

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE                      Communities, Housing and Infrastructure  
DATE                                18 March 2015  
DIRECTOR                         Pete Leonard  
TITLE OF REPORT                City Play Areas  
REPORT NUMBER:                CHI/15/125  
CHECKLIST COMPLETED    Yes

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1.    PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Committee of the progress of the 2014/15 Environmental Services programme of Play Area Refurbishment Works.

2.    RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i)    Acknowledges the success of the 2014/15 refurbishment programme.
- (ii)   Agrees that the Service should continue the rolling programme of Play Area Refurbishment for 2015/16 as detailed in this Report.

3.    FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

**2014/15 Programme**

Revenue     £120,000  
Capital       £450,000    **(HRA £300,000)**

Common good funding specifically allocated to the refurbishment of Hallfield Road Play area £20,000

Common good funding commemorating the centenary of WW1 £75,000 allocated to Earns Heugh Road and Langdykes Way play areas.

#### **2015/16 Programme**

Revenue     £120,000  
Capital       £470,000 **(HRA £300,000)**

Capital funding is split £300K HRA and £170K 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."*

**Nurtured Outcome Group** have identified in their 'Early Years Framework Implementation Plan 2014-15' that:

*"Increasingly and consistently, evidence shows that giving children the best start in life offering the highest quality of health, learning and play experiences, improves outcomes for children that will have a life long impact for them as adults. These experiences enable children to become active citizens who can make significant contributions to society and participate fully in their own lives and those of their communities."*

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 153 play areas (**64no HRA**) throughout the City with an estimated asset value of £9 million. The play areas are categorised according to the industry standard of:

- 53no Local Areas of Play (LAP) (**23no HRA**), small play area.
- 69no Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) (**33no HRA**), medium play area.
- 31no Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP) (**8no HRA**), large play area.

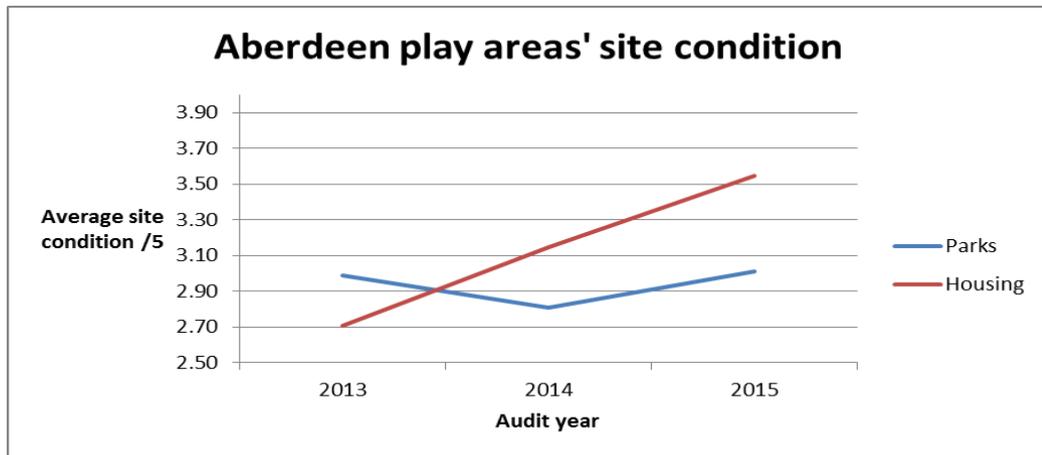
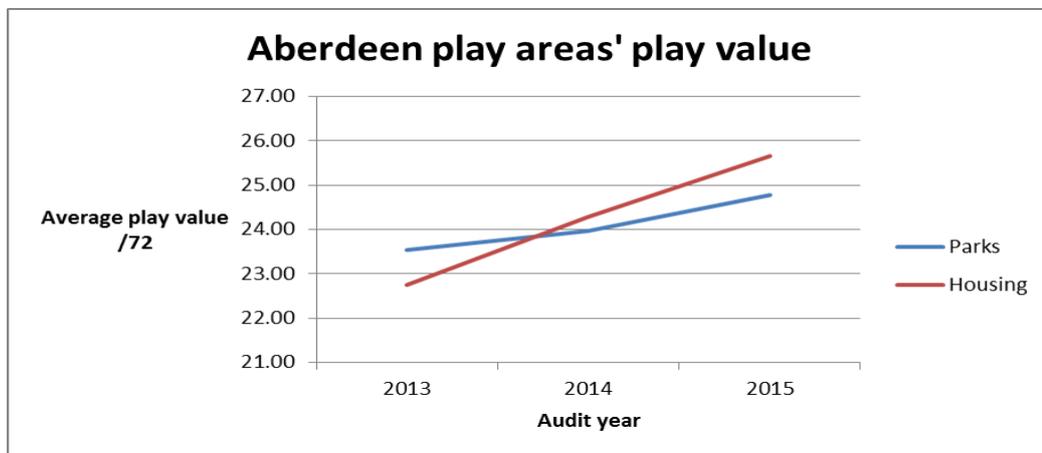
The Revenue Budget for maintenance of these areas is currently £120,000 a year, which gives approximately £784 per play area for

repairs and maintenance. A rolling programme of refurbishment is underway to replace all 153 play areas over a 15 year period.

## 5.2 Play Area Inspection and Maintenance 2014

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. Following on from that review new inspection, reporting and maintenance procedures have been put in place. These improved procedures are contributing to the overall improvement in the quality of play areas city wide.

Further audits have been carried out in Jan 2014 and Jan 2015 which clearly demonstrates this upward trend.



## 5.3 Programme 2014/15 UPDATE

Following on from a second audit a priority list for play area refurbishment during 2014/15 was created. This was 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 £120,000, and the addition of £95,000 from the Common Good Fund have enabled the Service to make good progress with the Refurbishment Programme previously described. This has been on a priority basis and has involved community consultation on the final design of each of the larger play areas.

By the end of the 2014/15 financial year the Service will have fully refurbished play areas at the following locations:

<b>Play Area</b>	<b>Capital Budget</b>
Leslie Terrace	C&S programme
Newton Terrace	C&S programme
Thistle Court	HRA
Marischal Court	HRA
Beech Rd	HRA
Oldcroft Rd	HRA
Mathews Rd	HRA
Earns Heugh Rd	Common Good Fund
Langdykes Way	Common Good Fund
Hallfield Rd	HRA
Girdleness Rd	HRA
Kerloch Gardens	HRA

And carried out several partial refurbishments as follows:

<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 and swings	C&S programme
Gordon Park, replacement of swings and roundabout and see saw	C&S programme
Greenbrae Drive, additional climber unit and multi goals	Housing

Around 25 items, identified as nearing the end of their useful lives were removed from sites around the city throughout the year.

In addition to allocated budgets, the service has worked closely with community groups raising funding for play facilities in their own areas. This year groups have secured

Play Area	External/community Funding
Kincorth Circle Skate Park	£50k
Girdleness Road play area	£26K
Eric Hendrie play area MUGA	£30K
Altens Community Centre play area	£50K

This gives an overall total of **£156K** of secured external funding. The success of these groups in securing this additional funding highlights the growing importance of community engagement.

Public feedback has been extremely positive to the works carried out to date and we anticipate positive press coverage once this year's refurbishments are complete.

#### **5.4 Proposed Programme 2015/16**

A third Play Area Audit of condition and play value has already been completed this year. Findings from this audit will be used to inform the priorities for the coming financial year. At present the Service is in the process of finalising priorities, costs and design briefs for the coming year.

The following areas are listed in priority order only and the 2015/16 programme for refurbishment will be finalised in the near future.

<b>Play Area</b>	<b>Capital Budget</b>
Wales Street	HRA
Fernhill Road	HRA
Findon Ness	HRA
Deevale Crescent	HRA
Manor Ave	HRA
Seaton Gardens N	HRA
Seaton Ave South	HRA
Hutcheon Court	HRA
Orchard Street	HRA
Kingswood Crescent	C&S programme
Bethlin Mews	C&S programme
Kingswood Road	C&S programme
Coldstone Avenue	C&S programme
Kincorth Land	C&S programme
Corthan Crescent	C&S programme

Once finalised, design briefs should be completed and out to tender by May. As in previous years Communities will again be consulted on the proposals for higher value sites. All refurbishment work will be completed within the 2014/15 financial year.

## 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”.

The report contribute towards the delivery of the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy 2011-2016 particularly in delivering objective 2 and action 2.4 of the Strategy action plan

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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