

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 July 2019	
Report Title:	Open Spaces - Play Area Equipment	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 Further to a recent motion at Council on 23 May 2019, Cabinet is asked to consider the Council's approach to play areas within our open spaces.

2 Key issues

- 2.1 The Council recognises the importance of play areas for our local communities, for both health and community cohesion.
- 2.2 Fenland manages many open spaces throughout the District - around 135 hectares in total. This includes 5 open cemeteries, 56 play areas, 6 skate parks and 20 closed churchyards.
- 2.3 Play areas receive a weekly safety inspection from a qualified member of the grounds maintenance contractor. Additionally, FDC commissions an annual comprehensive ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) inspection of the play areas. As a result of weekly inspections, maintenance is carried out on issues raised.
- 2.4 Fenland continues to replace individual items of equipment in play areas as and when required from the revenue funded repair budget.
- 2.5 A programme of play area replacement continues. Since 2015, the Council has facilitated the spending of £622,577. In this financial year, 2019/20, this will be further supplemented by spending of circa £350,000 on further improvements. These improvements have been funded mainly by Section 106 funding, as well as leveraging in supplementary third party grants from bodies such as WREN and Amey Cespa Community Fund.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet notes the report recognising that the Council manages many play areas, maintains them safely and is continuing to invest in replacement play areas as and when suitable funding is available.
- 3.2 Cabinet to comment on whether any further work is desirable in this area aligned to the motion attached at Appendix A.

Wards Affected	All Wards
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Peter Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Environment

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Background Paper(s)	Council Motion 23 May 2019; Fenland District Council Play Equipment

1 Day to day management of Fenland's Play Areas

1.1 The Council manages and maintains many play areas on our open spaces. Further information may be found on the council's website at:

<https://www.fenland.gov.uk/playareas>

1.2 Each play area has an average of 5 pieces of equipment available - the Council is looking after hundreds of different pieces of equipment. A weekly safety inspection is carried out at all play areas and skate parks, with any significant issues attended to promptly.

1.3 The Council uses a revenue budget to maintain the play areas safely and replace minor items. In the past 5 years the council has spent £139,037 on play park maintenance.

2 Improvement or Replacement of Play Areas

2.1 Fenland saw a significant programme of key play area replacements take place 10 years ago. Whilst the replacement programme has slowed down since then, significant investment continues, as highlighted by investment over the past 4 years in the following table:

2.2 Open Spaces capital spend in the past 4 years:

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Total
Wenny Rec', Chatteris		131,072			
Manor Play area, Whittlesey	111,491				
The Avenue, Gaul Road, March		45,039			
Wisbech Park - Bandstand			62,113		
Benwick Play Park			103,375		
Bath Road Skate Park				75,000	
Jasmin Park, Wisbech				13,607	
Wisbech Park				23,880	
Water Tower Play Area, Whittlesey				57,000	
Total	£111,491	£176,111	£165,488	£169,487	£622,577

2.3 Improvement and replacement works are now reliant on Section 106 contributions, often supplemented by third party grant applications. In the past Fenland has been successful with attracting matched funding from Amey Cespa Community Fund, WREN (now renamed FCC Communities Foundation) and Clarion Futures.

2.4 The Council works with Town and Parish Councils, often allowing them to take the lead on decisions and design in order to incorporate local knowledge of the area to ensure new provision closely meets local needs.

2.5 We work together with our partners to ensure that equipment has a reasonable geographic spread, focusing on key areas that the whole area can benefit from, trying to ensure that no wards are left behind in terms of their provision.

3 2019 / 2020 programmed works

3.1 In the coming months Fenland will be:

- Replacing play equipment in Wenny Rec, Chatteris (£45,000)
- Replacing the skate park in West End Park, March (£130,000)

- Adding equipment into Wisbech play areas (c. £60,000)
- Supporting Manea Parish with a skate park replacement (£75,000)
- Enhancing a play area in Doddington (c.£40,000)

Total investment planned in 2019/20: £350,000

(note that c. indicates an estimate and is dependent on matched third party funding).

- 3.2 A programme of further improvements is being developed for 2020/21, including Whittlesey play areas and Parson Drove play area.
- 3.3 Members who are keen to explore further play equipment improvements in their areas are welcome to discuss any proposals with the Council.

Appendix 1: Motion - Play Area Equipment

Fenland District Council Play Equipment

ALTERED MOTION

Play equipment can help to improve health outcomes for children across the District by encouraging exercise, it is also important to ensure facilities cater for all age groups. Some of the play equipment owned by Fenland District Council is in need of improvement and enhancement in order to continue to be of benefit to children.

This Council resolves to:

- 1 refer this matter for consideration by Cabinet; and
- 2 if the resolution at paragraph 1 is agreed, that Cabinet considers taking the following steps:
 - a) A review of play equipment provided across the District to determine where improvements and enhancements are most needed;
 - b) Agree the most effective means of undertaking that; and
 - c) Subject to the outcome of the review, identify with input from officers any external funding that may be available to meet the cost of improvements and, where that does not meet the overall cost, to review the availability of internal funding and where necessary make recommendations to Full Council if budgetary adjustments are required;
 - d) Agree to keep members informed of the progress that is being made via the Portfolio Holders Briefing.