

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	15 March 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	City Play Areas
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/021
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Committee of the progress of the 2015/16 Environmental Services programme of Play Area Refurbishment Works.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i) Acknowledges the success of the 2015/16 refurbishment programme.
- (ii) Agrees that the Service should continue the rolling programme of Play Area Refurbishment for 2016/17 as detailed in this Report. 5.4 Proposed Programme 2016/17
- (iii) Approves the use of the ESPO Framework as part of the 2016/17 procurement process.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

An additional £70,000 was allocated from an underspend in the previous year's budget and earmarked for refurbishment of Auchmill Terrace and Cairncry Community Centre play areas

2015/16 Programme

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

Common good funding specifically allocated to the refurbishment of Seaview Avenue play area £30,000

2016/17 Programme

Revenue £120,000

Capital £470,000

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

Communities Housing and Infrastructure staff undertake 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 21st 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

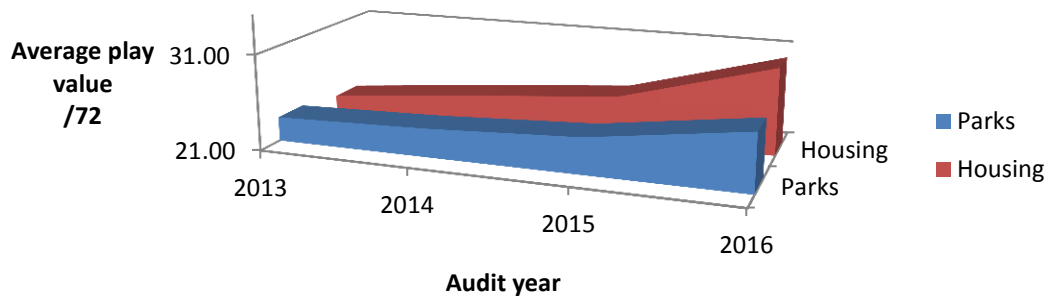
At present there are 148 play areas (**61no HRA**) throughout the City with an estimated asset value of £10 million. The play areas are categorised according to the industry standard of:

- 49no Local Areas of Play (LAP) (**17no HRA**), small play area.
- 66no Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) (**35no HRA**), medium play area.
- 33no Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP) (**9no HRA**), large play area.
- The Revenue Budget for maintenance of these areas is currently £120,000 a year, which gives approximately £810 per play area for repairs and maintenance. A rolling programme of refurbishment is underway to replace all 148 play areas over a 15 year period.

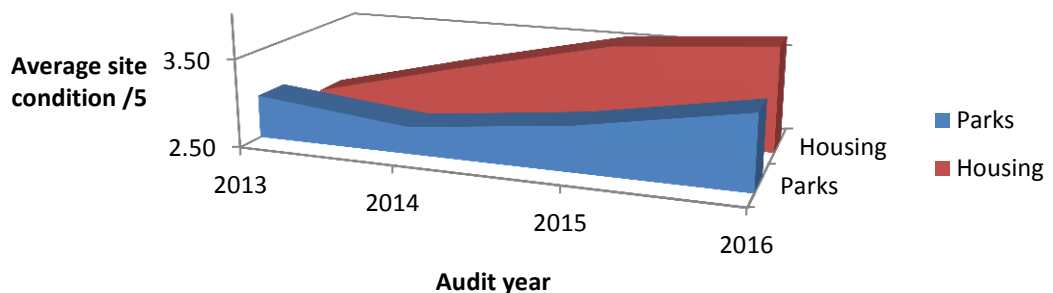
5.2 Play Area Inspection and Maintenance 2015

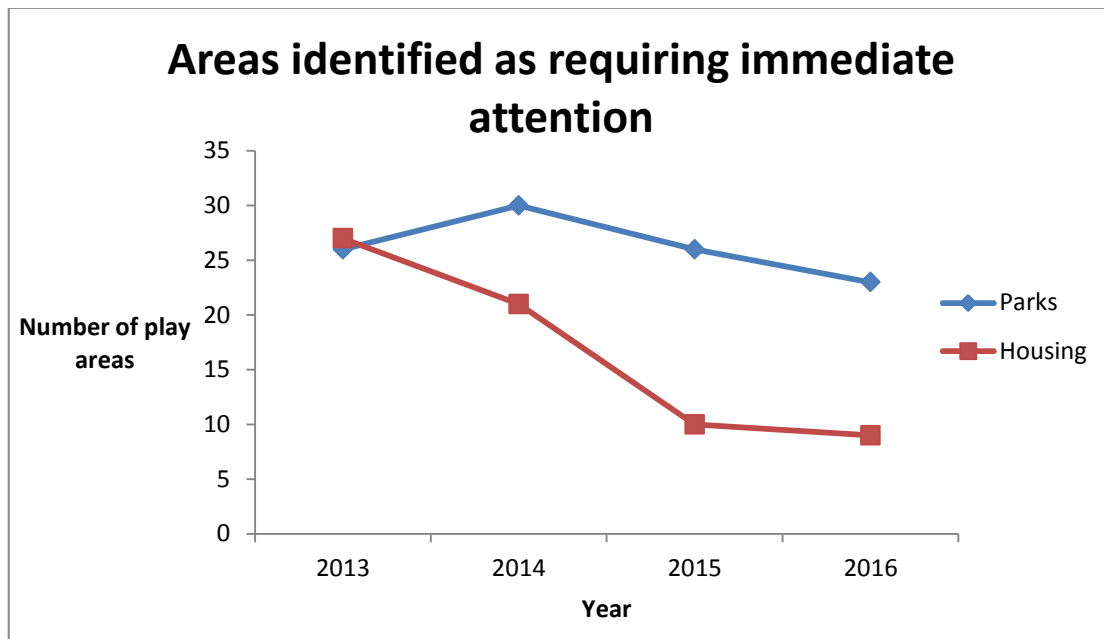
- A review of the Cities play area inspection regime was carried out by the Service in 2012/13, as a result of an identified decline in the overall condition of play areas. Following on from that review new inspection, reporting and maintenance procedures have been put in place. These improved procedures are contributing to the overall improvement in the quality of play areas city wide.
- Consistent audits of all play areas have now been carried out in four consecutive years. Analyses of the results clearly demonstrate a positive trend. See graphs 1-3 below. The graphs also demonstrate the gap that is growing between the areas held in the Housing and Parks budgets.

Aberdeen play areas' play value



Aberdeen play areas' site condition





5.3 Programme 2015/16 UPDATE

- Following on from a third audit a priority list for play area refurbishment during 2015/16 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 2015/16 financial year the Service will have fully refurbished play areas at the following locations:

Play Area	Capital Budget
Jacks Brae	C&S programme
Corse Gardens	C&S programme
Thorngrove Crescent	C&S programme
Millhill Brae	C&S programme
Callum Wynd	C&S programme

Deevale Crescent	HRA
Manor Avenue	HRA
Hutcheon Court	HRA
Kincorth Land	HRA
Corthan Crescent	HRA
Alexander Terrace	HRA
Mastrick Drive	HRA
Auchmill Terrace	Allocation from Underspend
Cairncry Community Centre	Allocation from Underspend
Seaton Gardens North	Seaton Backies Project
Seaton Avenue North	Seaton Backies Project
Skene Street	Communities/Service Revenue

And carried out several partial refurbishments as follows:

Play Area	Capital Budget
Seaton Crescent, Replaced Swings and two climbing units	HRA
Kirk Terrace, Replacement Swings	HRA
Westburn Park, Replacement large spinning item.	C&S programme
Duthie Park, all weather pitch surface	Bequest
Seaview Avenue, Large climber, swings, roundabout, see saw and springers	Common Good
Heathryfold, Embankment Slides, roundabout and swings.	Community funding/Service Revenue
Central Park, toddler climber, swings, dish spinner and step logs	C&S programme
Cromwell Road, Toddler unit	C&S programme
Braeside Place, Swings and toddler unit.	C&S programme

- 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 who raised funding for play facilities in their own areas. This year groups have secured

Play Area	External/community Funding
Skene Street	£46.5K
Heathryfold	£28K
Powis Circle	£6K
Printfield	£15K

- This gives an overall total of **£95.5K** 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 2016/17

- A fourth Play Area Audit of condition and play value has been completed. Findings from this audit were used to inform the priorities for the coming financial year and the service is in the process of finalising costs and design briefs for the coming year.

The following play areas are the priority for the 2016/17 programme.

Play Area	Capital Budget
Tillydrone Flats	HRA
Marquis Rd North	HRA
Seaton Gardens South	HRA
Eday Cr	HRA
Froghall	HRA
Ruthrieston Cr	HRA
Ferrier Cr	C&S programme
Wellside Pl	C&S programme
Callum Pk	C&S programme
Ash Hill Rd	C&S programme
Morrison Dr	C&S programme
South Esplanade West	C&S programme
Buckie Wynd	C&S programme
Balnagask Circle	C&S programme
Laburnum Walk	C&S programme
Devenick Pl	C&S programme
Charleston Rd	C&S programme

Once finalised, design briefs will be completed and out to tender by May. As in previous years communities will again be consulted on the proposals for the higher value sites. All refurbishment work will be completed within the 2016/17 financial year.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

Actively managing play areas within the city is leading to a demonstrable improvement in the quality of the facilities on offer

Improving Staff Experience –

In continuing with the commitment to provide the necessary resources, officers are empowered to continue the programme of play area improvements identified in their play area improvement plan. This leads to greater job satisfaction and raised motivation in the team tasked with play area management.

Improving our use of Resources –

Actively managing play areas will contribute to the continued provision of good quality play areas with an increased amenity value.

Corporate –

Contributes to the following sections of Aberdeen: The Smarter City

- We will embrace the distinctive pride the people of Aberdeen take in their city and work with them to enhance the sense of well-being here, building strong communities which look out for, and look after one another.
- We will challenge inequalities wherever they exist and bring our communities closer together.
- We will promote Aberdeen as a great place to live, bring up a family, do business and visit.
- 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.

- 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

Public –

This report will be of interest to the public as the improvements made to play areas to date have been very well received. Each stage of the process has been well reported and in several communities has inspired groups to get involved in sourcing additional funding for play facilities in their own areas.

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.
City Play areas update 2014/15
Play area audit 2016

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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