

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 6</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2019</b>	<b>CATEGORY DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>ALLISON THOMAS - STRATEGIC DIRECTOR SERVICE DELIVERY</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SOUTH DERBYSHIRE PLAY AUDIT ACTION AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN INCLUDING RURAL PLAY AREAS</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE:</b>

## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the Action Plan following on from completion of the District-wide play audit and considers the implications for play provision across the District.

## **2.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1 To advise the Committee on the contents and implications of the Play Audit Action Plan.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 None required

## **4.0 Detail**

- 4.1 This report follows on from an initial scoping document and two previous reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The scoping document reviewed the recreation provision in those rural villages that might not benefit from S106 funding and looked at other sources of funding to assist in the development of recreation facilities in these localities.
- 4.2 The initial report highlighted the different strategies that impact on the recreation provision in rural villages, identified the links between the Local Plan and Section 106 funding and emphasized that many rural communities will have little or no access to Section 106 funding. It also identified the requirements and opportunities for securing funding from other sources and the support for communities for project development and making applications from within the Council and via external organisations. Lastly, it highlighted the plans for a comprehensive audit of play sites across the District and Committee asked that a further report be brought which shared the findings of the audit.

4.3 A verbal update to Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018 advised on the scope of the play audit and a further written report was brought to Committee in February 2019 detailing the draft findings of the play audit. The summary recommendations have not changed since the previously issued draft and include the introduction of a painting programme, improvements to signage, further work on establishing site roles and responsibilities, and software requirements. The Play Audit report is attached as Appendix 1 and the summary recommendations extract is below.

*Table 2.7.1: Recommendations*

Recommendation	Explanation
Introduction of a painting programme	<p>Whilst overall quality of the play provision is deemed generally good, several comments from parish council consultation and site visits highlight a lack of a programme for the painting of play equipment. In some instances, parish councils cite certain sites as never having had a refresh of paint.</p> <p>Consequently, exploring a programme to ensure equipment receives a sufficient level of painting is recommended.</p>
Consistency of signage	<p>As discussed above, the level of signage across sites is variable. Many sites lack the basic information which should be presented.</p> <p>There is also a wide variety in the design and style of signage. Reviewing further the current signage at sites is recommended to ensure a consistent design and approach.</p> <p>The priority should be at those sites with play equipment necessitating additional information for safety reasons (i.e. skate parks such as Swadlincote Skate Park, Newhall Park etc).</p>
Ownership/maintenance responsibilities	<p>For most sites it is understood who is responsible for the equipment and its maintenance. However, there are several sites where the information on who is responsible is unclear or unknown. This is likely reflected in part to the two recommendations above. The Council should investigate further, with assistance from the parish councils, the current leases in place and the remaining length of the agreements. The findings of this audit report should help initially, however, further work is needed to have a full understanding of the current arrangements and responsibilities.</p>
Move to electronic system of data storage	<p>The current system of site checking and reviews by the Council is carried out in paper format. The Council will explore moving to an electronic software system for efficiencies of data collection, accurate recording and data management including sharing. This will also help in the long-term storage of data and future assessments for example any risk assessments or claims. It will therefore reduce the risks to the Council.</p> <p>Electronic play area software systems include for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ <b>PSSLive</b> – comprehensive and highly recommended by many Local Authorities.</li> <li>◀ <b>Play Inspection Company</b> – offers an online playground inspection app designed specifically for local authorities and contractors.</li> </ul>

- 4.4 Officers have developed an Action Plan based on the recommendations within the Audit Report on principles of good practice and to maximise opportunities for investment. The Play Audit Action Plan and accompanying Play Audit Improvement Programme are attached to the report as Appendices two and three.
- 4.5 The Play Audit also identifies risks and specific equipment observations. Significant progress has been made on tackling risks and works have been carried out on sites at Castle Gresley, Hilton, Overseal, Hartshorne, Melbourne, Stenson, Repton and Midway. The cost of day-to-day repairs carried out in the last 18 months is approximately £37,000 excluding the repairs made directly by the play inspector employed as part of the Grounds Maintenance Team. Most of the audit “observations” relate to supplementing the age range of equipment available on sites and in particular suggests provision of more equipment for the 8-16 age range. This requirement, alongside other opportunities, is being addressed in the Play Audit Improvement Programme by matching improvements with known existing resources, primarily including Section 106 funding.
- 4.6 In addition to received and known Section 106 resources there are a number of developments pending where new funds will become available to support play provision. These opportunities will be added to the Improvement Programme as they are realised.
- 4.7 The Council also has access to £16,071 of investment from the central government Local Authorities Parks Improvement Funding (LAPIF). The award is intended to be used to undertake remedial work and renovation of existing parks to enhance the green space available to local communities. The Play Audit Improvement Programme has identified that sites at Scropton, Coton in the Elms and Newhall should benefit from this allocation following consideration of the quality of sites across the District and the original Overview and Scrutiny scoping documents purpose to review recreation provision in those rural villages that might not benefit from S106 funding.
- 4.8 It should be noted that the Audit Report states that overall the District’s play provision is above average. However the Action Plan and the Improvement Programme aim to further improve provision across the portfolio and significantly on some specific sites where there is the budget to do this.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The Play Audit Improvement programme identifies a number of capital projects, the timeframe to realise them and the source and status of their funding. The detail is contained in Appendix Three.
- 5.2 The funding status and deliverability across the projects varies. Some projects have sufficient funds primarily from S106 capital monies and are ready for implementation whilst other projects require matched funding via external grant applications. There are further projects which will either be led by, or require consultation with, Parish Councils and other organisations and need funds to be raised before any improvement can take place. The outcome of funding applications and consultation will necessarily affect deliverability. There will also be the need for staff to plan and deliver these projects and the Head of Cultural and Community Services will be

bringing a Committee report to the Housing and Community Services Committee to address this issue in November 2019.

5.3 The Play Audit Improvement Programme also identifies other revenue based projects and requirements including play inspection and management software and hardware, the introduction of an equipment painting programme, signage improvements and bark topping. These requirements will be considered through both the budget setting process and allocation of S106 maintenance sums.

5.4 Where sites require significant sums and there is no external funding or S106 available then a business case would need to be made to access any capital reserve.

## **6.0 Corporate Implications**

### **Employment Implications**

6.1 The capacity to deliver the different projects and work programme in the Play Audit Improvement Programme will be addressed through the planned review and restructure of Cultural and Community Services.

### **Legal Implications**

6.2 There are some sites that require a review and clarification of site roles and responsibilities and potentially an update of lease arrangements.

### **Corporate Plan Implications**

6.3 Play sites are spread throughout the district and contribute significantly to the Corporate Plan Vision of "Making South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit". Under the People and Place themes of the Corporate Plan the availability and quality of the play sites addresses aims such as enhancing community infrastructure, keeping residents happy, healthy and safe and increasing participation in physical activity. The importance of the sites grows in tandem with the growth of the population of the district and the need to meet the health, leisure and cultural needs of residents and visitors.

### **Risk Impact**

6.4 There are no significant risks identified through the audit. All the play sites are risk assessed and any health and safety implications dealt with through the existing maintenance programme.

## **7.0 Community Impact**

### **Consultation**

7.1 Parish Councils were consulted as part of the audit and several Parish Councils, community organisations and facility users will be consulted as part of each project implementation.

### **Equality and Diversity Impact**

7.2 The impacts on rural communities and access to facilities have been considered as part of action planning.

## **Social Value Impact**

- 7.3 Play areas are very important features of communities and significant contributors to the health and well-being and development of children and young people. The Play Audit Improvement Programme and Play Audit Action Plan will bring improvements to children's development and enjoyment for current and future generations.

## **Environmental Sustainability**

- 7.4 Minimal impact.

## **8.0 Conclusions**

- 8.1 The Play Audit Improvement Programme and Action Plan provide a good basis for further improving play provision across the district.

## **9.0 Background Papers**

- 9.1 None