
PETITION FOR PLAY AREA AT BROADSTAIRS MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND

To: **Cabinet – 3 April 2014**

By: **Martyn Cassell, Community Safety and Leisure Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Wards: **Bradstowe**

Summary: **A Petition was presented to Council on 6th February in relation to making improvements to the Play Area at the Broadstairs Memorial Recreation Ground.**

The matter was referred without discussion to Cabinet and this paper sets out the Council's options.

For decision

1.0 Introduction and background information

1.1 A petition containing 1,760 valid signatures was received from Ms Kate Merriman on behalf of the "Revive our Rec Campaign", stating:

"We the undersigned petition the Council to undertake major improvements to the play area at the Broadstairs Memorial Recreation Ground (behind the station) for the following reasons:

- It is currently in a pitiful state
- The children and visitors of Broadstairs deserve an updated play area like the rest of Thanet have received
- Its position is in a lovely green space, central to many homes, schools, the library and the station
- There is poor access for wheelchair and buggy users
- The playground needs to become a safe, dog-free area with equipment for children of all ages and abilities."

1.2 The matter was referred to Cabinet to explore the issues and possible opportunities. Text from the minutes stated;

It was thereupon RESOLVED:

"THAT the petition be referred to Cabinet for determination or report".

2.0 Current Situation

2.1 There are currently 41 children's playgrounds on TDC land. 25 are TDC owned and maintained, 6 Parish Council, 9 Housing sites and 1 managed by charitable sector.

2.2 ROSPA inspects them each year to give an independent assessment of quality and identify any risks that the Council need to consider. Throughout the remainder of the year the Open Spaces Officer (ROSPA qualified inspector) inspects the facilities on a

daily basis and the Maintenance Operative (ROSPA qualified repairer) undertakes on-going maintenance. This process is robust and has allowed the Council to counter previous insurance claims.

- 2.3 Recently Cabinet agreed to the refurbishment/replacement of 4 sites that were highlighted by ROSPA as a health and safety risk. The Tender for this work is about to be finalised and will be undertaken using the national ESPO Playground Framework.
- 2.4 The Memorial Recreation Ground children's playground has dated equipment which is old and offers poor variety but was not considered a health and safety risk in the most recent inspection. It scored a medium risk.
- 2.5 It uses a woodchip safety surface and the site is not fenced off which is not considered best practice these days. This becomes an attraction for dogs. The location is poor being in the middle of the field and therefore difficult to access in the winter months with pushchairs and wheelchairs. This agrees with points raised in the petition.
- 2.6 It is the Officers view that a more suitable location could be found for the playground, resolving the resident concerns about access. This would also open up the main field site for other sport or events usage. A number of options for relocation are possible and this will be progressed in discussion with the local resident group who presented the petition.
- 2.7 Officers agree improvement of this site is a priority but this is not on the basis of an immediate health and safety concern as with the other four sites. However, the other sites to be improved cover Margate, Villages and Ramsgate and undertaking improvements here would help the Council show an investment in play across the whole district.
- 2.8 There is already investment going into the Memorial Recreation Ground site via the Thanet Skatepark project which will see a brand new concrete Skatepark built this year within two of the tennis courts. This will complement the other tennis courts and basketball court providing a good range of facilities for older young people. Improving the playground will therefore mean a site that adequately caters for all ages.
- 2.9 The Petition presentation also commented on the nearby Pierremont Park children's playground. The two are in very close proximity to each other. The Council will prepare a Play Strategy later this year which will look at all provision across the district and this point would be picked up then. However the approach suggested above and in the recommendations would fit with the draft Play Strategy principles discussed with informal cabinet.

3.0 Corporate Implications

3.1 Financial

- 3.1.1 Officers from Thanet Council and Sport England contested the loss of sports playing fields at the old Hereson School site as part of the development of a large number of family homes. As a result, a section 106 contribution of £134,170 was agreed for the provision of new or replacement sports and play facilities or for the upgrading of existing sport and play facilities in Broadstairs. The section 106 agreement states that they must pay the sports and play facilities contribution to the Council prior to the occupation of more than 50% of the general market dwellings of the development and therefore there is no clear time for receipt of the contribution.

3.1.2 An estimated figure of £200k was put aside for the playground refurbishments as part of the ROSPA inspections by Cabinet. The specification has now been drawn up and it is felt that some economies of scale will be achieved by including multiple developments, which could be used to save some money for some interim improvements to the Memorial Recreation Ground playground (approximately £40k). Additional play equipment could be added when the section 106 funding comes through but the majority would need to be focussed on sport and physical activity improvements such as for the tennis court facilities on-site and for other sites in Broadstairs.

3.2 Legal

3.2.1 Legal has checked the covenants on the land title. There is nothing that would preclude this development but some that will need to be considered in the choice of location and supports the improvement of adult sports facilities as well.

- a) that a portion of the ground shall be set apart for the exclusive use of children with a separate entrance but this should not interfere with the use of the Recreation Ground for cricket, football and other games
- b) children admitted to the main Recreation Ground shall be subject to whatever regulations the Council makes so as to prevent them being an annoyance to adults using the grounds or disrupting any games such as tennis etc that are in progress
- c) that nothing is carried on at the land which could be a nuisance to neighbouring properties

3.3 Corporate

3.3.1 Improvement of play facilities is covered under Priority 9 of the Corporate Plan.

3.4 Equity and Equalities

3.4.1 Providing an improved playground on the site will open it up to a wider range of people. Disability compliant equipment will form part of the specification and the new location would offer better access for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

3.4.2 The petition presentation suggested involving the residents in the specification of the site. This will need to be arranged quickly and will likely hold up the issuing of the tender for the other 4 playgrounds. This may mean that all of the refurbishments may not be ready for the summer holidays but it is recommended that consultation is undertaken to ensure the resident views are heard.

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 That Cabinet agree to add Memorial Park playground to the existing tender for playground improvements and for the Lead Officer to consult with the local resident group.

5.0 Decision Making Process

5.1 Cabinet have the final decision with a summary report to be presented to Full Council for information only.

Future Meetings

Council	To be confirmed
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Contact Officer:	Martyn Cassell, Community Safety and Leisure Manager, Ext. 7367
Reporting to:	Madeline Homer, Director of Community Services, Ext. 7123

Annex List

None	
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Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	Matthew Sanham / Sarah Martin
Legal	Dawn Cole
Parks and Open Spaces	Paul Verrall
Planning	Iain Livingstone