

Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	7 October 2025
Report of:	Dave Atkinson, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services
Portfolio of:	Councillor Jenny Kent, Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Emergency

Decision Report: £500k Parks Investment Fund – scheme approval

Subject of Report

1. At Budget Council in February 2025 £500k investment was approved into the Council's parks. The Executive is now being asked to approve a range of schemes using the weighted approach previously agreed at the Executive meeting on 15th July.
2. This decision will allow officers to commence the programme of investment and to carry out community and specialist consultation as necessary.

Benefits and Challenges

3. The benefits and challenges to this programme of investment are the same as those reported to the Executive on 15th July 2025 and are listed below.
4. This fund was established to improve our communities and ensure that residents can enjoy accessible parks, play areas, and green spaces fit for all. The fund also aligns with our Pride in Place values and will support improvement of community wellbeing, encouraging more people of all ages and abilities to spend time outdoors.
5. This initiative marks the first major investment in York's public spaces in several years and is part of the strategic ambitions laid out in the Council Plan 2023–2027, with widespread resident support. A key focus is ensuring accessible and sustainable

outdoor environments that enhance biodiversity, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

6. There are numerous benefits of investment into green spaces are best illustrated by The National Lottery Report *Space to Thrive* (2019). This was produced by researchers from Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield and identified
 - *Physical health, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction are all enhanced through access to and use of parks and green spaces.*
 - *Parks create important opportunities for social integration.*
 - *Parks provide opportunities for community engagement and local residents value the chance to be involved in designing and improving their green spaces (e.g., through volunteering)*
 - *Parks and green spaces highlight inequalities in society.*
 - *There are economic benefits of parks and green spaces in terms of creating employment, hosting economic activities (such as cafes or events) and encouraging inward investment*

Full details can be found at

https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/attachments/Space%20to%20thrive_2019-A%20rapid%20evidence%20review%2014102019-a11y.pdf

7. It is recognised that regular use of our green spaces is not consistent across York's communities. In developing projects and schemes both users' and non-users' views will be sought to ensure best use is made of the investment, with the desired outcome that this programme of investment will seek to ensure our green spaces are more inclusive and enjoyed by a wide variety of people.
8. In managing York's green spaces Public Realm work closely with the Environment and Community Officers, Friends Of and with many volunteer groups across the city. Several thousand hours of volunteer activity supplement the maintenance and upkeep of our green spaces. This investment will promote and encourage our communities to help with the ongoing and future involvement in York's green spaces.
9. The opportunity exists to link this programme to the work of the Public Health and Communities team. They will review the impact of a proposed scheme or project and seek to maximise its benefits. This could be through seeking additional community or 3rd party

involvement in planting, future maintenance or contributing to cost, in cash or kind.

10. The biggest challenge that has been identified is that there is insufficient capacity within the current workforce to deliver this greatly expanded programme. To address this problem, a project officer has been recruited to deliver the programme and will be in place until 31st March 2027.

Policy Basis for Decision

11. The prioritisation of investment based on the weighting supports two of the Council's Core commitments:

Equalities and Human Rights- Equality of opportunity. We will create opportunities for all, providing equal opportunity and balancing the human rights of everyone to ensure residents and visitors alike can benefit from the city and its strengths.

Health- Health and wellbeing - We will improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

Financial Strategy Implications

12. Budget Council (February 2025) approved a £500k capital budget to be spent over two years to fund improvements to City Council parks, green spaces and play areas.
13. As reported at the Executive on 15th July 2025 the aim of this project is to make a real difference to our parks, green spaces and play areas. The amount of investment will vary between sites or project depending on need and how the site meets the criteria. The smallest investments are likely to be in the region of £10-£15k per project.
14. The council also holds developer Section 106 contributions for parks and open space infrastructure. The S106 funding available is up to an additional £500k to support the capital funding. Where S106 Agreements allow, funding will be pooled to provide an enhanced scheme; where funding is stand alone, projects will be delivered in parallel with the core Council programme of work.
15. This exercise, along with external funding means that the core programme budget is now close to £750k. Of which £602k is earmarked for the schemes, £85k for staff costs and £62k held in

reserve as a contingency. Including standalone 106 funded projects and money due to 3rd parties the overall budget to circa £925k.

Recommendation and Reasons

16. Members are recommended to:

1. Agree the schemes detailed in Paragraph 26 and Annex 1.

Reason: to commence the Council parks, gardens, play areas and open spaces investment programme

2. Note the schemes detailed in Paragraph 28 and Annex 1.

Reason: to allow further investigation into the practicality and cost of these possible schemes

3. Request a follow up report for July 2026.

Reason: to monitor progress and, subject to the available budget, agree a second phase of work.

Background

17. The Council Plan 2023-2027 which sets a clear vision for the council - *by working with the city we will establish the conditions that would make the city healthier, fairer, more affordable, more sustainable and more accessible*. As part of delivering this Plan, Budget Council in February 2025 approved a two year £500k investment into the Council parks.

Consultation Analysis

18. Previous reports on the investment criteria for funding allocations were considered by the Place Scrutiny Committee on 24th June 2025 and the Executive on 15th July 2025.

19. Based on feedback from the above meetings the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) catchment area data has been updated by the Councils Business Intelligence Unit and is now based on a 500m radius rather than the original 300m. This both widens the population catchment of our sites and for those sites with a play area more closely aligns with the Local Plan standards.

20. A draft of this report was considered by the Place Scrutiny Committee on 22nd September 2025 in the presence of the report authors, Director of Environment and Regulatory Services and the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency. Following the meeting this report has been updated to include examples of infrastructure and a definition of what multi ward sites are. The Committee accepted the recommendations as written.

Proposed schemes

21. Officers have applied the weighted approach to nearly 60 Council play areas, parks, gardens, and smaller green spaces. As some sites have multiple issues this results in over 70 possible projects. Each of these has been scored and then weighting applied to reflect the agreed order of theme priority.

- 1st IMD
- 2nd Replacing play equipment over 20 years old
- 3rd Key infrastructure

Then equal 4th weight to

- Green Flag award
- Availability of external funds

22. Methodology: Each theme has been scored out of a 100% with 100 marks been allocated to the highest score within each theme. Lower scores are than awarded marks based on a % of the highest mark possible within each theme. The resulting scores are then given an added weighting to reflect the priority of that theme

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Scores range from 25.70 (100%) to 4.69 (19%). The higher the score the higher the level of deprivation. Weighting x 4.

Investment into play areas. Scores range from 20 (100%) to 4 (20%). The higher the score the older the age of equipment in 5-year bands, 34 years being the age of the oldest equipment identified. The age of play equipment has been established via manufactures tags, photographic and tender records held by the service and Google Street View and noted in Annex 2. Weighting x 3.

Key infrastructure (includes footpaths, fencing, safety surfacing). Scores range from 15 (100%) to 3 (20%). The higher the score the greater the need for a rebuild, refresh or upgrade, new build, through to minor works. Weighting x 2.

Support the expansion and retention of Green Flag Award standard. A single score of 10 (100%) has been allocated. Weighting x 1.

Projects which have or have the potential for 3rd party funding contributions. Scores range from 10 (100%) to 2 (20%). The higher the score the greater the contribution defined as external or ward funding. Weighting x 1.

23. This can be summarised as follows

Theme					
IMD score	Play area equipment scores	Infrastructure scores	Green Flag score	3 rd party £'s scores	Numerical score used in annex 2 *
25.70	20	15	10	10	100
					90
20.06	16	12			80
					70
15.04	12	9			60
				5	50
10.03	8	6			40
					30
5.01	4	3			20
				2	10

*to which weighting is then applied

24. A site-by-site assessment is detailed in Annex 2 including the indicative total cost and cost to the Parks fund. Those schemes recommend for investment and further investigation are listed in Annex 1
25. Where a site is known to be in good order and / or there is other funding available to rectify the issue, such sites have not been put forward even though they may score relatively high. An example of this is Tedder Road Play area line 12 Annex 2 – this is in a higher

IMD area and has older equipment. However, as the equipment is in good condition, not in need of renewal and has good access.

26. The following nineteen schemes are recommended for investment

Annex 2 ref no.	Site	Scheme features	Score	Ward
1	Chesney's Field play area - junior	new equipment, seating, new linking path	760	Westfield
2	Hull Road Park main play area	New items of equipment and accessible seating, safety surfacing	731	Hull Road
3	Chesney's Field play area - senior	New safety surfacing	680	Westfield
4	Crombie Avenue play area and adjoining games court	Near 100% rebuild of play area with new entrances. Surface work to games court	669	Clifton
5	Ashton Avenue play area (junior)	play equipment, access improvements	648	Clifton
8	Acomb Green play area	high footfall and wear, replacement steps required	603	Westfield
9	Rowntree Park play area	replacement 6m high pyramid climber	593	Micklegate
10	Brailsford Crescent play area - Junior	Complete replacement of old equipment	575	Rawcliffe and Clifton Without
14	Hull Road Park - footpath by beck	Rebuild footpath	551	Hull Road
15	Glen Gardens Basketball Court	court surface is worn out, perimeter fencing needs replacing	547	Heworth

16	Batchelor Hill - Tenant Rd entrance	Rebuild steps, install handrail	534	Westfield
18	Cemetery Road play area	Replacement of old remaining play equipment. Landscaping work	527	Fishergate
19	Bell Farm / Byland Avenue open space and play area	Create more coherent open space	522	Heworth
21	Hull Road Park - Lions Head area	Renewal of bow top fence, new handrails	511	Hull Road
22	Hull Road Park - Millfield Avenue boundary railings	Renew perimeter railings and new gate	511	Hull Road
23	Hull Road Park - Millfield Avenue footpath	Upgrade rough path to improve accessibility	511	Hull Road
26	Rowntree Park basketball court	New surface and boundary fence	476	Micklegate
29	Viking Road play area	Reclad bridge mound, renewal of few remaining old play equipment items, access improvements	455	Acomb
30	Cornlands Rd open spaces/ play area	New surfaced path across site with link to play area	454	Westfield

27. Nine of the above projects are at sites which serve more than one ward, some serve multiple wards. Multi ward sites are those which either contain a multiple facilities and choice of several activities or where the ward boundary runs down one side of the site. Column E in the Annex 1 identifies such sites

28. A further five high scoring possible schemes need further investigation into the practicality and cost before they can be recommended.

Annex 2 ref no.	Site	Scheme	Score	Ward
13	Clarence Gardens pavilion	Internal remodelling to allow community use / refreshments to be provided	559	Guildhall
20	Hull Road Park pavilion	Building needs modernising to expand use	511	Hull Road
25	Acomb Green - path access	Possible pedestrian ramp onto Green by bus stop	483	Acomb
28	Monkbridge Gardens	Rebuild access from Heworth Green, possible extension of tarmac path network	459	Heworth
38	Arran Place (King George V Memorial Playing Field)	Possible new accessible ramp from / to Fossway to supplement the existing steps	381	Heworth

Delivery

29. A Project Officer role has been created to deliver the schemes, for the duration of the programme. This will create the capacity to maximise best use of all funding opportunities to deliver the desired outcome.
30. The programme of work will start immediately; the first batch of projects will be delivered in 3 to 4 months, prioritising: -

Scheme 2 Hull Road Park - Main play area safety surfacing works
 Scheme 3 Chesney's Field senior play area safety surfacing
 Scheme 4 Crombie Avenue play area renewal
 Scheme 22 Hull Road Park - Millfield Avenue fencing and gate

Thereafter, there will be a constant delivery of schemes over the lifetime of the project. This timetable allows for consultation with users, communities, ward councillors, and specialist advisers, as well as tendering and installation. Some schemes may be delivered in phases as they require different contactors for each element, Scheme 3 above for example. Records will be kept of before and after work takes place to illustrate this journey.

31. As stated in the July Executive report, as part of our plans to redevelop parks and play areas, we are committed to making them accessible and inclusive for everyone. We will work closely with the equalities team and partner with relevant external organisations to ensure that accessibility and inclusivity are at the heart of the design and delivery process.
32. Where possible, we will aim to make environmental improvements as part of or in parallel with the scheme or project, seeking to embed a sense of Pride in Place, improve planting for climate resilience and support Nature in our City. For example, new tree planting in play areas to increase shade, and plants that support the pollinator agenda.
33. Should businesses, civic or community groups have an interest in being involved in this programme, be it through sponsorship, in kind contributions or complimentary activity the council would be keen to explore all opportunities.

Organisational Impact and Implications

34. The implications are as follows:
 - ***Financial***, there are 19 schemes recommended in the first tranche which will receive funding from the Park Improvement Fund. The projected total cost is £687.5k including the project officer, leaving a contingency of £62.4k. This is funded from £500k parks fund, specific and general 106 funds and 3rd party contributions.

Costs and funding sources are shown in the table below

Costs	£'000	Funding	£'000
Scheme Costs	602.5	Park Fund	500.0
Project Officer	85.0	Specific s106 and 3 rd party	97.6
<u>Phase 1 Total</u>	687.5	General s106	152.3
Retained	62.4		
Total	749.9		749.9

- Human Resources (HR)** The additional resource referred to in paragraph 28 to deliver this programme has been established and resourced in accordance with council policy. There are no other HR implications contained within this report.
- Legal** the Council does not have a statutory duty to maintain parks. However, the Council does have a duty of care to ensure the safety of public play areas and has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain footpaths, and certain bridges, in a safe condition and fit for the type of traffic which is ordinarily expected to use it. Under the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923, the Council has the power, but not a duty, to maintain, repair and protect war memorials within its district The Councils policy approach to the management of parks should take into account all relevant considerations, as set out in this report. There is a growing body of case law which emphasises the importance of public bodies taking proportionate steps to combat climate change.
- Procurement.** Whilst there are no direct procurement implications relating this report itself, procurement will be a main tool used to deliver some of works if this report is approved. Future procurements for all works and/or services must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.

- ***Health and Wellbeing*** As highlighted earlier in this report, well maintained parks and play infrastructure support physical activity, but also encourage social interaction and community engagement, all of which are beneficial for health. Prioritising funding for open spaces and play areas for those living in less affluent areas is welcome. We would also encourage development of these areas to consider local need and views of residents including children, older adults, those in care homes etc. as evidence suggests this is key to maximising use of such spaces. Finally, we urge consideration to be given to groups currently less likely to access, or face barriers to accessing, the city's open spaces and play areas such as disabled people, people from BME backgrounds and teenage girls by implementing design principles e.g. Make Space for Girls and Active Design Checklist.
- ***Environment and Climate action*** Enhancement of the city's parks and green spaces can make an important contribution to tackling the challenges of climate change. The York Climate Change Strategy sets objectives for increased tree planting, increased carbon storage and sustainable land management. These objectives should be considered in the assessment of potential investment. Capital works have the potential to increase carbon emissions, and these should be mitigated and minimised wherever possible. Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and climate adaptation could be considered as part of the assessment for potential investment.
- ***Affordability***, Investment in green spaces and play areas supports activities which are free at the point of participation.
- ***Equalities and Human Rights***, An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required at this stage but will be required for the proposed work package to be presented later to Members. Specific comments on the proposed way forward are contained within the main body of the report.
- ***Data Protection and Privacy*** The completion of data protection impact assessment (DPIA) screening questions evidenced there would be no processing of personal data, special categories of personal data or criminal offence data processed, so there is no requirement to complete a DPIA.

- **Communications** Local engagement in – and understanding of - this work will help the council to deliver this objective with the support of people in the areas affected. It is part of a wider story of support for communities across the city and information about this investment will be presented within the context of the range of activities making a difference on the ground. This will help council to explain how the different strands of work, including this investment, work together for the places where they live and work.
- **Economy**, None.

Risks and Mitigations

35. The risks associated with this report, are that the programme of work is not delivered in a timely manner or by the project planned end date risking negative reputational impact. This was previously identified, and mitigation measures have been put in place through the appointment of a project officer employed in the role until 31st March 2027.

Wards Impacted

36. Those wards which are impacted are listed in paragraphs 25 and 28, and in Annex 1 and 2

Contact Details

Author:

Ian Hoult

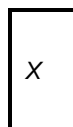
Head of Environment
Environmental Services

07923 206042

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Dave Atkinson

Director of Environment & Regulatory
Services

**Report
Approved****Date** 25/09/2025

Dave Meigh

Operations Manager
Public Realm

07923 217442

Background Papers

14 New Lane

Meeting of the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major
Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion the Environment and
Climate Emergency 16th January

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1060&MId=14518>

Budget Council 27th February 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=331&MId=15004>

Meeting of the Executive Member for the Environment and Climate
Emergency 29th April 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=870&MId=14599>

Meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee 24th June 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1122&MId=15314>

Meeting of the Executive 17th July 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=15173>

Meeting of the Place Scrutiny Committee 22nd September 2025

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1122&MId=15315>

Annexes

Annex 1 – Sites recommended for investment and further investigation

Annex 2 – Site Scores and provisional budget allocation

Annex 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Abbreviations – IMD – Indices of Multiple Deprivation