

Report of: Leisure and Cultural Services Business Unit Manager

To: East Area Parliament

Date: 15 November 2006

Item No:

Title of Report : Play Area Facility Action Framework



### Summary and Recommendations



**Purpose of report:** To propose to the Area Committees a play area facility action framework and to recommend the method and programme for consultation on the action framework and the submission of a budget bid as part of the Council's budget setting process for play facility refurbishment.



**Key decision:** Yes

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Alan Armitage



**Deputy Responsibility:** Environment

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report Approved by:** Emma Burson, Financial and Asset Management  
James Pownall, Legal Services



**Policy Framework:**

Improving environments where we live and work.



Supports the green spaces strategy



**Recommendation(s):** The Area Committee is recommended to agree to:

1. The principles of the play area facility action framework
2. The proposed consultation on the action framework.
3. The submission of a budget bid as part of the Council's budget setting process for play facility refurbishment



## **Background**

1. The Parks Section currently maintains and manages 97 play areas within the City of Oxford
2. The adopted green spaces strategy identified that there was an over provision of play facilities in Wood Farm, Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys
3. The green spaces strategy also identified that as well as overprovision a large number of the play areas were in poor condition. The quality survey criteria included:
  - a. Usability
  - b. Condition
  - c. Convenience
  - d. Work required to improve to suitable standard
  - e. The play value of the equipment
4. A further condition survey of play facilities within the City has been undertaken by the Assistant Parks Manager responsible for play facilities and each has been given a condition score
5. Using the data from the green space strategy and the condition survey a draft play area facility action framework has been produced. (Appendix 1)
6. Consultation on the framework will include:
  - a. Consultation with the schools
  - b. Letters to stakeholders e.g. youth groups etc
  - c. Displays in leisure centres during half term
  - d. Report to all area committees
  - e. Web site
  - f. Press release

The consultation will be undertaken from the 23 October 2006 (start of school half term) through to 30 November 2006 and the method of consultation will be through questionnaires.

7. Following consultation a report will be taken to all area committees outlining which play areas need to be improved with associated budgetary requirements and timescales and also which play areas are surplus to requirement.

## **Issues**

8. The green spaces strategy was based on the data collected from the green spaces assessment. This assessment surveyed the quality of all play areas based on quality of equipment, quality of infrastructure,

access, location and distribution of play facilities. Based on this survey there are play areas which are surplus to requirement because there are other play areas in the vicinity which provide the level of play provision for the area

9. There are also a large number of play areas that will have to be closed if funds are not allocated to refurbish them because the equipment is reaching the end of its lifespan and as a result will not meet the European standards for play equipment. The proposed play area facility action framework identifies a clear refurbishment programme for the play areas based on lifespan of the play areas.
10. There are areas of the City which have an under provision of play areas and these will have to be readdressed e.g. using Section 106 developer contributions
11. The Landscape and Play team (7 members of staff) are under resourced and are unable to meet the repair programme for all 97 play areas.

## **Options**

12. There are a number of options to address the issues above:
  - a. Close play areas that are surplus to requirement to enable more resources to be allocated to the remaining play areas to maintain and repair them to the correct standard and thus increase the quality of these facilities
  - b. Implement a refurbishment programme based on the programme identified in the proposed play area facility action framework subject to funding
  - c. Identify future use of play areas that will provide additional funding sources to improve remaining play facilities e.g. sell land to developers which would generate income to increase the standard of remaining play facilities and also partly address housing need issues
  - d. Close play areas when the equipment cannot be brought up to standard.

## **Financial Position**

13. The revenue budget for the landscape and play team is £48,000.00 and this is for repairs to all infrastructure within parks as well as repairs to play facilities.

## Recommendations

14. It is recommended that the Committee agree to:

- a. The principles of the proposed play area facility action framework
- b. The method and programme for the proposed consultation on the action framework
- c. Submit a budget bid as part of the Council's budget setting process for play facility refurbishment

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### Background papers: Play facility condition surveys

