



Date: 5 October 2022

Councillor Burke-Davies
Cabinet Member – Culture, Parks & Events
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Public Letter

Dear Councillor Burke-Davies,

PLAYGROUNDS AND PLAY AREAS UPDATE

Thank you for attending the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee on 4 October 2022, along with Jon Maidment, Steve Morris and Rosie James, to discuss the refurbishment of playgrounds and play areas in Cardiff. This letter captures the comments and observations from Members.

Members note there has been an increase in the budget in the last couple of years and were struck by the palpable sense of purpose and progress since the last scrutiny in October 2020. We note there is a new team structure in place, with an increase in spend, resulting in circa 30 schemes this year at a cost of circa £3million, as well as work to develop a Skateboard Strategy and ongoing work on an audit of provision, looking at the condition and quality of playgrounds and play areas.

In terms of the issues and constraints facing refurbishment, Members note these include increasing costs, supply disruptions, availability of specialist contractors, recruitment and retention difficulties, ageing equipment and a more litigious environment.

Members were pleased to hear officers are using new approaches to tackle these issues, such as: improving work with the procurement team; working with local firms so they are aware of the pipeline of work and can plan accordingly; training in-house

staff so they can undertake repairs and replace safety surfacing; recycling wood from tree surgery maintenance elsewhere; and holding some smaller items in stock.

At the meeting, Members explored the following areas:

- Audit of provision – Members note the Red/ Amber/ Green rating is based on an officer view of low priority issues, and that this does not include any Health and Safety issues as these would be dealt with immediately once they were identified, either by removing equipment or undertaking an urgent repair if this was possible.
- Funding mechanisms – there are three funding routes used for refurbishing playgrounds, which are: section 106 monies that derive from new developments and are geographically limited to the areas near to the development, as set out in Planning legislation; capital monies, which are used for planned works and come from the Council's capital programme; and revenue monies, approximately £153,000 per annum, which are used for reactive maintenance.
- Ward member consultation – officers acknowledged there had been some issues previously, but emphasised officers are working to improve on this, for example by contacting ward members when Health and Safety risks or other issues are identified and contacting ward members as part of the scheme development process. Members note ward members will be contacted if any future rationalisation of sites is taken forward.
- Replacing equipment – Members note that officers feel it is not possible to have a separate pot for equipment replacement as officers look to find the most appropriate funding stream to use to replace equipment, given the way the budgets are constructed, for example if an area has s106 monies available this would be used, otherwise, officers would look to use the reactive repairs budget if the replacement costs could be met from this budget, failing which replacement would form part of the planned, capital funded, programme of works.
- Future Proofing Sites – Members note officers' point that they have to use metal equipment as it meets safety standards for longer.
- Natural Play Equipment – Members note officers' points that children tend to play for longer with natural play equipment, as it encourages their creativity, albeit that they can require adult input to encourage them initially.

- Drovers Way, Rady – Members note officers are ready to start work on site as soon as the Highways work is completed and are anticipating being onsite early in 2023.

Members also raised the issue of helping to prevent children developing skin cancer by providing shade near to playgrounds and play areas. Members are pleased to hear this is happening at Maindy Park and suggest that officers take this approach at other sites wherever possible.

Finally, Members note that Wales has more playgrounds and play areas per child than London. Members **request information** on the density of playgrounds and play areas per child in Cardiff and ask that this be provided in the response to this letter.

This letter contains a **request for information** and so does require a response.

Once again, thank you to you and officers for attending committee, providing information and engaging openly in our discussion.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR PETER WONG
CHAIR, ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee
Group Leaders - Cllr Robson, Cllr Taylor
Neil Hanratty Jon Maidment
Steve Morris Rosie James
Clair James Cabinet Support Office
Chris Pyke Tim Gordon Jeremy Rhys