

**Subject:** Update on Open Spaces and Play Strategies      **Status:** For Publication

**Report to:** Cabinet      **Date:** 23 January 2008

**Report of:** Head of Street Scene and Neighbourhoods

**Portfolio**

**Holder:** Clean and Green

**Key Decision:** No

Forward Plan       General Exception       Special Urgency

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update members of progress made in relation to recent successes and community activity, associated with the Boroughs Open Space and Play Strategies.
- 1.2 To inform members of the proposed forward programme for play area improvements based on findings of the Play Strategy, Open Spaces Strategy and the delivery plans for resurfacing and equipment replacement in playgrounds.
- 1.3 To inform members of related Open Space and Play Area improvements (including funding amounts secured). These improvements are due to be implemented within the next twelve months.
- 1.4 To seek approval from members for related Open Space and Play Area improvements to be implemented.

**2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.
  - Delivering Quality Services to Customers (Customers, Improvement)
  - Delivering Regeneration across the Borough (Economy, Housing)
  - Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green (Environment)
  - Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)
  - Improving health and well being across the Borough (Health, Housing)
  - Well Managed Council (Improvement, Community Network)

### **3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- A commitment has been made by Rossendale Borough Council, its partners and the community to deliver the priorities as set out in the Open Space and Play Strategies 2007.
- Failure to support this commitment will result in few improvements to open space and play spaces, which is the core focus of the strategy.
- Failure to approve the proposed forward programme of resurfacing and replacement equipment could increase the likelihood of accidents occurring which would increase claims and insurance costs.
- Failure to realise Open Space and Play Area improvement will result in a significant amount of external funding which has been approved for spend in Rossendale being lost to the council.

### **4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS**

4.1 The Council has, in previous reports identified that significant investment is required to improve the quality of its playgrounds and open spaces, in order to capitalise on all funding opportunities, in addition to the councils own revenue funding. We are taking a structured approach to providing good quality open and play spaces throughout the borough based on need and priorities, targeting resources into those areas where they will achieve maximum impact for the community. In adopting this structured approach the council has produced two strategies in 2007, the first concentrating on play and the second on open spaces. These strategies enable the council to meet national, regional and local objectives in improving open and play spaces.

4.2 Both strategies set out actions for the council, with the first year's action plan almost complete and the majority of targets now achieved. These include the thinning and lifting of vegetation in and around playgrounds and parks such as Worsley, Greenfield and Helmshore, together with improving the playgrounds in Whitaker, Sunnyside and Weir Parks. We are also on target for achieving external investment in addition to the council's contribution of approximately £250,000 over the next 5 years.

4.3 Many improvements relating to the boroughs open spaces are either fully completed, significantly underway or programmed in for delivery between the council and / or partners during the next 5-10 years.

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.4 All play equipment and surfaces have been assessed with regards to their compliance with the relevant standard.

4.5 Those sites which are required to have equipment and resurfacing are as follows:

- Goodshaw Lane Playground
- Hays Street Play Area
- Knowsley Crescent Play Area
- Maden Recreation Ground
- Moorlands Park
- Water Gardens Play Area
- Whittaker Park

4.6 The Head of Streetscene & Neighbourhoods has identified budgets and the relevant equipment and work orders have been placed for the direct replacement of apparatus and surfaces. As recommended in the councils play strategy we propose to close the Hays Street site, remove the equipment and landscape the site.

4.7 The children's paddling pool in Stubblee Park has been assessed as a possible safety risk and therefore it is proposed to remove the feature by backfilling and re landscaping. This area has been unused as a paddling pool for over ten years and in addition to the above the pool is tied into the land drainage network in that area of the park. We propose to carry out the work to ensure the safety of children and young people and to improve the drainage in that area. Although the paddling pool is included within the open spaces strategy it was not proposed to bring it back into use due to the significant health and safety risks associated with open water courses in public areas.

## **SUMMARY OF WORK UNDERTAKEN SO FAR.**

### **Taylor Avenue Woodlands, Edgeside**

4.8 Taylor Avenue Wood, 2.347ha (also known as Edgeside and Tom Lane) was planted in 1975. It is currently neglected and unmanaged. It is linked to the Edgeside housing estate in Waterfoot. Residents and the wider community plan to transform the woods by improving access, and making the area a welcoming place suitable for recreation and educational purposes. The estimated costs of achieving this vision is £57,000 with current funding secured at £21,000. The current proposal forms an integral part of achieving linked areas of quality openspace.

### **Whitworth Cycleway, Whitworth to Britannia**

4.9 Lancashire County Council as Highway Authority has the main responsibility for providing facilities for cyclists, particularly on the highway and bids each year via its Local Transport Plan for money from central government. Lancashire County Council has adopted a road user hierarchy that should give priority to pedestrians and cyclists over motorised traffic.

- 4.10 The proposal for a cycleway at Whitworth has been discussed many times over the last few years, but more recently it came about from enquiries from cyclists within Whitworth. Groundwork assisted in the design and cost estimates, the work was agreed and a site survey, sketches and costs were undertaken in November and December 2006.
- 4.11 Groundwork has successfully secured £128,000 from Natural England (Aggregates Levy), the total cost of the project is approximately £190,000. The shortfall monies are secured from Lancashire County Council.
- 4.12 Key Community Group:- Community and Leisure Association for Whitworth. Number of consultation events / meetings held:- 7 (including school workshops).

**Weir Playground**

- 4.13 Weir Playground was initially brought to the attention of the Head of StreetScene & Neighbourhoods due to children from Northern County Primary School the local school contacting the Free Press and asking for us to make improvements to the site.
- 4.14 Historically the playground served a small number of houses. Recent house building means this area now serves many more children and facilities for older children are limited. The site is hard to access for people with disabilities, older people and mums with push chairs.
- 4.15 Consultation :Initial questionnaires sent to Weir residents Nov 2005. Initial sketch designs taken to Northern County Primary School and Weir Playground June 2006. From feedback received by the local community, final designs were drawn up; August 2006. Final finished design was displayed at Northern County Primary school and Weir Playground in September 2006, Funding sourced November 2006 onwards.

**Whitaker Park Toddler and Junior Play & Sunnyside Play Area (Mill Row), Rawtenstall**

- 4.16 Whitaker Park and Sunnyside Play areas have been identified as a priority for improvement from the RBC Play Strategy. Consultations carried out in 2006 and early 2007 show that many of the facilities are inaccessible for pushchairs, wheelchairs, and for those with limited mobility. There are several areas which need addressing in order for the council to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), and play facilities are below Neighbourhood Equipped Area For Play (NEAP) standard and do not meet the needs of children. Current costs associated with the project are approximately £160,000 with £135,000 already secured.

Key Community Group:- Friends of Whitaker Park, Cribden Neighbourhood Association & Civic Pride  
 Number of consultation events / meetings held:- 15+ (over several years)

**Table 1: Costs and Consultation**

PROJECT	FULL COST (Estimates)	FUNDERS AND AMOUNTS SECURED	SHORTFALL & FUNDERS APPLIED TO (Funding not guaranteed)	LOCAL PEOPLE INVOLVED / INVITED TO CONSULTATION	ESTIMATION OF NUMBER BENEFICIARIES
Taylor Avenue Woods	£57,000	Landfill - £11,000 Lottery - £10,000	Landfill - £25,000 Lottery - £11,000	500+	3000+
Whitworth Cycleway	£280,000	Aggregates Levy - £128,000 LCC - £72,000	Landfill - £25,000 RBC - £10,000 Whitworth TC - £2,500 LCC (Further) - £42,500	1500+	3000+
Whitaker Park	£160,000	Lottery - £80,000 Friends of Whitaker Park Group - £14,000 RBC - £28,000 LCC - £13,000	Landfill - £25,000	500+	5000+
Sunnyside Play Area	£152,000	Lottery - £35,000 Section 106 - £15,000 RBC - £21,500 Youth Capital Fund - £26,500 Youth Opportunities Fund - £7,000	Landfill - £47,000	500+	3000+
Weir	£160,000	Section 106 - £36,000 Landfill - £42,000 LCC - £10,000	Foundation for Sports and Arts - £72,000	500+	3000+
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£809,000</b>	<b>TOTAL SECURED:- £549,000</b>	<b>TOTAL SHORTFALL:- £260,000</b>	<b>3500+</b>	<b>17000+</b>

**Chatterton & Edenfield Play Areas**

4.17 The following works have been carried out at these parks in December 2007.

Exchange Street, Edenfield.

Mystical World Multi-Play System – Secret Oasis (Replaced an old Climbing Frame)

Single Zig-Zag Twister

Scottie 2-Way Bounce-About

Turnstile

Talking Flowers

All with Playscape Wetpour safety surfacing

Cost £6,874.56 plus VAT

Chatterton Stubbins.

Swings, Double Arch (Replaced an old set of swings)  
Scottie 2-Way Bounce-About  
Turnstile

All with Playscape Wetpour safety surfacing  
Cost £6,477.45 plus VAT

**Play Strategy Year One Action Plan.**

4.18 In addition to the improvement of playgrounds and play equipment a number of short improvements to the surrounding area have been targeted. So far there are several projects which have been scheduled for completion fiscal year 2007/08. This include the thinning of trees and vegetation at various locations

**Replacement of Damaged Equipment.**

4.19 As detailed in the content of this report several pieces of equipment have been replaced or are scheduled to be replaced this fiscal year. The following is a list of the estimated cost of upgrading works, replacement and proposed replacements:

- Exchange Street. Removal of defective climbing frame and replacement new equipment - Cost £8,000
- Chatterton Recreation Ground, replacement of defective swings with replacement swings - Cost £7,000
- Water Gardens, New proposal to replace defective equipment with like for like replacement - Cost £25,000
- Goodshaw Lane Playground, replacement of defective swings with like for like swings - Cost £8,000
- Knowsley Crescent Play Area, replacement of defective swings with like for like swings - Cost £8,000
- Maden Recreation ground, replacement of defective swings with like for like swing and also additional equipment to compensate for removal of additional swings - Cost £36,000
- Stubbylee Park, Removal of children's paddling pool and re-landscaping of site. Estimated Costs £12,000
- Hayes Street. Removal of playground and re-landscaping estimated costs £6,000

**APPOINTMENT OF PLAY INCLUSION COORDINATORS**

4.20 Through the council's pre existing partnership with Groundwork Rossendale and as part of the Council Big Lottery application, two part time play coordinators will be appointed by Groundwork in the New Year. These play coordinators will concentrate on arranging play events and play activates throughout Rossendale. The need for these positions was set out as part of the Big Lottery funding bid and have been approved as part of the bid submission,

there are no ongoing revenue implications for the council as these posts are time limited in accordance with the Big Lottery submission.

## **COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

### **5. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

- 5.1 In 2006/07 the Council committed £50,000 capital per annum for 5 years towards playgrounds.

### **6. MONITORING OFFICER**

- 6.1 Scott Wilson Consultancy has been selected by the Council to deliver an 'Open Space and Play Equipments Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)' which will form part of Rossendale's Local Development Framework. This will provide additional, more specific planning policy to the Council's Local Plan Saved Policies, and in time, the emerging Local Development Framework. By supporting policies within the Core Strategy as and when it is adopted, it will be helping to achieve Rossendale's Vision. The Open Space and Play Equipment Contributions SPD will inform developers of what contributions towards open space and play equipment the Council will expect on developments of specific sizes. It is crucial that SPDs are informed by a solid and robust evidence base – PPS12: Local Development Frameworks states: "A comprehensive and credible evidence base should underpin the policies in local development documents". Any studies / reports / strategies the Council has undertaken will form a part of this evidence base, in particular the recent strategies for Open Space and Play produced for the Council by Groundwork. The Open Space and Play Equipment Contributions SPD is timetabled to reach Draft SPD consultation stage in February of 2008, and is proposed to be adopted in June 2008.

### **7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

- 7.1 No Comments.

### **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 A great deal of work has been undertaken in relation to improving play and open space within the borough. It is noted that whilst some funding has been secured, a significant amount of work and finance is still required.

### **9. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 9.1 That the progress made in relation to delivering the open spaces and play strategies be noted.
- 9.2 That the outcome of the recent playground assessment is noted and the replacement works proposed are supported.

9.3 That members approve in accordance with the Open Spaces Strategy the closure of Hays Street Playground and its subsequent re-landscaping.

**10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

10.1 See above and attached documentation

**11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached Yes

**12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Open Spaces & Play Strategy Documents	Intranet
Consultation Breakdown	Attached