

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillor Wong(Chairperson)
Councillors Berman, Brown-Reckless, Cunnah, Henshaw,
Jenkins and Lloyd Jones

18 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Robinson and Shimmin

19 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

20 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2002 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

21 : PLAYGROUNDS/ PLAY AREAS UPDATE

The Chairperson advised that this item provided Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the refurbishment of playgrounds and play areas in Cardiff.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Burke-Davies – Cabinet Member – Culture, Parks and Events; Steve Morris – Operational Manager – Sport, Leisure and Development; Rosie James – Parks Strategy and Development Manager, and Jon Maidment – Operational Manager – Parks and Harbour Authority to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement, following which Officers provided a presentation. Members were invited to make comments, observations and ask questions.

Members asked how the backlog in S106 spending would be addressed in the timeline shown to them today. Officers advised that the backlog was a priority last year and there had been an accelerated delivery of the programme. In addition to this, some equipment had been purchased in advance, there had been recruitment of new officers and design processes are now sharper which mean less time is taken in the design phase. There had also been an increase in the budget to aid with all the interventions.

Members sought clarification whether it is Wales or Cardiff that has a higher number of playgrounds per child compared to London; officers stated that it is Wales. Members asked what the position is for Cardiff in terms of playgrounds per child.

Members queried whether the reference to SPD in the playground programme document provided as part of the papers for this item should read SPG; officers acknowledged this was the case and that it should reference SPG (Supplementary Planning Guidance).

Members asked whether Councillors would be informed about urgency of works needed. Members were advised that most works are low priority risks, the red statuses shown were an internal officer way to grade the works and identify which ones to address and when, rather than a red flag such as a Health and Safety issue. Members were assured that they would always be notified immediately if Health and Safety issues arose and arrangements for immediate repairs or removal would be made.

Members sought information on costs of installing a playground into an area. Officers advised that this was a sliding scale depending on scope and size and the type of play area. Costs could be anywhere between £350k for a larger play area to £500k for a skatepark.

Members referred to the time taken to replace play equipment when it's been taken away due its age or for repair and whether it was possible to have a separate pot of monies to deal with these cases. Members considered information on times to replace these would be useful to deal with residents' questions. Officers stated that Local Member communication had improved but agreed it could be improved further. Officers added that the revenue maintenance budget is too strained to have a separate pot of monies and that often they are relying on S106 funding which cannot be used across wards and so replacing equipment is not always straightforward. An example of a swing being replaced was provided and Officers explained that this often also requires resurfacing works to be undertaken too. Officers further added that although there had been an increase in the budget, they were still quite limited with what they can do, and the price of play equipment is very high. There is currently training for the inhouse team for installation and resurfacing so that there is less reliance on contractors. Small items of play equipment are now being kept in stock and officers are auditing all sites and prioritising those with gaps.

Members noted that s106 money is not always in areas that need it such as very well-established wards with no new developments, therefore the only way to address this is to increase the general fund budget. Officers agreed and said that Revenue budget was the only monies that can be used in any direction. Officers added that they are still playing catchup and it would take a couple of years to see the benefit of training the team inhouse, using the management software and working smarter.

A discussion took place around the inequity of S106 monies and the constraints of planning law. Officers explained that in the past capital funding had bridged the gap where there was little or no s106, based on need. However, this year there was a freeze on capital growth bids.

Members discussed the use of logs and boulders for natural play and were advised that these would be used in addition to and to enhance the traditional play equipment. Members queried whether there was evidence about whether these provided a good experience for children. Officers advised evidence showed children played for longer with natural play equipment albeit that they may initially require adult input to initiate play.

Members sought assurance that there would be consultation with local Members on any future rationalisation of playground sites. Officers advised that there would be.

Members discussed climate change and whether playgrounds needed to be modified to reflect the warmer weather. Members referred to providing shade in playgrounds and discussed the metal play equipment becoming too hot to use as well as the need to protect against skin cancer. Officers explained that there was little choice but to use metal due to vandalism and durability. With regard to shade, tree canopy over the main play area tended to be avoided as leaf fall and moss can make the area slippery and it deteriorates quicker, however shade can be provided around the edges of playgrounds.

Members queried whether the Drovers Way Play Area was on this year's programme; officers clarified that it is, that they are awaiting completion of the needed Highways work before they can start works, and that it is anticipated they will be able to start on site in early 2023.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

22 : WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Chairperson advised that this item enables Committee to consider further amendments to its draft work programme to enable Members to finalise their work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

Members were advised that the Chair had received an invitation from Cardiff Bay Yacht Club to visit their facilities and learn about what they do, including their community outreach work. Members were keen to join the Chair on the visit.

Members were advised that there was Scrutiny Training available on 1st November at 5.00pm. Experienced Scrutineers were encouraged to attend the training too to help their new colleagues.

RESOLVED: To

- I. Agree the Task Group Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix C to the report.
- II. Approve the nominations for the task group as Cllrs Robinson, Wong, Lloyd Jones, Berman, Henshaw and Jenkins.
- III. Agree the work programme at Appendix B to the report.
- IV. Agree the Forward Work Programme at Appendix D for publication on the Council's website.
- V. Agree for a member of the Youth Council to be a Representative on the Committee.

23 : CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided an update on correspondence sent and received for Members.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

24 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

25 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17th October 2022 at 5.00pm

The meeting terminated at 6.05 pm