

Name of meeting: Cabinet
Date: March 19th 2019
Title of report: Playable Spaces Strategy and Operational Plan

Purpose of report

Seek approval from Cabinet for the revised Playable Spaces Strategy and the implementation of the operational plan.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	Yes If approved will result in spending more than £250k and will have a significant effect on two or more wards.
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	Yes 9/1/19
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes If no give the reason why not
Date signed off by Strategic Director & name Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	Karl Battersby - 8.03.2019 Eamonn Croston - 8.03.2019 Julie Muscroft - 8.03.2019
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Naheed Mather Cllr Musarrat Khan

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: All

Public or private: Public

(Have you considered GDPR?) Yes, personal data will not be collected or retained.

1. Summary

In 2017 the Parks and Greenspace Service produced a draft Play Strategy for Kirklees which outlined proposals to review the delivery of play infrastructure in Kirklees and the engagement and research required to refine this vision and to produce an operational plan.

A final version of the Strategy along with an accompanying Operational Plan and associated Appendices, represents the outcomes of this process. This summarises the evidence gathered and presents a refined Strategy which sets out a new framework for play across the district and outlines the work required to achieve this based on a place based working approach.

The Playable Spaces Strategy will be a mechanism to enable a focussed well-being intervention and help to improve the health and well-being of Kirklees' citizens.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.1 Background

Kirklees Council currently operates 314 equipped play areas plus 22 additional sites with one or more alternative play facility such as a multi-use games area (MUGA), a skate/wheel park, a basketball hoop/goal end, a teen shelter, or a trim trail/outdoor gym (figures correct at time of publication). All of these sites are considered as part of this Strategy. There are no admission charges for any of these facilities.

The current distribution and profile of equipped play areas across the district is largely incidental rather than strategic, resulting in a network which does not offer all citizens access to a variety of play types. The quality of our existing stock of equipped play areas is also declining owing to the high number of sites and restricted resource availability. Almost one third of our play areas are now over their anticipated lifespan of 15 years and many have limited play value and/or are rarely used owing either to poor location or their existing condition.

Physical activity is an essential element of health and wellbeing. We know that taking part in formal and unstructured physical activity is one way to maintain a healthy weight, prevent long term conditions and enjoy good mental health. Play provides children and young people with the opportunity to enjoy informal physical activity and all of its benefits as well as a range of other positive outcomes.

The ability to access a playable space is part of the Council's broader focus on place based working. We need to ensure that our residents live in quality places – and access to playable space should be seen as part of this. We also know that children's use of playable spaces is influenced by a broad range of wider determinants – parents and family, the wider community, social norms, safety (and perception of), the local environment and access and knowledge of local playable spaces. It is important that the Strategy is framed within this broader place based context.

The aim of the Operational Plan is to implement the strategy outcomes through a programme which looks at prioritising play spaces in terms of areas of deprivation (super output areas), housing density, health inequalities and their physical age and condition. The Improvement Programme will be implemented in collaboration with internal and external partners to the Council.

2.2 Key Objectives

- To ensure that, by the end of the recommended Improvement Programme, all play equipment in Kirklees under Council management is less than 15 years of age, which will be achieved by renovating 107 play areas in line with the new Kirklees Play Standard, and converting a further 137 currently equipped play areas with limited play value into high quality playable public open space.
- To create a network which incorporates both equipped play areas and non-equipped high quality playable public open space, thereby reducing liability for equipped play areas by approximately

40% over the period of the recommended Improvement Programme and increasing the quality and play value of all playable spaces.

- To provide access within 720m (15 minutes' walk) for 90% of residents to a diversity of safe but challenging play opportunities encompassing manufactured play equipment in a range of materials as well as natural play features such as boulders, logs, appropriate planting and variation in terrain/landscaping.
- To ensure equipped play areas are inspected and maintained efficiently and in line with industry standards through the implementation of a rationalised inspection and routine maintenance programme.
- To create playable routes where possible in conjunction with site redevelopments by assessing local access routes and including small sculptural play elements or appropriate planting; this will encourage access by foot and offer the opportunity for people to extend their play journey beyond the sites themselves.
- To provide a targeted engagement programme to understand local needs and barriers to access, as well as embed positive and creative use of sites and foster a culture of local stewardship by supporting the 'recruitment' of Play Area Guardians from the local communities.

2.3 Recommendations

The recommendations of the **Strategy** are that Kirklees Council implements:

1. a new **classification of existing play sites** which can be used to ensure a more diverse play offer across the district comprising a network of Destination Parks, Community Play Areas and Doorstep Playable Spaces;
2. a **Kirklees Play Standard** to guide all future play area developments and for use in planning decision-making;
3. a **three year Improvement Programme** in our play area network to enable the rationalisation of our network of play areas and the redevelopment of sites into high quality equipped play areas and playable spaces;
4. an **engagement programme** to be delivered in conjunction with site redevelopments at a sub-set of sites, to embed positive use of whole sites and foster community ownership; and
5. a revised framework for ongoing **risk management and maintenance** which is fully compliant and will ensure that the new network of high-quality play areas is well maintained into the future.

The recommendation of the **Operational Plan** is that a total investment of £9,565k is made, which will be implemented over the three year period from 2019-2022. This will enable the delivery of the Playable Spaces Strategy in full and will see a minimum of 90% of Kirklees residents having access to at least one high quality equipped play area, offering a variety of play types and experiences, within 720m of their home.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

We are keen to ensure that citizens are involved in any changes taking place to their local open spaces. Communities will be consulted, involved and informed as part of the delivery of the programme to ensure that sites meet their needs and to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility over their open spaces.

It is important that this work is co-produced in order to ensure that our playable spaces are used equitably across Kirklees. It is acknowledged that the district is varied, with a wide range of environments, landscapes and communities, and these proposed developments will recognise these differences. Through the involvement of those living and using the spaces, as well as ward councillors – who are important community leaders - we will strive to make the most of the assets within our diverse spaces. We wish for our spaces to help identify and characterise their local area, and so be different from other spaces across the district. We will key in to the Place Based Working approach as appropriate.

We intend to deliver this by working with communities across Kirklees in order to:

- Understand local inequalities in access and play;
- Identify physical and social barriers to accessing playable spaces;

- Enable communities to gain the maximum opportunity to access these spaces and to benefit from the wellbeing benefits delivered by active, imaginative and environmentally engaged play.

3.2 Working with Partners

The Strategy and operational plan has been led by Greenspace colleagues, with support from Public Health and Policy colleagues. The partnership between Greenspace and Public Health will continue as the Operational Plan develops. Key to the success of this work is partnership working with other Council colleagues from Communities as well as partnerships with local communities and the voluntary and community sector.

3.3 Place Based Working

The places of Kirklees are complex and varied, and our residents are similarly diverse. Our portfolio of open spaces with and without equipped play areas is also diverse and through the involvement of our residents and ward councillors we hope to place a greater emphasis on these differences, and the benefits that this diversity brings.

It is important to recognise that a child or a family's ability to access and use play areas is influenced by a wide range of factors. This includes their relationship with their local environment or place, how attractive it is, how safe people feel, the ease of walking or cycling, perceptions of the meaning and value of play and local social norms.

The Playable Spaces Strategy and Operational Plan is not just about providing physical places to play but also about clearly understanding what physical and social factors influence the ability to access play – and how the Council can enable equitable access to play throughout Kirklees.

Sites will be refurbished on a case-by-case basis, in conjunction with the local community, rather than applying a “one size fits all” solution and will take into consideration areas of deprivation, housing density, health inequalities and equipment’s physical condition and age.

3.4 Improving outcomes for children

There is a wide range of evidence which demonstrates the positive impact of play for children as well as their parents/carers and families. This includes the opportunity to:

- access and participate in physical activity for both children and adults.
- enjoy good mental health for both children and adults
- children to enjoy social interaction with peers and adults
- develop bonds and attachments between children and parents/carers

3.5 Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

The Strategy will also contribute to the delivery of a number of the shared outcomes in the Corporate Plan, including:

- *Best start:* Providing neighborhood environments and facilities that nurture children, offering them opportunities to explore their abilities, develop their skills and socialise both with their peers and intergenerationally.
- *Well:* Encouraging people of all ages to engage in physical activity and enjoy contact with the natural environment, contributing to good physical and mental health and well-being amongst our citizens.
- *Sustainable economy:* Improving the physical attractiveness of neighbourhoods by creating high quality green spaces, improving local property values and attracting events and other community activity and associated investment.

- *Safe and cohesive:* Ensuring all communities have access to safe places to play, providing spaces where communities can come together, and encouraging community stewardship over their play spaces.
- *Clean and green:* Ensuring all citizens have access to high quality, well maintained green spaces.
- *Efficient and effective:* Improving the efficiency of play area management within the Parks and Greenspace Service to ensure a future network of high quality equipped play areas and playable spaces which is financially sustainable.

Due to the proposed changes which would be created by this strategy, and the changes to service delivery, a Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment was carried out. This EIA covered the strategy as a whole, rather than one for each site. The EIA shows that there will be positive levels of impact for service provision for residents in the characteristic groups of age and disability, with enhanced inclusivity being one of the key foci of the operational plan. All the other protected characteristic groups show a neutral level of impact. The risk score of the EIA was calculated as 10.

4. Consultees and their opinions

Cabinet member for Streetscene
Cabinet member for Public Health
Ward Councillors
Members of the public, community groups, key stakeholders

All consultees are in support of the proposals and feedback received as part of the engagement process so far has been fed back into the Strategy to help shape the proposed operational plan.

5. Next steps and timelines

Once approved officers from Parks and Greenspace will begin a recruitment process to employ a project manager to implement the improvement programme over a three year period from 2019-2022. The full timescales for engagement and implementation are included within the operational plan.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That Cabinet members approve the adoption of the Playable Spaces Strategy along with the Operational Plan in order to fulfil the numerous positive outcomes and objectives as set out in the full documents. The level of investment required to meet the outcome of the Strategy is £9.565M with a proposed 3 year operational programme – 2019 to 2022.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

8. Contact officer

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9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Revised Play Strategy and Delivery Cabinet paper 27/06/2017

<http://democracy.kirklees.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4208>

10. **Strategic Director responsible**

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