

Referral item to Corporate Management Committee 19 January 2023

Parks and Recreational Spaces – Consultancy and Health and Safety works budget (Community Services, Aadam Ahmed)

At its meeting on 5 January 2023, the Community Services Committee approved that subject to the approval of this Committee, a sum of £215,000 from the ring-fenced budget from 2022/2023, following the cessation of the school transport service, be utilised to commission a consultant to evaluate and deliver a comprehensive inspection of the Council's play areas. This would enable Officers to address the low to medium (as assessed) health and safety concerns regarding existing play equipment.

The Consultant's work would support that already undertaken by Officers. Specifically, they would be asked to:

- conduct thorough health and safety inspections all play and recreation sites
- Conduct a full DDA Assessment
- Carry out a Play Value Assessment
- Carry out an estimated life expectancy assessment
- Provide guidance and insight to support decision-making on the potential rationalisation of play facilities
- Provide guidance and insight to support decision-making on a replacement scheme, including the provision of indicative costs associated with such a scheme

This Committee is advised that the consultant will also be tasked with conducting an enhanced annual health and safety inspection, which will help inform decision making on pieces of play equipment, which is of priority to repair/replace due to the likelihood of it deteriorating further.

The use of a consultant has been deemed necessary to support Officers in understanding the scope, potential scale and ambition of this project, with part of the work being to ensure that spaces are fit for the future and refreshed to reflect current and anticipated trends within the targeted demographic.

The request for approval is aligned with the decision at Full Council regarding the de-continuation of school buses, where it was agreed that the budget should be ring fenced to focus on development and maintenance activity in relation to provision for children and young people. This is one of the key priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Therefore, it is felt that the use of the current 2022/2023 budget to undertake some immediate maintenance works to play facilities, as well as provide a direction and plan delivery of play facilities is appropriate use of this funding.

It is proposed that the sum of £215,000 is split £20,000 for the consultancy work and £195,000 for any resulting remedial health and safety works.

It is anticipated that 2022/2023 provision of £215,000 set aside for the development of leisure and recreation opportunities for children and young people across the borough, will be fully utilised by this request. However, given the need to procure contractors to undertake the necessary works resulting from the consultant's report, it is unlikely that the full £215,000 will be spent in the current year. Therefore, it is proposed to request that any unspent sums at the end of the year be carried forward to allow the works to be completed in the next financial year

Members are advised that subject to this Committee's approval, work will begin to appoint a consultant at the earliest opportunity and Officers will engage with colleagues within Procurement, whilst work to address any identified health and safety issues will also commence, utilising existing contractors.

Officers' Recommendation that –

- I) **the sum of £20,000 be approved for the use of a consultant to conduct the necessary evaluation of existing play equipment and to complete an enhanced annual health and safety inspection;**
- II) **the sum of £195,000 to be used to address immediate health and safety repairs required, as identified in routine site assessments and via the work of the above appointed consultant; and**
- III) **any unspent allocation from recommendation ii) as at 31 March 2023 be carried forward to the 2023/24 financial year to progress the works.**

(To resolve)