

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

21 SEPTEMBER 2016

CABINET

19 OCTOBER 2016

UPDATE OF PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT PLAN 2015-2020

REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES

Contact Officer: Susan Croker Tel No: 01962 848419

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2666 (revised) – Play Area Refurbishment Plan 2015-2020 11 March 2015

CAB2807 – Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Protocol

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report summarises the key issues and findings in relation to the future funding of the refurbishment of the City Council's play areas, as identified by an informal members group formed in October 2015 and sets out possible approaches for funding the programme. The report was requested by the Town Forum on 11 March 2015 and Cabinet on 18 March 2015. It seeks agreement for the remaining four years of the five year programme and sets out in principle possible options for funding the delivery of the works therein.

Play areas are a vital asset to Winchester and one that not only delivers the opportunities afforded by play to residents and visitors, but also helps deliver other key Council priorities including increasing walking, health and wellbeing, flood alleviation and biodiversity.

The financial requirement for delivering the next four years of the five year programme is £545,000 of which £399,225 will require funding to be identified (see

Appendix III. One option available to fund the shortfall in the refurbishment programme is for the Forum to use all or some of its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income. It is also possible that schemes which have more than just local benefit could receive some funding using the Council's District CIL receipts. However the allocation of the CIL funds for infrastructure projects across the District will follow the protocol set out in Cabinet report CAB 2807 and therefore cannot be quantified and relied upon at this stage. Schemes in the programme would need to be assessed on a case by case basis to see if they are suitable for funding from the District CIL funds. Not all schemes in the programme would meet the criteria so other funding will need to be identified and options for this are included in the report and recommendations below.

Another option is for the Forum to use Winchester Town earmarked reserves to support the delivery of the programme or to do this in combination with CIL funds. This would need to be identified as part of the budget setting process.

If the Town Forum is minded not to agree to any of these options to fund the shortfall in the programme the only alternative is to decommission play areas when they come to the end of their operational life.

The Town Forum therefore needs to agree to fund the programme by using its CIL income, reserves (or combination of the two), with the possibility of some funding from the District CIL fund, or to decommission play areas when they come to the end of their operational life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Town Forum:

1. Agree the four year refurbishment programme, subject to identifying the necessary funding, as detailed in Appendix III to the Report.
2. Consider and agree a strategy as set out in the options below for the delivery of the four year refurbishment programme namely:
 - a) That the Town Forum uses its CIL funds to fund the cost of the Play Area Refurbishment Programme;
 - b) That, as part of the budget setting process, the Town Forum identifies funding within the Winchester Town earmarked reserves, in order to fund the costs of the Play Area Refurbishment Programme;
 - c) That the Town Forum agrees to use a combination of the Town Forum's CIL income and Winchester Town earmarked reserves to fund the costs of the Play Area Refurbishment Programme;

- d) That the Council can consider allocating District CIL funds for, or as a contribution towards, the cost of delivering those projects in the programme which provide strategic or more than local benefits;
 - e) That if no funding strategy is agreed as set out in a) to d) above, play areas will be decommissioned once they come to the end of their operational life.
3. Note that if any option other than e) (decommissioning) is chosen then funding will need to be identified and the exact phasing of the four year refurbishment programme will need to follow this. If it is decided to only use CIL funding then there are likely to be delays in delivery of the programme due to insufficient funds currently being available within the Winchester Town budget for works in 2016/17 (it is anticipated that year two of the programme will now take place in 17/18).

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the approved four year refurbishment programme and the delay incurred due to insufficient funding within the Winchester Town Account.
2. Notes and approves as appropriate the funding option agreed by the Town Forum to deliver the programme.
3. Notes that some schemes in the programme may be suitable for the District wide CIL funding and these can be assessed in accordance with the protocol agreed as part of Report CAB2807.

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM21 SEPTEMBER 2016CABINET19 OCTOBER 2016UPDATE OF PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT PLAN 2015-2020REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACESDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises the key issues and options in relation to the future refurbishment of the City Council's Play areas, as identified by an informal Members' group. The report was requested by the Town Forum on 11 March 2015 and Cabinet on 18 March 2015.
- 1.2 The report relates to the 24 children's play areas managed by the City Council within the Winchester Town area. The provision of play areas within the wider District is not the responsibility of the City Council.
- 1.3 In addition, this report relates only to play area refurbishment and does not include annual maintenance costs which are included in the Revenue Budget.
- 1.4 Play areas and their connection to open spaces are extremely important. Play is fun and promotes child development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence. It helps keep children fit and healthy which is crucial as identified in the District Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board – Local Action Plan 2013/15 which identifies one priority as '*starting and developing well*' (page 1).
- 1.5 In addition, children experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk. Play helps children learn about their environment and develops their sense of community. It allows children to find out about their abilities, their interests and helps them deal with difficult situations and emotional stress. It can also be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends and family members (see Appendix I).
- 1.6 The Council has a five year programme for the refurbishment of its play areas. This was brought before Town Forum on 11 March 2015 and Cabinet on 18 March 2015 (CAB2666 (revised)).
- 1.7 Report CAB2666 (revised) sought approval for a five year refurbishment programme from 2015 to 2020 which was required to ensure the continuation of high standards of play provision in Winchester.

- 1.8 Approval was given for year one of the five year refurbishment programme. However, it was not possible to give approval for years two to five due to insufficient resources.
- 1.9 The primary source of funding for play area refurbishments has been the Open Space Fund. This Fund has £55,775 remaining, which has been allocated to the Winnall Manor Play Area. Once this has been spent, this pot of money will be exhausted and no further income is anticipated, resulting in insufficient funds to cover the cost of the refurbishment plan from year two onwards.
- 1.10 Consequently the Town Forum requested that an informal Members' group be set up to review the Council's approach to play area management and make recommendations for its future management, with a particular remit to identify new sources of funding. The informal Members' group comprised Cllr Hiscock (Chair), Cllr Osborne, Cllr Janet Berry, Cllr Eileen Berry, Cllr Scott and Cllr Maynard, with support from Cllr Hutchison in the final two meetings.

2 Process undertaken by the informal members group

- 2.1 The aim of the Group was "*to consider the Council's provision and management of its play areas across the city in the future (25-30 Years) and the funding for this*".
- 2.2 The group met on four occasions and undertook two site visits:-
- a) *Meeting 1*: 8 October 2015 - to agree aims and process.
 - b) *Site visit* to key Winchester play areas on 9 November 2015
 - c) *Site visit* to a Eastleigh play areas on 17 November 2015
 - d) *Meeting 2*: 24 November 2015 - meeting to discuss feedback from site visits; set principles for the management of Winchester City Council play areas and begin discussions on future funding.
 - e) *Meeting 3*: 26 January 2016 - meeting to consider future funding in more detail in conjunction with the Five Year Programme of Play Area Refurbishment 2015-2020 and beyond.
 - f) *Meeting 4*: 16 March 2016 - meeting to consider the draft report for the Town Forum.

3 Outcomes

- 3.1 A set of principles (see Appendix II) were agreed by the informal Members' group. These focus on the value of play areas not only for the use by residents and visitors, but also for the additional services they provide such as biodiversity, health and wellbeing and flood prevention.
- 3.2 These included:
- a) the provision of play areas should be strategic, rather than reactionary, and take account of:

- (i) Need, benefits and aims of individual sites whilst having regard for total provision across the City.
 - (ii) Location and setting (including access to other sites and places of interest).
 - (iii) Provision across all age ranges (ie preschool through to older adults).
 - (iv) Equipment availability
 - (v) Funding availability
 - (vi) Future maintenance costs.
- b) Provision will focus on destination sites (North Walls, Dean Park and Abbey Gardens), local sites providing local benefit and other sites providing a bespoke experience, for example skate parks and natural play areas.
- c) All play areas will be maintained to a high standard to minimise harm to users, legal challenges to the Council and reputational risk.
- d) Where necessary, some play areas will be decommissioned or their purpose altered.
- e) In light of the need to find alternative sources of funding for the five year programme of play area refurbishment, it is essential that play areas are valued by those who use them, and promotional activities will be undertaken alongside the refurbishment programme.

4 Financial issues

- 4.1 The financial requirement for delivering the next four years of the five year programme is £545,000 of which £399,225 will require additional funding to be identified (see Appendix III).
- 4.2 As a result, the Town Forum has to identify a strategy for funding the shortfall in its programme and there are only limited options available to do this. The Winchester Town CIL fund is one option and it is also possible to use the Winchester Town earmarked reserve.
- 4.3 The issue with CIL is that income is dependent upon development commencements over the next few years because it is at this point CIL needs to be paid by developers to the Council with 15% of income from schemes in the City being transferred to the Town Forum. Whilst it is possible to make predictions about future levels of funding, it is not a precise science and development can be affected by a range of factors, so there is a risk that CIL income will not be sufficient to fund the entire programme. It may also mean that all or most of CIL will be used for this purpose restricting the Town Forum's ability to support other infrastructure using these funds. It is possible that some of the schemes in the programme which are of a more strategic nature, or are at least of more than just local benefit, could be funded in whole or part by the District CIL funds but this cannot be relied upon at this point as the allocation of these funds will follow the protocol agreed on Report CAB2807. Funding allocation for schemes in the City will depend on infrastructure needs and opportunities elsewhere in the District.

- 4.4 It is also possible to agree an approach whereby a combination of CIL income and reserves is used to fund the programme which has the benefit of providing a buffer if there are insufficient CIL receipts to meet the entire cost. It also means that CIL funds could potentially be used to support the delivery of other infrastructure in the City. The details for agreeing funding for the programme each year will follow the normal annual budgetary process.
- 4.5 Whilst it is anticipated that play area refurbishment will be funded through the options identified in 4.2, there has been a delay in delivering year two of the refurbishment plan due to insufficient funding being available in 2016/17. It is anticipated that year two of the five year plan will now be delivered in 2017/18, assuming this is agreed through the budgetary process.
- 4.6 The delay in delivering year two of the five year plan is unfortunate as equipment has had to be removed from Winnall Manor Road for safety reasons. However, the current delay is not expected to result in any significant risk nor the loss of further equipment, assuming the refurbishment works are undertaken in 2017/18.
- 4.7 For information, as of 9 September 2016, Winchester Town has issued Demand Notices totally £147,238 (some Demand Notices are payable by instalments). The amount of CIL received to date is £80,306.
- 4.8 The anticipated cost of the following five year programme (2021 to 2026) is in the region of £730,000 (see Appendix IV) of which £610,000 needs to come from the Town Fund.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Play areas are an extremely vital asset to Winchester and one that not only delivers the opportunities afforded by play to residents and visitors, but also help deliver other key Council priorities including increasing walking, health and wellbeing, flood alleviation and biodiversity.
- 5.2 Delivery of the Five Year Refurbishment Programme has been delayed due to insufficient funding. However, there is likely to be funding available either through the Community Infrastructure Levy or the Winchester Town earmarked reserves to fund the remaining four years of the plan, albeit there are risks associated with relying on CIL to meet all the costs as explained at 4.3 above.
- 5.3 There will be a need to seek funding for the plan annually through the normal budgetary process. The Town Forum recommends its budget in January, which is finally approved by Council in February.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The refurbishment of plan areas contributes to the delivery of the following outcome within the Active Communities theme of the Community Strategy 2010 -2020, helping

people to 'lead active and healthy lifestyles byexercising regularly'. Specifically, contributing to the following priority:

'provide opportunities for everyone to become more active through organised sport, walking, cycling and other recreational activities, making the most of our natural environment and countryside'.

6.2 They also contribute to the following outcome within the Environment, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Plan:

'ensuring that the quality of place we enjoy is maintained and enhanced'.

7 FINANCE

7.1 Delivery of the programme will be managed by existing staff within the Landscape and Open Spaces Team, although if there is a need to secure funding either through internal or external processes, this will have an impact of their work priorities.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

8.1 The risk of failure to refurbish play areas in line with the proposed programme may result in a loss of play provision as equipment and areas have to be decommissioned and removed. Such decommissioning also has a cost implication. Funding the programme using only the Town Forum CIL funds is dependent upon development being commenced in the City and therefore there are a number of factors which can affect this and create uncertainties about future CIL income. There is a risk that CIL will not be sufficient to meet all the costs of the programme in which case other options set out in the Report will need to be considered again.

8.2 A programme of regular refurbishment of play areas mitigates the risks associated with equipment becoming worn and potentially dangerous once outside the period of use for which it was designed. Refurbishment also reduces costs to the Council of maintenance associated with older, worn equipment.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX I - The value of play areas

APPENDIX II- Principles of Play Areas as agreed by the Informal Members Group

APPENDIX III – Refurbishment Programme Years two to five: 2017/18 to 2020/21

APPENDIX IV – Refurbishment Programme 2021 - 2026

The value of play areas

Duty to protect and promote play. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the Government has a duty to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people up to 18 years of age. This includes providing opportunities for recreation and leisure activity engaging children in play at an age appropriate level.

Play parks provide a wealth of benefits. Play is fun and promotes child development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence. It helps keep children fit and healthy. Children experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk. Play helps children learn about their environment and develops their sense of community. It allows children to find out about their abilities, their interest and helps them deal with difficult situations and emotional stress. It can also be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends and family members.

Links to wider WCC work programmes. Encouraging play is key to helping deliver the Winchester District Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board – Local Action Plan 2013/15. This identifies four main areas of work and includes “*starting and developing well*”. This states that “*approximately 25% of the population of the Winchester District is under 19 years of age*” (page 3). In addition there are “*1,800 (8.8%) of children living in poverty*” and “*18.5% of Year 6 children are classed as obese*” in St John and All Saints (Page 6).

Play also helps to deliver actions within the proposed Walking Strategy by helping encourage adults and children to walk to play areas and open spaces and by helping to enhance and protect key linkages.

Play areas also provide multiple benefits including biodiversity for example Abbot’s Barton and flood alleviation for example Devils Island.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY AREAS

To help with the future direction and maintenance of the council's play areas the following principles have been identified by WCC Members.

1. Play areas are important and provide multiple benefits for residents and visitors to Winchester. Consequently WCC will continue to provide and maintain play areas for the benefit of residents and visitors free of charge to users.
2. The provision for play within the city needs to be strategic ie not simply responding to development opportunities but proactive in it's approach taking account of:
 - a. Need, benefits and aims of individual sites.
 - b. Location and setting (including access through and to other sites and places of interest)
 - c. Provision across all age ranges (ie preschool through to older adults)
 - d. Equipment availability
 - e. Funding availability
 - f. Future maintenance costs.
3. This strategic approach should also be developed to take account of :
 - a. New developments as they come on board, as these will continue to need to provide (where possible) on site open space provision to ensure the development is acceptable in planning terms.
 - b. Expanding play from designated areas to general open spaces such as safe streets, all weather paths and other green areas. This will allow alternatives to the formal/designated play areas to be developed which will help reduce costs going forward. However, the demand for formal play areas will remain.

When a play area comes up for renovation/renewal consideration to be given to whether it is still needed, relevant and/or appropriate. Sites may be decommissioned or their use changed if appropriate. In these situations, a new purpose needs to be clearly identified, discussed and communicated to interested parties.

Where a play area is failing to deliver a good play experience, assuming funding allows, the area should be modified/renovated even if it is not at the end of its life span.

Play areas do not need to be a minimum size but each site to be bespoke to the area and encourage links to other play areas and sites of interest, to link to pedestrian/cycle routes, to take account of the wider landscape and setting, provide interesting and varied equipment and be promoted.

4. A range of play types to be provided across the city including:
 - a. Destination sites (key play areas which receive greatest investment and provide benefits for a wide geographical area ie North Walls, Dean Park and Abbey Gardens)
 - b. Local play areas catering for local use which are within walking distance for communities.
 - c. Other sites which provide a bespoke experience ie natural play areas or specific use sites such as the skate park.

Equipment should challenge children, be inventive and encourage imagination. Conflict between users should be minimised through design.

When designing play areas potential users to be engaged with the design process.

5. Play areas need to meet not only the play need but also deliver a range of benefits including biodiversity, flood prevention, pollution mitigation, urban cooling, health and wellbeing and amenity value. Where possible these areas should be used to hold events, act as a focal point for communities and provide multiple benefits.
6. All play areas to be maintained to a high standard ie
 - a. All play areas to be inspected either daily or weekly (in line with the existing Inspection regime) and an annual inspection undertaken by an external, qualified inspector.
 - b. All urgent or dangerous repairs to receive an initial response within 24 working hours of the problem being reported.
 - c. All other repairs will be prioritised and dealt with as appropriate.

To assist with this the City Council will use only reputable manufacturers to supply equipment.

7. Play areas and open spaces to be valued by those who use them. To achieve this:
 - a. An audit of all open spaces to be undertaken, updated regularly and used to inform future work.
 - b. All areas to have a clear individual and collective identity.
 - c. Play areas to be promoted and awareness increased.
 - d. All play areas to be monitored regularly to assess usage.
 - e. Communities to be encouraged to hold events where appropriate.
8. Funding to be secured from a variety of sources and opportunities to secure funding to be continuously sought. Consideration should be given to identifying and seeking new ways and new sources of funding.

Winchester Play Area Refurbishment Plan Years 2 – 5: 2016/17 to 2019/20

Areas shaded in grey are those projects where funding has not yet been identified.

Years 2-5							
No	Play Area Name	Original Installation Date	Refurbishment Date	Additional work identified	Cost of works	Funding source	Programme Year
1	Bath Place			Decommission play area. Develop as an open space in consultation with residents	£5,000	Funding identified - Play area budget	2
6.	Winnall Manor Road			Complete refurbishment	£120,000	£55,775 funded via S106. £64,225 funding not identified however a CIL application submitted Aug 2016	2
7	Abbotts Walk			Installation of new play area as part of housing development	£80,000	Funding Identified - Developer	2
				Total	£205,000		
				Funding shortfall	£64,225		

8	Marnhull Rise			Decommission play area. Develop as an open space in consultation with residents	£5,000	Funding identified - play area budget	3
9	North Walls	1999	2006 (partial)	Review this site based on progress of leisure centre project	£150,000	Funding not identified likely funding Winchester Town budget/CIL	3
				Total	£155,000		

				Funding shortfall	£150,000		
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10	Gordon Avenue	2003		Complete refurbishment required. Develop into youth space for Highcliffe	£80,000	Funding not identified likely funding Winchester Town budget/CIL	4
11	Taplings Road	2002		Complete refurbishment	£80,000	Funding not identified likely funding Winchester Town budget/CIL	4
				Funding shortfall	£160,000		

11	Teg Down Meads	2001	2009/10 (partial refurbishment)	Replacement of multiplay unit	£25,000	Winchester Town budget/CIL – funding not yet identified	5
				Funding shortfall	£25,000		
				Total shortfall	£339,225		

Five Year Programme of Play Area Refurbishment 2021 – 2026

A number of play areas will require refurbishment during this period.

Site	Work required	Estimated cost	Estimated year	General Fund or Town Fund
Abbey Gardens	Total Refurbishment	£120,000	2020/21	General
Arlington Place	Partial refurbishment	£20,000	2024/25	Town
Chaundler Road	Total Refurbishment	£90,000	2020/21	Town
Friary Gardens	Total Refurbishment	£40,000	2024/25	Town
Dean Park	Total Refurbishment	£120,000	2021/22	Town
Fairdown Close	Total Refurbishment	£50,000	2023/24	Town
Imber Road	Total Refurbishment	£50,000	2024/25	Town
Somers Close	Partial Refurbishment	£20,000	2022/23	Town
St Martins Close	Total Refurbishment	£60,000	2023/24	Town
Thurmond Crescent	Total Refurbishment	£60,000	2022/23	Town
Stanmore Recreation Ground	Total Refurbishment	£100,000	2022/23	Town
Total		£730,000		