

Community Parks Grant Funding Proposed Play Area Improvements

Cabinet	16 December 2021
Report Author	Luke Glover - Deputy Technical Services Manager
Portfolio Holder	Cllr George Kup - Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Youth Engagement
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Cliftonville West

Executive Summary:

The condition of the viking ship play equipment at Ethelbert Crescent in Cliftonville is deteriorating and action is required to manage H&S risk. The play equipment represents an increasing maintenance liability and it is no longer economically viable to maintain to an acceptable standard.

Community Parks grant funding of £211k has recently been awarded to the Council for works to play areas in Thanet as part of the Contain Outbreak Management fund (COMF). This report proposes the expenditure of the majority of this funding at Ethelbert Crescent to replace and improve the play area equipment. The report also proposes improvements at other parks in the district to encourage the use of these outdoor spaces in line with the objectives of the grant funding.

Recommendation(s):

1. That Cabinet approve Option 2 for expenditure as described in Section 4 of this report using allocated Community Parks funding. This will include major replacement and improvement works at Ethelbert Crescent play area in Cliftonville. All approved work to be completed by 31 March 2022.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

The viking ship play equipment is a maintenance liability which has increased to over £14k p.a. This compares with an annual play area maintenance budget of £39k which must cover the maintenance on 31 play areas in Thanet.

On 9 November 2021 the Council was notified of a £211,280 allocation from KCC for Community Parks as part of Contain Outbreak Management funding (COMF) to be invested within the district. The funding must be spent by 31 March 2022 to deliver any of the below:

- New children's play equipment in a community park that previously did not have children's play equipment
- Enlarging children's play equipment in a community park
- Refurbish existing children's play equipment in a community park
- New outdoor seating/tables in a community park to create places for people to meet outside
- The funding provided cannot be used to purchase or refurbish outdoor gym equipment.

It is proposed to use the above grant funding to deliver a replacement and improved play area at Ethelbert Crescent in Cliftonville and other play area improvements as set out in this report.

Legal

Procurement of the works would usually require three written quotations. The decision is subject to the approval of a waiver under the Council's Procurement Rules, under section 12 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules

<https://democracy.thanet.gov.uk/documents/s74412/Part4RulesofProcedureGoogleDocs.pdf>

Corporate

This proposal for replacement, improvement and refurbishment of play areas within the district can be strongly linked with both the Communities and Environment corporate priorities

The recommendations of this report will deliver an enhanced play area at Ethelbert Crescent, Cliftonville and improvements at other play areas which will encourage the use of these outdoor spaces in line with the objectives of the COMF grant funding.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aims of the equality duty: -

- *To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it*
- *To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

The proposal will be subject to an Equality Act Assessment, but it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impacts beyond a short term impact during construction/improvement works.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- *Environment*
- *Communities*

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The condition of the Viking Ship play equipment at Ethelbert Crescent, Cliftonville is deteriorating and action is required to manage Health and Safety (H&S) risk. The play equipment represents an increasing maintenance liability and it is no longer economically viable to maintain it to an acceptable standard.
- 1.2 The Viking ship play park was installed in 2009 with the major structural components being of Robinia wood and bespoke design. This compares with the majority of play equipment that is made from galvanised/powder coated steel or composite materials and is of a standard design.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1 Revenue Expenditure
The total annual playground revenue budget of £39k a year is split between 31 playgrounds. In 2020/21 a disproportionate £12,647 was spent on essential maintenance and £1,900 on inspections at the Ethelbert Crescent play area. This level of expenditure is unsustainable and does not leave sufficient revenue budget to maintain the other 30 playgrounds in Thanet.
- 2.2 Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) Inspections and Surveys at the Ethelbert Crescent play area
- 2.3 An inspection carried out in December 2020 reported 83 defects at the Viking Ship playground with concerns raised over the timber structural elements of the viking ship itself. A consultant was commissioned to carry out a specialist timber decay survey.
- 2.4 The ROSPA report specifically highlighted concerns as a result of the condition of following pieces of play equipment:
 - Rocker Seal
 - Playhouse
 - Sprung Rocker Ship

- Viking Ship

- 2.5 The consultant also carried out a follow-up diagnostic non-destructive environmental timber infestation and decay survey of the viking ship, on the 8th June 2021. The report recommends that the viking ship should have 5 supporting posts replaced and the sand pit frame should have 2 replacement posts. The report adds that the posts should be inspected every 2 years. The cost of replacing the supporting posts has been estimated by Technical Services Officers to be £8-10k.
- 2.6 Another problem with the viking ship is access to inspect the high level yard, mast head and hoisted sail. The distance from the promenade is too great for a cherry picker to reach, so the park fence would need to be removed to gain access. Alternatively access could be gained by scaffold. This inspection alone would cost approximately £3,000 every 2 years.
- 2.7 A joint investigation by the Director of Operations, Health and Safety Compliance Officer and Open Spaces team has concluded that it is not economically viable to maintain the above four pieces of play equipment and that these items should be removed in the short term.

3.0 Community Parks Funding from COMF

- 3.1 On 9th November KCC confirmed an allocation of £211k to Thanet District Council for community parks and children's play equipment.
- 3.2 The funding requires councils to assess the community parks to ensure the additional funding is targeted at communities and play parks where there will be the biggest benefit. It also indicates that wherever possible, the funding should be focused on enhancing community parks in areas of deprivation.
- 3.3 The timescale for delivery of a project using this funding is very short. The new play equipment or proposed improvements must be installed/complete by the end of March 2022.
- 3.4 Given the short timeframe and recent notification of this funding, schemes are being considered at pace and consequently, a high-level 'Community Parks' scheme has been added to the 2021-22 Capital Programme.

4.0 Proposed Play Area Works

- 4.1 The following works and activities are proposed to be funded by the Community Parks funding allocation. The cost of the works items at Ethelbert Crescent and Northdown Park are based on a written quotation from specialist manufacturer/installers. The cost of the remaining items are based upon estimated sums from previous similar works. A general contingency sum is included to mitigate the impact of minor variations that are found to be required after construction/refurbishment works have commenced.

- 4.2 This project has been progressed at pace due to the short timescale dictated in the grant conditions for project delivery. In order to further mitigate the risk of the project exceeding the allocated budget, Item 5 is included as a provision item at this stage and will only be progressed when the cost of all items is confirmed through quotation and a contract has been awarded for item 2.

Table 1: - Proposed Schedule of Works

No.	Location	Works/Activity	Value (£)
1	Ethelbert Crescent, Cliftonville	Demolition of Viking Ship play area	10,231.00
2	Ethelbert Crescent, Cliftonville	Provision of improved play area	159,286.00
3	Crispe Park, Birchington	Painting of play equipment and boundary fence	4,000.00
4	Northdown Park, Cliftonville	Laying of rubberised safer surfacing around play apparatus	14,700.00
Provisional Item			
5	Memorial Rec, Broadstairs	New boundary fence to play area	16,000.00
	General Contingency		7,000.00
Total			211,217.00

- 4.3 Ethelbert Crescent Cliftonville
A quotation has been received from the play equipment manufacturer/installer Kompan for the replacement of all of the existing play area equipment apart from the galvanised steel framed swings which were newly installed as a replacement last year. More details of the proposed replacement play area can be found at Annex 1.
- 4.4 The work is proposed to take place in February and March 2022 and will include the demolition/removal of the existing viking ship, playhouse climbing frame, rocker seal and sprung rocker ship. Where possible the large natural timber sections will be carefully removed and taken to Dane Park depot for storage with the intention of recycling for non structural uses such as raised bedding borders in future maintenance and/or improvement schemes.
- 4.5 The play apparatus proposed for Ethelbert Crescent consists of powder coated galvanised steel posts with structural panels of EcoCore which is a highly durable, eco friendly material, which is produced from 100% recycled post consumer material from food packing waste. Raised decks are constructed from aluminium profiles.
- 4.6 Crispe Park, Birchington
Crispe Park, Birchington consists of older steel framed play equipment with a galvanised steel perimeter fence. Some of the play apparatus has a poor appearance due to the condition of the painted surfaces and the perimeter fencing is exhibiting

corrosion and delaminated paint in some places. It is proposed to refurbish the play equipment and perimeter fence by applying fresh paint coatings.

4.7 Northdown Park, Cliftonville

The rubberised safety surfacing around the play equipment at Northdown Park is in poor condition and requires replacement. The current condition means that regular inspections and temporary repairs must take place to avoid trip hazards and maintain the surface. The proposed complete replacement will reduce maintenance burden at the park and the improved appearance will encourage use of the play equipment

4.8 Memorial Recreation Ground, Broadstairs (Provisional Item)

This play area was substantially replaced and upgraded in 2014. However it has sadly suffered two major instances of vandalism the second instance of which resulted in the entire timber boundary fence being destroyed by fire. The play area is now open to the remainder of the recreation area reducing the safety and security for children using the play equipment. Instances of dog fouling and dogs running through the play area have occurred since the damaged fence has been removed. It is therefore proposed to install a new powder coated bow topped galvanised steel fence to encourage the safe use of this park. This material selection will also make it much harder to repeat the wide scale damage caused by the previous vandalism and arson attack.

4.9 Maintenance of the new play equipment and safer surface will be funded via existing revenue budgets. The installation of the play equipment at Ethelbert Crescent will reduce maintenance costs for approximately the first 5 years following installation allowing the maintenance spend to be better balanced between the 31 play areas in the district. The posts, ropes and nets on the equipment proposed at Ethelbert Crescent have a 10 year warranty. The aluminium decks are warranted for 15 years and the structural panels have a lifetime warranty.

5.0 Options

5.1 Option 1 - Do Not Undertake Improvement Works

This Option is included as a baseline. This is not a 'do nothing' option due to the increasing maintenance and inspection liability and resultant H&S risk. In particular, this option would therefore result in the closure of the play area at Ethelbert Crescent followed by removal of the play apparatus.

5.2 Option 2 - Approve Proposal (Recommended)

That Cabinet approve the expenditure of the full value (£211k) of the allocated Community Parks fund to undertake works items 1-5 (provisional item 5 to be taken forward at the discretion of the Director of Operations) as listed in Table 1 and described in Section 4 of this report. This will include major replacement and improvement works at Ethelbert Crescent play area in Cliftonville. All approved work to be completed by 31 March 2022.

5.3 Option 3 - Vary Proposal

That Cabinet vary the proposed schedule of works to reduce or alter the scope of the project or the list of play areas to receive works. Note: the timescale for delivery is

extremely short and any significant variation may have a programme impact resulting in some of the allocated funding remaining unspent and being returned.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That Cabinet chose Option 2 to approve the proposal for expenditure as described in Section 4 of this report using allocated Community Parks funding. This will include major replacement and improvement works at Ethelbert Crescent play area in Cliftonville. All approved work to be completed by 31 March 2022.

Contact Officer: Luke Glover (Deputy Technical Services Manager)
Reporting to: Mike Humber (Director of Operations)

Annex List

Annex 1: [Ethelbert Crescent, Cliftonville - Proposed Play Area Improvements](#)

Annex 2: [Photo Document - Existing Play Areas](#)

Background Papers

Example of play apparatus proposed for Ethelbert Crescent.

Kompan - Castle Keep data sheet

https://www.kompan.co.uk/media/com_redshopb/ftp_productsheets/PCM1139.pdf

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell, Director of Finance

Legal: Estelle Culligan, Director of Law and Democracy