6 | 0.3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Warsash Rec | 35 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Crossfell Walk | 34 | 1.35 | 0.7 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Bath Lane | 33 | 1.35 | 0.6 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Eastern Parade | 30 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Abshot Road | 28 | 1.25 | 0.3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Portchester Park | 30 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Castle Street | 26 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Sweethills Crescent | 29 | 1.15 | 0.6 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Dore Avenue | 31 | 0.95 | 1.2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Locks Heath District Skate | 26 | 0.95 | 0.7 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Clydesdale | 24 | 0.95 | 0.5 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Locks Heath House Park | 22 | 0.95 | 0.3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| King George V | 21 | 0.9 | 0.3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Barry's Meadow | 20 | 0.85 | 0.3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Wicor Skate Park | 16 | 0.75 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Kenwood Road | 16 | 0.7 | 0.2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Course Park Crescent | 21 | 0.65 | 0.8 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Harbour View | 15 | 0.55 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Blackbrook Park | 14 | 0.55 | 0.3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Hollybrook Gdns | 12 | 0.55 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Metcalfe Avenue | 13 | 0.45 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| St. Michaels Road | 13 | 0.45 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Salterns | 11 | 0.45 | 0.2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sunlight Gardens | 10 | 0.45 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| West Street | 10 | 0.45 | 0.1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Swanwick Lane | 11 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Seafeld Park | 8 | 0.35 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Newtown | 12 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Fielding Road | 6 | 0.3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Drake Close | 6 | 0.25 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Segensworth Road | 6 | 0.25 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Bellfield | 5 | 0.25 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------|------|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Badgers Copse | 4 | 0.2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Burridge | 4 | 0.2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Kites Croft | 4 | 0.2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Sarisbury Green | 5 | 0.15 | 0.2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Howerts Close | 3 | 0.15 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Funtley | 4 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Birchen Road | 2 | 0.1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Laurel Gardens | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 867 | | | 84 | 60 | 47 |