

Redditch Borough Play Audit and Investment Strategy update

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Juliet Barker-Smith
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Report Author	Ishrat Karimi Fini Email: ishrat.karimifini@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881204
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No (Please see report)
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Communities which are safe, well maintained and green Living Independent, Active and Healthy Lives The Green Thread
Key/Non-Key Decision – N/A	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to NOTE the update to the Redditch Play Assessment at Appendix 1 (June 2023) and the Redditch Investment Strategy at Appendix 2 (December 2023). The update is provided as Redditch Play Investment update at Appendix 3 (December 2024).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The background to this is that Redditch Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Members have prioritised play and parks provision as one of the topics to consider in 2024-25.
- 2.2 Responding to the recommendations in the Leisure and Culture Strategy for Redditch, a detailed Play Audit and Investment Strategy has now been adopted on the 9th January 2023. This is presented as Appendix 1, The recommendations from Appendix 1 have been costed as part of the development of a Play Assessment and Investment Strategy and this is presented as Appendix 2.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 There are currently 42 (43 with upgrade of the new Crabbs cross play area) 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.
- 2.7 The play assessment 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.
- 2.8 The play assessment 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).
- 2.9 The play assessment and investment strategy has achieved and continuing to implement the following:
- Creation of 1 Neighbourhood new play area at Crabbs cross local consultation with community and ward members has taken place.
 - Consultation to take place in early 2025 with ward members and local community for the new play area at Abbey Fields (Terrys Fields Abbeydale) and to include consultation for removal of sites Dolphin Road and Dale Road to understand local need.
 - Upgrading 3 play spaces from Local to Neighbourhood level provision which include Banners Lane, Lodge pool drive and

Throckmorton, consultation on play equipment with ward members and local community.

- Consult and upgrade Greenland’s Playing field play facility to take place in early 2025 with ward members and local community including understanding local needs and the options around play equipment.

2.10 The play assessment 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.

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

2.12 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). This is being addressed.

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 (Crabbs cross completed) whilst addressing gaps in accessibility.

To date the following has been achieved in 24/25

- Creation of 1 Neighbourhood new play area at Crabbs Cross local consultation with community and ward members has taken place, this site is completed and welcomed by the community.
- Tenders drafted, which includes consultations to be reviewed in the new year for upgrade play areas and development of new play area (see Appendix 3 Redditch Play investment update)

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial issues related to providing this update. By way of financial background information, 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 2023/24 play area requirement has already been accounted for in the Tranche 1 24/5 MTFP Report.**

Year 1 24-25 update provided in Appendix 3

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 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 assessment of the value, quality and accessibility of equipped children's play across the borough.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 The play assessment 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

- 6.4 The play assessment 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.
- 6.5 Investment and upgrading of play spaces will allow inclusive design principles to be followed.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

13 January 2025

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 (December 2023)

Appendix 3 – Redditch Play investment update (December 2024)

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Juliet Barker-Smith	31.12.24
Lead Director / Head of Service	Ruth Bamford	23.12.24
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter	30.12.24
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings	30.12.24
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		N/A
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)		N/A