

CABINET
21 JULY 2022
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL
25 JULY 2022

PLAYGROUND REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME 2022/23

1. Summary

- 1.1 This is a Key Decision as the Council will incur expenditure or savings beyond the threshold agreed by the Council.**
- 1.2 This is a Key Decision as it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the Borough comprising two or more wards.**
- 1.3 To seek agreement to the draft playground refurbishment programme 2022/23 and to request an increase to its capital budget, to facilitate the programme's implementation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That for the reasons detailed in the body of the report, the draft playground refurbishment programme 2022/23, as detailed in para. 3.7 of the report, be approved.
- 2.2 That the General Assembly of the Council be recommended to approve an increase to the playground refurbishment capital budget (M5335), from £986,000 to £1,500,000, to facilitate the programme's implementation.

3. Background and Discussion

The Council owns and maintains 27 playgrounds at various sites across the borough. The Health and Safety Executive stresses the importance of organisations regularly inspecting, maintaining, and if necessary, repairing or replacing any playground equipment under their control. Each site is regularly inspected and receives basic maintenance as and when required. The Council's last playground refurbishment programme was carried out between 2009 and 2011. Some equipment at some sites has degraded and deteriorated over time and in need of replacement. Some sites and equipment will either have to be closed or removed if new refurbishment works are not carried out.

- 3.1. In 2019 The Leader and administration made a commitment to improve the play experience of young people across the Borough and to refurbish existing playgrounds or deliver new facilities where appropriate.
- 3.2. A capital budget of £1,000,000 was created in 2020/21 for a playground refurbishment programme. Initial scoping and planning works were undertaken but the programme could not be progressed, as the playground industry effectively had to shut down for two years because of Covid-19. Playgrounds had to be closed during lockdowns to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

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- 3.3. In late 2021, it became apparent that the programme would be able to restart in early 2022. It was agreed that trial works would be undertaken at two sites to develop a blueprint for the wider programme. The Council's existing playground at Queens Gardens was identified for refurbishment and The Bridge development was identified as needing an entirely new playground.
- 3.4. A playground contractor with a proven record of delivery, Kompan Ltd, was engaged to carry out the works via the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO), a public sector owned professional buying organisation. The works were completed in April 2022 and the refurbished playground at Queens Gardens and a new playground at The Bridge were officially opened to the public in April and May 2022 respectively. Both playgrounds were completed on time and within budget and have been very well received by local residents.
- 3.5. A grant of £146,000 was received from Kent County Council in 2021/22 for playground refurbishment and was used to partly fund the first two trial projects, which both cost approximately £105,000 each.
- 3.6. Because of the success of the first two trial projects, it is proposed that the Council continues to use Kompan Ltd as its main playground installation contractor and to again procure its services via ESPO.
- 3.7. The next phase of the playground refurbishment programme, which was formulated following lead member site visits and discussions, and analysis of equipment condition appraisals, will include the following works:
- Central Park – complete removal of existing play equipment (with refurbishment of the water play area) and replacement with an entirely new playground and related facilities – estimate £1,000,000
 - Jessamine Place - refurbishment of existing play equipment – estimate £100,000
 - Hesketh Park – refurbishment of existing play equipment – estimate £100,000
 - Worcester Park - refurbishment of existing play equipment – estimate £100,000
 - Central Park – new outdoor gym equipment – estimate £50,000
 - Worcester Park – new outdoor gym equipment – estimate £50,000
 - Darenth Country Park – removal of remaining play equipment and replacement with an entirely new wooden playground – estimate £100,000

Total cost: £1,500,000 (one million five hundred thousand pounds).

It is possible that the final cost of some sites will cost be less than the estimate in which case any remaining budget will be used to start the process of replacing items of play equipment at other sites.

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Public Sector Equality Duty: All designs will be carefully considered and will fully account for disability and accessibility issues so that the playgrounds are useable by as wide a range of children as possible. New equipment installed will be fully compliant with all current safety and accessibility requirements.

3.8 The original budget of £1,000,000 currently stands at £986,000. An increase to the playground refurbishment capital budget (M5335) of £514,000 is therefore needed to facilitate the implementation of the programme. It is not anticipated that there will be any increase to ongoing revenue costs as although the programme will result in more equipment being provided, as it will all be new or refurbished to as new condition, it will need less maintenance.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

A playground refurbishment programme supports the Health and Well Being strategic objective HW1 – to increase the opportunities for participating in sporting, cultural and leisure activities.

5. Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments*

Financial Implications	£514,000 will need to be allocated from the Useable Capital Receipts Reserves to fund the increased programme. It is expected that ongoing revenue costs will be similar to current costs.
Legal Implications	As discussed in para. 3.1 above.
Public Sector Equality Duty	As detailed in section 3.7 of the report.
Climate Impact Assessment	Kompan Ltd.'s play equipment is made from environmentally friendly and sustainable materials where possible.
Staffing Implications	None
Administrative Implications	None
Risk Assessment	One common risk is that the condition of the playground equipment may deteriorate or degrade over time. A common control measure to mitigate this risk is to implement a comprehensive and rigorous inspection regime, which ensures any remedial actions identified during inspections are actioned as appropriate.

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6. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable

7. Appendices

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
		Dave Thomas Waste and Parks Manager (01322) 343273	Waste and Parks, Housing and Public Protection	N/A