

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR REGENERATION AND COMMUNITIES**

**Report prepared by: Jason Taylor**

**Date Issued: 6 May 2015**

#### **1. Play Area Capital Improvement Programme 2015/16-2017/18**

##### **1.1 Key Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To consider the play area capital improvement programme for 2015/16-2017/18.

##### **1.2 Recommendation of the Director of Regeneration and Communities**

1.2.1 To approve the Play Area Capital Improvement Programme for 2015/16-2017/18.

##### **1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 There are 120 play areas across Maidstone Borough, 73 of which are owned by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC). Other play areas are owned by other organisations including Parish Councils, Kent County Council and Housing Associations.

1.3.2 The last major capital investment in play was as part of the Green Spaces Strategy in 2005. In 2009 it was agreed to introduce a formal system for allocating capital resources for play areas. All play areas were assessed in terms of their quality and this established the condition of all play areas in the borough. The information was then used to direct the available capital to the MBC play areas most in need of replacement.

1.3.3 In 2012 the Parks and Leisure team carried out a complete play area review which looked at the current condition of all play areas and how they were distributed across the borough. This then led to looking at future options for play areas across the borough and approximate costs to implement these options.

1.3.4 The three options that were reviewed at that time were:

- 1. No change in policy – maintain MBC play areas to current level- which would cost in the region of £250k per year.
- 2. Prioritise 5 main play areas only.
- 3. Agree a borough wide strategic play provision standard - based on the majority of residents being a maximum of 12 minutes walk from an amber or green play area.

1.3.5 The initial findings of the play review were presented to the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013 which resulted in further work being undertaken on option 3. The results of the further work, including a draft Play Area Strategy, were presented to the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2013 and 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

1.3.6 A 6 week public consultation was then undertaken to seek views on the proposed strategy. In total 195 individual responses and two petitions were received. The majority of responses focused on individual play areas.

1.3.7 The council's capital programme for the period commencing 2015/16 approved by Full Council on 25 February 2015 includes £1.8 million for play areas improvements over a 3 year period. The play areas requiring improvements have been identified and the order in which the works will be undertaken is set out in Appendix A. It should be noted that play areas such as Peveral Drive are not listed in Appendix A as they are fully funded by S106 monies. Those play areas will have the relevant works undertaken in accordance with the S106 requirements.

1.3.8 Since the original work on the draft play area strategy was undertaken and consulted on, the council has recognised that the draft play area strategy is limited in its scope and should be more explicitly linked to the council's priorities, in particular improving health and wellbeing. It is also considered more appropriate to develop a strategy for play that covers more than just the play areas and also addresses the needs of adults and older people as well as children and young people. This approach will take time to develop with further work required. It is proposed that the scope be agreed with the relevant committees in the new governance structure to produce a more comprehensive strategy.

1.3.9 In order to ensure the development of a comprehensive play strategy does not impact on the improvements required to the play areas it is proposed that a play area improvement programme is agreed using the approved budget now with the work to begin in June 2015.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The play area improvement programme could be deferred until the wider play strategy is completed but this would delay works relating to the quality and safety of the play areas.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The play area improvement programme supports the council's objective for Maidstone to be a decent place to live.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There is a risk that the condition of the play areas will deteriorate if the capital works proposed are delayed. This risk will be managed by prioritizing key play areas and programming the works accordingly.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	X

1.7.2 Financial

The £1.8m funding for the Play Area Capital Improvement Programme has been approved and includes the costs of project managing the improvement works.

1.7.3 Asset management

The improvement of the council play area stock would enable the council to better manage its assets.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendix A – Play Area Capital Improvement Programme.

1.8.2 Background Documents

1.8.3 None

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

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This is a Key Decision because: the allocated budget is over the £250,000 threshold, the decision affects all wards.....

Wards/Parishes affected: All Wards

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**How to Comment**

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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