

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Report to Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel**

**Date**                    **5 September 2013**

**Report of:**            **Director of Street Scene**

**Subject:**              **PLAY AREA MAINTENANCE**

#### **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Council's play area inspection and maintenance programs.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the panel notes the contents of the report.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Council inspects and maintains 44 play areas and 5 skate parks located throughout the Borough, mainly on leisure and housing land. The oldest facility was installed in 1992 and the most recent was completed in 2013
2. Access to all of these unsupervised play areas is free and unrestricted. The Council's Grounds Maintenance Team is responsible for maintaining these facilities.
3. 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.
4. All play areas have a variety of fixed equipment suitable for children aged two – five years (toddler) and children aged six – 12 years old (junior). Some sites have equipment suitable for older children up to 14 years old. Skate parks cater for a wider age range of children and adults.

## INSPECTIONS

5. A full time play Inspector/Fitter, trained to Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) standard, is employed to inspect and undertake minor repairs to all of the play areas to ensure they are functional, secure and safe. Inspections take place on a frequency between 1 and 4 times per week depending on usage (Appendix A).
6. Four other members of the Grounds Maintenance team have been trained to the ROSPA standard as cover for the full time play inspector during periods of leave and absence or to assist if repairs require additional support.
7. The play inspector is also required to clear litter, remove small areas of graffiti and inspect all static and moving parts during each visit. This includes seating, gates and fencing in addition to the play equipment and safety surfacing.
8. A written record of the inspection is made and handed in to the Streetscene office to be stored electronically. If a defect is found then a separate defect log is recorded and also stored electronically. Defects are given a category depending on the inspectors assessment of the hazard:
  - **A = Immediate action/close off equipment.**
  - **B = Repair/replace within 1 week.**
  - **C = Repair/replace within 1 month.**
  - **D = Maintenance issue within six months.**
9. A spreadsheet of the defects is maintained and the inspection and defect records are kept for a period of 21 years to support the Council's defence should an insurance claim be made as a result of an accident involving a child.
10. The inspection regime has been approved by Zurich Municipal, the Council's insurers as fit for purpose.
11. In addition to the Council's inspection programme, an independent inspection is undertaken annually on behalf of the Council's insurers. Reports are sent to the

Operations Manager and any recorded defects are added to the defect spreadsheet for the play inspectors repair programme.

12. If an item is deemed unsafe the play inspector will attempt to make it safe immediately. If this is not possible, the equipment may need to be removed or in extreme circumstances, if neither option is possible at that time, it may be necessary to close the play area until the equipment can be made safe or removed.

### **MAINTENANCE**

13. The majority of repairs are carried out in-house by the play area inspector or by other members of the Streetscene team. Occasional repairs that are beyond the scope of the in-house team will be carried out by a contractor by following the Council's procurement procedures.
14. For the first 7 months of 2013, a total of 129 defects had been reported and 103 of those defects had already been rectified.
15. Officers are currently investigating the implementation of a safety surface replacement programme to ensure that all sites continue to provide a safe place for children to play.

### **FINANCE**

16. During the last financial year it cost a total of £49,700 to provide this service. The cost is broken down as shown below:-
  - Staff costs £32,000
  - Vehicle running costs £3,700
  - Spare parts/sub contractor costs £14,000

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

17. The service provided is essential to ensure the safety of all users and in particular the younger visitors that are less aware of the potential hazards that may be present around them. Play areas by their nature involve some element of risk as part of their design and it is essential for children to learn about risk as they play. However if used in the correct way and according to the intended purpose they rarely cause problems.
18. The inspection frequency for each site has been tailored depending on the type of equipment, the amount of use the facility gets and the history of defects. The frequency appears to be about right as in the financial year 2012/13 there has only been 1 reported claim for an injury that is still being investigated for liability. This is an impressive statistic when compared to the total number of sites operated by the Council that are open 365 days of the year and visited by large numbers of children and their parents.

### **CONCLUSION**

19. The inspection regime is subject to an annual review and frequent management checks to ensure procedures are followed and the process continues to be fit for purpose.

20. The service is providing an environment that is as safe as it needs to be to allow children to explore risk and develop social, emotional and physical skills.

**Appendix A - Table of weekly inspections**

**Background Papers:**

None

**Reference Papers:**

None

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Mick Gore. (Ext 4459)

Appendix A

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date of Installation</b>	<b>Weekly Inspection Frequency</b>
King George V multi play	1992	2
Birchen Road	1994	1
Drake Close	1994	1
Sarisbury Green	1994	1
Clydesdale (swings, senior multi play & trim trail)	1994	2
Portchester Park (swings, multi play & seesaw)	1994	4
Howerts Close	1994	1
Park Lane	1995	4
Stubbington Rec.	1995	4
Dore Avenue (swings, multi play & trim trail)	1996	3
Abshot Road	1998	1
Harbour View (swings, roundabout & senior multi play)	1998	1
Fareham Park	1998	2
Locks Heath House Park (swings & trim trail)	1999	3
Swanwick Lane	1999	2
Blackbrook Park (swings, junior multi play & trim trail)	1999	1
Sweethills (swings, multi play & space net)	1999	2
Funtley Rec.	2000	1
Castle Street	2000	1
Course Park Crescent	2000	2
Eastern Parade	2000	3
Priory Park	2001	1
Segensworth	2001	1
Barry's Meadow	2001	2
King George V	2002	2
Newtown	2002	1
Warsash Rec.	2003	2
Seafield Park	2003	1
Metcalf Avenue	2003	1
Wicor Skate Park	2003	1
Bath Lane	2003	4
Longacres	2004	3
Sweethills (roundabout & seesaw)	2004	2
Stubbington Skate Park	2004	4
Badgers Copse	2005	2
Portchester Park (rotator, roundabout & space net)	2005	4
Locks Heath Centre Skate Park	2005	3

Salterns Park	2006	1
Park Lane Skate Park	2004	4
Harbour View ( multi play, play panel, roundabout, stepping stones)	2007	1
Crossfield Walk seesaw	2007	3
Clydesdale (junior multi play & seesaw)	2008	2
Burridge	2009	1
Fielding Road (swings, junior multi play, roundabout & springle)	2009	1
Bellfield	2010	2
Kenwood Road	2010	1
Kites Croft	2010	2
Bath Lane roundabout	2010	4
St Michael's Road	2011	1
Blackbrook Park (basket swing, space net, springle & stepping stones)	2011	1
Dore Avenue (basket swing, space net, senior multi play & stepping stones)	2011	3
Fielding Road (basket swing, senior multi play & springle)	2011	1
Locks Heath House Park (junior multi play & seesaw)	2011	3
Crossfell Walk	2012	3
Hollybrook Gardens	2012	1
West Street	2012	4
Laurel Gardens	2013	1