



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

23 June 2022

Pride in our Play Areas

Cabinet Member: Cllr Carolyn Healy, Cabinet Member: Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment and Cultural Services

Lead Director: Dean Sargeant, Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services

Service Area: Strategic Waste and Neighbourhood Performance

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Wards Affected: All wards are affected

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan: 20 April 2022

Report considered by:

Business Briefing: 28 April 2022

Senior Management Team: 19 April 2022

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

1.1 Cabinet approve the £750,000 investment package into Telford & Wrekin owned play areas across the borough.

1.2 Cabinet endorse the approach to delivery as outlined in this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The Purpose of this report is to highlight the investment and set out the delivery proposals.

2.2 Telford & Wrekin Council recognises the importance of providing stimulating play areas and opportunities for children and young people. The council is committed to enhancing the quality of current and future free play provision and equipped play facilities across the borough.

3.0 Background

3.1 Play provision can be a space, facilities, equipment or a set of activities intended to give children and young people the opportunity to play. Across the borough there is a wealth of free play opportunities which include:

- Local Areas of Play (LAP) e.g. open spaces, parks, playing fields which may include a minimal amount of small pieces of play equipment;
- Equipped Play Facilities e.g. Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) for children up to 12 years;
- Equipped Youth Facilities or Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) e.g. Multi Use Games Areas, BMX Tracks and Skate Parks (also including an equipped play area);
- Play Provision e.g. play schemes and activities that supports children and young people's free play opportunities

3.2 The above provision is complemented by opportunities in the award winning Telford Town Park and our four district parks including Dawley, Hartshill, Bowring and Dale End. These parks will benefit from £1m investment in parallel to the £750,000 investment in play areas as outlined in this report.

3.3 Telford & Wrekin Council works with partners, stakeholders and developers to co-ordinate and bring forward opportunities for new play areas and investment into existing ones. The majority of new play areas are provided as part of new developments which are usually managed by management companies appointed by the developer, rather than transferring them to the council to maintain. There are approximately 21 play areas provided by developers with 10 managed directly by Town/Parish Councils.

3.4 In delivering this investment, the council will continue to work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils, while seeking opportunities for joint investment where possible. In addition to this, each Ward Member has been given £10,000 of funding for projects within their ward and we will continue to consult with Ward Members to explore opportunities for them to invest further into local play areas to add value to the council's £750,000 investment.

3.5 Telford & Wrekin Council undertakes routine inspections of all play equipment/facilities in accordance with national guidance. Reactive maintenance takes place on a prioritised basis with safety critical items given the highest

priority. The additional investment provides the opportunity to bring forward a range of improvements and enhancements to deliver higher quality play equipment/facilities right across the borough.

- 3.6 While this investment is intended to have a borough wide benefit, it will be prioritised to areas of highest need and those areas of greater usage/catchment. This is to ensure quality standards and relevant legislative requirements are met.
- 3.7 Alongside this investment the Council has been collating information which will inform future council wide policies relating to play areas. The council is currently undertaking a Play, Recreation and Open Space Needs Assessment, to understand the values, demands and aspirations for investment in current and future facilities, alongside the distribution and type of facility. In undertaking this assessment, the Council will be seeking views from residents, including children and young people, to understand the needs for the borough.
- 3.8 The Play, Recreation and Open Space Needs Assessment will provide evidence for the Councils Play and Recreation Strategy, to deliver the council's Vision to ensure that every child, young person and adult lives well in their community while creating neighbourhoods that are a great place to live. It will outline the Councils commitment to improving and developing Play and recreation opportunities for all.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 Telford & Wrekin borough is very well served by the number of its precious green open spaces, parks and play areas. There are 17 Local Nature reserves (triple the minimum recommended standard), 200 Green Guarantee sites, 4 district parks (2 with Green Flag status) and an award winning Telford Town Park.
- 4.2 The additional '**On your Side**' £3m investment into green open spaces and parks will bring forward improvements to protect, enhance and improve a number of these open spaces for the enjoyment of our residents. However, as a council, we recognise there is more which can be done to specifically enhance our play areas which we value as important community assets.
- 4.3 The Play, Recreation and Open Spaces assessment is currently on target to be brought forward this Autumn for approval. As part of the investment into our parks, a £250,000 scheme to improve the toddler play area in the Town Park is scheduled towards the end of the year, along with investment into Dawley Park. A lighting improvement scheme is also being scoped at Hartshill Park. Investment in our play areas will begin to deliver over the next few months with investment continuing to take place over the next 12 months.

- 4.4 In addition to the £750,000 investment there is almost £1m of funding from developer contributions which will be spent alongside this investment.
- 4.5 Telford & Wrekin Council is the main provider of play provision and facilities across the borough. There are 117 individual play areas within the borough which is complemented by provision provided by third parties such as developers and some Town/Parish Councils.
- 4.6 As a Council, we want our children and young people to have the space and freedom to play in the borough and would like to see more children playing, more often. Play is necessary for the healthy development and well-being of children and young people, and of communities.
- 4.7 Play areas not only create neighbourhoods that are great places to live but also ensure that every child, young person and adult lives well in their community. We have a vision for our play areas across the borough to ensure that we have areas that are attractive, welcoming, challenging and accessible.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council recognises the importance of providing stimulating play areas and opportunities for children and young people. This investment provides opportunity to ensure well maintained facilities are available.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 Managing safety is key; in accordance with national guidance, weekly safety inspections are undertaken on each of the council owned play areas by a trained safety inspector. These are complemented by a more intensive 6 weekly safety check by another trained safety inspector.
- 6.2 In addition to this, a full annual inspection is undertaken by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents). The additional £750,000 investment provides further opportunity to improve the value and quality of Telford & Wrekin owned play areas within the borough

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The proposals contribute to the following priorities:
- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community
 - All neighbourhoods are a great place to live

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Capital funding of £750,000 has been allocated as part of the Council's Investment Programme. In addition to this revenue funding of £105,000 per year has been made available in 22/23 and 23/24 to provide additional resources to support delivery of the play area investment.
- 8.2 This includes £25,000 to support additional ongoing maintenance costs of the play areas. This provision is complemented by the £1m funding that the Council has also made available for further investment into our award winning Telford Town Park and our four district parks including Dawley, Hartshill, Bowring and Dale End

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 Improvements to specific play areas that are subject to approved expenditure pursuant to this resolution may need to obtain planning permission and other regulatory approvals depending on the nature of the improvements.
- 9.2 Delivery of projects funded by this expenditure may involve engaging with procurement legislation that will need to be considered at that time.
- 9.3 As with all Council decisions the expenditure approved by this resolution will need to be undertaken in a manner that is compliant with Equalities legislation.
- 9.4 Additional, dedicated resource, has secured to support the delivery of the investment programme and on-going maintenance and value of our play areas.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 Adequate provision of play areas is important to provide equal opportunity for all communities within the borough to access the developmental and health benefits play provides. This is enabled through planning strategy and investment as the borough grows.
- 10.2 Through this process both new facilities and enhancements to existing play areas are gained through planning contributions from developers. There is also the opportunity to invest into play upgrades and added value play through the £750,000 investment.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Providing and maintaining free and accessible play facilities has many health benefits including:
- Active Children become active adults.
 - Play fosters social inclusion.
 - Play helps to foster children's sense of community.
 - Allows children to find out about themselves and their abilities.
 - Is therapeutic.
 - Gives children a chance to let off steam and have fun.
 - Play reduces boredom and as a result unacceptable/anti-social behaviour

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The proposals will have a borough wide impact, particularly on children and young people. The approach will be to target the investment in the areas of greatest need in terms of play provision for our communities, including investments into sensory and naturalised play.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 While public procurement regulations will be adhered to, there are a number of locally based specialist play providers that will be used to not only support the local economy but reduce the carbon impact from the supply chain.

14.0 Background Papers

None

15.0 Appendices

None

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	11/04/22	13/04/22	MJB
Legal	11/04/22	13/04/22	JL