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| <b>Report To:</b>       | <b>Environment and Regeneration Committee</b>        | <b>Date:</b>       | <b>30 August 2012</b>    |
| <b>Report By:</b>       | <b>Head of Environmental and Commercial Services</b> | <b>Report No:</b>  | <b>SSC/ENV/IM/12.135</b> |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b> | <b>Willie Rennie</b>                                 | <b>Contact No:</b> | <b>714761</b>            |
| <b>Subject:</b>         | <b>Play Area Investment</b>                          |                    |                          |

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## 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of the Council's play area investment programme in respect of works in progress and proposed, and to seek approval as regards the next stage of the programme.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Inverclyde Council's play area strategy was approved in March 2010. Based on the approved strategy, an initial programme of improvement works was approved in August 2010 and a further tranche in May 2011.

With the exception of two community group projects all the approved play area upgrades are complete.

One of the two remaining community group projects, Larkfield, is included in the current programme and the second, Sir Michael St/Ann St, will be progressed following the outcome of a lottery funding bid due to be awarded in December 2012.

- 2.2 Additional funding of £300k was approved in the current financial year to progress the play area strategy. One stipulation applies to this year's funding allocation i.e. that a flagship skate park be created in Battery Park.
- 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 One priority 1 site from the initial assessment in 2010 remains to be dealt with, Jacobs Drive, Gourrock. The Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee of May 2011, decided to defer investment in the site pending further monitoring of anti-social behaviour associated with it. In the interim period no major issues with anti-social behaviour have been recorded. In the circumstances the play area will either have to be invested in to the tune of £125k, or the play units removed and the site landscaped at a cost of £25k. It is recommended that the play units are removed and the site landscaped.
- 2.5 Within the last year three new play areas have been constructed or refurbished as part of new housing developments. It is proposed these sites be readopted as public play areas.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the committee note that the programme of play area improvement works undertaken to date, as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of this report.
- 3.2 That the committee approve the allocation of the 2012/2013, £300k play area investment budget for the undernoted projects:
  - a) £175k for the construction of a new flagship skate park within Battery Park, Greenock.
  - b) £25k for the removal of the old play area in Jacob's Drive, Gourrock and associated landscaping works.
  - c) £50k for the installation of an outdoor gym within Battery Park.
  - d) £50k to be allocated to the investment in new play area provision at a site yet to be determined, subject to a further report to this committee to focus on gaps in play area provision across the district.
- 3.3 The committee remit the Head of Environmental & Commercial Services to implement the 2012/13 play area improvement works through further detailed design, producing tender documents, selecting tenderers and appointing the most economically advantageous tenderers.
- 3.4 The committee approve that 2 replacement play areas and 1 expanded play area at Parkhill Avenue, Oronsay Avenue and Auchmountain Halls be readopted onto Inverclyde Council's core establishment of public play areas.

**Ian Moffat**  
**Head of Environmental & Commercial Services**

## 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A programme of play area improvement works has been in progress over the last 3 years. The programme involved works to 23 sites across the district, including three sites put forward by community groups to have new play areas installed.
- 4.2 With the exception of two community group projects all the planned play area upgrades are complete.

The undernoted table shows a brief summary of the works carried out to date.

| Location              | Works Carried Out  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Auchenleck Lane       | New play area installed  |
| Clune Brae            | Old play area removed and site made safe                                 |
| Bawhirley Road        | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |
| Grosvenor Road        | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |
| Leven Road            | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |
| Dempster Street       | Old play area removed and site made safe                                 |
| Murdieston Park       | Old play area removed and site made safe                                 |
| Lady Alice Park       | Play area expanded and refurbished in a two phase improvement programme. |
| Grieve Road           | New play area installed on a new site.                                   |
| Watt Street           | Play area expanded and refurbished in a two phase improvement programme. |
| Fox Street            | New kickabout installed  |
| Cove Road             | Play area expanded. New play units installed                             |
| Ailsa Road            | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |
| Main Street, Inverkip | Play area fence repaired.  |
| Ryan Road             | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |
| West Glen Park        | Play area expanded. New play units installed                             |
| Boglestone            | New play area and MUGA installed on a new site.                          |
| Coronation Park       | Play area expanded. New play units installed                             |
| Weir Street           | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |
| Lauriston Park        | Old equipment removed and new play area installed                        |
| Hay Street            | All old equipment removed and new play area installed                    |

- 4.3 The two projects from the current programme which remain outstanding are Burns Square and Sir Michael Street play areas. The Burns Square works are in the process of being tendered and work will be completed later this year. The Sir Michael Street project is being taken forward by a community group, Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRAG), and advancement is dependent on a successful grant application to the Big Lottery Fund.

## 5.0 OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY GROUP PROJECTS

- 5.1 Larkfield, Braeside & Branchton Community Council (LBCC) was awarded Council funding of £100k as a contribution towards the installation of a play area within their area. A site for the proposed play area was chosen, which is on or nearby the site of the former play area in Burns Square.

A further £75k was made available for the project through Planning Gain associated with the Planning Application of River Clyde Homes to build new houses in the Larkfield area.

Planning permission for the new play area was granted in March 2012 and thereafter detailed designs were drafted in order for the works to be tendered. It took longer than anticipated for the detailed designs to be finalised due to issues with the proximity of underground services.

However, tenders have now been invited and works are due to commence in September and be concluded late November or early December.

- 5.2 Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRAG) was awarded Council funding of £75k 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 has 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.

GCRAG submitted the stage 2 lottery bid on 1<sup>st</sup> August and the application is now being considered. The outcome of their application should be known by late December 2012. Assuming the bid is successful, works on site are anticipated to commence April 2013.

It should be noted that there are lease issues still to be resolved with Network Rail and the Big Lottery Fund. Ownership of the site is split between Inverclyde Council and Network Rail and both parties have agreed to lease their respective land to GCRAG to permit the play area to be constructed. However, the conditions of the proposed lease fall short of the requirements of the Big Lottery Fund. At the time of writing negotiations are ongoing to try to resolve the matter. The matter of the unresolved lease will not hinder consideration of the funding application by the Big Lottery, but the issue of the lease needs to be concluded prior to lottery funding being made available for the project.

## 6.0 PROPOSALS 2012/2013

- 6.1 **Battery Park Skate Park:** The skate park has been a very popular addition to Battery Park since it was constructed ten years ago. Despite being popularly referred to as a skate park the facility is actually dual function in that it is also designed to be used by BMX riders. Indeed, many of the skateboarders are also keen BMX riders and vice versa.

Wear and tear is evident on the skate park equipment which has a detrimental effect on the enjoyment of users, especially skateboarders. The design is also somewhat limited in comparison to more modern skate parks recently installed by other providers.

It is proposed to construct a new skate park at different location within the park, in the vicinity of the now defunct helipad and to retain the existing site for use in the main by BMX riders.

Based on a desktop study of recently installed skate parks in other areas and in consultation with the Inverclyde Skateboarders Group, it is estimated that a new, state of the art skateboard park for Battery Park will cost £175k.

- 6.2 **Jacob's 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 very short term.

This play area is the only outstanding priority 1 site from the initial assessment in 2010 that remains to be dealt with. The Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee of May 2011, decided to defer investment in the site pending further monitoring of anti-social behaviour associated with it. In the interim period no major issues with anti-social behaviour have been recorded, however, based on the amount of broken glass that has to be removed from the site on a regular basis it is clear that it is still being used as a drinking den.

The play area will now either have to be replaced at a cost of £125k, or the play units removed and the site landscaped at a cost of £25k. The replacement option would require all of this year's remaining play area budget to be allocated to this one project. In the circumstances, it is proposed to deal with the immediate health and safety issues by undertaking an initial phase of works this year i.e. remove all the old play units and landscape the site. Landscaping works will be carried out so as to leave the site ready prepared for the installation of a new play area should a decision be made to install a new play area on the site in a subsequent investment phase.

There are four other play areas within a mile of this location and one just over a mile away:

| Location              | Distance  | Remarks              |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Skye Cres./Ailsa Road | 0.3 miles | Recently refurbished |
| King Street           | 0.6 miles | Recently refurbished |
| Broomberry Drive      | 0.6 miles | Recently refurbished |
| Albert Road           | 0.6 miles | Small play area      |
| Cove Road             | 1.1 miles | Recently refurbished |

**6.3 Battery Park Outdoor Gym:** Battery Park is earmarked under the play area strategy as a destination play area. Destination Play Areas are play areas within a key site, such as a park; they are aimed at attracting families and similar groups for longer visits and they tend to be larger than neighbourhood sites. Destination Play Areas will also have car parking (free), a greater quantity and variety of fixed equipment and access to facilities such as cafes and public toilets. Most children will be accompanied by an adult so their access to the play area will be limited to the occasions when an adult, teacher, youth leader etc. is able to take them. With that in mind it is proposed to install a new range of equipment on a site adjacent to one of the existing play areas that can be enjoyed by a wide range of age groups, including adults. The type of equipment proposed is primarily linked to fitness and general wellbeing but also has a high play value. Similar installations in other local authority parks are often referred to as outdoor gyms and they have proved to be very popular. The introduction of outdoor gym equipment to Battery Park will serve to meet the destination play area criteria of having a wider variety of fixed equipment available for use by a broader age group.

**6.4 Gap Provision:** Of the 23 sites addressed since the introduction of the play area strategy only one site, Boglestone, has gone some way to addressing the issue of providing play areas in neighbourhoods where none currently exist. All the other investment works to date have been to existing sites or to replace existing sites that had to be removed to permit housing development.

It is therefore proposed to earmark £50k of this year's budget to provide a play area in a neighbourhood in which there is currently no provision. To that end it is intended to bring forward a further report on potential investment sites based on an analysis of play area provision across the district.

## 7.0 PLAY AREAS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

**7.1** Within the last year three new play areas have been constructed or refurbished as part of new housing developments. All three new play areas have been constructed on or nearby the sites of previously existing Inverclyde Council play areas. These play areas are welcome additions to Inverclyde Council's establishment of play areas and serve to promote the Council's play area strategy. Although installed/refurbished by local housing associations it is proposed that the play areas in questions will remain as public play areas and be a maintained by the Council. The play areas are:

| Location        | Remarks  |
|-----------------|--|
| Oronsay Avenue  | Old play area that was originally located on the same site was removed and a new one installed in its place by RCH as part of their new build programme in the area.<br><br>The play area is on Council owned land and will be maintained by Inverclyde Council as a public play area. |
| Parkhill Avenue | New play area constructed on a new site by RCH as part of their new build programme in the area. The new play area is in part a replacement for Council play area which was removed as part of the wider housing development.  |

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
|                              | In the circumstances it is proposed that the facility will be maintained by Inverclyde Council as a public play area.   |
| Auchmountain Halls (rear of) | <p>The Council play area on this site has been expanded by Cloch Housing Association as part of their new build programme within the area.</p> <p>An arrangement was entered into with Cloch which permitted them to successfully apply for external funding to expand the play area on this site. Said arrangement was the subject of earlier committee reports.</p> <p>The newly expanded play area will be retained as a public play area and be maintained by Inverclyde Council.</p> |

## 8.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 8.1 Financial

| Cost Centre                        | Budget Heading       | Budget Year | Proposed Spend this Report<br>£'000 | Virement From | Other Comments   |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Carried Forward Earmarked Reserves | Play Area Investment | 2012/2013   | £100                                |               | Larkfield  |
| Planning Gain                      | Play Area Investment | 2012/2013   | £75                                 |               | Specific to Larkfield. Carried forward from 2011/2012                            |
| Carried Forward Earmarked Reserves | Play Area Investment | 2013/2014   | £75                                 |               | Sir Michael Street £75k to be carried forward to 2013/2014                       |
| Earmarked Reserves                 | Play Area Investment | 2012/2013   | £300                                |               | Battery Park Skate Park and Outdoor Gym & Jacob's Drive removal and landscaping. |
|                                    |                      |             |                                     |               |  |

### 8.2 Human Resources, Legal and Equalities

None.

## 9.0 CONSULTATION

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