

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE		Report No. 12
Date of Meeting	24 th July, 2008	
Title of Report	Improvements to Play Areas	
Portfolio	Leisure and Economy	
Link to Corporate Priorities	Healthy Lifestyles, Children and Young People	
Key Decision	No	
Executive Workplan Ref	N/A	
Public Report	Yes	

Summary of Report

The report sets out a number of improvements which can be made to play areas within North Wiltshire District. The proposal and concept arose during the Budget setting at the Full Council meeting in February 2008, there was agreement that should a material underspend arise during 2008/09 that the Executive would consider proposals to improve play areas within North Wiltshire. Elsewhere on this agenda is a Revenue Report indicating that an underspend is likely to arise during 2008/09, giving rise to an opportunity to fund some or all of these schemes

Officer Recommendations

That the Executive:

- 1. Endorse the principle of improving play areas within North Wiltshire District and allocate funds resulting from the projected underspend forecast for 2008/09 as follows:
NWDC Play Areas – Appendix A - £85,000
Wootton Bassett proposal – Appendix B - £24,776 (Hard copy available on request)
Town/Parish grants for Disability inclusive play equipment £70,224.**
- 2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to work in conjunction with the Assets, Design and Regeneration Team to deliver the improvements as per Appendix A within the confines of the allocated funds. To grant the funds for the scheme set out in Appendix B, plus successful bidders from Towns and Parishes against the £70,244.**

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the budget setting full Council meeting on 26th February 2008. There was a counter budget proposal by Cllr S.K. Doubell.

“The proposed capital budget is amended by adding:

£90,000 for the provision of a piece of play equipment in all the District Council owned play areas that can be used by children with disabilities.

£90,000 to be spent on the general refurbishment of all the District Council owned play areas that require it.

£50,000 to provide an additional 30 car parking spaces in the District Council owned car park in Cricklade.” The Cricklade Car Park proposal is dealt with elsewhere on this agenda.

The minutes reflect the following as the decision

“That the Executive requests reports on the three proposed changes to the capital budget and considers whether these can be accommodated within underspends on the capital budget.”

- 1.2 The Revenue Budget Monitoring Report on this agenda indicates that NWDC is anticipating an underspend of at least £0.5M for 2008-09. The Council has received a General Consent that it may operate within its budget totals as set by the full council to deliver its planned objectives. Whilst these were not specifically allocated budget the approval was that underspends might be re-distributed for one-off projects. The motion and decision do both refer to Capital underspend, however in local authority accounting it is permissible to utilise revenue funds for capital projects (but not vice versa).

2. Options & Options Appraisal

- 1.1 Option 1: To agree the recommendations.
- 2.2 Option 2: To not approve the recommendations.
- 2.3 Option 3 To propose alternative recommendations.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 Play areas represent an important aspect of community life for both children and young people and their families. Within North Wiltshire the level of play provision is considered reasonable overall, however it could be improved in quality and in terms of inclusiveness for children with disabilities.
- 3.2 As a result of the Council Budget Meeting, our Part Time Lottery Play Project consultant (on secondment from Swindon Borough Council) undertook a quick review of the play areas and produced a number of suggestions for several sites, with indicative costings. These proposals are provided at Appendix A, the costings are indicative, therefore the proposed funding of £85K does allow for an element of contingency.

- 3.3 If the Executive were to approve the projects in Appendix A, the proposal is to negotiate with Swindon Commercial Services (SCS), who are currently appointed to regularly inspect and carry out repair and improvement works to the same Council-owned play areas through a term contract with this Council, following a competitive tender process. It is understood that SCS have the resources to specify appropriate equipment and materials, obtain competitive prices from relevant suppliers and carry out necessary preparatory and supervisory work so as to leave NWDC with the minimal task of project/contract monitoring. This would enable work to be carried out in the shortest possible time and with projects running concurrent.
- 3.4 In addition to the proposals provided by the NWDC officers, a request to fund a scheme has been received from the children of Wootton Bassett, via the town council to support one of the four schemes they are undertaking in their area. The sum requested is £24,776 and would support the principles of this funding allocation. The children have been greatly involved in the construction of the proposal itself and the scheme represents a good opportunity to support a very inclusive proposal. The information relating to this project is available on request and a copy will be available for reference at the Executive meeting.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The proposed schemes are as outlined in detail in the Appendices A. They cover a multitude of enhancements and improvements to the play areas across North Wiltshire. The proposed approach to delivering these schemes is to negotiate with Swindon Commercial Services (SCS), who are currently appointed to regularly inspect and carry out repair and improvement works to the same Council-owned play areas through a term contract with this Council, following a competitive tender process. It is understood that SCS have the resources to specify appropriate equipment and materials, obtain competitive prices from relevant suppliers and carry out necessary preparatory and supervisory work so as to leave NWDC with the minimal task of project/contract monitoring. This would enable the schemes to commence and proceed concurrently, so reducing the final completion date. If approval is given it would not be unreasonable to anticipate full completion within 5 to 6 months, subject to contractor availability.
- 4.2 The emphasis with this approach is to have a minimal impact on NWDC officer capacity, which is already limited. There would be a need to extend the services of the officer from Swindon Borough Council to perform the role of project and contract management to facilitate this scheme.
- 4.3 If approval is given to proceed, a more detailed budget would be constructed on the receipt of formal quotes from the contractors. Should any of the provisional estimates be materially insufficient then the intention would be to proceed with only one of the two Monkton Park schemes, if the costs could not be contained in the modest contingency. The overall costs would not be permitted to exceed the funds approved by the Executive. The table following provides a summary of the location and indicative costs of the schemes proposed, they do not include the main contractors design and supervision fees which are likely to be in the order of 20%, these would be absorbed within existing budgets, as would the costs of administering the Town/Parish grant scheme, to be identified by the S151 Officer.

Play Area	Cost £
Audley Road, Chippenham	7,000
Bences Lane, Corsham	12,000
Blackwellhams, Chippenham	4,000
Fynamore Gardens, Calne	6,000
Gypsy Lane, Chippenham	4,000
Kingsley Road, Chippenham	14,000
Monkton Park, Chippenham (1 site)	15,000
Pockeridge A, Corsham	11,000
Pockeridge B, Corsham	3,000
Pinewood Way, Colerne	2,000
Contingency	7,000
Grand Total	85,000

4.4 Whilst the funds for the Wootton Bassett proposal are in fact a contribution to a larger scheme, it would demonstrate the District wide nature of this proposal and support a scheme which has had considerable input from the local children and includes much equipment of a fully inclusive nature, so supporting that key objective. The balance of the scheme's costs, £80K, is being provided by Wootton Bassett Town Council.

4.5 To ensure full coverage of this scheme across the District the third element is to utilise £70,224 as grant funds to support any Parish or District (not included in the table above) initiative to purchase and install an individual piece of disabled/inclusive play equipment. The proposal is a one-off communication to invite bids which will then be assessed by Asset Design & Regeneration Officers (lay related officers) / Community officers in conjunction with the lead member for leisure, to assess best value based on inclusive nature of the equipment, conformance with the Play Strategy and identified usage of the play area. We anticipate this sum will allow for between 5 and 10 grant allocations. Bids will be invited for end of August 2008, with awards being made in September/October 2008.

5. Community and Environmental Implications

5.1 The subject matter is itself a community issue, improving children and young peoples facilities will be of benefit to the wider community.

6. Human Resources Implications

6.1 The key implication is the requirement to secure retention/extension of the current Lottery Play Project consultant's availability from Swindon Borough Council; this is containable within current resources.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

7.1 Improvements in provision of inclusive play equipment will support the Council's aims to support children with disabilities.

Appendices:	Appendix A – Improvements to NWDC Play Areas Appendix B – Available upon request.
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Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
Budget Proposals 2008-09	Council – February 26, 2008	Draft C83

Improvements to NWDC Play Areas

Audley Road, Chippenham (Improvement & Access)

Safety Surface

The rubber tiles at Audley Road are in a poor condition, and gaps are opening up between the joints creating trip hazards. This type of safety surface is not recommended any more, because of problems fixing the tiles and stabilising them. One way of removing the trip hazards and giving the safety surface a new lease of life is to overlay the tiles with Notts Sport carpet.

Notts Sport is a safety surface in its own right, and comes in many colours. It is similar in appearance to an artificial cricket wicket, and the top of the carpet is top-dressed with sand to prevent fires and cutting of the surface.

<http://www.nottssport.co.uk/childsplaycase-studies.php>

New Equipment

The Supernova, a revolutionary type of roundabout, is made by Kompan, a Danish play equipment manufacturer, and one which is leading the way in accessible and innovative play. The beauty of the Supernova is that it is low to the ground, therefore requires less depth of safety surface, and is fairly robust – there are currently 20 of these installed in Swindon, and they have not experienced any problems with vandalism or maintenance. The Supernova is a genuine example of accessible and exciting play equipment.

More able children, adults and teenagers can test their skills of balance by running on the surface of the Supernova and using the marker to count their revolutions. Smaller or younger children can sit astride the roundabout, pushing themselves with their feet. Very young or severely disabled children can lie on the Supernova whilst carers/parents gently rotate the roundabout.

http://products.kompan.com/gb/Products/Age_6-15_-_School_Age/GALAXY/3570/Supernova_GXY916.html

Recommendations and Costings

Overlay the rubber tiles with Notts Sport carpet £2-3k

Install a Supernova within the boundary fence on the grass area, and install Childsplay 1 – Notts Sport safety surface £3.5k.

As well as providing a new and accessible item of play equipment, the Supernova would also provide an item of rotating play, thus increasing the play value and bring the play area nearer to achieving a LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) rating.

Total cost for suggested improvements: £6.5k

Bences Lane, Corsham (Improvement & Access)

This play area is currently in a reasonable condition, although it is very small.

The preferred option could be to increase the size of the play area, install a Supernova along with new wet pour rubber and a new fence. The cost of this would be around £11 – 12k.

A less expensive option would be to install a pair of talk tubes – these are situated at either side of the play area, and when a child speaks into one end of the tube, their voice can clearly be heard at the other tube.

<http://www.wicksteed.co.uk/talking-flowers-c70.html>

<http://catalog.hags.com/ProdInfo/Item.asp?hidLang=gb&hidCatalogID=1&hidGroupID=6&hidSubGroupID=22&hidItemID=1412>

Another very accessible and reasonably cheap item of play equipment is a play panel, which can have a variety of games on it, e.g. Noughts and crosses, or a maze.

<http://www.wicksteed.co.uk/play-panels-c68.html>

http://www.smp.co.uk/product_range/early_years/new_world/panels.html

http://www.recordplaygrounds.co.uk/early_pgs/p_panels.html

The cost of installing both of these items would be around £3.5k, including an area of hard standing, if needed, to allow access to the new items.

The preferred option is to expand the play area and encompass the new equipment mentioned above which is more inclusive.

Total cost of suggested improvements: £11-12k,

Blackwellhams, Chippenham (Improvement & Access)

This is a reasonably new play area, with not a great deal of space in which to extend or expand. It currently only has a fence around 3 of its 4 sides, allowing children to access a hedge and a ditch, which is a risk that could be avoided.

The cost of supplying and installing flat top, galvanised fence along this boundary would be around £1k.

There is a small area of grass within the play area, and a small item of social play, such as a low picnic table or a 'shop'. Could be achieved for around £2.5k

http://www.smp.co.uk/product_range/early_years/speciality/magic_corner.html

http://products.kompan.com/gb/Products/Age_2-6_-_Pre_School/MOMENTS/3491/Red_House_M7000.html

http://products.kompan.com/gb/Products/Age_2-6_-_Pre_School/MOMENTS/3491/Red_House_M7000.html

Total cost of suggested improvements: £3.5k

Fynamore Gardens, Calne (Access)

A pod swing is an item of play equipment, which is fairly new to the market, and has emerged since the enforcement of the DDA. It consists of a large circular swing seat suspended from a standard frame, upon which many children can sit. It is suitable for both very young children, as well as severely disabled children or adults, as they can lie in the centre. Able children also enjoy the experience, as they can all pile on, and I have seen 8 older children using it at once. Also carers can sit on the swing with their children if needed.

http://www.proludic.com/index.php?ID_page=31&ref=J440

Recommendations and costings

Replace the missing spring rocker £1.5k

http://www.proludic.com/index.php?ID_page=31&ref=J809

Replace the existing swing frame with a pod swing £4.5k.

Total cost of suggested improvements: £6k

Gypsy Lane, Chippenham (Access)

This area consists of one ball court with tarmac surface but the access from the nearest path way is impossible unless you are able bodied.

Recommendations and costings

Improve the access by installing limestone dust access path. Approximate cost: £3.5k

Total cost of suggested improvements: £3.5k

Kingsley Road, Chippenham (Improvement & Access)

This play area is in need of some refurbishment. Recommend removing the multi play unit and replacing it, also adding some gates to enclose the area and thus make it safer.

Recommendations and costings

Supply and install new multi unit – up to £10k

http://www.proludic.com/index.php?ID_page=31&ref=J2521

Supply and install two new self-closing gates £2k

Replace missing springy rocker £1.5k

Total cost of suggested improvements: £13.5k

Monkton Park, Chippenham (Improvement & Access)

Both areas are in need of total refurbishment, however if funds were restricted it may be better to concentrate on one of the two areas

Both or either area – install new and accessible multi play unit, swing seats, and missing items of equipment £10 – 15k

http://www.smp.co.uk/product_range/juniors/bravo/bravo_021.html

Total cost of suggested improvements: £20 – 30K (£10 – 15k if only one selected)

Pockeridge A Corsham (Improvement & Access)

Suggest replacing the multi unit with one that would fit into the available space. Also suggest some tactile play panels to be installed onto the fence.

<http://catalog.hags.com/ProdInfo/Item.asp?hidLang=gb&hidCatalogID=1&hidGroupID=3&hidSubGroupID=145&hidItemID=1687>

<http://catalog.hags.com/ProdInfo/Item.asp?hidLang=gb&hidCatalogID=1&hidGroupID=2&hidSubGroupID=129&hidItemID=1347>

Costings

Multi unit £7 – 8k

Play panels - £2-3k

Total cost of suggested improvements: £11k

Pockeridge B Corsham (Improvement)

This play area is very small, and cut into a steep hill. Could possibly fence this with flat top galvanised fencing for around £2.5k, but space is very restricted here, and difficult to improve play value.

Total cost of suggested improvements: £2.5K

Pinewood Way, Colerne (Improvement)

Fairly new area – possibly erect fencing to exclude dogs? £3.5k for flat -top galvanised fencing.

Total cost of suggested improvements: £3.5K

Rodbourne Rd, Corston

This area consists of just a ball court, which would be difficult to expand or improve.

Newnton Grove, Malmesbury

This area is fairly new – there are some problems on site, ADR are progressing issues with the developers to reinstate these. There is some new fencing needed to secure the area – approximately £2k, but need to investigate this further with ADR, as all the issues that have been raised on the site should really be the responsibility of the developers to reinstate.

NOTE:

Improvement = General improvement to the play equipment or surrounding area / fencing

Access = Improved or new equipment allowing access to play for disabled children in an inclusive environment.