

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee

## Agenda Item 52

**Subject:** Playground Refurbishment Programme

**Date of meeting:** 12 March 2024

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

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**Ward(s) affected:** Coldean & Stanmer, Hollingdean & Fiveways, Preston Park, Queens Park, Rottingdean & West Saltdean, South Portslade, Westdene & Hove Park, Wish

### 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 following the last update on 20 June 2023.
- 1.2 The report is also seeking approval to deliver further playground refurbishment projects, as well as projects to introduce new play and fitness provision in the city's parks, including outdoor fitness areas, a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and a wheelchair accessible swing. These projects are within existing budgetary provision.

#### 2. Recommendations

That Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the progress of the Playground Refurbishment Programme as set out in the report and Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Approves the further spend of £1.691m for the Playground Refurbishment Programme, outdoor fitness areas, a MUGA and a wheelchair accessible swing as set out in Table 3 in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Executive Director: Economy Environment & Culture to procure and award contracts for playground refurbishments and new play and fitness provision 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 manages and maintains 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, 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 of capital funding towards the costs of refurbishing playgrounds that were not eligible for funding from Section 106 (S106) developer contributions. This was complemented by an additional £0.539m of borrowing, leading to a £3.000m Playground Refurbishment Programme being approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 18 March 2021. Since this time, further contributions have been made to the Programme from S106 funds, Housing budgets and capital investment. This has brought total approved spend to £3.753m.
- 3.5 Table 2 in Appendix 1 sets out the projects that were procured in January and February 2024. Once these have been delivered, this will bring the Playground Refurbishment Programme, as approved by Committee on 18 March 2021, to completion.
- 3.6 Therefore, the recommendation in 2.2 represents the start of the next phase of improving playground, outdoor play and fitness provision across the city. To that end, this report is seeking approval to procure and award contracts for up to £1.691m to continue the playground refurbishments, plus introduce outdoor fitness areas, a MUGA and a wheelchair accessible swing, predominantly funded by Section 106 contributions. The Saltdean MUGA will be part-funded by community contributions and the outdoor fitness area at Wish Park will be part-funded by a third-party grant.
- 3.7 Not only do playgrounds bring benefits to families, as described in paragraph 3.2, but outdoor play and fitness provision brings wellbeing benefits to the city's residents and visitors. Furthermore, one of the actions within the Open Spaces Strategy is to *optimise outdoor sport and physical activities provision across the city, including skateparks and fixed gyms, prioritising investment to improve quality of identified sites*. Therefore, this new phase will bring additional benefits to the city, its residents and its visitors.

## **Implementation update**

- 3.8 On 20 June 2023, Committee received an update on the delivery of the Programme. Since that time, a further eight sites have been completed. All the completed sites are set out in Table 1 in Appendix 1.
- 3.9 Table 2 in Appendix 1 sets out the projects already approved by Committee which will be implemented over the next few months.

### **Projects for approval**

- 3.10 During the initial Programme, it was not always possible to fully refurbish each site in its entirety due to the funding available at the time. To that end, several sites have been identified as opportunities to conduct a phase 2 refurbishment, as additional funding has become available. In addition, other sites have been identified for additional play provision, outdoor fitness areas, a MUGA and a wheelchair accessible swing.
- 3.11 The new projects, subject to approval by Committee, are:
- Hove Park Play Area (Phase 2): additional S106 funding is now available to continue the playground refurbishment work.
  - Preston Park Outdoor Fitness Area: S106 funding is available for the provision of a new outdoor fitness area.
  - Preston Park Wheelchair Swing: the play area in this popular park has been selected as the first location for a fully inclusive wheelchair accessible swing, following extensive consultation and officer engagement with user groups, local charities and parents and guardians of wheelchair users. This will be funded by S106.
  - Queens Park Play Area (Phase 2): additional S106 funding is now available to continue the playground refurbishment work in this park.
  - Saltdean MUGA: the current provision has reached its end-of-life. Officers have been working with stakeholders and community groups to raise funding for the project to complement the S106 funding. Donations have been received from local charity PARC and the Local Action Team.
  - Stanmer Park Accessible Play Area and Trail: the Stanmer Play Area was installed in 2020 and has been hugely popular with the public. Through S106 funding it has been identified as a location to create a fully accessible destination play space, and it is proposed that this includes a wheelchair accessible swing.
  - Victoria Recreation Ground/Park: S106 funding is available for the provision of a new outdoor fitness area.
  - Wild Park: this park has been identified as an area of need for play provision for older children, which will be funded by S016 and will complement the recent addition of a MUGA.
  - Wish Park: The Friends of Wish Park have applied for third-party funding to create an outdoor fitness area. A contribution will also be made from S106 funding.

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

- 4.1 The alternative to the Playground Refurbishment Programme is to not replace the play infrastructure as it fails. This would save the council capital investment and future maintenance costs. However, it 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.
- 4.3 An alternative option is to not provide new play and fitness provision in the city's parks, including outdoor fitness areas, a MUGA and wheelchair accessible swings. This would save the council capital investment and future maintenance costs. This would mean wellbeing benefits are not delivered. It would also mean that S106 contributions remain unspent.

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

- 5.1 The sites that have recently been procured (Table 2, Appendix 1) have all been subject to consultation, which was used to inform the tender specifications. Members of the public were encouraged to provide feedback via the council's consultation portal.
- 5.2 For the projects seeking approval, the following consultation has taken place:
- Hove Park Play Area (Phase 2): the consultation launched on the consultation portal on 19 February and will close on 29 March 2024. This is being supported by the Friends of Hove Park.
  - Preston Park Outdoor Fitness Area: the consultation was completed via the consultation portal between 23 October and 3 December 2023. Most respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the installation of an outdoor fitness area.
  - Preston Park Wheelchair Swing: extensive consultation and officer engagement with user groups, local charities and parents and guardians of wheelchair users has taken place between March 2021 to date.
  - Queens Park Play Area (Phase 2): the consultation was completed via the consultation portal between 23 October and 3 December 2023. The consultation provided officers with additional information required to deliver additional facilities at Queens Park Phase 2, including play provision for older children and dynamic play.
  - Saltdean Multi Use Games Area: the consultation was completed between 23 and 29 October 2023 via the PARC Charity and Local Action Team.
  - Victoria Recreation Ground/Park: the consultation was completed via the consultation portal between 23 October and 3 December 2023. Most respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with the installation of an outdoor fitness area.
  - Wild Park: the consultation launched on the consultation portal on 19 February and will close on 28 March 2024. This consultation is supported by The Trust for Developing Communities and the council's Communities Team in line with the park being identified as an area of need for play

provision for older children. This consultation is with focus groups in the community.

- Wish Park: the consultation was completed via the consultation portal between 19 January and 18 February 2024.

5.3 The Stanmer Park Accessible Play Area and Trail will be procured via a preferred supplier route in line with procurement policy. The winning bidder will assist officers with community engagement, consultation and final design / delivery of the project.

5.4 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 Committee with an update on the delivery of the Playground Refurbishment Programme. Committee is asked to approve further funding and procurement of £1.691m for further playground refurbishments, plus new play and fitness provision in the city's parks, including outdoor fitness areas, a MUGA and a wheelchair accessible swing, as set out in the report.

## 7. Financial implications

7.1 New sites identified within the General Fund playground investment programme is proposed to be funded as set out in the table below.

	<b>2024/25 £m</b>
<b>Planned Programme</b>	<b>1.691</b>
Less Section 106 funding	(1.604)
Community and Grant funding	(0.087)
Balance to fund	0

7.2 Should costs of the refurbishment programme be greater than the funding identified, additional funding would need to be identified or potentially result in service borrowing costs.

7.3 If agreed, the additional programme will be reflected in the next Targeted Budget Management report to Finance, Strategy & City Regeneration Committee for approval of the capital budget.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack    Date consulted: 13/02/2024

## 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.

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 Accessibility and inclusion are key to the Playground Refurbishment Programme and the introduction of new play and fitness provision in the city's parks.
- 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. In addition, the consultations are shared specifically with local organisations 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 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.
- 9.4 As part of this next phase, officers have identified opportunities for the installation of wheelchair accessible swings, where full and unrestricted access is available; one at Preston Park and one as part of the Stanmer Park Accessible Play Area project. This follows the installation of the first truly wheelchair accessible multi play unit at Queens Park this summer.
- 9.5 The procurement tenders are heavily weighted and scored for their inclusion and accessibility credentials to ensure accessibility is sincerely considered when refurbishing sites.
- 9.6 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 and the introduction of new play and fitness provision in the city's parks undertakes 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 shoed 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. This will also be the case for the introduction of new play and fitness provision in the city's parks.

### Public health implications

- 11.2 Improvement of play facilities and the introduction of new play and fitness provision in the city's parks 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.
  - Our City: 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 and new play and fitness provision

### 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)
5. [Playground Refurbishment Programme Report](#) presented to City Environment, South Downs & The Sea Committee on 20 June 2023 (item 9)

