

WINCHESTER TOWN FORM

20 January 2010

CABINET

3 February 2010

PLAYGROUND FIVE YEAR REFURBISHMENT PLAN

REPORT OF HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF24 – Play Area Refurbishment Plan – 13 January 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report seeks approval for a five year plan for refurbishment of play areas managed directly by Winchester City Council. The attached plan follows on from the previous five year plan, which was approved by Winchester Town Forum in 2004 and will be completed by the end of March 2010. The plan is based on an assessment of the condition of the sites against the minimum quality standards for playgrounds. This report asks the Town Forum to comment on the proposals and requests Cabinet to provide authorisation for the expenditure on works within the programme from an established capital budget and the Winchester Town area Open Space Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Town Forum comment on the proposals and agree the implementation of the five year refurbishment and maintenance programme, as set out in the report.
2. That Cabinet agree expenditure of any approved funds from the Open Space Fund or Play Area Capital budget on these schemes over the next five years, subject to annual review of the capital programme.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for the provision of 40 children's playgrounds, 27 of which are in the Winchester town area. Parish Councils provide the majority of play areas in other parts of the district as they consider appropriate.
- 1.2 Over the last five years the Council has carried out an extensive refurbishment programme, undertaking work at 25 sites involving both partial and total refurbishment. This work has been funded through the capital programme and the Open Space Fund. The completion of the previous plan and the Council's investment has resulted in high quality play provision which better meets the need of the local community.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval for the next 5 year programme which will continue the refurbishment and provision of high standards of play areas across the District.
- 1.4 The key issues to be considered when developing a five year investment programme are the site location, selection of equipment and maintenance as set out in the following sections of this report.

2. Site Location

- 2.1 Many existing play areas have a long history having been built at the same time as surrounding houses. Some of the locations are not ideal but are the only viable option for continuing provision and are also accepted by local residents.
- 2.2 The number of City Council owned play areas increases when housing developments are adopted under Section 106 Legal Agreements. Since 2004, the City Council has taken over responsibility for an additional 12 locations.

- 2.3 The choice of location for a new play area is a complex one particularly within established residential areas. The ideal location has easy and safe access with the majority of potential users not having to cross major roads, railways or watercourses. There should be clear paths and good lighting and residents also have to feel comfortable using the site.
- 2.4 Play areas can be associated with negative issues such as antisocial behaviour mainly caused by older young people. The careful selection and location of equipment can help to reduce these problems but may not eliminate them entirely. This is usually a particular concern to local residents when a new site location is being considered.
- 2.5 There are some locations where sites have come into the ownership of the City Council where it may be appropriate to consider whether the play area should be retained in the future. There are certain sites detailed within the new plan at Appendix 1 where it would be appropriate to consult with local residents and Ward Members regarding their retention. Reasons include sites which are too small to offer adequate provision or there are other more suitable locations in close proximity. Alternatively the site may be rarely used and no longer provides any real function. Where sites are deemed to be redundant then the solution is usually to return the land to amenity green space.
3. Selection of Equipment
 - 3.1 Play areas should offer a selection of equipment which provides a challenging environment for children to develop skills and grow in confidence. The equipment should also be enjoyable over a number of visits.
 - 3.2 The City Council only uses reputable manufacturers to supply equipment and aims to use a variety of suppliers in order to ensure that different opportunities and choice are offered throughout the area. Following installation, all play areas and equipment are inspected by an independent body to ensure they meet British and European safety standards.
 - 3.3 Where major refurbishment works are deemed necessary local residents are consulted in order to help choose the new equipment. They are informed at an early stage and asked to provide input on the changes they would like to see made to the area. When tenders are received they are also given the opportunity to view several chosen designs and make the final decision about which scheme is to be installed. It is hoped that involving local residents and particularly young people in the process helps the community to have some ownership of the site and value the play provision and equipment.
 - 3.4 There are increasing trends in the play area market to move towards a more natural approach to play through the use of different materials and landscaping. The City Council is embracing this trend within its Playbuilder project which will create a new play area using some of these concepts and combining them with a variety of play equipment. However, irrespective of these new developments there is still a need for traditional play areas and with

40 existing play areas to maintain the City Council needs to continue a rolling programme of investment in order to ensure high quality standards are maintained, risk is controlled and issues are not permitted to build up to a point where an unaffordable level of investment is required at one time.

- 3.5 The Landscape and Open Spaces Team is currently working with the County Council and neighbouring authorities to develop more cost-effective procurement of play area equipment and contractor services. A number of options are being considered including a joint independent design service, joint procurement of equipment, design and build services. It is hoped that joint procurement will allow better provision within agreed budgets or provide potential for cost savings. Members will be kept updated of any changes as this project progresses.

4. Maintenance

- 4.1 Maintaining equipment in good condition is essential to ensure safety and encourage play area use. Most damage to equipment is the result of vandalism but fortunately the overall level across the District is relatively low. All sites are included in the overall grounds maintenance contract and are inspected by the Council's contractor on a regular basis.
- 4.2 In addition to the inspection regime, an annual independent inspection is carried out on every individual piece of equipment and a full report made on the condition and suitability of both site and equipment. The inspection includes a risk assessment of each item of equipment. Any item which poses an unacceptable level of risk is repaired or removed from use as appropriate.

5. Site prioritisation

- 5.1 Given the significant costs involved in refurbishment and provision of new equipment it is essential that a planned approach is taken to play area investments. This ensures that works are tackled in priority order so as to make the best use of the available resources and existing sites. The attached five year plan at Appendix 1 lists all sites together with an indication of proposed future works where appropriate. The works proposed in years 4 and 5 may be subject to amendment or additions as the position in terms of future condition of other areas and need becomes clearer during the earlier years of the programme.
- 5.2 Some sites deemed to be satisfactory for the next 5 years are shown separately for the purposes of completeness of provision but will not require any work during the next programme. The sites marked in shaded text are those within the Town Forum area and comment from Forum on these priorities is requested.
- 5.3 The plan indicates the order of priority for the works by assigning a year to each site where works are required. The pace at which work progresses will depend on the available resources including officer time and contractor availability but every effort will be made to complete the works within the

timescales quoted. Members are asked to approve the programme which will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the business planning process.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The refurbishment of play areas under this plan will contribute to the delivery of the following outcome within the Health and Wellbeing theme of the Community Strategy:

‘Children & young people enjoy healthy, fulfilling and active lives’. Under this outcome, the following action is identified

Promote the wellbeing of every child and young person in the Winchester District, whatever their background or circumstances, by delivering the five ‘Every Child Matters’ key outcomes – be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The play area refurbishment programme at appendix 1 identifies the priorities for expenditure over the next 5 years. The capital cost of this work can be met from existing capital provision for Play Areas of £50,000 per annum supported by up to £100,000 per annum from the Open Space fund subject to the views of the Town Forum.
- 7.2 Delivery of the programme will be managed by existing staff within the Landscape and Open Spaces Team with no additional resource requirements.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 8.1 The risk of failure to refurbish play areas in line with the proposed programme will result in a loss of play provision as equipment and areas have to be decommissioned and removed.
- 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 1 – Five year playground refurbishment plan

Proposed Five Year Plan

Note: Sites marked in shaded text are within the Town Forum area

No.	Play Area Name	Original Installation Date	Refurbishment Date	Additional work identified	Cost of works	Funding source	Programme Year
1.	Abbey Gardens	1993	2002(Partial)	Replace safer surfacing where required	£8,000	Play Area capital	1
2.	Blanchard Road, Bishops Waltham	1997	N/A	Complete refurbishment required.	£40,000	Open space fund / play area capital	1
3.	The Valley, Stanmore	2010		New play area location: Undertake consultation exercise and develop play area site	£80,000	£50,000 Playbuilder £30,000 Play area capital	1
4.	North Walls Recreation Ground	1999	2006 (Partial)	Replace safer surfacing where required	£5,000	Play Area capital	1
				Total	£133,000		

No.	Play Area Name	Original Installation Date	Refurbishment Date	Additional work identified	Cost of works	Funding source	Programme Year
5.	Fryers Close, Kingsworthy		N/A	Replace items of equipment as required and add to existing provision	£20,000	Play Area capital	2
6.	Godfrey Pink Way, Bishops Waltham	1996	N/A	Review future plans for this location	£20,000	Play Area capital	2
7.	Stanmore Recreation Ground	1997	2004	Replace items of equipment as required	£16,000	Open space fund	2
8.	Nursery Gardens, Fulflood		N/A	Complete refurbishment required	£10,000	Play Area capital	2
9.	North Walls Skate Park			Complete refurbishment required	£50,000	Open space fund	2
				Total	£116,000		

No.	Play Area Name	Original Installation Date	Refurbishment Date	Additional work identified	Cost of works	Funding source	Programme Year
10.	Sarum Close, Fulflood		N/A	Complete refurbishment required	£20,000	Play Area capital	3
11.	Imber Road, Winnall	1998	2005	Replace items of equipment as required.	£35,000	Play Area capital	3
12.	Monarch Way, Stanmore		N/A	Replace items of equipment as required	£25,000	Play Area capital	4
13.	Provene Gardens, Waltham Chase	1997	N/A	Complete refurbishment required	£30,000	Play Area capital	4
14.	Firmstone Road, Winnall		N/A	Review future plans for this location.	£12,000	Open space fund	4
				Total	£122,000		

No.	Play Area Name	Original Installation Date	Refurbishment Date	Additional work identified	Cost of works	Funding source	Programme Year
15.	Orams Arbour, Fulflood	1993	2004	Replace items of equipment as required	£35,000	Play area capital	5
				Total	£35,000		

The following sites are considered to be in sufficiently good condition to remain in a satisfactory condition until 2015 with routine maintenance.

Play Area Name	Original Installation Date	Refurbishment Date
Somers Close, Stanmore	2000	2009
Saffron Way, Whiteley	2000	2008
Teg Down Meads, Teg Down	2001	2009/10
Dean Park, Teg Down	2001	2009/10
Taplings Road, Weeke	2002	2009/10
Cheshire Close, Whiteley	2000	2009
Carraway, Whiteley	2000	2009
Mollison Rise, Whiteley	2002	2009
Silchester Place, Hyde	2002	2009/10
Westman Road, Weeke	Not known	Not known
Bath Place, Fulflood	Not known	N/A
King George V Playing Fields, Highcliffe	2003/04	N/A
Abbotts Barton Open Space	1990/94	2004
Meadowside Sports Ground, Whiteley	Not known	N/A
St Martins Close, Winnall	1993	2005
Thurmond Crescent, Stanmore	1994	2004
Fairdown Close, Winnall	1995	2004
Coriander Way, Whiteley	2000	2008
Friary Gardens, St Cross	2000	2007
Arlington Place, Hyde	1997	2008
Marnhull Rise, Fulflood	Not known	N/A
Winnall Manor Road, Winnall	Not known	Not known
Gordon Avenue, Highcliffe	2003	N/A