

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

## **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Environmental Service Cabinet Committee  
**Date:** Tuesday 12 February 2019  
**Reporting officer:** Stuart Alford – Assistant Director (Environment)  
**Subject:** Play Site Improvement Programme

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To update Members on improvements to the borough's play sites

### **Recommendations:**

Information Only

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 There are currently 38 play sites in Gravesham, these are broken down into 21 General Fund sites, 10 HRA funded sites and 7 sites under Parish Council ownership. A full list is shown in Appendix 2
- 1.2 In 2016 it was recognised that many of the Council owned play sites were in a poor condition so an independent review of play provision across the borough was commissioned.
- 1.3 The independent open space study carried out in April 2016 by Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) concluded that;
  - The current provision in Gravesham is noticeably less when compared to most other local authorities as well as recommended standards set by national organisations e.g. Fields in Trust. Most play provision is identified as being of Local Equipped Areas of Play (42%) classification which are sites with a wider amount and range of equipment that are designed to predominantly cater for unsupervised play.
  - The Urban Analysis Area has the highest number of sites. However, on a population basis (i.e. per 1,000 population) provision is evenly distributed.

- The 10 minute walk time accessibility standard covers the majority of the area. However, rural areas, such as Meopham Green, Sole Street and Three Crutches are not served by provision.
- A greater proportion of play sites (57%) are above the threshold for quality. Quality is reasonable in general, however, provision at a number of sites is viewed as tired and dated.
- A lack of available investment tends to result in equipment being removed as opposed to being replaced. This is across both urban and rural areas, of which the latter are served primarily by the parishes.
- There have however been a handful of new sites created within new housing developments in recent years.
- All play provision (with the exception of one site e.g. Fountain Walk) is rated above the threshold for value; reflecting the important role such sites provide.
- Therefore, overall quantity of provision is viewed as being sufficient. However, quality of equipment at a number of sites requires attention.

## **2. Play Site Improvements**

- 2.1 Since 2016 there have been improvements made to a number of play sites across the borough. The two major improvements have seen the sites at Woodlands Park (2016) and Cascades Leisure Centre (2018) being completely refurbished. These two sites and the earlier improvements at the Riverside Leisure Area have given the borough a strategic network of modern play sites.
- 2.2 Additional improvements have been made at the following sites:
- 2.2.1 Rosherville Rec – Additional play equipment to increase the size of the site and a new tarmac circular path to improve access.
  - 2.2.2 Windmill Hill – New swing set, multi play unit and safety surfacing.
  - 2.2.3 Whinfall Way – Complete site refurbishment and equipment moved to the front of the site.
  - 2.2.4 Michael Gardens – Refurbished swing set and multi play unit with improvements to the safety surface.
  - 2.2.5 Shirley Close, Chalk – New safety surfacing throughout site

## **3. Play Site Improvements Planned for 2019/20**

- 3.1 To continue the play site improvement programme an additional £185,300 has been allocated for 2019/20. The following sites will see improvements during 2019/20
- 3.1.1 Central Avenue – Complete play site refurbishment
  - 3.1.2 Waterton Avenue – Complete play site refurbishment
  - 3.1.3 Durndale Recreation Ground - Complete play site refurbishment

3.1.4 Wombwell Park – New fence around the ball court

3.1.5 Windmill Hill – Replacement of junior equipment

#### **4. The Future**

4.1 Although the standard of the General Fund play sites has been dramatically improved over recent years there are still some sites such as Camer Park that need to be reviewed.

4.2 The Camer Park site will be looked at separately to determine the current and future need of the site taking into account play provision, car parking and toilet provision on the site.

4.3 During 2019 the provision of HRA funded play sites will be reviewed. An initial review has already been carried out which has shown that the following sites require various improvements:

4.3.1 Wallis Park – Renewal of the play site situated within the grounds of the Wallis Park site however there is currently work being undertaken with the EDC which may see the updating of the play site.

4.3.2 Park Place – There are currently three small sites at Park Place, it is recommended that the three sites are consolidated into one site on the middle courtyard

4.3.3 Medhurst Gardens – There is a ball court which has no fence so it recommended that a fence is installed. The playsite adjacent to the ball court could be updated to provide a more up to date selection of equipment.

4.3.4 Carl Eckman House – The current playsite is dated and in need of replacement. The site is directly under the block of flats, it is recommended that the option of relocating and installing a new site on the open space in Shepherd Street is investigated.

4.4 The next step is to confirm the specific improvements required and to establish funding from the HRA for these works to be carried out. Currently an initial £80,000 has been provided for improvements to HRA funded sites.

4.5 To maintain an adequate play provision within the borough an ongoing finance provision to carry out future improvements and refurbishments is being considered.

**IMPLICATIONS**

**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	The current provision has allowed a number of play sites to be improved which has increased usage at all sites so encouraging young people and families to use local facilities.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	If future funding is not made available there is the risk that the current play equipment at many of the sites will be too old to repair so will have to be decommissioned so reducing the provision of play equipment for young people
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<b>Screening for Equality Impacts</b>
	<b>Question</b>
	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	Corporate Priority 1 – Safer Gravesham
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	None
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	None
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	None