

PLAYGROUND AND PLAY AREAS: UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with information to inform their scrutiny of the refurbishment of playgrounds and play areas in Cardiff.

Scope of Scrutiny

2. At their work programming forum meeting on 11 July 2022, following a suggestion by the Director of Economic Development, Members decided to scrutinise the Council's approach to refurbishing playgrounds and play areas, including capital programme, Section 106 schemes, and revenue funding.

Background

3. The Council has over one hundred playground areas with fixed equipment, as well as eleven Skate Parks, sixteen MUGA (Multi-Use Games Areas), nine outdoor fitness areas and trim trails, informal no-sport outdoor court areas, and two BMX tracks.
4. These are subject to regular inspections, which are used to identify an annual programme of required refurbishments or replacements, to ensure health and safety standards are met. Play equipment has a finite lifespan and it is recommended that all installations are reviewed / replaced every 10 years. This is funded by capital programme funding and S106 contributions. At Council 30 June 2022, in response to a written question from Councillor Boes, Councillor Burke-Davies, Cabinet Member – Culture, Parks & Events, clarified that

'The Council has a statutory duty to carry out regular inspections and repairs to all play areas in accordance with British Standards (BS) EN1176 and EN1177, ensuring that they are in a safe and useable condition. The overall regime includes an annual independent

S106 schemes

7. As part of planning negotiations for residential developments, contributions to playgrounds and play areas can be agreed via Section 106 planning agreements. For large-scale new developments, these require developers to provide funding to meet the costs for new playground areas once a required level of occupancy is reached. Any funds remaining are also able to be used to refurbish the relevant playground and play area in future years, with the caveat that some funds will have an expiry date.

8. The Section 106 programme for 2022-23 for playground areas and path/ trails restoration includes the following schemes:
 - Brewery Park, Adamsdown
 - Cemetery Park, Adamsdown
 - Craiglee Drive, Butetown
 - Gelligaer Street (Maindy) Park, Cathays
 - Sovereign Chase, Cyncoed
 - Llanishen Park, Llanishen
 - Parc Cefn Onn, Lisvane
 - Parc Coed Y Nant, Pentwyn.

9. The Parks Programme 2022-23 is attached at **Appendix A** and provides further information on the above, including artists impression for some of the schemes due this year, as well as schemes completed in 2021-22.

Refurbishment/ Replacements - progress in 2022/23

10. In a statement to Full Council 21 July 2022, Councillor Burke-Davies, Cabinet Member – Culture, Parks & Events, stated

'The capital programme for parks and playground improvements is progressing well and a number of schemes across the city are either complete or nearing completion. These include schemes at Sovereign Chase open space in the Cyncoed ward; Brewery Park, Cemetery Park and Howard Gardens in the Adamsdown ward; Gelligaer Gardens in the Cathays Ward; Llanishen Park in the Llanishen ward; Maltings Park in the Splott ward; and Grange Gardens in the Grangetown ward. I am delighted with the quality of the schemes being delivered and, in particular, the

innovative approaches to design and the use of natural resources, which are providing inviting, safe and challenging environments for play.'

'Officers are progressing the development of a Skateboard Facility Strategy, considering the needs and demands of young people across our city and a consultation exercise with stakeholders, user groups and young people has been completed. The strategy will seek to secure investment for areas of greatest need and demand, creating destination facilities to both suit beginners and challenge experienced skateboarders. The first destination site will be located in the Llanrumney ward and, as skateboarding is now an Olympic sport, the development of the strategy and implementation of capital investment is timely. I hope to see Cardiff produce future Olympians performing on the world stage'

11. The Budget Monitoring Month 4 report to Cabinet on 28 September 2022 sets out the Parks Infrastructure budget 2022/23 is to be used for footpath reconstruction at Brachdy Lane, Bute Park and Grange Gardens, and structural works, such as bridge replacement at Cobb Woods, Hendre Lake and wall refurbishment at Insole Court. It emphasises that schemes may need to be prioritised, subject to design and cost estimates. It states that the play area schemes to be upgraded this year, using s106 and capital funding, include Heol Llanishen Fach and Drovers Way, Radyr. It also states that, pending the outcome of the tender for the proposed skate park in Llanrumney, it is assumed most expenditure will fall in 2023/24.

Revenue Funding

12. In addition to the capital programme, there is a limited revenue budget for repairs. Repairs are prioritized on a risk basis, with works addressing health and safety of users taking priority.

Previous Scrutiny

13. In October 2020, the previous Committee scrutinised the approach to playground area refurbishment. Officers gave a presentation that highlighted the following issues at the time:

- A backlog in spending Section 106 funding

- A small team of in-house Landscape Architects who carry out project work (design and delivery)
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining Landscape Architects as the salary compares unfavourably with similar posts in other Local Authorities and the Private Sector.
- A lack of specialist Playground Frameworks in place to improve procurement process.
- New drainage regulations (SAB) increasing costs significantly
- The number of playgrounds and other sites exceed the resources available for improvement

14. Officers set out their proposed plan, which included:

- Re-structure and recruit to the team to grow capacity.
- Develop a “Design and Build” Framework for playgrounds.
- Appoint external consultants for a package of projects using fees to cover costs.
- Appoint agency staff to deliver projects, subject to salary point.
- Utilise existing project support management from internal resources during COVID 19.
- Communicate regularly with Ward Members to update on schemes.
- Consider a rationalisation of sites with further development of destination playgrounds and skate parks to offset the removal of poorly located playgrounds.

15. Following their scrutiny, the then-Chair, Councillor Howells, wrote to the then-Cabinet Member, Councillor Bradbury. The letter is attached in full at **Appendix B** along with the Cabinet Member’s response, for Members information.

Way Forward

16. Councillor Jennifer Burke-Davies (Cabinet Member – Culture, Parks & Events), Steve Morris (Operational Manager – Sport, Leisure and Development) and Rosie James (Parks Strategy & Development Manager), will attend, to give a presentation and to contribute to the discussion and respond to points raised.

Legal Implications

17. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct legal implications.

However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

18. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Consider the information in this report and the discussion at the meeting
- ii) Consider whether they wish to make any comments, observations or recommendations to Cabinet, and
- iii) Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance & Legal Services

28 September 2022