
Report title : Redditch Borough Play Audit and Investment Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Joanne Beecham
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Report Author	Job Title: Ishrat Karimi Fini Contact email: ishrat.karimifini@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881204
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green Living Independent, Active and Healthy Lives The Green Thread
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision.	Non-Key Decision
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The approach to improve the accessibility of equipped children's play as presented in the Redditch Play Assessment (Appendix1) is adopted**
- 2) That the approach to capital investment as presented in, The Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy (Appendix 2) is accepted and that officers are requested to prepare bids for capital funding, as applicable, to be considered in due course and in the context of other funding bids**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Responding to the recommendations in the Leisure and Culture Strategy for Redditch, a detailed Play Audit and Investment Strategy now been completed. This is presented as Appendix 1, The recommendations from Appendix 1 have been costed as part of the development of a Play audit and Investment Strategy and this is presented as Appendix 2.

- 2.4 An accessibility assessment of existing play found that currently 91.6% of households in the Borough have access to some form of equipped children's play within a walking time of up to 10 minutes.
- 2.5 Whilst this headline figure is positive, significant gaps in accessibility were noted in some wards, particularly Crabbs Cross, Astwood Bank & Feckenham, Headless Cross & Oakenshaw, Abbey and Matchborough Wards.
- 2.6 Play areas and associated provision needs to comply with British Standards (including Playground Equipment & Surfacing – BS EN 1176 & 1177). Play areas within the borough are inspected regularly by the inhouse team providing up to date information about compliance and condition. This is supplemented by an annual external inspection of all play spaces by an accredited play inspector.
- 2.7 There are currently 42 play areas across the Borough. Of these nine have an expected lifespan of up to three years, a further five of up to 5 years, and 22 up to 10 years (assuming regular maintenance is carried out). A further six play areas are in poor condition and are nearing the end of their lifespan. The evidence provided has considered walking distance of 10-15 where other play spaces would be accessible once the 6 play areas have been removed.
- 2.8 The play audit has considered how future play provision could improve the overall accessibility of play provision, providing equality of access to play spaces across all wards whilst responding to the need to maintain quality and comply with national standards. Consideration has been given to rationalising play provision, with the removal of play spaces that are poorly located, offer low play value, are difficult and costly to maintain, or are subject to repeated vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.9 The play audit and investment strategy set out an approach that will increase the accessibility of play provision so that 96.1% (up from 91.6%) of households in the borough have access to a play space within a walking time of up to 10 minutes. The 3.9% of households that lie outside this standard would typically have access to a play space within 15 minutes walking time (the exception being a small number of households in the more rural parts of Astwood Bank and Feckenham).
- 2.10 The play audit and investment strategy propose achieving this by:
- Creation of 2 new Neighbourhood level play spaces (in Crabbs Cross and Abbey Wards)

- Upgrading 3 play spaces from Local to Neighbourhood level provision
- Upgrading a further 7 Neighbourhood play spaces and 9 Local play spaces.
- decommissioning of 6 existing place spaces that are 'end of life' (reducing the pressure on revenue budgets)
- Investing in a further 17 play spaces, that are currently in good condition but will need upgrading within the next 10 years.

2.11 The play audit and Investment strategy includes a prioritised list of enhancements based on a set of principles that prioritise addressing deficiencies in access in the first instance, followed by investment to address deteriorating condition and quality.

2.12 The Investment proposals have been costed using recent cost data from play area improvements and ongoing repairs and maintenance in the Borough.

2.13 The table below summarises the estimated costs over a ten-year period.

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029/30 - 2033/34	Total
No. of play spaces	1	5	4	8	3	6	17	44
Cost	£137,995	£398,463	£173,649	£118,690	£118,514	£136,560	£670,000	£1,753,871
Inflation @ 5%	£0	£19,923	£17,799	£18,709	£25,540	£37,729	£319,895	£301,600
Total	£137,995	£418,386	£191,447	£137,399	£144,054	£174,290	£989,895	£2,055,471

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 There is inequality in the access to play provision across the borough and this has now been assessed in detail through analysis using computer-based mapping (GIS).

3.2 Play areas and associated provision needs to comply with National Standards in order to satisfy risk management procedures and to comply with the requirements of the Council's insurers.

3.3 Outdoor equipped play provision typically has a lifespan of 10 to 20 years. Within the next 5 years, 20 play spaces require partial or full replacement to achieve national standards.

- 3.4 There is significant pressure on existing revenue budgets for ongoing inspections and repairs and maintenance. The recent play audit has identified the opportunity to rationalise play provision, reducing the overall play stock from 42 play spaces to 38 (removing 6 play spaces and creating 2 new sites) whilst addressing gaps in accessibility.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Play Investment Strategy sets out costs for the proposed approaches over a ten-year period. This will be subject to review and to budget bids for council consideration.

The proposed capital programme, if no other funding were available and assuming a life of 20 years, would see additional revenue costs of Circa £10k in year one, rising at £20k a year until year 5 when costs would increase at £10k a year. In year 10 this would result in an ongoing £145k a year cost to finance the work. These costs are rounded as programmes and interest rates will change over time. A 5% interest rate is used for initial modelling. **It should be noted that £100k of the 20223/4 play area requirement has already been accounted for in the Tranche 1 24/5 MTFP Report.**

Year	1 £000	2 £000	3 £000	4 £000	5 £000	6 £000	7 £000	8 £000	9 £000	10 £000
Interest @5%	10	20	30	40	50	55	60	65	70	75
MRP		10	20	33	40	50	55	60	65	70
Total	10	30	50	73	90	105	115	125	135	145
Play areas Upgraded	2	3	4	9	3	6	4	5	4	4
Ongoing Upgrades	2	5	9	18	21	27	31	36	40	44
Note - Existing Maintenance Budget 65500 - at £1.5k per play area a year covers 44 play areas										

These sites will require maintenance, and this is estimated to be £1.5k per site. This will be met within the existing £65k maintenance budget.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Play provision is required to achieve national safety standards for the Council to meet its risk management and insurance liabilities.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 6.1 The Council has recently adopted the Leisure and Culture Strategy for Redditch. This strategy recognises the value of equipped children's

play in providing spaces where children can play, be active and spend time outdoors. Play provision is also an important part of safe, well maintained and green neighbourhoods.

- 6.2 The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, forming part of the Leisure and Culture Strategy recommended that the authority carry out an audit of the value, quality and accessibility of equipped children's play across the borough.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 The play audit and Investment strategy seeks to address deficiencies in play provision across the borough. Allowing all households to have access to good quality play spaces within walking times of up to 10 minutes (15 minutes where this cannot be achieved). This supports the development of neighbourhoods where local facilities can be accessed on foot or through active travel.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.3 The play audit and Investment strategy proposes addressing deficiencies in the accessibility of play provision across the borough, providing children and young people, and their families, with access to play provision within walking distance of home.
- 6.4 Investment and upgrading of play spaces will allow inclusive design principles to be followed.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Ongoing investment is required to keep play spaces in a condition that meets national standards and reduces the frequency and scale of insurance claims.
- 7.2 Not investing in play spaces will mean that some play areas will be decommissioned once they reach the end of their working life or become uneconomic to repair. If this is not managed in a strategic manner this will adversely affect the equality of access to play provision across the borough.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Redditch Play Assessment (June 2023)

Appendix 2 - Redditch Play Investment Strategy (November 2023)

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Joanne Beecham	27.11.2023
Lead Director / Head of Service	Ruth Bamford	27.11.23
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter.	27.11.23
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings Claire Felton	27.11.23.
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Commitment to working with Equalities moving forward including Equality Impact Assessments	27.11.23

Executive Committee
2024

9th January

Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles	27.11.23
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