



Cabinet 20 July 2011

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Playgrounds in St Edmundsbury

1. In March 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a 'Task and Finish' Group to investigate the provision of childrens' play facilities in the Borough. This review will form part of the wider Asset Management Plan review of Council-owned leisure facilities. On 6 July 2011, the Committee received an update on the work of the Group to date, which included consideration of the location, ownership and funding of play facilities in the Borough; current maintenance and inspection regimes; classifications of play areas; and the current condition of each play area.
2. Having considered the current position, and in the knowledge that a planned schedule of significant capital funding would be required to renew/refurbish play areas, the Group had agreed a set of principles which they would like the Council to consider when determining the future management of play facilities.
3. The report provided the background to the review, and the Asset Management Plan proposals for play facilities. The report also set out, in Section 3.1, the principles for conducting the next stage of the review which had been agreed by the Task and Finish Group. The Committee agreed with the majority of the principles, except for the suggestion that any transfer of responsibilities for facilities on the Moreton Hall estate in Bury St Edmunds, should not be progressed until a decision was made on the 'parishing' of the estate. Members felt that decisions on play facilities at Moreton Hall should not be held up pending a decision on parishing, which could take a very long time to complete.
4. The Committee discussed the report in detail, and asked for it to be clarified in the recommendations that any transfer of responsibility for playgrounds would not include the transfer of the existing responsibilities undertaken by Borough Council employees, such as inspections.
5. The Committee **recommends** that:-
 - (1) **the principles set out in Section 3.1 of Report C52 be adopted for the next stages of the Asset Management Review of Playgrounds in St Edmundsbury, subject to the removal of the principle regarding the transfer of responsibilities for facilities on the Moreton Hall estate in Bury St Edmunds not being progressed until a decision is made on the 'parishing' of the estate;**
 - (2) **officers start negotiations with Town Councils and other relevant community organisations on the potential to transfer the**

responsibility for playgrounds in non-strategic parks/green spaces (any such transfer not to include the transfer of the existing responsibilities undertaken by Borough Council employees, such as inspections), and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in Autumn 2011 as part of the Leisure Asset Management Review process; and

- (3) the findings of this Asset Management Plan review of existing playgrounds be fed into both the current work to revise planning requirements for play spaces in new developments, and the Council's broader Vision 2031 policies for children's play.**

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