

 Executive – 10th October 2012		Agenda Item No. 9
Title	Play Area Improvement Programme	
For further information about this report please contact	David Anderson Green Space Team Leader 01926456214 david.anderson@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Executive – 15 th February 2012	
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes Ref: 447
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	Yes/No (If No state why below)

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	19 th September	Andrew Jones
Head of Service	19 th September	Ian Coker
CMT		
Section 151 Officer	19 th September	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		
Finance	19 th September	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	19 th September	Councillor David shilton
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Warwick District Council, Play Working Party – (ongoing) Interim report to Overview and Scrutiny - June 2010 Overview and Scrutiny – September 2011		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Through the Play Working Party, Council officers have recently carried out a survey of all of the Council play areas which has been used to develop the Play Area Improvement Programme. This report details this rolling programme, the funding requirements and the need to release the Play Equipment Renewal Reserve.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive approve the Play Area Improvement Programme, as set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Executive approve the release of £480,000 provisionally allocated in the Play Equipment Renewal Reserve for the refurbishment of existing play areas, drawn over the first 5 years of the plan.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 In order to prioritise the improvements of the Council's play areas across the district over the next 10 years.
- 3.2 To enable officers to procure the improvement of the Councils play areas for the first 5 years, as set out in the Play Area Improvement Programme.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – This report does not bring forward any changes to the policy framework.
- 4.2 **Fit for the Future** – The Council's purpose is to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in or visits Warwick District. With our partners, we aspire to build sustainable, safer, stronger and healthier communities. Ensuring we have good play provision will contribute towards these aims.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 A Play Equipment Renewal Reserve that can be used to fund the replacement of play equipment has been established. This currently has £480,000 allocated to it. This reserve could also be funded from a range of sources including s106, New Homes Bonus monies, external grants, community infrastructure levy and the capital receipts from the disposal of green space, identified through the parks audit and the subsequent Green Space Strategy.
- 5.2 If all the allocated reserve of £480,000 was released to develop the identified 13 play areas within years 1 to 5, this still leaves a shortfall of £1,165,000. A bid to secure the additional funding will be made during the normal budget setting process.
- 5.3 The Executive agreed to set up the Play Reserve as part of the 2011/12 Budget Setting process in February 2011. It was agreed that any future contributions to this reserve will be subject to the overall financial position of the Council and be considered as part of future Budget considerations.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 6.1 A decision could be taken to do nothing differently and continue with the current approach and pattern of play provision. As explained this approach would not be cost effective and all play areas would continue to be of low play value. This approach has been estimated to cost £1.82m and is more expensive than the proposed The Play Area Improvement Programme at £1.65m
- 6.2 Unless substantial sources of capital funding can be identified over the next 10 years, much of play equipment installed as part of the 2002-2003 £1.1 million playground initiative will be approaching the end of its life and will require removal on health and safety grounds. This could mean the closure of play areas or losing their overall play value. This will result in shortfalls in provision, as set out in the Councils local play area standard, and many children and young people will not be able to access a sufficient range of play opportunities within their own local neighbourhood. This ad hoc approach would result in an unplanned and inequitable pattern of play provision across the district and the opportunities to maximise the benefit of any future play funding would not be realised.
- 6.3 Play areas could be improved by not prioritising but this could mean improving sites first that do not need improving, while neglecting those sites that are in greatest need.
- 6.3 Not to fund beyond year 5 of this programme would mean no improvements to the remaining sites across the district.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 A Play Area Review report went to the Executive on 15th February 2012 approving the Play Working Party proposals for the reduction and enhancement of the Councils play areas, as set out in the Play Area Development Plan to that report.
- 7.2 The Play Area Development Plan lists those remaining play areas requiring future investment, a new classification, an estimated 10 year replacement cost to each play area and a total capital requirement for all the Councils play areas. However the plan did not list in any order of priority those play areas requiring improvements.
- 7.3 Therefore officers have produced a rolling programme of play area improvements by prioritising each of play areas with a 'development' score based on the following criteria of condition, play value and age appropriateness. As part of the Councils annual independent inspection of play areas, carried out by an industry expert in May 2012, a score was assigned to each play area indicating the level of development required. The higher the score to each site the greater need for development. Full details of this scoring methodology can be found section 7.13.
- 7.4 From this scoring it was then possible to develop the Play Area Improvement Programme. This was then presented to the Play Working Party on the 25th July 2012 for approval. Likewise this Committee report has also been presented to the Play Working Party for approval.

- 7.5 The Play Area Improvement Programme lists year by year a programme of all the Districts play areas that require refurbishing, their new classification, capital requirements and comments in relation to future improvements specific to each site. Years 1 to 5 lists 13 play areas requiring a capital investment of approximately £545,000. It is proposed that the £480,000 funding available from the Play Equipment Renewal Reserve be used to deliver improvements to these 13 sites, but also supplemented from other external grants, s106 off site developer contributions and any other funding opportunities.
- 7.6 The remaining 33 sites from year 6 to 10 still require further funding of £1,165,000, and therefore a shortfall to the total capital requirements. These sites have deliberately not been prioritised to any great detail at this stage and will only be clearer at the end of year 5.
- 7.7 Officers have worked closely with the Procurement Manager in the past on procuring play areas, and are now working together in procuring the identified 13 play areas and getting best value for the £480,000. As in previous years the Council has procured playground equipment using the ESPO framework, based on a quality/price model that ensures that Council achieves best value for money and that play equipment is of high play value but is also very robust. The procedure is fully OJEU compliant and is particularly advantageous as it allows the Council to tender with a good range of excellent suppliers in this market.
- 7.8 The procurement of play areas will be to design, supply and install. All companies within the framework have their own specialist designers with expertise in both landscape design and play design. This method of procurement has produced some excellent examples of well designed and exciting play areas in recent years that fulfil the needs of young children and also the Council.
- 7.9 The Council's remaining 47 play areas have been reclassified from the old National Playing Fields Association standards of NEAPs, LEAPs and LAPs to a new classification, as detailed in the previous Executive report.
- 7.10 The estimated capital replacement cost for each of these type of play areas are;
Destination Play Zones (Equipped) - £100,000
Community Play Zones (Equipped) - £40,000
Local Play Zones (Equipped) - £15,000
Natural Play Zones (non-equipped) - £5,000
- 7.11 These costs are based on average costs for each type of play area. For example the Community Play Zone is estimated at £40,000, but some sites may cost £50,000, while others may only cost £30,000 and will be appropriate to each site.
- 7.12 The independent annual inspections are carried out by an industry expert with considerable experience of inspecting children's play areas and other allied facilities. He has inspected Warwick District Council play areas for the last 12 years.
- 7.13 The inspections carried out and the subsequent reports are compliant with the relevant Standard for playground equipment, including the surface, the condition of the equipment and surfacing, and the ancillary items. The inspection includes any other matter that the expert believes is associated with

the playground and which may create a hazard. Assessments of play area equipment are made using the recommendations of EN 1176, which is the European Standard and has the status of a British Standard.

- 7.14 This year's annual inspection included an assessment made on the 'Development' of each play area. The expert considered the condition, play value and age appropriateness of the playground. He also considered the likely actual and potential usage. A score was then given to indicate whether, in the consultant's opinion, development should take place.

10 Review use. This playground probably needs to be closed, re-sited or its purpose changed.

8 Extensive capital works to develop the site are required.

6 Significant capital works to develop the site are required.

4 A significant remedial refurbishment is needed.

2 Satisfactory – No significant capital works are needed.

1 Good – No capital works are needed.

The words low/sufficient indicate that there is low need for development as the current facility is suitable for purpose. The words low/need are used to indicate that there is little need for developments at this site as child attendances are likely to remain low.