

Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 September 2019	
Report Title:	Open Spaces - Play Areas	

Purpose / Summary

Further to a recent motion at Council on 23 May 2019, and a subsequent Cabinet discussion regarding the Council's approach to play areas within our open spaces, this paper sets out the further information requested by Cabinet.

Key issues

The Council recognises the importance of play areas for our local communities, for both health and community cohesion.

Fenland manages many open spaces throughout the District - around 135 hectares in total. This includes 5 open cemeteries, 42 play areas, 6 skate parks and 20 closed churchyards.

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 identified.

Since 2015, the Council has facilitated 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 FCC Community Fund (formerly WREN) and Amey Cespa Community Fund.

The Council is responsible for maintaining its play equipment and it continues to replace individual items of equipment in play areas as and when required from the revenue repair budget.

As requested, this paper provides a complete list of areas where FDC owns and/or maintains play equipment including a very brief summary of the equipment at each site, its state of repair/maintenance and its likely lifespan.

At the last meeting, Cabinet paused on projects within Manea Parish Council and Wisbech Town Council areas to allow further consultation on potential future projects, the feedback on which we have now received.

Recommendations

- Cabinet notes the report recognising that the Council manages many play areas and maintains them safely.
- Cabinet agrees projects with Wisbech Town Council and Manea Parish Council can proceed as part of the ongoing consultations with these 2 Councils.
- Cabinet notes the equipment FDC maintains and the current lifespan of that equipment as set out at Appendix 1.

Wards Affected	All Wards
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Peter Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Environment
Report Originator(s)	Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services phughes@fenland.gov.uk Carol Pilson, Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk
Contact Officer(s)	Carol Pilson, Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services phughes@fenland.gov.uk
Background Paper(s)	Council Motion 23 May 2019; Fenland District Council Play Equipment Cabinet paper July 2019; Fenland District Council play areas Minutes Cabinet meeting July 2019

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.
- 1.3 A weekly safety inspection is carried out at all play areas and skate parks, with any significant issues attended to promptly.
- 1.4 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 repair and maintenance (excluding grass cutting, staff resources, ROSPA inspection and Tivoli inspections) from the FDC revenue budget.

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 Rd, 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, Whittlesey				57,000	
Total	£111,491	£176,111	£165,488	£169,487	£622,577

- 2.3 Improvement and replacement works are currently 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. FDC funds general maintenance and repair of the equipment.
- 2.4 The Council works with Town and Parish Councils, usually allowing them to take the lead on broad decisions of what to replace or refurbish in order to incorporate local knowledge of the area to ensure new provision 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 Committed 2019 / 2020 programmed works

3.1 Due to procurement, 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

4. Current play area conditions survey

4.1 Fenland's play areas have been assessed, with a summary of each facility, approximate installation date and equipment condition detailed in Section 5, the Appendix.

4.2 Currently the Council does not have a formal equipment register to log equipment and location. As part of our Tree Management Plan work, software should soon be available to log play area equipment, including ancillary equipment such as benches and bins.

4.3 The conditions survey work will inform the planned play area replacement works over the coming 5 years in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and local Members.

5.0 Appendix 1; Play Area conditions survey

Play Area Conditions Survey; Summary

5.1 Fenland Council supports 42 play areas and 6 skate parks. Inspection of equipment at every site takes place weekly through the contractor, currently Tivoli, and annually through ROSPA (most recently March 2019).

5.2 The sites are spread about the district amongst 4 towns (Wisbech and Chatteris have 9 play areas each, March has 8 and Whittlesey has 6) and 8 villages (Coates and Eastrea have 2 areas each, the others one).

5.3 There are other play areas in the district managed by Clarion, housing developers, Town and Parish Councils and these have not been included.

5.4 Size of the play areas varies, as does the nature of the equipment, but in total there are 342 pieces of play equipment across the Fenland managed sites. This does not include bins, benches, fences or signage.

5.5 In general the equipment is in reasonable to good condition. Where items have been vandalised beyond repair or have become structurally unsafe, these have been removed. Where items can be repaired they have been and Tivoli carries equipment which can remedy many eventualities without further intervention.

5.6 Three areas have been greatly improved in 2019. The Water Tower Park at Whittlesey, the new Skate Park at Bath Road, Wisbech and, shortly, the toddler and junior play area at Wenny Rec, Chatteris as well as the skate park at West End Park in March will be refurbished.

5.7 The table and comments below list the existing stock, note the approximate installation date(s) and anticipated replacement dates that should be considered as part of the play area future investment programme. Any dates, historic or predicted, are indicative only. Whilst a piece of equipment or the entire stock of a park may be expected to last 15 - 20 or more years, heavy usage, vandalism, extreme weather or misuse will inevitably reduce the lifespan.

Benwick

- High Street. All equipment is in good condition. New site installed 2018. Replacement 20+ years

Chatteris

- Cricketers Way. Installed circa 2002. Equipment showing signs of deterioration. Fence and multiplay both with decay to timber. Replacement 4 years
- Furrowfields Rec. Equipment is in reasonable condition with some deterioration to surfaces. Installed c 2012. Replacement 6+ years
- Hunters Close. Equipment in reasonable condition although slide has been bent. Installed by developer c 2005. Replacement 10+ years
- Huntingdon Road (Infant and Junior). Surfaces in poor condition. Benches need replacement. Equipment in average condition but dated – possibly pre-2000. Replacement max 2+ years
- Larham Way. Equipment very dated – possibly pre-2000. Below average condition. Replacement 1 year
- St Paul's Drive. Old equipment in rusty and poor condition – installed before 2000. Benches need replacement. Lifespan 1 year.
- Wenny Rec. New equipment to be installed Sep/Oct 2019. Replacement 20+ years
- Willey Terrace. Surface deterioration. Equipment old, (installed c 2012) limited but functional. Lifespan; 5 years.

Coates

- North Green. Equipment meets current standards. Installed 2014. Replacement 15+ years
- South Green. Limited equipment (installed c 2015) but slide (pre-2000) is in poor condition. Remove slide imminently and do not replace as a slide is available at North Green. Other equipment replace 10+ years

Doddington

- Beech Avenue. Equipment in reasonable condition (possibly pre-2000) but surfaces have deteriorated. Replacement 5 years. Current equipment is rather dated and would benefit from additional more up to date equipment adding.

Eastrea

- Springfields. All good condition (installed 2014). Replacement 20+ years
- Thornham Way. All in reasonable condition - installed c 2005. Replacement 10+ years. Would benefit from revenue funded painting in 2019/20.

Friday Bridge

- West Drive. Reasonable condition. Installed by developer c 2010. Replacement 10+ years

Manea

- Williams Way. Good condition. Installed c 2012. Replacement 20+ years.

- Skate Park; maintained by Parish Council and requires imminent replacement, scheduled for 19/20.

March

- Albert Drive. Installed 2011. All good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- Dagless Way. Installed c 2012. Good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- Gaul Road. Installed c 2012. Equipment in good condition. Some deterioration of surfaces. Replacement 20+ years
- North Drive. Installed c 2014. All in reasonably good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- Robingoodfellows. Installed c 2012. Mixture of new and old equipment. Replacement of new 20+ years. Replacement of old (swing) 1-2 years from revenue budget.
- The Avenue. Installed c 2012. Good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- West End Park. Installed c 2009. Good condition. Replacement 15+ years
- West End Park Outdoor Gym (Parts 1&2). Installed c 2014. Periodic repairs to equipment but generally in good condition with infrequent use. Replacement 10+ years

Parson Drove

- Installed c 2002. Mix of old (c 2002) and new equipment (c 2015). Replacement of old equipment and expansion of current offer imminent through S106 funding. Replace other equipment 15+ years.

Wimblington

- Relatively new, with limited equipment. Replacement 10+ years.

Whittlesey

- Burdett Grove. Installed c 1996. Old equipment requires replacement. Replacement 2021/22.
- Manor Field. Installed c 2015. All in good condition. Replacement 15-20 years
- Pinewood Avenue. Installed c 1996. Old equipment – lifespan 1 year.
- Snowley Park. Installed c 2002. Old equipment – fence repairs required. Lifespan 1 year.
- Station Road. Installed c 2013. All in good condition. Replace in 20 years
- Water Tower Park. Installed 2019. No changes required. Replace in 25 years
- Wimblington. Installed c 2000. Average condition. Replacement 7 - 10 years

Wisbech

- Barton Rd. Installed in different stages. Swings and multi-point swings relatively new (c 2012) and other equipment c 2005. Average to good condition. Replacement 10 years
- Burcroft Rd. Installed new swings and see saw in 2018. Replacement 20 years. Limited equipment in this space.
- Conference Way. Installed c 2000. All equipment in average condition. Replacement 5 years

- Heron Road. Installed c 2001. Average condition – paintwork needs work in 2019 / 20 from revenue budget along with the replacement of bins and bench. Surfaces showing signs of wear. Minor repairs within 1 year. Replacement 7 years
- Jasmine Close. Installed climbing unit 2018. Swings installed c 2000. Replace swings within 5 years.
- Malt Drive. Installed c 2001. Equipment is old but in average to good condition. Paint work required in 2019 / 20 from revenue budget. Lifespan 5-10 years.
- Westmead Ave. Installed c2003. Average condition. Surface needs attention in 2020. Replacement 5-10 years
- Wisbech Park (Harbour Line). Wooden equipment installed c 2012 in average condition – some pieces already removed. Lifespan as equipment wears.
- Wisbeck Park. Installed over multi-years. Most recent 2018, oldest c2000. Consequent mix of condition – replacement of toddler equipment 2020 / 2021, junior equipment 15 years.