

<b>Report title</b>	<b>Water Play Facilities in Runnymede</b>
<b>Report author</b>	Darren Williams (Corporate Head of Community Services)
<b>Department</b>	Community Services
<b>Exempt</b>	No

**Purpose of report:**

**For information.**

**Synopsis of report:**

**To provide an overview of the status of Council owned paddling pools across the borough.**

**To advise Members of the steps being undertaken in Community Services to determine the future viability and any subsequent procurement of water play facilities in Runnymede.**

**Since the pandemic, this Council's water play facilities (paddling pools) in our ownership, have remained closed.**

**In accordance with the 2023-2024 Community Services Service Area Plan, Community Services are tasked with the possible procurement of replacement facilities, in the form of Splash Pads.**

**A capital sum has been approved as part of the 2023-2024 budget setting process, totalling £500,000. However, given the potential scale of works required and the Council's current financial position, this may not be sufficient for the replacement programme.**

**Officers consider that an understanding of the true extent of any works in terms of requirements and indicative costs is needed, prior to any procurement activity. Taking this approach will enable Members to make decisions as to if and how the Council proceeds. Undertaking further exploratory works will also ensure that any procurement exercise has a robust specification, and which details the Council's full requirements, in the event Members determine that the Council should proceed with replacement.**

**Therefore, this report outlines steps that are to be undertaken to achieve clarity of the requirements and associated costs, in transitioning from Paddling Pool facilities to Splash Pads.**

**Recommendation(s):**

**None. This report is for information.**

## **1. Context and background of report**

- 1.1 The Council has three paddling pool facilities in its municipal parks, at Chertsey Recreation Ground, Heathervale Park (New Haw), and Victory Park (Addlestone).
- 1.2 These three sites have remained closed since the pandemic for reasons identified by the operational parks team in Environmental Services, linked to their condition, age and the environmental implications of reopening them. All facilities have been in place for over 30 years.
- 1.3 In addition, a paddling pool is located at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds (RPG), a site which is held in Trust and managed by the Council through this Committee acting as Trustees. This facility has also experienced a period of closure post pandemic. However, following repairs organised by Community Services and Assets and Regeneration, it reopened in June 2023.
- 1.4 The condition, environmental, sustainability and operational requirements which have resulted in the closure or, in the case of RPG, the short-term extended life span, of facilities has resulted in Officers being asked to consider the future replacement of these facilities.
- 1.5 As part of the 2023/2024 budget setting process, a capital budget of £500,000 was approved for the replacement of paddling pools (excluding RPG which would be required to utilise its own Trust budget).
- 1.6 Following the priority work required in relation to play areas, this report outlines the initial steps to be undertaken in determining the Council's future approach to water play facilities in the borough.

## **2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended**

- 2.1 Dovetailing with work around the play area repairs and replacement programme, consideration has been given to the future requirement for waterplay at existing sites in the borough, where paddling pools are currently located.
- 2.2 Early conversations with Members, demonstrated a desire to move away from traditional paddling pool facilities to other forms of water play, primarily in the form of splash pads. Officers have shared this view, based on the environmental, sustainability, health and safety, and likely operational resource implications and associated costs, relating to operating paddling pools.
- 2.3 As a result, Officers are working towards the potential of splash pad facilities, and it is on this basis that further work will be carried out.
- 2.4 Work undertaken to date, together with information shared by neighbouring authorities who have faced similar situations, leaves a concern that to replace the facilities in the three municipal parks will cost more than the approved £500K budget.
- 2.5 Given the Council's current financial position, the cost of a full replacement programme needs to be understood, to make an appropriate recommendation to inform a decision by this Committee.
- 2.6 In order to have full understanding of the requirements in installing new facilities, the Council is engaging a water play consultant to advise on options and indicative

costings relating to the replacement of existing paddling pool facilities with splash pad facilities. Aspects on which the consultant's advice will be sought include:

- Potential options in relation to splash pad facilities.
- The infrastructure requirements in operating splash pads – (electricity, drainage etc.)
- Site location (focus will be on existing sites but may need to consider relocation within them)
- Environmental implications of equipment installed.
- Ongoing maintenance and part replacement requirements
- Day to day operational delivery requirements against best/good practice
- Health and safety considerations against best/good practice

2.7 The use of a consultant will be funded by a virement from existing Community Services revenue budgets. At the time of writing work is underway to identify and appoint a consultant, working with procurement colleagues. A budget provision of up to £10,000 has been identified for this work although it is hoped it will cost significantly less.

2.8 Members will be keen to determine a way forward. However, at the time of writing it is not possible to provide an indicative timetable of when this work will be undertaken or when a further report will be brought to Members. Notwithstanding, Officers will work as quickly as possible to have this phase of work completed. Should it be possible to provide a further update on timescales this will be reported verbally at the meeting.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

3.1 Play and recreation, as well as the use of the Council's parks and open spaces, aligns with the Corporate Business Plan, particularly relating to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

3.2 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy Objective 2 - Healthy Communities has the action "for all residents to be able to engage and participate in their community, access services, facilities, amenities, leisure, and recreational opportunities locally", contained within the Community Services, Services Area Plan.

### **4 Resource implications/Value for Money**

4.1 Costs directly associated with the appointment of a consultant will be funded from existing Community Services revenue budgets. A maximum intended expenditure of £10,000 has been applied, allowing for contingency and further works if necessary.

4.2 This approach is considered to be the most appropriate way to ensure the Council is fully understanding both the capital and ongoing revenue implications associated with the installation of splash pads, while also intending to take a best value approach.

4.3 The budget provision of £500,000 for the replacement of paddling pools, approved as part of the 2023/2024 budget setting process remains in place and available should ultimately Members decide to proceed with any replacement works. However, no further budgetary provision has been identified to supplement this amount, if the consultancy work identifies costs greater than the budget set.

4.4 Members are advised that the above sum is in specific relation to the three parks sites. Any replacement scheme at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds would be required to be funded by the finances of the Trust, when possible, and with the approval of its Trustees (this Committee).

## **5. Legal implications**

5.1 None identified.

## **6. Equality implications**

6.1 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Section 149 of the Act provides that we must have due regard to the need to;

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- b) advance equality of opportunity
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share protected characteristics.

6.2 We should at all times act in a way that is non-discriminatory through our policies and procedures and interactions with people.

6.3 An Equalities Screening Assessment is being prepared for consideration by the Equalities Group.

## **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 There are no specific environmental implications relating to this report. However, more broadly, in the event of any future procurement of new facilities, the environmental credentials of any submission will be a key component, and one of the areas for assessment in evaluating bids.

7.2 Procuring facilities which reduce water usage, and which have a lesser reliance on the use of chemicals, if possible, will also be sought.

7.3 An understanding of the methods of disposing materials removed in the event of paddling pools being replaced, in as an environmentally friendly way as possible, will be included within any future procurement also.

## **8. Other implications.**

8.1 None.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 The appointment of, and work completed by a consultant will assist the Council in determining the way forward regarding any replacement of paddling pools with new water play facilities.

## **10. Background papers**

None stated.

## **11. Appendices**

None.