

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **CABINET – 18 NOVEMBER 2009**

#### **PLAYPARK INVESTMENT PROGRAMME**

##### **Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a prioritised programme of playpark investment across East Ayrshire.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the installation of five playparks and two Streetsport cages at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009. This will complete the initial priority list of playparks and consideration now needs to be given to establishing future priorities for investment.
- 2.2 In order to assist with the development of a prioritised programme of playpark investment and following discussions with the spokespersons for Environment and Regeneration and the Corporate Management Team an external consultant was engaged to carry out a condition survey of the Councils playparks to identify any significant health and safety issues relating to playparks. This work was carried out in addition to the weekly checks on equipment that are carried out by Council staff and provides an objective, external, assessment to assist Cabinet in agreeing priority areas for investment.
- 2.3 The consultant was asked to categorise each play park in terms of potential health and safety risk. While risk can never be fully eliminated in relation to playparks it is considered that all playparks should be medium / low risk and that any identified as high or medium/high risk should be given a high priority in any future investment programme, or be considered for removal.
- 2.4 This report has been considered and approved by the Corporate Management Team.

### **3 SURVEY FINDINGS**

- 3.1 The external consultants report identifies the levels of risk at the remaining playparks as follows. The external inspector has categorised the parks into 3 priorities:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Priority 1 | Playparks to be replaced or removed as soon as funds are available.     |
| Priority 2 | Playparks to be considered for future development due primarily to age. |

Priority 3 Playparks to be considered on the completion of the first 2 priorities or

When deciding on priority the inspector has considered the following:

- Risk value
- Age of equipment or site
- Location
- Central and high amenity play areas

3.2 Full copies of the report which was produced by Dunlop Playground Services are available on the Council portal and hard copies have been placed in the Members lounge. The priority 1 playparks identified in the report are listed in Appendix 1.

#### **4 PROPOSED PRIORITY LIST**

4.1 Utilising the consultants' findings and local knowledge regarding the levels of use at playparks the proposed priority list for new playpark installations can be summarised as follows:

- |                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Piersland Park, Kilmarnock    | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 2. Minnoch Road, Bellsbank       | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 3. Greenside, Newmilns           | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 4. Braehead Place, Lugar         | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 5. Strandhead, Stewarton         | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 6. Hayhill, Sinclairston         | (Modular unit only)            |
| 7. Cessnock Place, Kilmarnock    | (Toddler equipment)            |
| 8. Cairn View, Muirkirk          | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 9. Cairnston Avenue, Drongan     | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 10. Rugby Road, Kilmarnock       | (Toddler equipment)            |
| 11. Craighens Road, Netherthird  | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 12. Ness Glen Road, Bellsbank    | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 13. Merlin Park, Auchinleck      | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 14. McTurk Court, Cumnock        | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 15. Alexander Terrace, Mauchline | (Toddler and Junior equipment) |
| 16. Dalton Avenue, Dalmellington | (Toddler equipment)            |
| 17. School Brae, Waterside       | (Surfacing)                    |

4.2 The significant changes between the consultant's original list and the proposed priority list can be summarised as follows:

1. Piersland Park, Kilmarnock is a high profile site on a well used open space off London Road, access to alternative sites requires crossing main roads.
2. Minnoch Road, Bellsbank is the preferred site of the two on the consultant's list in Bellsbank.
3. Greenside, Newmilns replaces Claremont in Newmilns as it is a central site which is more easily accessible.
4. Braehead Place, Lugar – priority unchanged.

5. Strandhead, Stewarton replaces Merrygreen, Stewarton to compliment the proposed development of new sports facilities in Stewarton.
6. Hayhill, Sinclairston – priority unchanged, a small modular unit is proposed to reflect the small population.
7. Cessnock Place, Bellfield, Kilmarnock – alternative facilities are available across the Bellfield estate.
8. Cairn View, Muirkirk – minor change in priority.
9. Cairnston Avenue, Drongan – minor change in priority.
10. Rugby Road, Kilmarnock – small site not owned by the Council, alternative facilities available at Annanhill Park.

There are no changes to the consultant's priority order for numbers 11 to 17.

18. Kay Park, Ochiltree – not considered a priority as alternative provision is available.

- 4.3 It should be noted that the playpark at Morton Park, Darvel is likely to be replaced using the major park improvement fund in 2010/11 as approved by Cabinet, and that provision of a playpark in Gargieston, Kilmarnock, instead of a streetsport cage was agreed by Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Capital funds for the playpark investment programme were allocated by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009, i.e. £155,000 in 2009/10 and £480,000 for 2010/11 to 2012/13 and £160,000 for 2013/14 to 2015/16. Acceleration of this programmes expenditure is now possible with £455,000 available in 2009/10, £300,000 of which would be required to complete the remaining sites on the current priority list.

- 5.2 The remaining £155,000 in addition to £340,000 in the capital programme to 2018/19 would then be available to fund the highest priority schemes, as approved by Cabinet and would be covered by the new playpark installation contract which is currently out to tender. Until the new contract prices are agreed, it is not possible to accurately state how many sites could be addressed, however, £495,000 should cover 6/7 installations at current prices.

- 5.3 Maintenance and inspection of the upgraded playparks will be carried out with the existing revenue budgets.

## **6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to ensure that any play facilities it provides are properly maintained and meet appropriate safety standards.

## **7. COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Provision of playparks supports the delivery of Community Wellbeing targets within the Community Plan.

## **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The playpark refurbishment programme allows for the replacement and upgrading of play equipment. Where equipment is in poor condition and cannot be repaired, removal is the most appropriate method of managing risk to the Council.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 The proposed priority programme for playpark improvements has been developed using the findings of the external consultant's survey and local knowledge of existing issues relating to the availability of playparks in communities.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Approve the proposed priority programme detailed in 4.1 above; and
- (ii) Otherwise note the content of this report

William Stafford  
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

WS/JAG/CF  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2009

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Dunlop Playground Services Report (available via the Members' Portal and in the Members' Lounge).

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5.0 PRIORITY 1

**PLAYGROUNDS RECOMMENDED FOR REMOVAL OR REDEVELOPMENT DUE TO HIGH RISK AND OR AGE OF EQUIPMENT.**

The following playgrounds should be replaced or removed as soon as funds allow:

**5.1 Piersland Park, Kilmarnock**

**Medium/High**

This area has two swing frames, one of which dates back to the mid-1960's and, with no impact absorbing surfacing, the risk of a child suffering an injury due to a fall could be far greater than another similar play area with impact absorbing surfacing. The play area has a limited life span, is unfenced and is surrounded by roads, forcing children to cross the road. I would therefore give careful consideration to the location of the site before redevelopment.

**5.2 Cessnock Place, Kilmarnock**

**High**

This play area has only one item of equipment, which, as above, dates back to the mid-1960's also with no impact absorbing surfacing. The area is set well back from nearest housing and is quite secluded. The main A77 carriageway is nearby. Nearest facilities are some distance away being either at Bellfield Estate or Carron Avenue.

**5.3 Merry Green, Stewarton**

**Medium/High**

There are only two items of equipment on site with limited play value – 1) Turnstile/Roundabout and 2) Swings, neither of which have impact absorbing surfacing. There are no play provisions close by and, if the site were to be removed, children would have to travel some distance and cross a busy road to the nearest facilities at Robertland.

**5.4 Claremount Estate, Newmilns**

**Medium**

There are two items of equipment on site, only one of which has impact-absorbing surfacing. Equipment dates back to the mid-1970's and mid-1980's. One of the swing frames has lain derelict for some years and has no impact absorbing surfacing. The remaining swing frame does have impact-absorbing surfacing and, although there is corrosion to metalwork, the swing frame could be refurbished and the remainder of the site redeveloped. There are no facilities close to this area, with the nearest site being Greenside, Newmilns, which requires redevelopment.

**5.5 Rugby Road, Kilmarnock**

**Medium/High**

While the equipment on site has some life left, the design in my opinion places visitors to the site at risk of collision with the swings. It is difficult to access the slide without passing through the path of the swings, thereby increasing the risk of collision. New facilities are some distance away at Howard Park. The site itself if

quite small and, with the inclusion of swings, has led to the congestion and risk of collision. Therefore, I suggest that when the site is being considered for redevelopment and if swings were to be re-installed, they are placed to the rear of the site, furthest away from the entrance and are lower in height and suitable for the toddler age group.

#### **5.6 Alexander Terrace, Mauchline**

**Medium**

Site is well back from housing with one item. There is insufficient impact absorbing surfacing and equipment dates back to late 1970's and is coming to the end of its' life. The nearest facilities are located at Jean Armour Drive.

#### **5.7 Cairn View, Muirkirk**

**Low/Medium**

There is only one unit, i.e. swings and the site has a low play value. There is insufficient impact absorbing surfacing below the swings. The nearest play facilities are some distance away at Victoria Park and children have to cross a busy road to gain access to the site.

#### **5.8 Lugar**

**Medium/High**

There is only one item on site dating back to the early 1980's with no impact absorbing surfacing and no play facilities nearby.

#### **5.9 Netherthird, Cumnock**

**Medium**

Equipment and surfacing on site has reached the end of its life. Site has a variety of items swinging, climbing, sliding and rocking.

#### **5.10 McTurk Court, Cumnock**

**Medium**

The site play value is limited with only four climbing structures and no impact absorbing surfacing installed. The nearest facilities are at Glenweir.

#### **5.11 Merlin Park, Auchinleck**

**Medium**

There are four items on site consisting of swinging, sliding and rocking. The equipment is coming to the end of its life. Surfacing is in a poor condition. The location of the site is not ideal, i.e. it is set well away from housing and is susceptible to vandalism. There are good play facilities at the nearby Well Road site.

#### **5.12 Dalton Avenue, Dalmellington**

**Medium**

There is only one swing frame on site. Equipment is heavily corroded and coming to the end of its life and there is insufficient impact absorbing surfacing. The nearest facilities are at Dalmellington Park some distance away.

**5.13 Minnock Road, Bellsbank****Medium**

There are two items on site – a climbing frame and swing structure. Although the swing frame has recently been installed, the climbing frame surfacing would need to be replaced in the near future. The nearest play facility is at Ness Glen Road, which is some distance away.

**5.14 Ness Glen Road, Bellsbank****Medium**

There is a variety of equipment – climbing, sliding and swinging. The equipment and surface have reached the end of life and would start to become expensive to maintain properly. The nearest facilities are at Minnock Road and are limited.

**5.15 School Brae, Waterside****Medium**

There is only one swing frame on site and insufficient impact absorbing surfacing.

**5.16 Hayhill****Medium/High**

The equipment dates back to early 1980's, consists of swings and climbing frame. There is insufficient impact absorbing surfacing and corrosion to structures.

**5.17 Cairnston Avenue, Drongan****Low**

There are two swing frames on site; both swing frames have been unused for a number of years, no impact absorbing surfacing and heavy corrosion to structures. The nearest play facilities can be found at Millmannoch Avenue, which is some distance away and across a busy road.

**5.18 Kay Park, Ochiltree****Low**

There is only one item and old equipment bases on site. Nearby is a recently installed multi-use games area and the playgrounds at both Broom Crescent and Douglas Brown Avenue have recently been redeveloped.