

# Shadow Executive Members

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Single Council Implementation – Harmonisation of Approach to Play Area Inspections</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>EXC/SA/18/007</b>	
<b>Report to / date of decision:</b>	<b>Shadow Executive (Cabinet) Members</b>	8 August 2018
<b>Shadow Executive (Cabinet) Members:</b>	<p>Andy Drummond FHDC - Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture <b>Tel:</b> 01638 751411 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:andy.drummond@forest-heath.gov.uk">andy.drummond@forest-heath.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Joanna Rayner SEBC - Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture <b>Tel:</b> 07872456836 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:joanna.rayner@stedsbc.gov.uk">joanna.rayner@stedsbc.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Lead officer:</b>	<p>Mark Walsh Assistant Director (Operations) <b>Tel:</b> 01284 757300 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:mark.walsh@westsuffolk.gov.uk">mark.walsh@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<p>To consider the current differences in approach to the playground inspection service across Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury and to put forward an interim option for 19/20 and 20/21 whilst a wider review is being completed.</p>	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that:</b></p> <p><b>(1) the Shadow Executive (Cabinet) Members with the responsibility for Leisure and Culture approve the proposed interim arrangement for a free play area inspection service for the financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21, as outlined in paragraph 1.3 of Report No: EXC/SA/18/007; and</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Continued over....</i></p>	

	<b>(2) agree that, as part of the 2019/20 budget setting process, the budget for play inspections be increased by £6,500 to take account of the increased costs and reduced income, as in paragraph 1.4 of Report No: EXC/SA/18/007.</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b> <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <b>do not</b> apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within <b>48 hours</b> and cannot be actioned until <b>five clear working days of the publication of the decision</b> have elapsed.</i>			
<b>Consultation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement process to be undertaken in August 2018. See Section 2.</li> </ul>		
<b>Alternative option(s):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report sets out the alternative which in summary is to levy a charge to Parishes in SEBC as we do for Parishes in FHDC.</li> </ul>		
<b>Implications:</b>			
Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed in the report</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The additional work can be accommodated within the existing staff resources</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harmonisation of approach to play area inspections</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	
<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
Costs of undertaking the additional play area inspections exceeds expectations	Low	<p>We have a unit rate price for inspections.</p> <p>The additional work can be covered within the existing staff resource we have.</p>	Low
Loss of income from play area inspections	Low	<p>The income figures are known and are not considered significant in the absence of an aligned approach to charging.</p>	Low

There being more play areas than we are currently aware of.	Low	As part of the work undertaken to review the Supplementary Planning Document on Open Space each Parish has been contacted to help identify all of their leisure assets.	Low
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>		All Wards	
<b>Background papers:</b> <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		N/A	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		None	

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## **1. Background to play area inspections**

- 1.1 The West Suffolk Council Implementation Plan (adopted by the Shadow Council in June 2018) sets out the approach to harmonisation of any differences in policy or service delivery. The plan states that each issue will be considered on its merits, with emphasis placed on smooth and transparent transition of arrangements to the new Council.
- 1.2 Both St Edmundsbury Borough Council & Forest Heath District Council own a number of play areas which stand on land they own. The inspection of these play areas is undertaken by the West Suffolk councils Parks Service. The West Suffolk councils Parks Service also inspects play areas that are owned by parish and town councils and Playing Field Associations. The play areas in St Edmundsbury are inspected free of charge, whereas Forest Heath levies a charge for the inspection. The charge levied by Forest Heath is as follows:
- Annual (external Audit) = £52.08  
Monthly inspection = £25.00
- 1.3 It is proposed that the approach to play area inspections be aligned for implementation on 1 April 2019 (creation date for the West Suffolk Council) and it is recommended that the playground inspection service be offered to all parish and town councils and Playing Field Associations without a charge for the financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21. During that time the play area inspection service will be considered as part of a wider review of the new Council's relationship with town and parish councils.
- 1.4 The Parks Infrastructure Manager has indicated that the additional work associated with the additional inspections (an additional 156 inspections per year) could be accommodated within the existing staff resources. But a budget uplift of £6,200 would be required to cover the additional annual audits (23 sites approx. £1,200) and loss of income associated with not charging for playground inspections.
- 1.5 It should be noted that there is no specific legal responsibility to inspect play areas. However such procedures are recommended by the British Standards Institute, the Health and Safety Executive, Insurers and RoSPA. Owners of play areas have a moral responsibility of care to children using the site - and at the same time they need to meet the expectations of parents. When undertaking inspections they should be to EN1176, Part 7.

## **2. Timetable and next steps**

- 2.1 The following timetable is proposed for implementing the change to play area inspections:

Action	Lead	Timescales
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<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Engage with various interested parties including wider Councillor engagement	Cllr Andy Drummond and Cllr Joanna Rayner	August 2018
Correspondence to Members	Ben Smith	Mid-August 2018
Letter to all parish and town councils to cover change to play area inspections and precept payments	Ben Smith	Late August 2018
West Suffolk Council budget preparations	Rachael Mann	July 2018 to January 2019
Parish budget setting process		September – December 2018
Implementation date		1 April 2019