

Report title	Play Area Programme 2023/2024
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Department	Community Services
Exempt	No

Purpose of report:

To provide a summary of the work undertaken in establishing the requirements in relation to repairs and planned replacement of Council play areas.

For members to consider the proposed way forward, outlined within the report, with a view to recommending to Corporate Management the approval of the intended health and safety works and play area replacement programme for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

Synopsis of report:

Following work undertaken to look at the need for replacement play areas across the borough, this report sets out the outcomes of the work undertaken, a proposed replacement programme for financial years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, and details of sources of funding that have been identified to support this initial programme.

Recommendation that:

Corporate Management Committee be requested to

- i) approve the proposed health and safety works and play area replacement plan;
- ii) approve a capital estimate in the sum of £792,000 for the play area replacement plan as set out in table 3 of the report to be funded from the resources set out in table 2, subject to any additional approvals required;
- iii) In approving recommendation ii) above, also agree to release the £100,000 for Play area replacement programme provisions in the capital programme for 2023/24;
- iv) approve an allocation of £47,000 from the 2024/2025 youth development revenue budget for the play area replacement; and
- v) approve the virement of the revenue budgets earmarked for the replacement of play equipment to fund the capital expenditure, noting that this will show in future revenue reports as contributions to capital expenditure on the summary page of the budget; and

This Committee approves:

- vi) the release of £30,000 provision set aside in the General Fund Revenue Budget and Business Plan for this purpose to be added to the 2024/2025 and future years' budgets; and**
- vii) the business case for ongoing maintenance of play areas to the improved standards**

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The Open Space and Community Development team is responsible for the strategy and associated development of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces as well as projects to develop and support the community.
- 1.2 In recent months the Council's Open Spaces and Community Development Manager has been working to identify the issues facing the Borough's play areas, to undertake necessary repairs where appropriate and where such an approach represents best value for money, and determine the priorities relating to play area replacement across the borough, with a costed solution for the initial phases.
- 1.3 This work has incorporated a series of Ward briefings where all Councillors had the opportunity to contribute to the process from their personal experience, knowledge of facilities within their ward, and feedback comments received from residents.

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

- 2.1 Within its Green Spaces and Housing areas, Runnymede Borough Council currently provides and maintains 43 play areas. The Council is committed to providing well-designed, exciting, and accessible play areas for the enjoyment of users/residents.
- 2.2 However, with under investment in play areas in previous years, a significant amount of work is required to achieve the Council's commitment.
- 2.3 Work has focused on two areas which jointly support the intention of providing safe, good quality facilities. Firstly, following consideration of existing facilities in relation to health and safety, a programme of key repairs and/or the replacement of individual play items has been identified. Secondly, work on a longer-term plan for the replacement of play areas across the borough has been undertaken.
- 2.4 Ward Members have participated in the discussions focusing on both elements during July and August 2023. Meetings were held clustering wards (and their Councillors) to enable a spotlight focus on play facilities identifiable to Members.
- 2.5 Within these meetings, where summary presentations were provided covering each of the local play areas, a table ranking the health and safety risks and associated works requirements across all 43 play spaces was provided, which forms the basis of the repairs programme.
- 2.6 Once the identification of proposed health and safety works was completed, attention subsequently turned to the need for a play area replacement programme, prioritising

the facilities across the borough which have reached, or are closer to reaching, end of life.

- 2.7 This report summarises each element of the work requirements identified and proposed to be taken forward.

Play Area Repairs Programme

- 2.8 Following work undertaken with the former Health and Wellbeing Member Working Party in 2022, a report to this Committee in January 2023 resulted in the approval of a budget of £215,000 for the assessment and completion of health and safety works required within play areas across the borough. Of this budget, £195,000 was allocated specifically for works, with the remainder to be spent on consultancy support and assessments where necessary.
- 2.9 Officers in Community Services, supported by the Corporate Projects Officer and the operational parks team in Environmental Services, led the identification of required health and safety repairs, utilising information received from both independent monthly and annual inspections (provided by different companies), as well as undertaking own site visits and assessments.
- 2.10 Two definitions have been applied to repairs within this process. They are: items that can be restored or repaired to full working order or to meet health and safety requirements, and replacement of individual equipment items which promote the longevity of the play area in its useful life, extending the timescales for full replacement.
- 2.11 The table below sets out how it is intended to spend the budget:

Table 1: Repairs Budget Expenditure Plan

Play Area	Ward	Work Type	Estimated Cost
Gogmore Farm Play Area	Chertsey St Ann's	Replacement Surfacing	£45,000
Bishops Way	Egham Hythe	Surfacing Repairs	£37,000 – procured as a complete lot of repairs
Caseldon Close	Addlestone South	Surfacing Repairs	
Heathervale Rec	New Haw	Surfacing Repairs	
Herondale	Addlestone South	Surfacing Repairs	
Hythe Park	Egham Hythe	Surfacing Repairs	
Ottershaw Memorial Fields	Ottershaw	Surfacing Repairs	
Sayes Court	Addlestone South	Surfacing Repairs	
Staines Lane	Chertsey St Anns	Surfacing Repairs	
Thorpe Green	Thorpe	Surfacing Repairs	
Victory Park	Addlestone North	Surfacing Repairs	
Warwick Avenue	Thorpe	Surfacing Repairs	
Charta Road	Egham Hythe	Replacement Unit	£5,000
Sayes Court	Addlestone South	Replacement Units	£15,000
Woodham Lodge	Woodham & Row Town	Replacement Units	£20,000
Sumner Place	Addlestone North	Replacement Units	£15,000
Heathervale Park	New Haw	Replacement Units	£20,000

Victory Park	Addlestone North	Replacement Units	£15,000
Walton Leigh Recreation Ground	Woodham and Rowton	Replacement Units	£15,000
Abbeyfields	Chertsey St Ann's	Replacement Unit	£8,000
		Total	£195,000

- 2.12 So far, the surfacing repairs have been completed, as have several other minor repairs that are not included in the table above.
- 2.13 Members will note that it is intended to replace several single items in play areas across the borough. The rationale behind replacing individual items is that they are beyond their economical repair, and it is a more efficient use of Council funds to replace rather than repair them.
- 2.14 Members will also note a sum of £45,000 allocated to Gogmore Park for surface repairs/replacement. Whilst this is a sizeable investment in the repair of a play area, when considering the equipment in place, the size of the play area, and when considering other priority sites in the borough, this investment is deemed the most appropriate approach in the short term.

Play Area Replacement Programme

- 2.15 Having identified the repairs and individual items to be replaced across the play areas, a priority list for replacement play areas has been created. Appendix 'A' details the priority order for works prior to repairs and replacement items being completed. This was also provided to Councillors during the ward briefings.
- 2.16 Appendix 'B' shows the revised priority list following the identification of health and safety works and on the assumption of their completion. This appendix is the basis of the proposed works to be procured and where possible commence in 2023/2024. The revised list also incorporates the comments and feedback received from Members during the ward briefings.
- 2.17 With the identification of a priority order for play area replacement established, focus has turned to the identification of funding to commence the replacement programme.
- 2.18 Two confirmed budgets available to support the programme are the annual play area replacement budget in the capital programme (£100,000) subject to formal Committee approval and the sum approved by this Committee from within the Youth Development Budget (£60,000).
- 2.19 Officers have worked with colleagues in Planning to identify possible sources of funding via existing S106 agreements, and worked with Housing on the potential replacement of play areas that are aligned to social housing estates within the borough. Other work, considering the trust budget for Runnymede Pleasure Grounds, and in relation to the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (see the report elsewhere on this agenda) has also been completed.
- 2.20 The table below shows where funding has been found that could be used for the replacement of play areas.

Table 2: Identified Funding for Play Area Replacement

Ref	Budget	Amount	Type of Funding
1	S106 Chertsey Recreation Ground	£80,000	Developer Contributions
2	S106 Englefield Green	£80,000	Developer Contributions
3	S106 – relating to Magna Square	£43,000	Developer Contributions
4	Capital Replacement Programme 23-24	£100,000	Budget Provision
5	Youth Development Fund 23-24	£60,000	Budget Provision
6	Housing Contribution – Garfield Rd	£69,000	Budget Provision
7	Housing Estates Programme	£45,000	Budget Provision
8	Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Trust	£110,000	Future Trust Balance
9	Contain Outbreak Management Fund	£165,000	As proposed in report elsewhere on this agenda
10	Youth Development Budget 24-25	£47,000	Provisional Budget
	Total	£792,000	

2.21 In relation to the above table, further notes for consideration are:

1. Regarding the Englefield Green S106 monies, this will be subject to approval via the process agreed at the meeting of this Committee in June 2023, as a project proposed by Officers. The exact value of funding required is dependent on design.
2. The S106 monies relating to Magna Square currently specify for use for play facilities at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds. Officers are currently reviewing the potential to amend the S106 funding to other play spaces near the Magna Square development.
3. The Housing Business Unit's contribution of £69,000 to enhancements at Garfield Road, is to act as match funding to year 2 of the agreement with Eikon, providing youth engagement services in the area, as approved relating to the Safer Streets funding received.
4. The sum of up to £110,000 for Runnymede Pleasure Grounds will only be made available when sufficient income, primarily from parking fees, is generated to create a reserve that enables this work to be undertaken.
5. The Capital provision requires approval through the Corporate Management Committee in order to release the funds.

2.22 Based on the information provided in the Appendices, the funding identified above, and having considered the restrictions placed on areas of expenditure in some cases, the following have been identified for replacement in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025:

Table 3: Proposed Play Space Replacement – 2023 to 2025

Play Area	Ward	Estimated Cost	Replacement Year	Funding Ref (see table 2)
Beomonds	Chertsey St Ann's	£45,000	23/24	7
Chertsey Recreation Ground	Chertsey Riverside	£80,000	23/24	1
Surrey Towers	Addlestone South	£69,000	23/24	6
Pooley Green (young children)	Egham Hythe	£80,000	23/24	9
Hamm Moor	Addlestone South	£50,000	23/24	9, 5
King George V	Virginia Water	£60,000	23/24	5, 10
Manorcrofts	Egham Town	£100,000	23/24	4
Hythe Park	Egham Hythe	£80,000	23/24	9
Runnymede Pleasure Grounds	Egham Town	£150,000	TBC	8, 3
Englefield Green	Englefield Green West	£80,000	TBC	2
	Total:	£794,000		

- 2.23 The above table shows a shortfall of £2,000 against the identified sources of funding in table 2 of this report. To cover this, it is intended that £2,000 will be drawn down from the contingency budget within the Youth Development Fund plan, as approved by this Committee in June 2023.
- 2.24 It is important to note that the installation of new places for many of the 2023/2024 sites is unlikely. Therefore budgetary provision is likely be required to carry forward into the 2024/2025 financial year.
- 2.25 In 2023/2024, the priority will be to utilise funding that is available for this financial year only, that being the allocated Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) money. In support of this, Members are advised that within the COMF report where approval to spend the remaining budget is sought, a request for a waiver of standing orders is made to best achieve this.
- 2.26 The Committee is advised that whilst the intended procurement process will look at envelopes of funding for each site as outlined, potentially costs will exceed those set in the table. Where this is the case, against the table in Appendix 'B', works will be completed as far down the table as funding permits, unless other sources of funding are identified at the time. There is no intended financial growth in support of this, given the financial position of the Council. Members are asked to note that some time specific funding is also location specific. Therefore, works completed on some sites may not directly follow the priority list.
- 2.27 In addition, having considered play areas in relation to social housing estates across the borough, the Housing business unit is intending to relocate equipment from Lasswade Court, Chertsey, to Sussex Court in Addlestone. This is based on the very low number of young people residing at Lasswade Court. This intended approach has been discussed with Councillors in the Chertsey area meeting and has been discussed with the Chairman of the Housing Committee. This work is therefore

intended to be completed within this project, funded by the estate improvement budget within Housing.

Procurement Process

- 2.28 On the basis that the recommendations in this report are approved by Corporate Management Committee, it is intended that the procurement process will commence in November 2023. Preparatory work has already been undertaken to identify the most appropriate procurement route and associated documentation has also started to ensure a timely start to the process.
- 2.29 However, this does not mean that following the procurement process play spaces will be replaced immediately. There are several considerations to make, including:
1. Ground conditions during the winter will likely affect the pace works can be carried out so as not to compromise the wider park for the enjoyment of residents during these months.
 2. The availability of the appointed contractor(s) will likely be affected by the scale of the task, e.g. should one contractor win all lots within the tender this will result in a longer installation period.
- 2.30 Members will be advised of progress once the tender has been awarded through the Council's project reporting progress updates.

Maintenance of Play Areas

- 2.31 The operational Green Spaces team within Environmental Services already hold responsibility for the ongoing inspection and maintenance of play areas across the borough.
- 2.32 This report does not create a negative impact on the resources required to continue this work, nor on the budgets required for maintenance, given that all items/play areas to be procured are replacements for existing items at existing sites, and not in addition to the current levels of provision.
- 2.33 Members are advised that it is intended to increase the budget held by Environmental Services for maintenance in 2024/2025. Therefore, the work detailed in this report will likely create less of a maintenance requirement immediately following its installation. This increase of £30,000 was the subject of a 2023/2024 growth bid and was included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2024/2025 onwards.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The play area programme aligns with the Corporate Business Plan, particularly around the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the role that this will play in providing residents with leisure and recreational spaces. The work brings a way forward following conversations in the former Health and Wellbeing Member Working Group, where play area replacement was identified as a priority area of work.
- 3.2 By utilising play areas, residents, in particular young people, will benefit from being able to lead an active lifestyle, which in turn is anticipated to result in positive health outcomes (including mental health) for those residents; individuals who have an

active lifestyle have, on average, been shown to require fewer medical interventions throughout their lifetime than those who have not.

- 3.3 In addition, in seeking approval from Public Health to allocate COMF funding to play area replacement references the importance of play in reducing inequalities amongst children and in supporting the development and socialisation of children at an early age.
- 3.4 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”.

4 Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 This report demonstrates significant investment from different funding streams available to the Council and a collaborative approach to the identification of funding across Community Services and with colleagues in the Planning and Housing business units.
- 4.2 The delivery of the project will have resource implications and currently the work is supported by colleagues in the Corporate Projects Office. This Committee will recall the approval of new posts in the Open Space Development team, at the June 2023 meeting. One of the newly approved posts was a Community Development Project Officer. This Officer has now joined the Council and will be inducted in to support the programme.
- 4.3 Table 3 sets out the play area replacement programme. The replacement of the play equipment on this scale equates to capital expenditure and should be included in the Capital Programme accordingly. Subject to committee approval for the whole programme a capital budget of £794,000 (as per table 3) will be created to be funded by the resources set out in table 2. This also has the benefit of keeping all associated expenditure in one place, making it easier to control and report on.
- 4.4 In terms of the revenue budgets being allocated towards this scheme, these budgets will be vired from their existing service areas to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget summary pages and will show as contributions to capital expenditure. This is purely procedural and has no implications on the overall level of resources being used for either the General Fund or HRA.
- 4.5 The 2023/2024 budget approved by full Council in March 2023 included provision of £30,000 for ongoing maintenance of play areas to the improved standards from 2024/2025. This was the subject of a growth bid approved by Corporate Management Committee in January 2023.
- 4.6 If Members are content with the detail, and costs presented are within the amount provided for in the growth provision, the Committee is asked to recommend approval by Corporate Management Committee to proceed and for the budgetary provision to be released into next year’s budget.
- 4.7 As the budgetary provision for this £30,000 has already been agreed by full Council through the budgetary process, the release of this money does not require further referral to the Corporate Management Committee.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The work to identify and rectify health and safety issues across the Council's play areas, reduces the risk of accidents and injuries occurring, and the potential for litigation to be brought against the Council.
- 5.2 In relation to the replacement of play areas, legal services colleagues will support the procurement process through the provision of suitable contracts to be agreed with the appointed contractor(s).
- 5.3 All rules and regulations relating to any funding streams mentioned in this report will be followed.

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 Within the design of new play areas, suitable equipment will need to be incorporated, to promote the accessibility of play to all children. In support of this, an Equalities Impact Assessment is being prepared for review by the Council's Equalities Group.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 The decision to replace individual equipment items to maximise the life span of other equipment within a play area reduces the requirement for avoidable removal and disposal of equipment. This is the same for the equipment intended to be relocated at Lasswade Court.
- 7.2 It is important to note that the likelihood of natural materials being used at all proposed sites is low, given the cost implications of doing so. Should Members wish for this to be the approach taken, whilst having greater environmental credentials, it would mean that the replacement of play areas will slow down due to the need to secure additional funding and would be subject to a longer procurement process.
- 7.2 Within the procurement process potential suppliers will be encouraged to submit designs that promote environmental sustainability as well as in relation to the disposal of existing materials.

8. Other implications (where applicable)

- 8.1 None.

9. Timetable for Implementation

- 9.1 This is included within the main body of the report.

10. Background papers

None

11. Appendices

- Appendix A: Play area rankings for health and safety repairs as shown to Members during summer ward briefings
- Appendix B: Prioritisation list for play space replacement