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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Environment and Regeneration Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>16 January 2014</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Acting Corporate Director Environment Regeneration &amp; Resources</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>ERC/ENV/IM/13.177</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Ian Moffat</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>715910</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>New Earmarked Reserves Proposals</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for proposals in respect of new earmarked funds allocated to the Environment and Regeneration Committee in September 2013.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Policy & Resources Committee of 24 September 2013 approved that new reserves be spent on Play Areas (£200k) and Improvements in Parks and Cemeteries (£100k). The Policy & Resources Committee of 19 November approved that a further £50k of reserves previously allocated for a possible gypsy travellers' transit site in Kelburn Park is instead allocated to review security measures and restore Kelburn Park and other Council parks that have been adversely affected by unauthorised encampments in the recent past.
- 2.2 The Council approved a Play Area Strategy in March 2010 and since then has invested heavily in play areas district wide. Future progress will now focus on improving and expanding existing sites in key areas by increasing the number and variety of play units and installing new or upgrading existing facilities.
- 2.3 New earmarked reserves to the value of £200k were approved in September 2013 and it proposed to focus spend on an existing play area site, Fox Street £180k and to a lesser extent on the Gibshill play area project £20k, to supplement the funding already allocated by Persimmon Homes.
- 2.4 Reserves have also been allocated to repair or refurbish Parks and Cemeteries across Inverclyde. It is recommended that this be allocated to repair roadways and paths associated with Kilmacolm, Port Glasgow and Gourrock cemeteries and to a lesser extent Birkmyre Park, Port Glasgow.
- 2.5 Proposals for the utilisation of the £50k originally allocated for the potential provision of a traveller's transit site within Kelburn Park are included in the body of the report along with identification of other major works to the Park.
- 2.6 The Regeneration Committee of 27 October 2011 approved Inverclyde Council funding of £250k for the upgrade of Coronation Park as part of a potentially more extensive project. The outline proposal for Coronation Park was valued at £810k at the time, however additional grant funding for the proposed works was not forthcoming. In the circumstances it is now proposed to design a revised scheme of improvement works for the available funding.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the Committee approve the available play area investment of £200k to be spent on:
- £180k to upgrade Fox Street play area;
  - £20k for the installation of a new play area at Gibshill, subject to further public consultation.
- 3.2 That the Committee approve £100k worth of repairs to footpaths and roadways associated with Kilmacolm, Port Glasgow and Gourrock cemeteries and Birkmyre Park, Port Glasgow.
- 3.3 That the Committee approve £50k to be used to:
- review security measures at Kelburn Park and Parklea and where appropriate modify them to suit current requirements;
  - resurface roadways and footways within Kelburn Park.
- 3.4 That the Committee note assessments of the wooden bridge and river defences within Kelburn Park are being carried out and that recommendations be included within the Open Space AMP.
- 3.5 That the Committee note the position in respect of the upgrade to Coronation Park and officers will review the original scheme and present recommendations to a future committee as to how to invest the available funds.

**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 has already been approved for 2013/2016 to further progress the aims of Play Area Strategy and the Council's Nurturing Inverclyde vision. This report seeks approval to allocate a further £200k of investment in play areas.
- 4.3 Sites on which development has been approved and still to be concluded are: Battery Park Skatepark, Jacobs Drive, Gibshill and Sir Michael Street play areas – the latter is being installed in partnership with Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRA) and the Big Lottery; and the Gibshill project is in partnership with Gibshill Residents' Association and Persimmon Homes.

Three new sites have also been approved in principle for 2014; Barrs Brae, Port Glasgow; Braeside, Greenock and Taymouth Drive, Gourrock.

Subsequent phases of investment now need to concentrate on 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.

- 4.4 With respect to the proposed Gibshill play area, previous reports have highlighted a gap in the provision of children's play areas in this area, which it was initially intended to be addressed through the installation of a new play area on a new site. The project was originally to be funded through funds available to Gibshill Residents' Association which included a funding allocation from one of the housing developers that has built in the area. In summary, the value of available funding has reduced by approximately £20k, not enough for a new play area on the chosen site. A recommendation has been made in this report to deal with the funding shortfall.
- 4.5 Fox Street play area is a large neighbourhood play site and includes a blaes kickabout pitch. The kickabout was previously grass and was very well used, so much so that it was worn out and latterly there was more mud and dirt than grass. The upgrade to blaes took place less than five years ago with the intention to carry out a further upgrade once outstanding health and safety issues had been dealt with on other sites. In addition, the age and condition of the adjacent play area is such that it needs to be upgraded. In particular the wooden logs that make up the design of the play area as well as the surrounding landscape are in poor condition and require to be addressed.
- 4.6 Inverclyde Council owns and manages a significant network of roadways and footways in parks and cemeteries. Repairs and maintenance of these assets are paid for from the central repairs budget managed by Property Services; however the budget is insufficient to fund all necessary works and year on year maintenance budgets are hard pressed. Some progress was made in 2012/2014 via funding allocated from the Environmental Improvement Fund, but there is still a significant need for repairs to be carried out in these areas, hence the proposal to further supplement the works already carried out via the Environmental Improvement Fund.
- 4.7 There was a sum of £50k allocated for a potential gypsy traveller's site in Kelburn Park, but following the outcome of public consultation the funds were instead allocated towards securing and restoring Kelburn Park and other Council parks that had recently been damaged by unauthorised encampments.
- 4.8 Over the years there have been several unauthorised encampments in Kelburn Park, and more recently on land around Parklea. Damage was caused at the time and most of the immediate issues have been dealt with but not enough to bring the park back to the standard it formerly enjoyed. Both sites remain secure at present, but in the case of Kelburn Park in particular, the degree of security measures taken are significant and prevent most vehicle access to the site, including maintenance vehicles.

- 4.9 Vehicles have not been permitted into the park for a number of years, but even so the condition of the tarmac roadways and footways is poor and they are in need of attention. Likewise, most, if not all, of the park benches and picnic sets have been vandalised. Funding from the Environmental Improvement Fund (EIF) amounting to £17k was allocated to Kelburn Park, however most of the work was postponed pending the outcome of public consultation on the potential transit site, the EIF works will now commence. Repairs to the benches etc. will be undertaken by Inverclyde Community Development Trust (ICDT), so labour costs will be minimal and the work can be started right away. The refurbished units will be available for next spring. Some repairs to tarmac surfaces will also be carried out under the EIF.
- 4.10 A further two main items need also to be addressed and will require more investigation prior to specific recommendations being made. The first is a wooden bridge in the park, with metal fasteners, it has suffered from vandalism over the years. Repairs have been made on several occasions, but it is currently closed to the public due to damage. The bridge is also now quite old and corrosion is visible in several locations.
- 4.11 Secondly, river defences are probably the most pressing issue as regards Kelburn Park. The park is built on reclaimed land and river defences on the windward side of the park have been breached, with some of the footpaths having been washed away. Repair or reinstatement works will be outwith the scope of works that can be dealt with through the funding already allocated.
- 4.12 Inverclyde Council funding of £250k was allocated in 2011 for the upgrade of Coronation Park. The funding formed part of a much more extensive development framework involving Inverclyde Council, Riverside Inverclyde and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport. The value of works proposed under the Port Glasgow Strategic Development Project was £3.1m of which £810k was to be for the Coronation Park works. The objective was that the £250k of Inverclyde Council funds would assist in attracting significant external funds to make up the balance for the Coronation Park scheme. In a challenging financial environment it was not possible to attract external funding.

## **5.0 PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 It is proposed to continue to meet the key aims of the play area strategy by upgrading the existing neighbourhood play area in Fox Street, Greenock and help create a new play area in Gibshill, Greenock, where there is a recognised gap in the provision of children's play areas.
- 5.2 Fox Street play area: it is proposed to upgrade both the kickabout site to include fencing and an improved surface, and to refurbish the play area element of the site. The budget proposed for the scheme is £180k. Subject to the cost of said works, some new play units will also be installed. It is not proposed to install lighting around the kickabout.
- 5.3 Gibshill proposed play area, it is recommended to allocate a sum of £20k to the project. Given that the resident's association was involved in choosing the proposed site for the play area there is clearly local support for it. Nonetheless, if funding is approved, it is proposed to carry out further public consultation as regards the proposed new play area.
- 5.4 As regards roadways and footways in parks and cemeteries, it is proposed to allocate £100k to effect repairs to roadways and footways associated with Kilmacolm, Port Glasgow and Gourrock cemeteries, and Birkmyre Park, Port Glasgow.
- 5.5 It is proposed that the security measures at Kelburn Park are reviewed and where identified as inappropriate they are modified to suit current requirements. In addition to the security measures proposed for Kelburn Park the overall condition of the park will be addressed within the confines of available funding. It is proposed the balance of the available £50k is used for resurfacing of tarmac areas.
- 5.6 It is also proposed that the Committee note assessments of the wooden bridge and river defences within Kelburn Park are being carried out and that recommendations will be included within the Open Space AMP.

5.7 It is proposed that the Committee note the position in respect of the upgrade to Coronation Park and that officers will review the original scheme and present recommendations to a future Committee as to how to invest the available funds.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 Financial:

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report £'000	Virement From	Other Comments
Reserves	Play Area Investment	2014/2015	£200		Fox Street and Gibshill
Reserves	Parks & Cemeteries	2013/2014	£100		Roadways and footways.
Reserves	Kelburn Park & Parklea	2013/2014	£50		Security and restoration
	Coronation Park	2014/2015	£250		Refurbishment

6.2 **Human Resources:** No implications.

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

6.4 **Repopulation:** The Council's aims stated in the Corporate Statement 2013-17 are assisted by the recommendations in this report, in that there will be access to leisure opportunities for all life stages and that abundant protected green/open spaces are accessible to all.