



Cabinet 23 November 2011

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Leisure Facilities Asset Management (Dec11/08)

1. Background

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a Task and Finish Group in March 2011 to investigate the provision of children's play facilities in the Borough. This review formed part of the wider Asset Management Plan (AMP) review of Council-owned leisure facilities.

2. Funding and ownership of fixed play facilities in the Borough

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Group has identified 10 sites as being suitable for community transfer, based on the criteria agreed by the Cabinet on 20 July 2011, as set out under Section 2 of Report C172. The remaining sites would remain in Borough Council ownership, and whilst the community transfer of play equipment should not be discouraged, the Task and Finish Group felt that it should not be actively pursued as a priority at the current time, for the reasons set out in the report.
- 2.2 Also under Section 2 of Report C172, five areas were recommended for the removal of play equipment when it came to the end of its useful life.
- 2.3 The Task and Finish Group felt that there was currently an inequality in the funding of play equipment, since most rural equipment was owned or funded by parish councils. The Group proposed that there should be one central fund to cover the maintenance of all Borough and parish play areas. This would, however, require a revenue growth bid.
- 2.5 The Committee **recommends that:**
1. **a revenue growth bid of up to £39,000 be made as part of budget setting to enable the Council to maintain all of the play areas in the Borough;**
 2. **if the growth bid is approved, a central maintenance contract be let for a "term playground repairs maintenance contractor", and parishes be invited to opt into that contract;**

3. **the rationalisation of the play areas in Clover Fields, Lavender Fields, Raine Avenue, Argyll Court and Puddlebrook in Haverhill, outlined in Report C172, be approved in accordance with the principles previously approved by Cabinet on 20 July 2011 (minute 13 refers); and**
4. **the Borough Council continues to welcome approaches from town councils and other community groups for the voluntary transfer of ownership of play equipment and open spaces.**

3. The Leisure Asset Management Plan 2011

- 3.1 Appendix 1 to Report C172 presented a schedule of leisure facilities refurbishment, replacement or investment for 2011/12 to 2017/18, based on a rolling programme of works required to maintain each leisure facility. Options available for each asset were: no change; disposal including community transfer; sale on the open market; or long leasehold interest.
- 3.2 Some initial recommendations were detailed in Section 5 of Report C172 in respect of sites which required immediate action, and would therefore affect the 2012/13 budget. The action plan of major investment would be reviewed annually, and the estimated leisure AMP schedule of investment from 2013/14 to 2017/18 indicated that, on average, a sum of up to £500,000 per annum may be needed to maintain the current assets, although this did not take into account savings from disposals or transfers, or the option of reduced facilities. After 2017/18 a range of significant investments was required, and officers would examine all available options as the AMP evolved in coming years.
- 3.3 The Committee **recommends that:**
 - (1) **the initial schedule of leisure facilities refurbishment, replacement or investment, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report C172, be used to assist the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan and budget setting processes from 2012/2013 onwards; and**
 - (2) **the proposals for investment in 2012/2013, as set out in Section 5 of Report C172, be included as capital growth bids in the normal budget setting process for that year.**

Contacts:

David Nettleton, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, (01284-702212)
Ian Houlder, Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, (01284-810074)
Adriana Stapleton, Scrutiny Manager, (01284-757613)