

PLAYGROUND AREAS: UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

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

Scope of Scrutiny

2. At their work programming forum meeting on 29 September 2020, Members agreed to prioritise a suggestion from Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Member – Culture & Leisure, to scrutinise the Council's approach to refurbishing playground areas, including capital programme and Section 106 schemes. Members were particularly keen to explore the Health & Safety aspects of playground refurbishment.
3. Following discussions with service area officers, this scrutiny will enable Members to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on playground areas, the re-opening processes, including Health & Safety assessments, and measures proposed to implement the agreed capital programme and Section 106 schemes scheduled for 2020-21.

Background

4. The Council has over 100 playground areas with fixed equipment. These are subject to regular inspections, which are used to identify an annual programme of required refurbishments to ensure health and safety standards are met. The costs of refurbishment form part of the Council's Capital Programme, agreed as part of the budget setting process in February each year. In 2020-21, the capital programme for refurbishment of playground areas is:

Scheme	2020-21	2019-20 Slippage	Total Programme 2020-21	Outturn
	£000	£000	£000	
Play Equipment	290	243	533	533¹

5. The programme for 2020-21 includes resurfacing and replacement of playground equipment at sites including:

- Lascelles Drive, Pontprennau
- Parc Caedelyn, Rhiwbina
- Glenmount Way, Thornhill
- Grange Gardens, Grangetown
- Drovers Way, Radyr
- Catherine Gardens, Rumney
- Victoria Park, Canton
- Peppermint Drive, Pontprennau.

6. In addition, as part of planning negotiations for new large-scale residential developments, additional playgrounds can be agreed via Section 106 planning agreements. These require developers to provide funding to meet the costs for new playground areas once a required level of occupancy is reached on the new development. The overall Section 106 programme for 2020-21 for Parks and Green Spaces is £1.6 million, and includes the following schemes:

- Adamsdown Open Space
- Cogan Gardens
- Llandaff Fields
- Shelley Gardens
- Kitchener Gardens
- Cemaes Crescent
- Llanishen Park.

¹ Appendix 4 - Month 4 Budget Monitoring Report to Cabinet 17 September 2020

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

7. As part of the UK and Welsh Government's response to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, playground areas were closed for use on 23 March 2020. In July 2020, the Welsh Government announced playground areas could re-open, following a Covid-19 risk assessment and an inspection by a qualified playground inspector of the equipment and safety surfaces.
8. Cardiff Council followed a safety-first approach with a view to ensuring that children across the city had some play provision in their local area as quickly as possible, opening play areas on a phased basis throughout July, August and September 2020. To help maintain social distancing and minimise the risk of transmitting Covid-19, some changes were made to some play areas, such as:
 - removing some swing seats to ensure a 2 metre distance is maintained, and
 - installing new signage requesting families follow Covid-19 social distancing and hygiene advice, limit visits to 30 minutes during busy times and only have a maximum of one adult per child in the play area.
9. The health and safety inspections identified eight play areas that needed to remain closed after failing safety tests because sites deteriorated or were vandalised while closed. These sites are:
 - Anderson Fields (Adamsdown)
 - Cemetery Park (Adamsdown)
 - Mill Road Recreation Ground (Ely)
 - Grange Gardens (Grangetown)
 - College Road open space (Llandaff North)
 - Drovers Way (Radyr & Morganstown)
 - Parc Caedelyn (Rhiwbina)
 - Caerleon Park (Trowbridge)
10. Members will note that some of these sites are already included in the sites scheduled for refurbishment this year. The Month 4 Budget Monitoring report to

Cabinet on 17 September 2020² highlighted that capital programme schemes across the Council have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic due to the initial lockdown, contractors needing to adapt to Covid-secure ways of working, issues sourcing materials and difficulties for some contractors in securing labour. The report stresses the importance of putting in place robust processes for the planning and delivery of schemes and the possible need for schemes to be reprioritised.

Way Forward

11. Councillor Peter Bradbury (Cabinet Member – Culture & Leisure), Steve Morris (Operational Manager – Sport, Leisure and Development) and Rosie James (Principal Landscape Officer), will attend, to give a presentation and to contribute to the discussion and respond to points raised. The presentation will take Members through the impact of Covid-19 on playground areas, the re-opening process and the proposed programme of refurbishments, which were paused during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Legal Implications

12. 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

² Available at: <https://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=4209&LLL=0>

having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

13. 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; and
- ii) Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance & Legal Services

07 October 2020