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**Decision Session – Executive Member for  
Economic Development & Community  
Engagement (Deputy Leader)**

7 February 2017

Report of the Assistant Director – Communities, Culture & Public Realm  
**Playground Investment Programme**

**Summary**

1. This report sets out options for investment in the city’s playgrounds.

**Recommendations**

2. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - a) Approve the use of the Council’s playgrounds capital programme for upgrading existing playgrounds.
  - b) Note the eligible schemes to be funded as determined by Officers.

Reason: To improve the quality of the city’s playgrounds and leverage in additional funds.

**Background**

3. Within the Council’s capital programme for 2017/18 there is £170k for playground improvement. The Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement (Deputy Leader) agreed at the 24 May 2016 Decision Session that:
  - a) The summer edition of Shine be used as an engagement tool, inviting suggestions from children and young people, parents and carers in York to identify potential capital projects.
  - b) The availability of the fund be widely circulated to all parish and town councils and Elected Members.
  - c) Playgrounds that have been receipt of Playbuilder, or significant lottery or section 106 funds since 2008 should not be eligible for consideration.
  - d) If money is sought to create a new play area, this would only be considered if the location has been identified as being deficient in play provision in the Open Space and Green Infrastructure final report of September 2014.

- e) Completed applications be considered by a multi-agency panel consisting of representatives from the Council, Parish Councils, play organisations and young people's forums.
4. Over the summer and early autumn several suggestions for playground improvement and development have come forward for assessment. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to convene the multi-agency panel; however, in the event it is possible to offer funding to every eligible scheme for an existing play area that has come forward and therefore the panel has not proved necessary at this time.
5. In parallel with the capital funding allocation process a scrutiny review has been underway. A task group of the Learning & Culture Policy & Scrutiny Committee set the following review objectives:
- a) Examine national best practice and methodology and consider examples of recent good practice locally from engagement through to delivery of a project.
  - b) Identify future positive ways to engage with children, young people and families in order to evidence local need and inform the development of play opportunities at a neighbourhood level.
  - c) Examine how best to allay resident's concerns and improve buy in from the whole community, thereby improving community/ward cohesion.
  - d) Identify best ways (methodology) to bring forward/develop potential new schemes.
  - e) Identify where lack of community capacity makes identifying need more challenging.
6. At the Learning and Culture Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 11 January the following recommendations were agreed:
- a) A best practice guide to be introduced for Members, to be used when committing ward funds to the future development of community spaces schemes which incorporate play provision.
  - b) The guide to be used to support Members when new open spaces improvement schemes come forward. For example the proposed playground capital investment schemes in 2017.

- c) An appropriate member training package should be introduced to provide Members with the necessary skills to effectively engage with children and young people in their local wards.
7. The opportunity now exists to link the work of the Scrutiny Committee (which is subject to report to the Executive) with the investment programme into the city's playgrounds. In line with the recommendations of the scrutiny report it is proposed that Officers will work along side Ward Members to establish what improvements the local community wants to see to their play area and to use this to inform the specification and scheme selection processes. Experience gained from this will in turn be used to inform the development of the best practice guide.

### **Existing playgrounds**

8. Tables 1 and 2 below detail the existing playgrounds which were suggested by the community, parishes and/or Elected Members for further investment. Table 1 lists those that meet the criteria and which officers have decided should be funded. Table 2 lists those that do not fully meet the criteria and which Officers have decided should not be funded.

**Table 1**

	<b>Location</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Owner</b>
1	Askham Bryan	Rural West	Parish Council
2	Badger Hill	Hull Road	CYC
3	Cemetery Road	Fishergate	CYC
4	Littlethorpe Close	Strensall	CYC
5	Nelsons Lane	Dringhouses and Woodthorpe	CYC
6	Rowntree Park	Micklegate	CYC
7	School Lane	Fulford and Heslington	Parish Council
8	Victoria Field	Holgate	CYC
9	West Bank Park	Holgate	CYC
10	Woodthorpe Green	Dringhouses and Woodthorpe	CYC

**Table 2**

	<b>Location</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Why not recommended</b>
1	Clarence Gardens	Guildhall	CYC	Major refurbishment carried out in 2015 *
2	Navigation Road	Guildhall	CYC	Substantial section 106 payment due from nearby Hungate °

\* The Clarence Gardens suggestion does not meet criterion 3c as a major refurbishment took place in spring 2015.

° The Navigation Road suggestion is due to receive Section 106 funds within the next 12 – 18 months and therefore has been ruled out in accordance with criterion 3c.

9. The Executive Member is asked to note the Officers' decision to fund the schemes in Table 1 and that they will all receive an equal initial allocation.

### **New playgrounds**

10. Table 3 below details suggestions for areas of city where a new playground could be built (although some suggestions are not specific with regard to location). No follow-up discussions have yet been held by Officers with the local community and interested parties about these suggestions.
11. As identified in paragraph 3 above, funding for new play areas will only be considered if the location has been identified as being deficient in play provision in the Open Space and Green Infrastructure final report of September 2014. The table provides some commentary on the potential feasibility of these sites.

**Table 3**

	<b>Location</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	Fenby Field	Fishergate	CYC	Possible. Needs further investigation and discussion with local community group

2	Hunters Way	Dringhouses and Woodthorpe	CYC	Needs further investigation, may be doubtful due to ground conditions
3	Yorkshire Museum Gardens *	Guildhall	CYC	Possible subject to fit with heritage landscape
4	Heworth Stray or surrounding area	Heworth / Heworth Without	CYC / 3 <sup>rd</sup> party	Stray previously rejected by community. May be possible on 3 <sup>rd</sup> party land in the area. Requires more investigation
5	Old Manor School	Acomb	CYC	Possible. Requires more investigation into the relationship with the British Sugar development

\* Site managed by York Museum Trust. Yorkshire Museum Gardens is due to receive section 106 funds in the next few years to create imaginative play opportunities within the landscape rather than a formal equipped play area.

### Way Forward

12. To create a new scheme with a fully equipped playground of any significance would require around £50k for equipment, surfacing, fencing, paths, etc. Given the limited impact that the available budget would have for such new schemes, and the fact that the schemes in Table 3 all require significant further investigation, it is recommended that the budget is fully allocated for upgrading existing play areas.
13. The available funding divided across the 10 schemes in Table 1 will provide £17k each. This represents a sensible level of investment to enable a significant upgrade at each site.

### Options

14. The options open to the Executive Member are:
  - A. To allocate the fund to the schemes approved by officers as detailed in Table 1. Under this option each scheme would be allocated a working budget of £17k.

- B. To allocate part of the fund to the schemes detailed in Table 1 and part of the fund to suitable schemes in Table 3.

### **Analysis**

15. Option A) responds to a city wide need to improve play provision with 10 sites allocated funding. Many of the sites have “Friends of” groups who can aid the delivery of the scheme. The exact needs of each community and site will be developed and from this a tender document produced. It is likely to take 12 months to complete all schemes.
16. If option A) is chosen each site will be allocated a working budget of £17k. It is suggested that the Assistant Director (Communities & Equalities) be allowed to vary this by +/- 20% to respond to consultation, scheme design and site conditions providing that the council’s overall capital contribution does not exceed £170k.
17. Option B) dilutes the impact of Option A) but could start to address the lack of local of play provision that exists in some communities. As planning permission will be required and there are no agreed locations it is likely to be 2018 before any construction work would take place.

### **Next Steps**

18. Officers from Communities and Equalities and Public Realm will work with groups to develop and implement schemes. It is recognised that ward councillors form an important part of this process and can utilise their ward committee and ward teams meetings to gain the support and involvement of local partners and residents. Wards may also consider allocating a proportion of their ward budget to enhance the development of schemes. This work is also timely in implementing the recommendations of the scrutiny review to develop the necessary protocols and training for members.
19. For City of York Council sites officers will take the lead in procuring the scheme. For the sites under Parish Council management it is presumed that the Parish Council will take the lead and money will be paid over to the Council once a procurement exercise has taken place. If a Parish needed support or help with the process then this will be provided.

## **Council Plan**

20. The 'Taking Play Forward' policy contributes to the following Council Plan priorities:

- All York's residents live and thrive in a city which allows them to contribute fully to their communities and neighbourhoods
- Delivering frontline services for residents is the priority
- All children and adults are listened to, and their opinions considered
- Every child has the opportunity to get the best possible start in life
- Residents are encouraged and supported to live healthily
- Focus on the delivery of frontline services for residents and the protection of community facilities.

## **Implications**

21. **Financial:** The capital budget for this programme of work is £170k.

For a number of recommended sites the core budget is likely to be supplemented ward grants, smaller 106 contributions and external grants. The exact amount of additional funds will not be known until a scheme for each site is developed.

22. **Equalities:** The Taking Play Forward policy advocates and promotes inclusive practice throughout the document.

23. **Crime and Disorder:** The development of future schemes will take into consideration the Taking Play Forwards 5 key principles ensuring that there is clear need and involvement from the local community, thus promoting and enabling local ownership. Scheme are required to be reflective of best practice, and will take advice from key guidance documents including Play England's, Design for Play 2008, Better Places to Play through Planning 2009 and Secured by Design.

24. There are no **Human Resources, Legal, Information Technology, Property** or **other** implications associated with this report.

## **Risk Management**

25. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified associated with the proposals contained in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and to deliver services, leading to

damage to the Council’s reputation and failure to meet stakeholders’ expectations. The level of risk is assessed as “Low”. This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

**Contact Details**

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Dave Meigh Operations Manager – Public Realm		<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b>	23 January 2017
<b>Specialist Implications Officers:</b>					
<b>Wards Affected:</b>				<b>All</b>	✓
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>					

**Background papers:** Shine magazine held by Mary Bailey

**Annexes:** None

**Abbreviations**

CYC - City of York Council