

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE            Housing and Environment

DATE                    11 March 2014

DIRECTOR             Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT     City Play Areas

REPORT NUMBER:    H&E/14/029

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1.    PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Committee of the progress of the 1<sup>st</sup> Year of the Programme of Play Area Refurbishment Works.

2.    RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i)    Acknowledges the success of this year's refurbishment programme.
- (ii)   Agrees that the Service should continue the rolling programme of Play Area Refurbishment as detailed in this Report.

3.    FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All works associated with play areas is undertaken within existing approved budget levels.

**2013/14 Programme**

Revenue    £100,000  
Capital     £450,000

Capital funding is split £300K HRA and £150K Condition and Suitability programme.

**2014/15 Programme**

Revenue    £120,000  
Capital     £450,000

Capital funding is split £300K HRA and £150K Condition and Suitability programme.

There are no further financial implications as a result of this report.

#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Housing and Environment staff undertakes implementation of all works associated with the rolling programme of Play Area Refurbishment.

There are positive implications of this rolling programme against International, National and Local Children's' Play Policy:

**United Nations**, Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 31 of the Convention states:

*“Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”*

**The Scottish Governments**, Play Strategy for Scotland 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013 states:

*“Children’s play is crucial to Scotland’s well being; socially, economically and environmentally. Our people are our greatest resource and the early years of life set the pattern for children’s future development.*

*‘The experiences children have in early life – and the environments in which they have them – shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grow up to be healthy, productive members of society’ (Harvard University, 2007).*

*Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and ‘when children play their brains do two things: they grow and they become organised and usable’ (Hughes, 2013). By investing in all our children and young people now we can strengthen their ability to achieve their full potential.”*

**Aberdeen City Council** upholds children’s rights to play in the City’s Play Policy. Some of the key action points contained within this policy are to:

- *Monitor the city’s network of fixed play equipment to ensure that they are safe, well lit and maintained to a high standard.*
- *Provide play opportunities within the city that are of high quality, challenging and safe.*
- *Promote the importance of play within the lives of ‘Aberdeen’s Children’ so that they are active and healthy.*

It is clear that the Council recognises that play is an essential part of a child's development and important to the future of Aberdeen. This can be clearly seen in the Council's Children's Strategy statement:

*"Play is an essential part of everyone's life and is fundamental to human development and is freely chosen and self directed. Children engage in play as a mechanism to explore the world around them, for enjoyment and creative expression and as the medium through which skills are learned and developed. Play is the stimulus for physical, intellectual, emotional and social development."*

There are direct implications arising from this report in terms of health and safety under BS EN 1176 Playground Equipment Standard and BS EN1177 Impact Absorbing Playground Surfacing.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

### 5.1 Aberdeen City Play Areas

At present there are 154 play areas (62no HRA) throughout the City with an estimated asset value of £9 million. The play areas are categorised according to the industry standard of:

- 55no Local Areas of Play (LAP) (22no HRA), small play area.
- 69no Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) (32no HRA), medium play area.
- 30no Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP) (8no HRA), large play area.

The Revenue Budget for maintenance of these areas is currently £100,000 a year, which gives approximately £649 per play area for repairs and maintenance. A rolling programme of refurbishment is underway to replace all 154 play areas over a 15 year period.

### 5.2 Play Area Inspection and Maintenance 2013

A review of the Cities play area inspection regime was carried out by the Service in 2012, as a result of an identified decline in the overall condition of play areas. The review is supported by Aberdeen City Open Space Audit conducted in 2010. The play areas were becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain at an acceptable standard and inspection records were limited.

The review highlighted that existing reporting procedures and staffing levels were insufficient to ensure that inspections and repairs were being undertaken effectively. This led to the creation of a new more robust computerised reporting procedure and an additional inspection team. The inspection team, consisting of 5 staff, now carry out weekly inspections to every play area and undertake minor repairs to

equipment improving the safety of the areas whilst preventing repairs becoming increasingly costly.

This improved overall maintenance highlighted that the majority of the Cities play areas were reaching the end of their useful life. Many areas contain equipment well past the manufacturer's life expectancy of 10 to 15 years. It was decided to carry out an Audit of the condition and play value of the areas to create a base line for a rolling programme of refurbishment.

### 5.3 Programme 2013/14

Following on from this audit a priority list for play area refurbishment was created based on the site condition, play value and proximity to other play areas. Along side this, a separate list of individual items requiring renewal, removal or immediate repair was compiled using recommendations from the Annual Independent Play Inspection Report.

This allowed the Service to develop a programme to move the refurbishment forward as funding was made available. The programme is structured to target the areas most in need of refurbishment, balanced against overall condition, play value and proximity to other areas.

Capital Funding of £450,000 and an increased Revenue Budget of £100,000 have enabled the Service to move forward with the Refurbishment Programme previously described. This has been on a priority basis and has involved community consultation on the final design of each play area.

By the end of the 2013/14 financial year the Service will have fully refurbished:

Play Area	Capital Budget
Airyhall Community Centre	C&S programme
Alan Douglas Park	HRA
Denburn Court	HRA
Formartine Road	HRA
Gordon's Mills Road	HRA
Johnston Gardens East	HRA
Kaimhill Circle	HRA
Lemon Street	HRA
Willow Park Crescent	HRA

and carried out the following refurbishment works:

Play Area	Capital Budget
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Coronation Road, installation of a new accessible roundabout.	HRA
Westburn Park, 2 new climbing units.	C&S programme
Kincorth Circle, 2 kickwalls with goals, accessible roundabout and swings.	C&S programme
Powis Crescent, 2 kickwalls with goals and refurbishment of an aerial runway and cantilever swing.	HRA
Orchard Street, new bowtop metal railings.	HRA

Progress has been made on general maintenance with 75 of the 97 items highlighted in the Annual Independent Report as requiring attention being dealt with. The Inspection teams continue to improve areas by not only slowing deterioration but by also improving the overall condition, cleanliness, safety and play value.

Further development continues at the existing play areas within Duthie Park which should be completed by the end of April 2014. This is work funded by the 'Russell Bequest'.

Additional funding for play areas was secured from Britvic by 2 local community groups and works implemented by the Service. A further Community group secured funding from the Police Community Safety Fund to cover the installation of an accessible roundabout.

Feedback from the public has been extremely positive to the works with most delighted by the improvements. There has also been a great deal of positive press coverage.

#### **5.4 Proposed Programme 2014/15**

The 2013/14 refurbishment programme saw an improvement in the condition of the Cities Play Areas of 4% and in their play value by 5%. It is hoped that a similar improvement will be achieved following the 2014/15 programme.

A Play Area Audit of condition and play value has been completed in order that again refurbishment works are based on a priority order. At present the Service is in the process of finalising costs and design briefs for this years programme.

The following areas are programmed to be fully refurbished in 2014/15:

<b>Play Area</b>	<b>Capital Budget</b>
Girdleness Road	HRA
Kerloch Gardens	HRA
Leslie Terrace	C&S programme
Marischal Court	HRA
Mathews Road	HRA

Newton Terrace	C&S programme
Oldcroft Road	C&S programme
Thistle Court	HRA

with the following refurbishment works included:

<b>Play Area</b>	<b>Capital Budget</b>
Heathryfold, replacement of climbing units and landscaping works.	C&S programme
Cromwell Road, replacement of main climbing unit.	C&S programme
Gordon Park, replacement of swings and roundabout.	C&S programme
Greenbrae Drive,	HRA

The programme has yet to be finalised but design briefs should be completed and out to tender in May. Consultation on the design proposals with the community should be in June and July. It is expected that the installation of the equipment would be in November 2015.

## 6. IMPACT

The City Play Areas will contribute to the delivery of the five year plan “Aberdeen the Smarter City” commitments to:-

“promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's citizens to lead more active, healthier lives.”

“provide a clean, safe and attractive streetscape and promote biodiversity and nature conservation. We will encourage wider access to green space in our streets, parks and countryside. “

It will also assist the Council in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement’s National Outcome 12 “We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations” and will contribute to several other outcomes including No.6 “We live longer, healthier lives”, No. 7 “Tackling inequalities” and No. 10 “We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need”.

It will also help deliver the Council’s open space strategy particularly achieving objectives to improve the quality of open spaces and implementing quality standards provided in the Open Space Supplementary Guidance.

## 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

This report is seen as a benefit to all, the assessment of risk associated with this report is very low.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Play Area Report 2012.  
Independent Play Area Inspection Report 2013.  
Play Area Priorities 2013/14.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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