
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date:	2nd May 2013
Report By:	Head of Environmental and Commercial Services	Report No:	ERC/ENV/IM/13.157
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Subject:	Play Area Investment		

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 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 further tranches agreed in May 2011, August 2012 and January 2013.

The majority of projects approved to date are complete, only five remain in progress. Work on four of these remaining projects is underway either on-site or in the design/procurement phase. Four of the projects are solely Inverclyde Council funded ventures i.e. Battery Park outdoor gym and skatepark, Jacobs Drive and Gibshill play areas, and the fourth site at Sir Michael Street is being installed in partnership with Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRAG) and the Big Lottery.

- 2.2 Ownership of the Sir Michael Street 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. At the time of writing the lease document has not yet been signed, however progress has been made since the matter was last reported to committee in that the terms of lease have largely been agreed and the process is in the final stages.

In the interim, tender were invited by GCRAG's agent and a contractor will be appointed as soon as the lease is signed.

As regards the Gibshill project, the proposed site is on land currently owned by River Clyde Homes and discussion is therefore ongoing re the transfer of the land to Council ownership.

- 2.3 Since the January update to committee the Burns Square play area in Larkfield has been completed. The play area is proving to be a big hit with local children and is always busy.

The outdoor gym for Battery Park had been expected to be in place by March, however the procurement process took longer than initially anticipated and the revised date for project completion is June 2013.

- 2.4 There is an available budget of £300k for the period 2013 through 2016. This report recommends that £100k is allocated for investment in existing play areas and that the £200k balance is used to install three new play areas in areas with an identified gap in play area provision.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the committee approve the available play area investment budget of £300k to be spent on:
- £100k to deal with major repairs and minor refurbishments of existing sites, with spend prioritised by officers based on technical assessments and condition reports.
 - £200k for the installation of three new play areas at:
Devol (Barrs Brae), Port Glasgow
Drumillan Hill (Braeside), Greenock
Castle Levan (Taymouth Drive), Gourrock
- 3.2 The committee remit to the Head of Environmental & Commercial Services to proceed to install three new play areas on the designated sites through further detailed design, producing tender documents, selecting tenderers and appointing the most economically advantageous tenderers.

Ian Moffat
Head of Environmental & Commercial Services

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council started a major play area investment programme in 2008/09 and to date over £2.1m has already been invested or is earmarked for investment in play areas across the district. The Council's Play Area Strategy was adopted in March 2010 to better direct the significant sums being made available to improve and sustain the district's play areas.
- 4.2 Funding of £300k is allocated in the period 2013 through 2016 to further progress the aims of Play Area Strategy and the Council's Nurturing Inverclyde vision.
- 4.3 The investment made to date has created an establishment of modern well equipped play areas across the district, there are still some gaps in provision to be dealt with, but in the three years since the investment strategy was adopted significant progress has been made and all of the old sites that were previously not fit for purpose have been dealt with – which was the first priority of strategy.

Subsequent phases of investment now need to concentrate on the other two key aims of the strategy, which are (i) continue to invest in current sites in a planned way so as to sustain the establishment of play areas as viable, safe and valued community assets (ii) invest in the provision of new sites to meet identified gaps in provision in specific localities.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In order to meet the sustainability aim of the Play Area Strategy it is proposed to allocate £100k of the £300k available over the next three years to deal with major repairs and minor refurbishments of existing sites, with spend prioritised based on technical assessments and condition reports of each site. For example, modern safety surfacing is susceptible to wear and to vandalism and expensive to repair. Revenue budgets will deal with minor repairs but will not be sufficient to repair large areas of safety surfacing or replace worn out or damaged play units. It is proposed that officers be given delegated authority to allocate funding as required over the three year period.
- 5.2 The January 2013 report to committee reported on the gaps in play area provision across the district and three locations were suggested as potential sites for new play areas, the sites in question being:
- Devol (Barrs Brae), Port Glasgow
 - Drumillan Hill (Braeside), Greenock
 - Castle Levan (Taymouth Drive), Gourrock

It is proposed to allocate the balance of the available funding, £200k, for the installation of new play areas on these sites.

- 5.3 **Devol, Port Glasgow:** the site in question is to the east of Barrs Brae and south of Moray Road. The reference to Devol is made due to the neighbourhood being the most populous in the vicinity with a pronounced gap in play area provision. The site being proposed is not actually within the Devol estate, but it is within reasonable walking distance. The land in question is owned by the Council so there would be no additional costs to acquire it. A play area on this site would also serve the Dougliehill and Whitecroft neighbourhoods. To date no local consultation has taken place.
- 5.4 **Drumillan Hill (Braeside), Greenock:** the potential site is on Council land which previously housed a play area several years ago (15+), located to the south east of Braeside Road, adjacent to the site of the old St Gabriel's school, which is at present a vacant plot. The Larkfield, Branchton and Braeside Community Council have made representations through their ward councillors for a new play area to be installed in the Braeside area.

5.5 **Castle Levan/Cloch Rd/Trumpethill, Gourock:** on Council land at Taymouth Drive. The plot in question previously housed a Council play area, but it was removed circa 15 years ago due to persistent drainage problems on the site. The drainage problems continued despite ditch clearing work carried out in 2012. The plot is directly downhill of Gourock Golf Course and surface water sheds onto the site. Since the January 2013 report to committee a new drain has been installed, but it is anticipated that further drainage work would have to be included in the design of any new play area on the site.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 **Financial:** The proposals include the installation of three new play areas, which will bring with them increased revenue costs, in terms of day to day maintenance for custodial type duties such as cleansing, litter clearance and safety checks. There will also be additional costs in the future to deal with minor mechanical type repairs due to equipment wear and tear, replacement parts, painting etc. It is recognised that the Council have just recently set a three year budget, so it is proposed to reprioritise the grounds maintenance section's workload to incorporate the custodial duties associated with the new play areas and therefore contain the costs within existing budgets. As regards the costs associated with replacement parts etc., if the proposal to allocate £100k of the available investment funds to sustain existing stock is approved, then this element of the maintenance costs of the new play areas will also be contained within existing revenue budgets.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report £'000	Virement From	Other Comments
CFCR	Play Area Investment	2013/2016	£100		Investment to sustain the existing stock.
CFCR	Play Area Investment	2013/2015	£200		For the installation of three new play areas.

6.2 **Human Resources:** No implications.

6.3 **Legal, Equalities and Diversity:** No implications.

6.4 **Repopulation:** No implications.