

## PLAY PARK FUNDING – UPDATE REPORT

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### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the December 2022 EDI Committee a Play Park Funding report was noted by members with an agreement that officers would submit a further report outlining the suggested process and timelines proposing further engagement with other groups, including Youth Forums and relevant Community Councils. The original report can be found at the below link:

[December 2022 EDI Play Park Funding Report](#)

- 1.2 In August 2022, the Scottish Government confirmed a full 5 year funding package to all Scottish Local Authorities from 2020/21 through to 2025/26. Argyll and Bute Council will receive a total of £938k for Play Park funding which will cover our 28 Play Parks which are in need of upgrading. All Scottish Councils have received funding through the Capital Allocation for Renewal of Play Parks Fund for investment in play park equipment.
- 1.3 The December 2022 EDI Committee agreed the allocation to each geographical area. This was calculated based on an even split per play park across all Council areas.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government commitment was to ensure that all children have access to quality play in their own community and **the budget was specific in that the funding was for renewing play parks**. A definition/scope of investment was also issued as part of the grant offer and is as below:-

- *The agreed definition of an eligible play park is one which is local authority owned, managed or maintained sites, designated for play, which are free to access and open to all. Playparks in private ownership, those that require an entry fee or those only available to specific groups / with conditions for entry would be outwith scope. We would expect that play parks with equipment (swings, slides etc) aimed at children aged 0-14 would be included as would other facilities used by the same age group (e.g. pump tracks), but MUGAs (Multi Use Game Areas) or dedicated sports fields would be outwith scope.*

- 1.5 Previously, discussions took place with local youth forums which members commented could be improved upon and officers were tasked with improving engagement. Prior to any engagement officers have reviewed the above definition which has been split into the below suggested areas:
- How many Local Authority managed play parks are designed for different age groups (i.e. 0-4 years or 10 years plus)
  - Should Health and Safety be prioritised against replacement of equipment (i.e. should the ground surface be fixed to reduce the likelihood of injury prior to costing replacement of equipment)
  - Should Inclusiveness be a priority (i.e. should access and equality of play be prioritised for disabled users)
  - Should ABC continue to deliver this via agreed tender processes or purchase the equipment/material and then utilise in house staff or a local contractor to fit the equipment/material
- 1.6 As can be seen from the above list there is a need to engage further with local communities to evidence that we have adhered to the Scottish Government commitment that ALL children have access to quality play in their own community.
- 1.7 The following actions are being taken forward by the Service:
- Area Committees Business Days with Elected Members to discuss their views and seek to clarify what age group each park generally represents. The Business Days will also pick up on cemetery provision.
  - Once we have established general age groups for each site, engage with Community Councils and Education colleagues to establish whether Health and Safety/Equal Access or equipment is a priority for users of the play parks.
  - Once we have established the priorities for each site, engage with Disability Forums to ensure proper facilities are discussed.
  - Given tender exercises have been conducted twice, as well as a direct award, it is proposed to deliver the project by purchasing material/equipment and then either fitting this in house or via a local contractor, or if capacity is available by national suppliers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:

- Note that Area Committee Business Days are underway, where officers are engaging with Elected Members; and
- Agree the indicative timeline as set out in section 4.4 of this report.

## PLAY PARK FUNDING

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides an update outlining the suggested process and timelines for proposing further engagement with other groups, including Youth Forums and relevant Community Councils in regards to the Play Park Funding Award of £938k which has been awarded by Scottish Government for the 28 Play Parks being renewed in Argyll and Bute Council until 2025/26.
- 2.2 The report further outlines the complexities encountered to ensure officers evidence that we have adhered to the Scottish Government commitment that **ALL** children have access to quality play in their own community.
- 2.3 As part of the previous discussions, officers engaged with a Play Park Design company who costed the supply and fitting of an aspirational play area for Bendarroch Play Park in Garelochhead with a view to identifying indicative costs for a range of equipment with activities such as climbing, swinging, balancing, rotating and other rapid movement. This design is suitable for children of all ages, with included items which are inclusive and can be used by children of varying abilities. The cost was £139,538.18, which should be compared with the budget we have of £33,500. A breakdown of indicative costs is highlighted in Appendix 1.
- 2.4 This costing provides a realistic view as to what can be delivered with a £33,500 budget for each play park. It should be highlighted that members have the overall discretion on how the £33500 is spent in their area (ie should this be £33500 for each play park or a proportion of that funding spent in a play park and more spent on another play park which may require extra funding in line with condition of equipment or access for all).

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:
- Note that Area Committee Business Days are underway, where officers are engaging with Elected Members; and
  - Agree the proposed timeline as set out in section 4.4 of this report.

## 4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Council is responsible for delivering the Play Park facilities across all of Argyll and Bute's 30 Council managed Play Parks. However as per agreement at the December EDI Committee this was reduced to 28 Play parks as two play parks in Lochgilphead and Oban were recently upgraded. The Council utilised the Framework Tender Scotland Excel to procure bids for the 2021/22, unfortunately no tenders came forward. The year one funding was carried into year two and tenders were again sought, no bidders came forward. As part of the procurement process officers contacted potential bidders to identify the reasons for this. Timescales, as well as full order books, were stated as the reasons why suppliers did not return a tender. This is also being experienced in some other Local Authorities and is very likely due to the fact that all Scottish Local Authorities are carrying out similar work, consequently there is a shortage of organisations able to do this. The geography of Argyll and Bute may also make our area unattractive to bidders.
- 4.2 It is proposed that this project be delivered through a mixed economy model of external procurement of equipment which is installed, where possible, in-house and supported by specialist external local businesses. This will help to ensure the programme of play park equipment is delivered.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government had stipulated that engagement with local Youth Forums must be carried out and this has been done previously, however it has been recognised by members that some Youth Forums have engaged in a more positive manner than others. Having again reviewed the Scottish Government commitment officers suggest we engage under the following route:
- Area Committees Business Days with Elected Members to discuss their views and seek to clarify what age group each park generally represents. The Business Days will also pick up on cemetery provision.
  - Once we have established general age groups for each site, engage with Community Councils and Education colleagues to establish whether Health and Safety/Equal Access or equipment is a priority for users of the play parks.
  - Once we have established the priorities for each site, engage with Disability Forums to ensure proper facilities are discussed.
  - Given tender exercises have been conducted twice, as well as a direct award, it is proposed to deliver the project by purchasing material/equipment and then either fitting this in house or via a local contractor, or if capacity is available by national suppliers.
- 4.4 Should the above engagement process be agreed, an indicative time line of delivery has been given in the below table. It should be noted that this is a rolling programme and having experienced issues with tenders previously, as well as other Local Authorities indicating that there are extensive delays in just providing the equipment, as there are only a few contractors able to supply equipment, it is expected that only some play parks will be upgraded for Summer 2024, with others in the following year, however the funding covers until 31 March 2026.

Officers suggest the following indicative timeline is appropriate:-

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>
Hold Area Committee Business Days to discuss and seek feedback from Elected Members	First meeting took place on 6 <sup>th</sup> February with MAKI Members and then on 8 <sup>th</sup> February with OLI members.  B&C Business Day has been arranged for 3 <sup>rd</sup> March and H&L has been arranged for 6 <sup>th</sup> March.
Engagement with Community Councils and Education Department	Commencing March 2023
Engagement with Disability Forums	Expected to commence Summer 2023
Procurement process (which will last 8 – 12 weeks)	Expected to commence late 2023 early 2024

4.5 Previously we have looked at prioritising play parks in regards to those which are in most need of repair, however it is suggested that once the engagement process has been concluded that we then look at the options of delivery in regards to:

1. Health and Safety, should ground works/ dangerous edges etc be prioritised
2. Accessibility, should access and play for all be prioritised.
3. Replacement and Refurbishment, should this be prioritised.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1 The Scottish Government has allocated a total of £938k for Play Park funding to Argyll and Bute Council for investment in play park equipment through to 2025/26 from the Capital Allocation for Renewal of Play Parks Fund. This report recommends a suitable engagement process covering local elected members, community councils, education and disability forums over a period of approximately 8 months. It is the intention to work during this period to seek timelines for external delivery of equipment as well as make an informed decision on whether this can be delivered in house or externally.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Policy – This project may well be delivered outwith the Procurement tendering process as we have two unsuccessful processes already as well as a direct award failure.

6.2 Financial – funded from grant funding from Scottish Government.

- 6.3 Legal – None known.
- 6.4 HR – None known.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: None known.
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – engagement will take place with appropriate groups, including the disability forum, to provide a positive impact on our young people.
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None known.
- 6.5.3 Islands – elements of renewal on all play parks, which therefore will not adversely affect islands.
- 6.6 Climate Change – we will endeavour to minimise carbon footprint of this project.
- 6.7 Risk – Failure to deliver within the allotted Scottish Government timescales may result in losing the budget allocated.
- 6.8 Customer Service – the intention of this funding is to provide better facilities for our customers.

**Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services,  
Kirsty Flanagan**

**Policy Lead for Climate Change and Environment, Councillor Ross Moreland**

February 2023

**For further information contact:**

Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services

[Jim.Smith@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Jim.Smith@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

Hugh O'Neill, Network and Standards Manager

[Hugh.ONeill@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:Hugh.ONeill@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

**APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1 – Breakdown of indicative costs for equipment and fitting