



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee


Tuesday, 18 June 2024

Report of Councillor Paul Stokes,
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Leisure and Culture

Draft Play Area Strategy

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To consider the draft Play Area Strategy for South Kesteven

Recommendations

In recognising the work undertaken to develop the draft Play Area Strategy for South Kesteven, it is recommended that the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Reviews and comments on the draft Play Area Strategy and considers any amendments for inclusion.**
- 2. Recommends the draft Play Area Strategy to Cabinet for approval.**
- 3. Request that an Action Plan be developed and presented to a future Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, if the Strategy is approved by Cabinet.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Connecting communities Effective Council
Which wards are impacted?	All wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The development of a Play Area Strategy is welcomed in order set out a framework and provide clarity on the future responsibilities of the District Council. The Strategy sets out the current play area locations, the current inspection and maintenance methodologies that are deployed and how a process to manage any future adoptions or transfers to Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.2 During financial year 2023/24, a decision was made to appoint external inspection contractors to undertake the monthly operational play equipment inspections and undertake a lifespan audit on all the play equipment at an annual cost of £25,82. The contractor is also currently assessing the life expectancy of the current play equipment at the 38 locations as set out in the Strategy. The Council does not have the financial resources to replace all the equipment that has reached or is reaching end of life and so it is recommended that a prioritisation replacement programme is undertaken alongside exploring options to transfer specific play areas to third parties who will be able to access external funding.

Completed by: **Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer**

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 There are no legal and governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: **James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer**

Risk and Mitigation

- 1.4 To satisfy the requirements of BS EN1176 Zurich Insurance undertake six monthly independent inspections of all the play equipment.

Completed by: **Tracey Elliott, Governance and Risk Officer**

Health and Safety

- 1.5 The Health and Safety Executive recommend that at least one inspection is undertaken every year by an independent suitably qualified body such as The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), to ensure the long-term safety of the site, equipment and ancillary item. This also meets the legal and insurance responsibilities as well as complying with the requirements of BS EN1176 (the British and European Playground Standard). As a Council this is undertaken by Zurich as detailed in paragraph 1.5.
- 1.6 In addition to this the Council has a defined inspection regime in place and employs qualified staff to undertake weekly visual inspections, and has commissioned KOMPAN to undertake monthly operational inspections. All inspection findings are recorded in real time on a specialist mobile app called PSS Live.
- 1.7 Following the installation of any new play area an independent post installation inspection is carried out to ensure that the playground meets modern standards and has been installed correctly.

Completed by: **Phil Swinton, Health and Safety & Emergency Planning Manager**

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan (2024-27) sets out the corporate ambition to be 'A thriving District to live in, work and visit' with the aim of encouraging physical activity to support healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities. Underpinning this are the key priorities for the Council of 'Connecting Communities' and being an 'Effective Council'.
- 2.2 The provision of high-quality play areas supports the Council's corporate ambitions and provides opportunities for improved health and wellbeing outcomes for local communities.

- 2.3 A draft Play Area Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed to ensure that the Council effectively manages the 38 play areas across the District that it is currently responsible for, providing young people with safe and sustainable places to play. This is attached at **Appendix One**.
- 2.4 The Strategy will also complement the work being undertaken to deliver the Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2021-26) by supporting children and young people to meet Sport England's target for them to be considered active, which is to undertake an average of 60 plus minutes of exercise per day.
- 2.5 The Council recognises that there has been a historical lack of investment in its play areas and that the costs associated with maintaining them is ever increasing. This in turn increases the financial pressures on the budgets available, going forwards the available budget set aside will require careful future management to ensure that resources are being used effectively and generating the optimum outcomes.
- 2.6 The Council's key priorities for play areas, as outlined within the Strategy, are to:
- Prioritise strategic capital spending on play area improvements.
 - Secure and utilise appropriate S106 developer contributions.
 - Identify external funding opportunities to rejuvenate play areas.
 - Continue a robust inspection regime to ensure play areas are safe.
 - Collaborate on the design of play areas with relevant Ward Members, local communities and external partners.
 - Promote the availability of play areas to both residents and visitors.
 - Undertake audits of play areas to identify capital investment programmes based on the age and condition of the equipment.
 - Facilitate a transfer of play areas to local Town and Parish Councils where there is appetite to do so.
- 2.7 In recent years the Council has attracted significant external funding by working with local groups which has allowed the rejuvenation of some of its play areas. Examples of this include the Wyndham Park Senior Play Area which was upgraded in 2022, and the Gonerby Hill Foot Play Area which was upgraded in 2023. Work is also currently underway to refurbish the Beeden Park Play Area following a successful award of grant funding by FCC Communities Foundation Limited in March this year. The procurement exercise to secure a contractor is currently live and the refurbishment is scheduled to commence during early Autumn 2024.
- 2.8 The Play Area Strategy aims to allow the Council to prioritise those play areas and pieces of equipment which require capital investment and also allow the Council to continue working with external stakeholders to identify funding opportunities.

- 2.9 The Strategy contains a process to be followed for Play Area Investment which will be utilised when enquiries are received from members of the public, Ward Members and local stakeholders.
- 2.10 In ensuring the Council maintains its play areas to a safe standard, the Strategy also details the inspection and maintenance regime which is undertaken and how the results from this can help to support the prioritisation of investment.
- 2.11 The Strategy contains the Council's future design principles for new and upgraded play areas when considering investment or refurbishment. New housing developments will be required to provide new play and open space facilities and the same principles will be applied for designing these new facilities. Where new play facilities are delivered through planning applications funding arrangements will be secured for their ongoing maintenance.
- 2.12 In summary this Strategy will help to prioritise the maintenance, development, and refurbishment of play areas within the District, taking into account any opportunities to transfer play areas to the ownership of Town or Parish Councils.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Spend on Play Areas is discretionary for the Council, and it is important that the management and investment into them demonstrates value for money and that the resources invested deliver the priorities the Council is seeking. This Play Area Strategy aligns with the corporate vision and takes account of the Council's challenging financial backdrop.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Within its Corporate Plan there is a key theme of supporting healthier lifestyles and the provision of high-quality play areas supports this ambition. The Council also has a legal and moral responsibility of care to children using the play areas its responsible for and meeting the expectations of parents in keeping their children safe from harm. Therefore the 'do nothing' option was discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The Play Area Strategy will become the guiding principal document to enable the Council to prioritise the replacement of equipment or refurbishment of play areas within the allocated budget. It will be a material consideration for planning applications and be used to support decisions on planning applications. It is important that Members assess the contents of the Strategy to ensure that it meets the Council's vision for the service, considering any amendments for inclusion.
- 5.2 The Strategy will receive corporate branding and artwork, along with any amendments required prior to approval by Cabinet.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix One – Draft Play Area Strategy for South Kesteven