

Elm Grove Play Area

Briefing Note to 7 July 2011 Trowbridge Area Board

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1.0 Background

Elm Grove play area was transferred to Wiltshire Council from West Wiltshire District Council on 1 April 2009. It is a large grass area covering at least 2 acres, unlit and hidden from public view. The area is prone to flooding during winter months, making large areas inaccessible at times, particularly where the play area is located.

The play area, primarily of a wood based design and structure which was installed prior to 2007, is prone to vandalism and in 2007 was damaged from an arson attack.

Correspondence received from one local resident in 2010, suggests a number of residents have expressed frustration with the lack of facilities in the vicinity of the outdoor area and have the perception that the play area was continually overlooked for refurbishment.

1.1 September 2010

On 13 September 2010 the play area was inspected following a spate of vandalism. The inspectors report identified that all the equipment had been vandalised or was badly worn through age. The inspector recommended that the play area be closed with immediate effect and the equipment removed if repairs were not cost effective. The inspector also concluded that any new equipment installed would have to be designed to withstand vandalism. Ground works were also recommended as the site is prone to flooding.

The play area was closed to the public on 14 September 2010 and the local councillor, Councillor Payne was informed and supportive of the decision. Trowbridge Town Council were also informed and invited to comment on whether they would wish to consider owning the asset or being involved in any future consultation exercise regarding the installation of new equipment. The extent of the damage and general condition of the equipment necessitates replacement rather than repair. This was explained to everyone at the time. The Early Years Team were also invited to contribute to the consultation phase should suitable funding be found to purchase new equipment.

It was also clarified at the time that the council had no funds to purchase new equipment and that the most likely source of funding would be from 'Planning Gain' contributions (Section 106). Unfortunately due to the economic downturn, new building developments have ground to a halt and there are currently no Section 106 funds available nor is it likely that there will be any forthcoming in the short to medium term.

2.0 Insurance

Play area equipment is not insured by the council. The council's insurers are not keen on insuring play ground equipment and as such it is not included on the council's building insurance. The other option is to include it under 'All Risks' however, due to the cost associated with this the council took the decision to not insure the equipment.

3.0 Current Situation

The play area equipment and fencing has been removed.

Play equipment is normally replaced from Section 106 funds however; there are currently no Section 106 funds available. The council does not have a budget to replace such equipment.

The land is prone to flooding so it is likely that serious consideration would need to be given to repositioning the play area which would add to the cost of replacement.

As the play area is owned by the council it is unlikely that a grant application would be considered by the Community Area Board and it would certainly not be sufficient to cover the cost of replacement.

Over the next two years the council is planning to deliver a 'Formal Recreation and Pitch Strategy' as part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and update the Play Strategy which collectively should identify any deficiencies in the area and consider how these could be addressed.

As soon as suitable s106 funding becomes available it will be earmarked for a replacement play area at Elm Grove Farm.

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