

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:

A.3

Meeting Date: 26th February 2015
Portfolio: Environment and Transport
Key Decision: Not Applicable:
Within Policy and
Budget Framework YES
Public / Private Public

Title: UPDATE ON PLAY AREA REVIEW
Report of: The Director of Local Environment
Report Number: LE 05/15

Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of this report is to update O&S Panel on the progress of the Play Area Review. The report summarises the work carried out to date and looks ahead at the improvements planned for the coming year.

Recommendations:

1. Members note the progress achieved to date and the planned work to improve children's play facilities in Carlisle.

Tracking

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Play Area Review took place in 2013 and the outcome was presented to the Council in Spring 2014. Since then there has been a major investment in play provision in Carlisle district and a number of play areas have seen new equipment and facilities installed. This report brings Members up to date with progress.

1.2 A 'Healthy City' starts with healthy children

The single largest investment during the year was at Dale End Field (Harraby) where the play area was completely replaced after being declared obsolete in the Review. The supplier of the equipment, the Play Practice, was chosen after extensive consultation with the community including children and parents. The Carlisle South Community Group was our main point of contact with the community, and they organised several valuable consultation sessions to make sure that everybody's ideas were considered during the design stage. Funding came from two main sources; a S106 contribution by Barratt Homes of £60,000 and a Landfill Tax grant from Cumbria Waste Management of £15,000.

The resulting facility is now one of the best in Carlisle and provides a wide range of challenging activities for children from 3 –14 years of age. This is the demographic group that has been identified as having particular health issues due to inactive lifestyles and top-quality play equipment is a vital component in the strategy of presenting children with the opportunity to take part in healthy activity. The Review demonstrated that old and out-dated equipment is rarely used and is therefore not a cost-effective response.

At Yewdale Community Centre (another priority site identified in the Review) a new multiplay unit was installed in summer 2014. Incorporating components to challenge children's abilities in climbing, balance and stamina, the unit was an instant success with the local youngsters.

At Melbourne Park the Review identified a need for investment in new equipment as a priority and consequently we have consulted widely with the community. Their clear instruction was to focus on provision for younger children and this will form the basis on the tender specification. The project will be funded entirely from S106 contributions and these have already been paid over by the developers concerned.

1.3 Fun for one, fun for all!

The Play Area Review gave us the opportunity to stand back and assess, with as much objectivity as possible, the key sites for investment and improvement based on the principle of 'highest standard for the highest number'.

The following play areas identified in the Play Area Review as strategically important but in need of upgrading have seen investment during the year to make sure that all children have ready access to decent play equipment.

Play Area	Improvement	Cost
Broad Street	Safety surfacing replaced	£1,593
Fusehill Street	Safety surfacing replaced	£1,593
Denton Street	Safety surfacing replaced	£1,592
Acredale Road	Ground anchorage equipment	£817
Melbourne Park	Replacement parts for zip-wire	£2,354
Cummersdale	Repairs to climbing net	£245
Heysham Park	Replace bird's nest swing and springer unit seat after vandalism	£1,583
Lund Crescent	Renew spinner unit and safety surface	£2,893
Bitts Park	Replacement of log stockade	£1,460
Bitts Park	Green Gym exercise equipment	£5,363
Yewdale	Replace safety surfacing	£2,020
Yewdale	New multiplay unit	£7,303
Sheffield Street	Groundworks, landscaping	£1,800
Various	Spare parts & components	£4,852
Various	Groundworks	£14,025
Various	Installation of self-closing safety gates	£3,524
Various	Replacement of play-bark	£5,995
TOTAL		£59,012

1.4 Wellbeing – Get fit, Keep Fit, Stay Fit.

As well as healthy play, the Council also provides residents with opportunities to keep fit with specialist 'outdoor gym' equipment. The fitness trail at Bitts Park Riverside was installed in wood many years ago and had become unsafe due to natural wear and tear. In summer 2014 it was replaced by new equipment in stainless steel, with rubberised safety surfacing installed at the same time. The equipment incorporates instructions for safe use and the benefit of that specific exercise.

1.5 Safety First!

The purpose of the Play Area Review was to help us to make sure that the Council's resources are used most efficiently. The play areas that provide the greatest play value for the greatest number of children have benefitted from the additional attention we have been able to give them – not only in terms of repairs but importantly, by improving the inspection regimes.

At the end of the year we commissioned a new independent inspector to look at every play facility in the Council's portfolio, plus a number of those that are managed by parish councils. The resulting reports enable our officers to plan the forthcoming year's maintenance work, prioritising any safety risks highlighted in the reports. The planned programme of work for 2015-16 includes:

LOCATION	IMPROVEMENT
Bitts Park	Installation of wheelchair swing
Yewdale	New springer and safety surface
St James Park	New seesaw
Parkland Village	New springer and safety surface

In all the above instances we are seeking funding via Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust (Landfill Tax).

The following play area sites are also due for some upgrading, pending external grant applications:

Milbourne Street	(Denton Holme)
Clark's Field	(Stanwix)
Keenan Park	(Botcherby)

1.6 Fit for the Future

The future of children's play in Carlisle has been secured by the Council's approach – identifying and prioritising those sites that offer the most benefits to the greatest number of children. With our programmed approach we are now able to look ahead at the play areas whose equipment has further deteriorated in the 2 years since the survey was conducted and is now in need of replacement. The 2 play areas due for investment next are:

- Eden Parkside (Botcherby)
- Lund Crescent (Currock)

At Hammond's Pond, a significant investment in play is due via the S106 agreement relating to the Story Homes development at Blackwell Road (the Ridings estate) which will be available on the occupation of 50% of the development.

In rural areas, most play areas are provided and maintained by Parish Councils. Our strategy is to support the parishes by offering a reduced rate for the independent annual inspections that are required by insurers. By booking at a bulk rate we are able to offer a much reduced price to Parish Councils (about £45 in 2014-15)

In addition we are working with Dalston, Brampton and Arthuret Parish Councils to maximise the value of existing play areas in their parishes. We are looking at the options for using existing and emerging pots of S106 funding to benefit parish council play areas where the parish can take responsibility for on-going maintenance.

This programmed approach is helping us to maximise the play value of our sites while keeping them safe for children to enjoy. Following the Play Area Review the City Council currently retains responsibility for 49 children's play areas, plus 3 BMX tracks, 4 multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and the Skatepark.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1** Our proposals for the next phases of work are described above.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1** The Play Area Review underwent extensive consultation and was endorsed by the Executive in LE 29/13 and LE 32/13.

Further consultation on individual schemes has included, among others, Friends of Melbourne Park; Botcherby Residents Action Group; local schools; Friends of Dale End Field; individual ward Members.

4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1** The Play Area Review was a major step forward for the City Council. The audit of play areas identified those that provided the best play value for local children and therefore helped to prioritise our work programme. It has enabled us to target resources and invest in those play areas that offer the greatest benefit. Importantly, it has also helped us to keep Carlisle's children safe while playing as older, obsolete equipment has been replaced by modern designs. As a result of the Play Area Review the children of Carlisle have more exciting, modern and safe places to play and test their skills.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 5.1** 'Health and Wellbeing of Carlisle's residents' – the Play Area Review represents a major commitment by the City Council to the health and wellbeing of young people, providing first-class opportunities for play and development within safe walking distance from home.

Contact Officer: Angela Culleton

Ext: 7325

**Appendices
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- **None**

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

Chief Executive's -

Deputy Chief Executive –

Economic Development –

Governance –

Local Environment –

Resources -