

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

## Agenda Item 9

**Subject:** Playground Refurbishment Programme

**Date of meeting:** 20 June 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director: Economy, Environment & Culture

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

### For general

#### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report provides City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee with an update on the delivery of the Playground Refurbishment Programme. The report is also seeking approval for further funding and procurement within the Programme.

#### 2. Recommendations

That Committee:

2.1 approves the further funding of £0.803m and procurement for the Playground Refurbishment Programme as set out in Table 3 in Appendix 1.

2.2 approves borrowing of up to £0.468m to contribute to the refurbishment of playgrounds.

2.3 delegates authority to the Executive Director: Economy Environment & Culture to procure and award contracts for playground refurbishment over a period of up to three years.

#### 3. Context and background information

3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council owns and maintains 55 playgrounds in the city of which 15 are owned by the Housing Department but managed and maintained by City Parks. The Seafront Team manage and maintain two playgrounds on the seafront.

3.2 All the city's playgrounds are well-used resources for families. They are important for child and family health and wellbeing and also for childhood development and socialisation. The consultation carried out as part of the Open Spaces Strategy 2017 made it clear that the provision of playgrounds is a high priority for residents.

- 3.3 Before the start of this Playground Refurbishment Programme, the last significant investment in council-owned playgrounds was through the Playbuilder Grant scheme in 2010. Whilst this meant there was substantial investment in the city's playgrounds, it also meant that a large amount of playground equipment was due to come to the end of life simultaneously.
- 3.4 In 2019/20, Members allocated £0.200m capital towards the costs of refurbishing playgrounds that were not eligible for funding from developer contributions. This was complemented by the additional £0.539m of borrowing, Section 106 and HRA contributions, leading to a £3.000m Playground Refurbishment Programme being approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 18 March 2021.
- 3.5 Since this time, further contributions have been made to the Programme from Section 106 funds, Housing and the capital investment. This has brought total spend to the £3.000m already approved and this report is seeking further approval to procure and award contracts for up to £0.803m to continue the playground refurbishments.

### **Implementation update**

- 3.6 On 17 January 2023, Committee received an update on the delivery of the Programme. As part of the first phase of the Refurbishment Programme, City Parks completed 24 sites, as detailed in Table 1 in Appendix 1.
- 3.7 Since that time, tender processes have been completed for a further eight sites, as set out in Table 2 in Appendix 1. Works on these sites will begin in the summer / autumn and will be completed during the winter. Some of the playgrounds may need to be closed during the summer school holidays to ensure the weather does not impact on the installation of new equipment and new safety surfaces being laid. City Parks will work with the contractors to minimise disruption as much as possible. Residents and 'friends of' groups have shared their thoughts and ideas for the eight sites, which has led to improvements in the design and to provide the most sought-after equipment.

### **Refurbishment projects for approval**

- 3.8 There are a further 12 sites to undergo refurbishment, and three that require maintenance. These are detailed in Table 3 in Appendix 1. The funding for these sites is from Section 106 contributions, Housing and City Parks' budgets and the funding source for each site is indicated in Table 3.
- 3.9 The work will be completed in four packages as set out in Table 3 in Appendix 1. The indicative timescales, subject to approval from committee, is:
- Draft tender documents by the end of July 2023, incorporating feedback from the consultation process (see paragraphs 5.3 to 5.5 below).
  - Publish tender documents in September or October 2023, for a period of eight weeks.
  - Award contracts in early 2024.

- Install during 2024.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 The alternative to this Programme is to not replace the play infrastructure as it fails. This would save the council significant capital investment and future maintenance costs. This would have a detrimental impact on a number of children who would not benefit from outdoor play, both developmentally and in terms of health and wellbeing.
- 4.2 A variation to the above is to consolidate playgrounds and close some sites. It may provide an opportunity for more transformative play spaces and a high-quality number of sites. However, this would mean sites are further away from several children. This option will not reduce maintenance costs but create an inequality pertaining to the distribution of playgrounds.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The sites that have recently been procured (Table 2, Appendix 1) have all been subject to consultation. Members of the public were encouraged to provide feedback for Queens Park via the council's consultation portal from 25 February 2022 and 8 April 2022. Feedback was invited for the remaining sites between 8 April 2022 and 27 May 202. In addition, face-to-face consultation events were held with the Friends of Knoll Park, members of the public and the Trust for Developing Communities for Knoll Park, plus two events with the Friends of Queens Park and members of the public.
- 5.2 Community engagement sessions for these eight sites were held between 30 May and 9 June to show members of the public the new designs and answer any questions before installation.
- 5.3 The sites to be procured in the future (Table 3, Appendix 1) were subject to consultation between 12 October 2022 and 13 January 2023 on the council's consultation portal, with the exceptions of:
- Hollingbury Park which is currently out for consultation.
  - Gatton Park, Newhaven Street and The Level, which require essential maintenance, rather than refurbishment.
- 5.4 City Parks' officers also met with the newly formed Friends of Mackie Park to inform the plans for the Mackie Park refurbishment.
- 5.5 Subject to committee approval, the feedback from these consultations will inform the designs to be contained within the tender documents.

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 This report provides Members with an update on the delivery of the Playground Refurbishment Programme. Committee is asked to approve further funding of £0.803m and procurement for the Playground Refurbishment Programme and borrowing of up to £0.468m to contribute to the refurbishment of playgrounds.

## 7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The General Fund playground investment programme is proposed to be funded as set out in the table below.

	2024/25
<b>Planned Programme</b>	<b>608,000</b>
Less Section 106 funding	(256,000)
Less City Parks revenue funding	(100,000)
Less City Parks Car Parking Net Income/Unsupported Borrowings	(252,000)
<b>Balance to fund</b>	<b>0</b>

- 7.2 The funding includes the use of earmarked Section 106 funds. If additional Section 106 funds are available for other playgrounds within this programme, they will be called upon before other funding options. City Parks have identified available revenue budgets to support Direct Revenue Funding of £0.100m to support this programme. The remaining £0.252m would be met through unsupported borrowings supported by City Parks available budgets and from net incomes from Parks car parking charges. Borrowing for this sum of £0.252m would result in an estimated annual cost of £0.023m per annum assuming a 15 year the life of the assets and an estimated 4% interest rate. The final split (revenue versus unsupported borrowing) will be assessed as part of a review of the projected ongoing maintenance requirements following the delivery of the investment programme.
- 7.3 In addition, there is also £0.195 million of proposed investment in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) playgrounds which will be funded by the HRA. The programme will be amended as tender prices are obtained and reflected in Targeted Budget Management reports to Finance, Strategy & City Regeneration Committee as required

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 09/06/2023

## 8. Legal implications

- 8.1 All contracts required to implement to implement the programme will need to be tendered in compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

Name of lawyer consulted: Alice Rowland Date consulted: 09/06/2023

## 9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Accessibility and inclusion are key to the Playground Refurbishment Programme.
- 9.2 The consultation process provides an opportunity for members of the public and local organisations to share their suggestions for each playground refurbishment, including accessibility and inclusion. The consultations are

shared specifically with local organisations, charities and disability advocacy groups for them to share with their networks to ensure a greater reach as possible and enable everyone to feedback.

- 9.3 The Ronald Mace principles for inclusive play spaces are referenced in all tender documents. The procurement tenders are heavily weighted and scored for their accessibility and inclusion credentials to ensure accessibility is sincerely considered when refurbishing sites. It is evaluated as one of the top three-point scoring criteria.
- 9.4 The council is seeking to obtain accreditation from [PiPA](#) once they have assessed the city's playgrounds for accessibility and inclusion.
- 9.5 It is important to remember that providing accessible and inclusive play equipment is not only about the equipment itself. When considering items for wheelchair users, for example, consideration also needs to be given to accessible parking, step free access and the availability of accessible or Changing Places Toilets to ensure users can enjoy the whole experience.
- 9.6 The first truly wheelchair accessible multi play unit is to be installed at Queens Park this summer, with officers looking at other sites where such units can be installed. Accessible and inclusive space at Carden Park and The Level have received awards for inclusion.
- 9.7 Further information on additional equalities implications and how equalities have been addressed in the Playground Refurbishment Programme is available in the Background Documents listed below.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 This report relates to activity which will have limited impact on sustainability. However, the Playground Refurbishment Programme has sought to undertake the following to uphold best practice:
  - Select companies which have the longest warranties.
  - Score tenders on companies' sustainability credentials.
  - Ensure components are easy to replace so equipment can be repaired.
  - Specify for quality so that items such as slides are stainless steels rather than plastic or fibre glass.
  - Request that no wooden post enter the ground but ensure they are shod or sleeved with metal to prevent them rotting.

## **11. Other Implications**

### **Social Value and procurement implications**

- 11.1 The procurement process for the Playground Refurbishment Programme has, and will continue to, comply with Contract Standing Orders and the council's procurement policies.

### **Public health implications**

- 11.2 Improvement of play facilities that are accessible to all children will contribute to achieving the strategic objectives of the Brighton & Hove Health and Wellbeing Strategy, including:
- Starting Well: The health and wellbeing of children and young people in Brighton & Hove will be improved.
  - Brighton & Hove will be a place which helps people to be healthy: green & open spaces and sports & leisure facilities will be used effectively to improve wellbeing.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **Appendices**

1. Playground Refurbishment Programme

### **Background documents**

1. [The Big Conversation – An Open Spaces Strategy for Brighton & Hove](#) presented to Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee on 17 January 2017 (item 66)
2. [Playground Refurbishment Programme 2021-2025 Report](#) presented to Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee on 19 January 2021 (item 72)
3. [Playground Refurbishment Programme 2021-2025 Report](#) presented to Policy & Resources Committee on 18 March 2021 (item 172)
4. [Playground Refurbishment Programme Report](#) presented to Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee on 17 January 2023 (item 76)