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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>3 May 2011</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Environmental and Commercial Services</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>ECP/ENV/IM11.86</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Willie Rennie</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>714761</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Play Area Investment 2011/12</b>		

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval of play area investment proposals for 2011/12.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Inverclyde Council's play area strategy was approved in March 2010 and the first phase of an £608k investment plan was approved in August 2010. Phase one of the action plan is currently in progress.

From the £608k investment fund, £250k was awarded in principle to three community groups in the hope that the Council funds would help the groups to attract complementary funding from organisations such as the National Lottery or other awarding bodies. An update on the status of these projects is included in this report.

- 2.2 A sum of £300k from earmarked reserves is available in financial year 2011/12 to progress phase 2 of the play area investment programme and a further £50k of external funding in the form of a Planning Bond is also available to be invested this financial year.
- 2.3 The approved investment priorities from the play area strategy are:

### **Priority 1**

Invest in current stock to meet safety standards.

### **Priority 2:**

Invest in current stock to modernise/refurbish.

### **Priority 3:**

Invest in new provision to meet quantity and quality standards. This may take the form of increasing the size and varying the content of existing play areas or the construction of new play areas on new sites.

- 2.4 The proposals contained in this report will see 10 (23%) of the district's play areas upgraded or refurbished.

## 2.5 Summary of Proposals

Priority	Location	Action	Value £ 000
1	Weir Street	Replace old equipment – install 3-4 new units	25
1	Lauriston Park	Replace old equipment – install 2-3 new units	25
1	Wemyss Bay Comm. Centre	Deal with drainage and safety surface issues. Increase number of play units, extend existing footprint - add 3-5 new items.	75
2	Hay Street	Replace old equipment – install 3-4 new units	25
3	Boglestone	Additional funding for community council play area project	75
3	Larkfield, Branchton & Braeside	Additional funding for community council play area project	25
3	West Glen Park	Expand play area footprint - add 2-3 new items within grass area.	25
3	Watt Street	Increase number of play units within existing footprint - add 2-3 new items.	25
3	Lady Alice	Expand play area footprint - add 2-3 new items within grass area.	25
3	Coronation Park	Increase number of play units within existing footprint - add 3-4 new items.	25
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>350</b>

## 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the committee approve the play area investment proposals as detailed in this report and summarised in paragraph 2.4 above;
- 3.2 That the 'in principle' funding already approved for the undernoted community projects is confirmed and the requirement for the groups to obtain external funding is dropped:-
- Boglestone                    £100k
  - Greenock Central        £ 75k
  - Larkfield/Braeside        £ 75k
- 3.3 That the committee approve the invitation of tenders for works relating to the £350k play area investment works for financial year 2011/2012.

**Aubrey Fawcett**  
**Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 There are 43 play areas currently managed by Inverclyde Council. The approved play area strategy sets out priorities for the investment in play areas across the district. Investment focus is on maintaining current stock to an acceptable standard in terms of safety and quality and extending existing play areas or creating new ones in order to bridge gaps in provision in some neighbourhoods.

The approved investment priorities from the play area strategy are:

### **Priority 1**

Invest in current stock to meet safety standards.

### **Priority 2:**

Invest in current stock to modernise/refurbish.

### **Priority 3:**

Invest in new provision to meet quantity and quality standards. This may take the form of increasing the size and varying the content of existing play areas, or the construction of new play areas on new sites.

- 4.2 Council funding is the main means through which the objectives of the play area strategy will be delivered. However, external funding will also be utilised where possible. There is a budget of £350k for 2011/12, of which £300k is Council funds and £50k external funds from a Planning Bond specific to Wemyss Bay.
- 4.3 Three community groups declared an interest in applying for funding through the play area investment fund for the purpose of creating new play areas within their geographical area of interest. The play area strategy allows for community groups to bid for funding for local projects e.g. as matched funding in a lottery or other external funding bid. At the August 2010 Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee all three groups were awarded funds in principle on the understanding that they complement the Council funds with externally sourced funds and present a project that is agreeable to the Council.
- 4.4 The 3 Wards Community Council in Port Glasgow was awarded Council funding of £100k in principle as a contribution towards the installation of a play area and a separate multi-use games area both to be located on a plot of land adjacent to Boglestone Community Centre.

In addition to the £100k awarded to the group through the play area investment fund (earmarked reserves) a further £7k was awarded, in March 2011, by the Grants Sub-Committee.

The Community Council has also applied for funding from other sources. At the time of writing, five funding applications have been made, of which one has been refused (£50k) and four are pending (£55k in total). Decisions on the pending applications are expected between April and June 2011.

- 4.5 Larkfield, Braeside & Branchton Community Council (LBCC) was awarded Council funding of £75k in principle as a contribution towards the installation of a play area within their area.

LBCC has made five applications for external funding. To date, four have been refused and one is pending. A site for the proposed play area has been chosen, which is on or nearby the site of the former play area in Burns Square.

- 4.6 Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRAG) was awarded Council funding of £75k in principle as a contribution towards the installation of a play area on a site located between Ann Street and Sir Michael Street. In addition, Inverclyde Alliance awarded Riverside Inverclyde £25k towards the project and the group have also been awarded a stage 1 lottery grant of £25k to assist in developing the project to a point that will allow a stage 2 lottery bid for £100k.

The group will meet on 4 May to set a project budget using the £25k stage 1 lottery award.

The site of the proposed play area is owned by Inverclyde Council and if the stage 2, £100k lottery bid is successful one of the several conditions of an award will be that GCRAG is granted a lease for the site.

The chosen site is particularly problematic from an engineering point of view as it is situated directly over a railway tunnel. In the circumstances, there will be constraints as to the depth of excavations and permitted load bearing capacity. Some design work has already taken place to mitigate these issues and further work of a similar nature is anticipated.

## 5.0 PRIORITY 1 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 **Weir St:** The large multi-use play unit and some of the small units on this site are now corroded and in need of replacement. It is proposed to remove all the old play units and install 3 - 4 new ones.

Estimated cost of the removal of the old units and installation of suitable replacements with the appropriate safety surface is £25k.

- 5.2 **Lauriston Park:** A small play area containing only two pieces of equipment. One unit, a large chute situated on a mound of causie stones, requires to be removed due to its poor condition, out-of-date design and lack of safety surface. The other multi-play unit is in relatively good condition and has an adequate safety surface in situ.

The recommended proposal is to remove the causie chute and mound and replace it with 2 - 3 new play units and safety surface at an estimated cost of £25k.

- 5.3 **Jacobs Drive:** This site has six play units, of which three swing units are at least 40 years old and the other three play units are at least 20 years old. None of the swing units have safety surface installed around them. The majority of the play area surface is made up of cracked and broken tarmac or concrete and needs to be replaced in the near future.

The estimated cost to refurbish this play area is £125k, which is a significant proportion (42%) of the available funding for 2011/12. Members may recall from an earlier report that antisocial behaviour was on occasion an issue at this site and that refurbishment of the site was deferred pending further investigation as to the extent of the problem. Over the last seven months there have been no reports of antisocial behaviour. However, it is possible that the problem may recur during the lighter summer nights.

If the Jacobs Drive play area is not refurbished during this investment phase then it will have to be refurbished or removed within the next 2 financial years.

The two available options at present are:

- a) Defer investment pending further assessment of the extent of antisocial behaviour associated with the play area: and
- b) Proceed with refurbishment this financial year at an estimated cost of £125k.

It is recommended that option a) is taken.

- 5.4 **Wemyss Bay Community Centre:** The play area is located on the grass plot directly adjacent to the community centre. There are three play units in situ and all are 15-20 years old. Two of the units are large, substantial items and are in good condition for their age. The site is very well used during the summer months. However, there is a problem with drainage and this added to the fact that the safety surface is predominately wood bark often makes the play area unattractive to children and on occasion unusable.

It is proposed to retain two and remove one of the existing units, replace the wood bark safety surface with a more suitable wet pour type surface and extend the play area with the introduction of 4-6 new play units. In addition, it will be necessary to upgrade the drainage on the site.

There is £50k of external funding available through a Planning bond and it is intended to fund the new play equipment with this money. It is proposed that a further £25k is allocated to this site to deal with the renewal of the safety surface and the necessary drainage works.

## 6.0 PRIORITY 2 PROPOSALS

6.1 **Hay Street:** Small play area laid out on two levels and now with only three play units in situ, all of which are 15-20 years old.

It is proposed to remove the three existing units and replace them with 3-4 new units at an estimated cost of £25k.

## 7.0 PRIORITY 3 PROPOSALS

7.1 As referred to in section 4, three community groups are actively seeking external funding to invest in play areas and the play area strategy encourages this approach in order to supplement Council investment in play provision. At the August 2010 Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee all three groups were awarded funds in principle, as undernoted, on the understanding that they complement the Council funds with externally sourced funds and present a project that is agreeable to the Council.

- Boglestone £100k
- Greenock Central £ 75k
- Larkfield, Branchton & Braeside £ 75k

GCRAG, as referred to in para 4.6, has been awarded £25k lottery funding for a feasibility study which may ultimately lead to further lottery funding of £100k. However, despite the assistance of Community Support Workers, the other two groups have struggled to obtain external funding in the current financial climate.

In the circumstances, in order to progress the aims of the play area strategy in providing play areas in neighbourhoods where there is a recognised gap in provision, it is proposed that the Boglestone and Larkfield projects be allocated additional funding from the play area earmarked reserves to allow their respective play area projects to proceed without delay, subject to them presenting schemes agreeable to the Council. The additional sums proposed are:

- Boglestone £75k
- Larkfield, Branchton & Braeside £25k

7.2 **West Glen Park:** The play area is set within a public park and there are two discrete areas of the park in which play units are installed. Four modern units are installed in one area and one set of swings elsewhere in the park.

It is proposed to expand the play area with the addition of 2-3 new play units within the grass area, the estimated cost of which is £25k.

7.3 **Watt Street:** One new, large play unit is being installed on this site under the phase 1 investment works. However, the new unit is a replacement for an old one and as such the site will still only have 3 play units in place. The minimum number of items required to bring the site up to the standard approved in Inverclyde Council's Play Area Strategy is 5.

It is therefore proposed to redesign the site and install sufficient new units to meet the approved standard at an estimated cost of £25k.

7.4 **Lady Alice:** This site will have new swings and a new play unit installed under the phase 1 investment works. However, the original equipment still in situ is old and in need of replacement. This site was chosen as the preferred site to upgrade within the neighbourhood and as such two nearby sites were removed, at Dempster Street and Murdieston Park.

It is therefore proposed to redesign the older part of the site and install sufficient new units to meet the approved standard at an estimated cost of £25k.

7.5 **Coronation Park:** The large play area within the park has two distinct footprints, one is a sand filled area with equipment designed for younger children, the other has a wood bark surface and the equipment is more biased towards older children. The range of equipment within the older children's area does not fully cover the footprint of the play site, there is a large and noticeable gap.

It is therefore proposed to install additional play units within the existing footprint of the play area. The estimated cost of installing 3-4 new units on this site is £25k.

## 8.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 8.1 Financial

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report £'000	Virement From	Other Comments
New Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Investment	2011/2012	£300		
Planning Bond	Play Area Investment	2011/2012	£50		Specific to Wemyss Bay

### 8.2 Human Resources, Legal and Equalities

None

## 9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 Finance was consulted on the financial Implications section of this report.