



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 14 October 2025

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

Play Area Strategy Update

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To provide an update to the Committee on progress of the Action Plan accompanying the Play Area Strategy.

Recommendations

Members of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

- 1. Note the significant work undertaken over the past 12 months in delivering the Action Plan and the improvements made to the Council's play areas.**
- 2. Agree to receive a further update detailing the progress made against the actions identified in 12 months' time.**

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| Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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 adoption of the Play Area Strategy 2024 and accompanying Action Plan has provided a basis for the Council to prioritise spend in this area, with equipment that has reached or is nearing its end of life being replaced.
- 1.2 During 2024/25 £341k was spent on improvements to play areas which is summarised in the table below including various funding sources the Council accessed to support investment.

| Funding Source | Beeden Park | Wild Witham Play Area | Arnoldfield Play Area | Empingham Road | Dysart Park | Wellhead Play Area | Other Play Areas |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| UKSPF | £0 | £10,696 | £24,683 | £16,850 | £30,000 | £0 | £0 |
| S106 | £40,090 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £35,176 | £0 |
| FCC Communities Foundation | £100,000 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 |
| Rotary Club of Grantham | £5,000 | £0 | £0 | £0 | £10,000 | £0 | £0 |
| SKDC | £0 | £0 | £3,491 | £0 | £6,210 | £960 | £57,565 |
| Total | £145,090 | £10,696 | £28,174 | £16,850 | £46,210 | £36,136 | £57,565 |

- 1.3 As shown the table above, in 2024/25 the Council allocated £100k towards investment in play areas of which £68k was spent. The remaining £32k has been carried forward into 2025/26. There is further allocation of £100k within the Council's General Fund Capital Programme for this financial year for investment into play parks which therefore brings the overall total to £132k for 2025/26.
- 1.4 It is proposed these budgets will be prioritised in line with the revised Action Plan. Officers will continue to explore further funding opportunities over the course of the current financial year to supplement the approved budget further where possible.

Completed by: **David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer**

Procurement

- 1.5 The works which have taken place to replace equipment and improve play areas have been procured in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 1.6 Officers are in the process of developing a tender opportunity for a repair, supply and inspections contract for play equipment. This competitive process will ensure a suitably qualified contractor is secured for a longer period providing continuity of works and assurance on value for money.

Completed by: **Helen Baldwin, Procurement Lead**

Legal and Governance

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

Completed by: **James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager**

Health and Safety

- 1.8 Following the installation of any new play area, an independent post installation inspection will be carried out to ensure that the playground meets the required standards of EN 1176 and EN 1177 where applicable and has been installed correctly.
- 1.9 The Council is responsible, so far as is reasonably practicable, for the safety of those using its play areas and the maintenance of the equipment as well as the condition of the play area. There is a defined inspection and maintenance regime in place to ensure that equipment and play area condition is monitored and identified hazards are mitigated in a timely manner.

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 Council's 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 continues to support the Council's corporate ambitions and provides opportunities for improved health and wellbeing outcomes for local communities, particularly in relation to children and young people.

- 2.3. At a meeting of the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 03 September 2024, the Council's Play Area Strategy 2024 Action Plan (Action Plan) was presented to Members and was subsequently endorsed, with an agreement to provide an update to Members on its progress in 12 months' time (see **Background Papers**).
- 2.4. Since the endorsement of the Action Plan, Officers have undertaken extensive work to deliver on the 20 actions which were initially agreed, with 15 actions having been completed in full. Three actions are considered as ongoing and in progress, and a final two actions have been put on hold due to wider issues within the location. A copy of the completed actions can be found at **Appendix One**.
- 2.5. A presentation can be found at **Appendix Two** which showcases some of the improvements made to the Council's play areas during 2024/25.
- 2.6. A review of the Action Plan for the current year, 2025/26, has been undertaken by Officers, again using the findings from the play area inspections which are undertaken by Council Officers, Kompan Limited (who are contracted to undertake the monthly operational inspections) and Zurich Insurance (who undertake six monthly insurance inspections on behalf of the Council). The life expectancy audit previously undertaken was also revisited by Kompan Limited in April 2025. This has provided the Council with an updated indicative timeframe for when equipment will need to be replaced. Consideration is also given for any s106 developer contributions which have been specifically agreed for enhancing play equipment in certain areas.
- 2.7. The updated Action Plan lists how each action will be achieved, and which service area is responsible. Each action has been assigned a priority level based on the current equipment's risk scoring, and further notes and considerations are provided where appropriate. The Action Plan can be found at **Appendix Three**.
- 2.8. The Action Plan will continue to be used as a live document and be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to meet the Strategy's aims and objectives and takes account of any new information.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. Spend on play areas is discretionary for the Council, and it is important that the management and any investment undertaken demonstrates value for money, and that the resources invested deliver the priorities the Council is seeking.
- 3.2. The Action Plan aligns with the Play Area Strategy 2024 and the Council's corporate vision, ensuring a priority approach to any spend

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Within the Council's Corporate Plan there is a key theme of supporting healthier lifestyles, and the provision of high-quality play areas supports this ambition. Therefore the 'do nothing' option was discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The Play Area Strategy 2024 provides a basis for the Council to manage and prioritise the replacement of equipment or refurbishment of its play areas. The Action Plan which has been developed sets out how the Council will achieve this with clear actions being identified for the forthcoming year.
- 5.2. The Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to receive a further update in 12 months' time to assess the effectiveness of the Action Plan and ensure that it has been effectively implemented.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1. *Play Area Strategy Action Plan* – Report to Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published 23 August 2024, available online at: <http://moderngovsvr/documents/s43220/Play%20Area%20Strategy%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

7. Appendices

- 7.1. Appendix One – Play Area Strategy 2024 Action Plan – Completed Actions
- 7.2. Appendix Two – Presentation showcasing improvements made to the Council's play areas
- 7.3. Appendix Three – Play Area Strategy 2024 Action Plan