

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Strategic Commissioning
DATE	30 th April 2018
REPORT TITLE	City Play Areas
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/18/008
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Steven Shaw
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1 & 2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise the Committee on the progress of the 2017/18 Environmental Services programme of Play Area Refurbishment Works, request authority to spend up to £470,000 to deliver the 2018/19 Play Area Refurbishment Works, and to authorise expenditure via a range of call-offs from a relevant Framework Agreement.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Committee:

- 2.1 Acknowledges the success of the 2017/18 refurbishment programme.
- 2.2 Agrees that Environmental Services should continue the rolling programme of play area refurbishment and to approve the total estimated expenditure of £470,000 for this programme in 2018/2019. This being subject to the service having the capacity to deliver and subject to the industry suppliers having the capacity to supply within the 2018/19 financial year.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At present there are 146 play areas within the city. 86 of these play areas are recognised as park assets and referred to under the service's Parks Account. The remaining 60 play areas are Housing assets managed by the same service but under HRA (Housing Revenue Account). The estimated asset value of all the city play areas is £10 million.

The play areas are categorised according to the industry standard of:

- 50no Local Areas of Play (LAP) (17no of these are HRA), small play area.
- 64no Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) (34no of these are HRA), medium play area.
- 32no Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP) (9no of these are HRA), large play area.
- The Revenue Budget for maintenance of these areas is currently £120,000 a year, which gives approximately £816 per play area for repairs and maintenance.

3.1.2 Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.

The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.¹ Play can happen indoors or outdoors, with or without the oversight of adults, in everyday spaces, in environments designed for play and in places chosen by children and young people (Play Strategy for Scotland).

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

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 sites to ensure that they are safe, well-lit and maintained to a high standard.
- Provide play opportunities within the city that are high quality challenging and safe.
- Promote the importance of play within the lives of 'Aberdeen's Children so that they are active and healthy.

3.1.4 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."

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

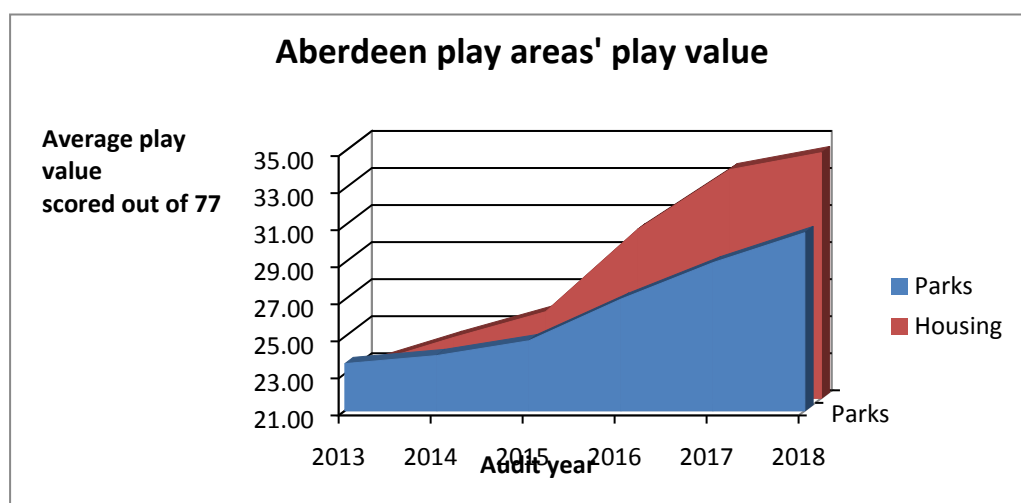
“Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

3.2.1 Play Area Inspection and Maintenance 2018

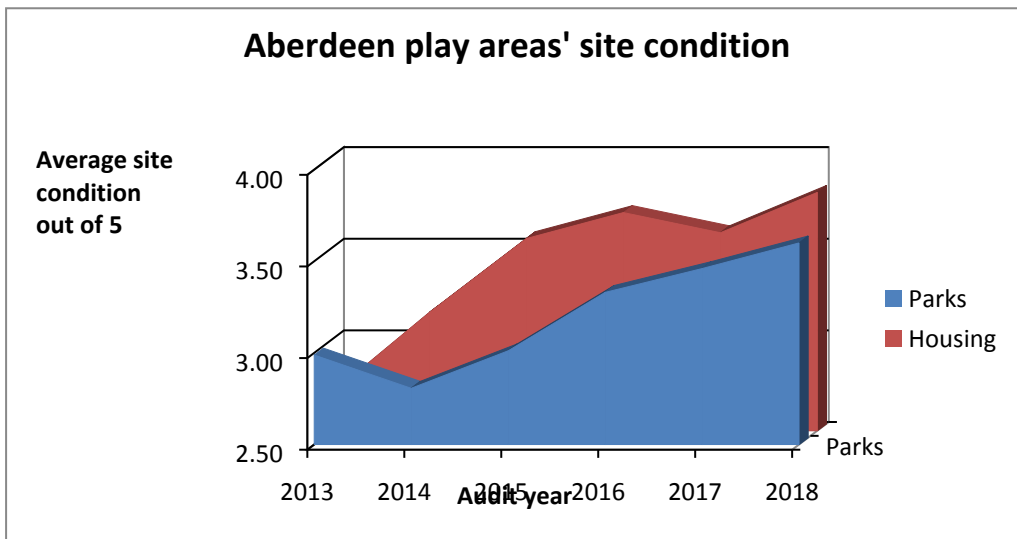
3.2.2 A review of the City’s play area inspection regime was carried out by the Service in 2012/13 following an identified decline in the overall condition of play areas. Subsequently, new inspection, reporting and maintenance procedures have been put in place. These improved procedures are contributing to the overall improvement in the quality of play areas city wide.

Consistent audits of all play areas have now been carried out in six consecutive years. Analyses of the results clearly demonstrate a positive trend. see graphs 1-3 below. The graphs also demonstrate the gap in condition and play value between the areas held in the HRA and Parks budgets. This can be explained by proportionally higher levels of funding made available for HRA play area improvements.

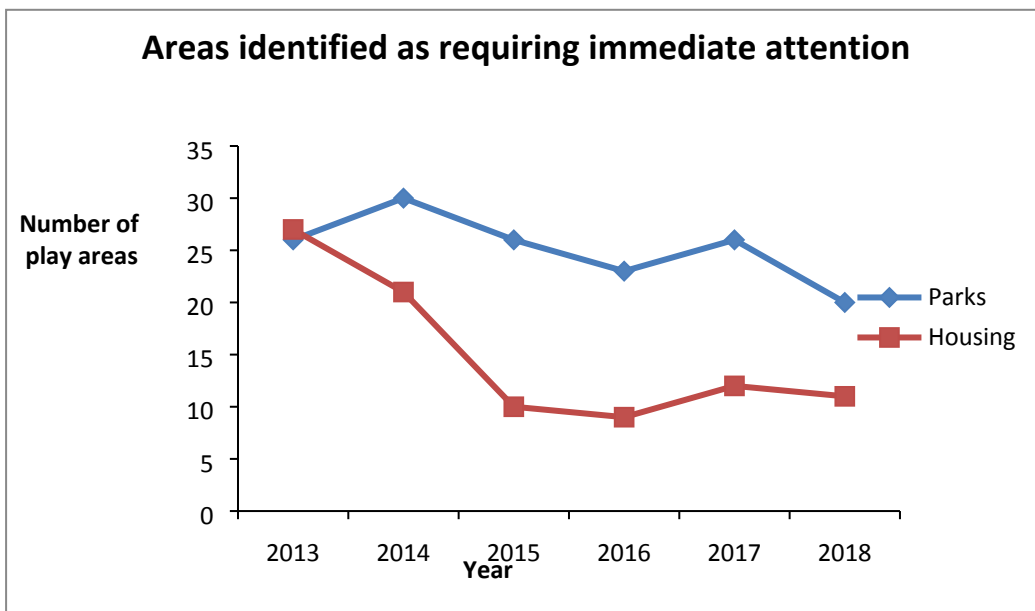
Graph 1 Sites are given a play value based on an industry recognised, Fields in Trust, system where different types of play experience are given points up to a maximum score of 77.



Graph 2 Sites are scored for site condition on a 1-5 scale. 1 = Very poor, 5 = Very Good.



Graph 3 Play areas requiring immediate attention based on external audit and team inspections..



Programme 2017/18

3.2.3 Following on from a fifth audit in 2017, a priority list of play area refurbishment for 2017/18 was created. This was based on site condition, play value and proximity to other play areas. Alongside this, a separate list of individual items requiring renewal, removal or immediate repair was compiled using recommendations from an Annual Independent Play Inspection Report.

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

3.2.5 Condition and Suitability Capital Funding of £170,000 for Parks and £300,000 from the HRA Environmental Improvements Revenue Budget was allocated to the programme. An additional £826,000 was allocated from the Council's Budget Meeting in 2017. Added to this total was the continued Revenue Budget of £120,000. The 2017/18 spend has enabled the Service to make good progress with the refurbishment programme.

3.2.6 The local community and local schools were consulted before final designs were decided for each of the larger play areas.

3.2.7 During the 2017/18 financial year the Service committed funding for the refurbishment of play areas at the following locations:

Play Area	Budget allocation	Account
Wales St	£20k	Housing
Cliffton Rd	£14k	Housing
Piries Lane	£36k	Housing
Orchard St	£29k	Housing
St Ninian's Ct	£64k	Housing
Oldtown Tce	£51k	Housing
Persley Cr	£32k	Housing
Abbey Pl	£44k	Housing
Clova Park	£61k	Parks
Ash Hill Rd	£48k	Parks
Lee Cr x 2	£26k	Parks
Portal Tce	£55k	Parks
Devenick Pl	£55k	Parks
The Meadows	£40k	Parks
Colthill Rd	£18k	Parks
Cove Playing field	£34k	Parks
Stewart Pk	£50k	Parks
Hilton Community Centre	£21k	Parks
Westfield Pk	£47k	Parks
Colthill Rd	£18k	Parks
St Fitticks Skate Park	£71K	Parks
Cults Wood Skate Park	£53K	Parks
Westburn Skate Park	£105K	Parks
Temporary staffing costs	£24K	Parks
Swings	£20K	Parks
Seating and bins at newly refurbished sites.	£7k	Parks

3.2.8 In addition to allocated budgets, the service has worked closely with community groups who have raised funding for play facilities in their own areas. This year groups have secured the funding to enable the following additional works.

Play Area	External/Community Funding
St Fitticks Skate Park.	£50K

3.2.9 This gives an overall total of £50K of secured external funding. Whilst welcome this figure continues a downward trend of 50%, year on year over the last two years. The reduction in external funding secured is of concern and highlights the growing importance of community engagement.

3.2.10 The weather experienced over the winter period has delayed works to the final part of the programme. There has also been an issue with a shortage of specialist installation contractors with sufficient experience to install play equipment but all play areas are on track to be completed by end of May 2018.

3.2.11 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.

3.3 Proposed Programme 2018/19

3.3.1 Priorities for 2018/19 are in the process of being finalised. As in previous years these priorities will be informed by an audit of all sites which is determined through site condition, play value and proximity to alternative facilities. The audit was completed at the start of the year and the following play areas are likely to feature on the priority list.

3.3.2 The number of play areas to be refurbished and the scale of refurbishment at each site will depend on final budget required at each site, which at the time of this report is yet to be confirmed, however the annual audit has been completed and the following play areas are likely to feature on the priority list.

Housing Sites	Parks Sites
Balgownie Drive	Ferryhill Community Centre
Gallowgate	Ashwood Park
Cruickshank Crescent	Broaddykes Way
Rosemount Square	Wellside Wynd
Seaton Gardens South	Eric Hendrie Park
Seaton Avenue South	
Regent Walk	
Middle Brae	
Sheddocksley Community Centre	

- 3.3.3** Depending on the budget required for each site, the service will aim to refurbish between ten and fifteen play areas of different sizes throughout the year. This number is an estimate and is based on the funding levels provided and experience gained during previous years of the refurbishment programme.
- 3.3.4** Once priorities are finalised and budgets confirmed, design briefs should be completed and out to tender by May. Each play area is tendered for separately. As in previous years communities will be consulted on the proposals for higher value sites. This consultation empowers communities to participate in decisions on how Council budgets shall be used in their local area and contributes to our commitment on participatory budgeting. All refurbishment work will be completed within the 2018/19 financial year.
- 3.3.5** The ESPO Framework 115 'Playground Equipment – Outdoor or Scotland Excel Contract 0215 'Outdoor Play Equipment' will be used to procure the equipment.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 2017/18 Programme

- 4.1.1** All works associated with play areas is undertaken within existing budget levels.
- 4.1.2** Funding for 2017/18 comprised of HRA Environmental Improvements Revenue Budget of £300K allocated to Housing play areas and £170K allocated to parks via the Condition and Suitability Programme. An additional £826K budget was assigned to play areas from the Council's Budget Meeting and this was allocated to the parks spend.
- 4.1.3** Every effort was taken to provide best value for all play areas and this allowed the service to reduce the overall spend but still deliver the programme.
- 4.1.4** Additional staff resources that were originally thought to be required were not all needed, and this has allowed a small saving to be made.
- 4.1.5** At the time of this report the final contract costs were not known. £1.14M of spend has been committed and it is estimated that the overall spend on the 2017/18 refurbishment programme will be in the region of £1.2M.

4.2 2018/19 Programme

- 4.2.1** The current proposal for funding subject to all agreements being in place would see HRA Environmental Improvements revenue budget of £300,000 allocated to Housing play areas and £170,000 allocated to parks via the Condition and Suitability Programme.
- 4.2.2** The revenue budget allocated to play is £120,000.

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

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 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.

5.2 The ESPO framework agreement has been approved for use by the Head of Commercial and Procurement Services in terms of the Council's internal Procurement Regulations.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

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

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Impact on revenue funding to keep older play areas fit for purpose.	L	Continue to invest in the refurbishment programme.
Legal	ACC has an obligation to inspect and maintain its play facilities to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose. Legal claims may result from failure to do so.	L	To continue to inspect maintain and improve play facilities. There are positive implications of this rolling programme against International, National and Local Children's' Play Policy.
Employee	Staff morale is impacted if staff are less involved in programme.	L	To continue to encourage staff at all levels to get involved with the program of refurbishment.
Customer	Satisfaction levels and reputational risk.	L	To continue with the program of refurbishment.
Environment	Standard of local area greenspace deteriorates.	L	To continue with the program of refurbishment.

Reputational	Poor public perception.	L	To continue with the program of refurbishment.
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7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Place	<p>1. Safe and resilient communities - Aberdeen is a place where people are safe from harm.</p> <p>Well maintained play areas give an area a community, family feel that helps make people feel safe.</p> <p>2. People friendly city - a city where people choose to invest, live and visit</p> <p>Well maintained play areas provide the local community with a local destination / meeting point for all ages. Play areas are where the community and visitors to the area come together to play. These are spaces where friends are made and the outdoors is celebrated.</p>

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	Play areas are designed through consultation with the users / the customers to ensure that local areas are fit for purpose and benefit the local community.
Organisational Design	Officers who specialise in the design and delivery of play areas lead on the work from start to finish.
Governance	The report ensures that all necessary approval and permission is in place.
Workforce	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.
Partnerships and Alliances	Partnership with local communities undertaken wherever possible. This ranges from consultation on proposals and designs to working together to raise funds.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Not required
Privacy Impact Assessment	Not required
Children's Rights Impact Assessment/Duty of Due Regard	Not applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Play area report 2012
Independent play area inspection reports from 2013-2017
City Play areas update 2016/17
Play area audit 2018

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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