

Item 4

KEY DECISION

REPORT TO CABINET
15 SEPTEMBER 2005

REPORT OF
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE SERVICES

Portfolio: Culture and Recreation

FIXED PLAY EQUIPMENT SAFETY AUDIT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report reflects the findings of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) Annual Audit of Fixed Play Areas commissioned by the Leisure Services Department as part of its independent quality check of play assets in the ownership of the Borough Council.
- 1.2 Cabinet were informed at its meeting on 14 July that this report was being assembled and that resources would be required to implement its findings.
- 1.3 The report contains an itemised schedule of work identified by the NPFA in order to meet current safety standards and performance indicators for local equipped areas of play (LEAP), shown at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 As part of the allocation of £350,000 for play sites in 2006/07, Cabinet approve expenditure of £70,000 to re-site the play area in Tudhoe South, Spennymoor and £100,500 to complete repair work to a further 11 play sites scheduled in the report.
- 2.2 That, should Cabinet agree, the repair work to 12 sites, valued at £100,500, could be scheduled within the 2005/06 financial year.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approve the schedule for removal of play equipment from 6 of the 12 play sites identified in the report.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 All 21 play areas and 49 individual items of fixed play equipment under the ownership of Sedgefield Borough Council have received their annual inspection by the NPFA.
- 3.2 The NPFA Annual Inspections are undertaken to establish the overall level of safety of equipment, foundations and surfaces. The inspections also consider the effect of repairs or added components on the safety of equipment.
- 3.3 The inspectors have compiled a written report, which identifies action required against the relevant European safety standards (EN1176 and EN1177/PAS30

and PAS35). A 4-point risk assessment, Immediate, High, Moderate and Low is set for completion of work.

3.4 In addition to the safety inspection, the report scores each play area out of 89 in terms of its overall play value under the following three categories; site features, equipment features and play co-operation. The report also assesses the play areas and scores them against the eight performance indicators recommended by the Audit Commission required for a Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP), which are:

- Each site must be in area a minimum of 400m².
- All equipment and facilities must be have been assessed as safe for continued use by a competent playground inspector.
- All equipment with a fall height greater than 600mm must have appropriate impact absorbing surfacing.
- Each site must have a minimum of five different equipment items. Multi-component equipment may contribute a maximum of 3 items.
- Each site must have a small games area (maybe grassed) within the boundary of the playground.
- Each site must be entirely fenced with a self-closing gate.
- Each site must have signs excluding dogs.
- Each site must be overlooked by housing, pedestrian routes or other well used public facilities.

4. PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

4.1 An analysis of the report has been completed. None of the required actions were identified as an immediate risk. Ten were identified as a high risk and 153 were identified as moderate to low risk.

4.2 Remedial action required which can be completed under the regular maintenance regime is now underway and will be funded from the agreed repair and maintenance budget for fixed playgrounds.

4.3 However the analysis highlights 12 play areas which require more extensive work. This work will be procured using specialist contractors but falls outside the annual repair and maintenance budget for playground maintenance.

4.4 Listed at appendix 1 are the details for each play areas' specific requirements identified in the report and the proposals for their future taking into account public consultation.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION

5.1 The report to Cabinet on 14 July clearly stated that additional resources would be required to address the issues that the National Playing Fields Association were likely to identify in their audit of play equipment report.

5.2 Should all the actions required be implemented, including the relocation of the play area at Tudhoe South, Spennymoor, (subject to the outcome of detailed consultation), total investment to make significant improvements to the play areas within the ownership of the Borough Council, is approximately £170,500.

- 5.3 A site/cost breakdown is given at Appendix 2.
- 5.4 In view of the Council's current capital resource position, a more flexible approach to Capital Expenditure between financial years is being followed, as indicated in the Capital Spending Budgetary Control report. Subject to Cabinet approval, it would be possible therefore to bring forward £100,500 of the 2006/07 play site allocation into the current financial year. This would allow work to commence on the range of repairs identified in Appendix 2.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 All 21 sites in the ownership of the Borough Council are part of its Asset Management stock and as such require sustained investment.
- 6.2 During August, a consultation exercise was conducted around the neighbouring areas of each of the play sites identified in the report. Appendix 1 includes the outcome of that public consultation which is reflected in the proposed action required section.
- 6.3 The report proposes that equipment is removed from 6 sites, (details are contained at appendix 1.)
- 6.4 Technical reports including desk research together with primary research data has been gathered which supports the proposals for investment, informal play or conversion to other uses.

7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Cabinet should be aware that by allocating the resources necessary to complete the repairs identified in the report, the monies remaining from the total of £700,000 will allow for investment in a further three areas where complete refurbishment is required, and not the 5 sites anticipated in 2006/07.
- 7.2 The Council's community strategy places emphasis on the four key components of working towards creating a healthy, attractive and prosperous borough with strong communities.
- 7.3 Investing in children's play contributes towards a healthy borough by creating leisure opportunities where children and young people have increasing places to play; an attractive borough with associated improvements to the environment by making play areas more aesthetically pleasing; and promoting safer neighbourhoods by giving children and young people positive play opportunities in designated locations.
- 7.4 The Council's Corporate Plan 2005/08 recognises the importance of increased physical activity in promoting good health, in the same way that it makes clear the need for a strategic approach to children and young people reflecting the governments "Every Child Matters" key outcomes. Youth Development is one of eight cross cutting priorities for the authority identified in the plan.

Contact Officer: Miss Joanne King
Telephone No: (01388) 816166 ext : 4539
Email Address: jking@sedgefield.gov.uk

Ward(s)

Key Decision Validation: Affecting two or more wards
Expenditure over £100,000

Background Papers: National Playing Fields Association Reports July 2005
Report to Cabinet 14 July 2005

Examination by Statutory Officers:

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLAY SITE PROPOSALS**BESSEMER PARK - SPENNYMOOR**

Play Value Rating – 19 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 6 out of 8

Action Required

- Members of Cabinet will receive a land status report in the very near future written by officers in the Neighbourhood Services Department. Until due consideration has been given to the report findings, no action relating to the play site should be undertaken.

NORTH ROAD - SPENNYMOOR

Play Value Rating – 8 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 2 out of 8

Action Required

- It is proposed that as a result of its low play value and high anticipated costs the equipment is removed and the area re-instated to grass. This area would be available for informal play. The nearest play area with fixed equipment is Tudhoe South, Tudhoe.

Result of the Action

The area will be maintained for informal play.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 180 residents surrounding the play area. In total 35 responses were received (19%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	20	8	28
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	4	3	7
<i>Total</i>	24	11	35

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved.

TIMOTHY TERRACE, SPENNYMOOR

Play Value Rating – 12 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 6 out of 8

Action Required

- Provide public signing, litter bins and bench seating

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 21 out of 89
Performance Indicators will increase to 7 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 170 residents surrounding the play area. In total 29 responses were received (17%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	14	4	18
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	11	0	11
<i>Total</i>	25	4	29

Although on the whole residents agree with the proposed action, several residents did express concerns regarding anti-social behaviour occurring on an evening. In particular residents were not convinced that the seating was appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved excluding the seating.

TUDHOE SOUTH - SPENNYMOOR

Play Value Rating – 14 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 4 out of 8

Action Required

- The low play value of the equipment coupled with high anticipated costs to install, repair or replace the items identified in the inspection report but more significantly the location of the play site, points to removing the items of fixed play equipment from the present site and creating a new play area within the Tudhoe South area.

Result of the Action

The new play area will achieve appropriate play value and performance indicators. The proposed location will be subject to public consultation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That a suitable site should be identified for a new play area following public consultation and the existing site be cleared and reinstated.

WATER BOARD SITE - SPENNYMOOR

Play Value Rating – 9 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 4 out of 8

Action Required

- Provide public information signage and bench seating
- Replace gate with self-closing gate

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 19 out of 89.
Performance Indicators will increase to 6 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 360 residents surrounding the play area. In total 51 responses were received (14%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	37	4	41
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	9	1	10
<i>Total</i>	46	5	51

In addition to the results detailed above consultation conducted by the Eden Residents Association showed residents were against the installation of bench seating. This was due to the risk of encouraging older youths to congregate on an evening causing annoyance.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved excluding the seating.

EADE CLOSE (PROVISION FOR TEENAGERS) - NEWTON AYCLIFFE

Play Value Rating – 5 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 2 out of 8

Action Required

- As this play area provides for a youth shelter and an area for young people to play football and basketball, the action required is to undertake remedial work to the grass to deal with erosion.
- Provide suitable public signage, litterbins and bench seating.

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 13 out of 89.
Performance Indicators will increase to 4 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 170 residents surrounding the play area. In total 38 responses were received (22%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	21	1	22
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	16	0	16
<i>Total</i>	37	1	38

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved.

KIMBLESWORTH - NEWTON AYCLIFFE

Play Value Rating – 12 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 4 out of 8

Action Required

- Replace the safety surfacing within the site
- Provide public signage, litterbins and bench seating
- Provide metal fencing around the site inc. self-closing gates

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 32 out of 89.

Performance Indicators will increase to 7 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 368 residents surrounding the play area. In total 25 responses were received (7%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	12	6	18
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	7	0	7
<i>Total</i>	19	6	25

Although on the whole residents agree with the proposed action, several residents did express concerns regarding anti-social behaviour occurring on an evening. In particular residents were not convinced that seating was appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved excluding seats.

BALIOL - NEWTON AYCLIFFE

Play Value Rating – 15 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 5 out of 8

Action Required

- Replace the safety surfacing within the site
- Provide public signage, litterbins and bench seating

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 32 out of 89.

Performance Indicators will increase to 6 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 286 residents surrounding the play area. In total 41 responses were received (14%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	26	3	29
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	15	1	16
<i>Total</i>	41	4	45

In addition to the above responses a group of children and young people from the area gathered a petition of 100 names to support the improvements and also to request a set of five-a-side goals.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action required be approved and that, if practicable, a set of goals be provided.

TEESDALE - SHILDON

Play Value Rating – 13 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 4 out of 8

Action Required

- Replace the safety surfacing within the site
- Install metal fencing with self-closing gates
- Provide litterbins and bench seating

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 30 out of 89.

Performance Indicators will increase to 6 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 180 residents surrounding the play area. In total 33 responses were received (18%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	8	15	23
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	6	4	10
<i>Total</i>	14	19	33

All those who disagree with the proposed action agreed that the play area should be removed rather than improved. The reason stated for this preference was anti-social behaviour occurring late on an evening.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the play equipment be removed and the area re-instated providing for informal play opportunities in accordance with the consultation.

LAUREL - SHILDON

Play Value Rating – 5 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 3 out of 8

Action Required

- The low play value provided by the equipment coupled with the high anticipated costs to install and replace the items required together with the age of the equipment suggests a total removal of the equipment from the site and re-instate to grass. The closest play area with fixed play equipment, if this action is agreed, will be Locomotion or Teesdale.

Result of the Action

The site will be retained for informal play.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 235 residents surrounding the play area. In total 7 responses were received (3%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	3	2	5
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	1	1	2
<i>Total</i>	4	3	7

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved.

DALTON - SHILDON

Play Value Rating – 5 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 2 out of 8

Action Required

- The low play value provided by the equipment coupled with the high anticipated costs to install, repair or replace items on site together with the location of the site suggests total removal of the equipment and as a result of this action it is suggested to replant the site with appropriate shrubs as there is a long history with anti-social behaviour within the site. The nearest play area with fixed equipment is Locomotion.

Result of the Action

This site will be re-planted and be re-designated accordingly.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 130 residents surrounding the play area. In total 23 responses were received (18%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	12	6	18
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	3	2	5
<i>Total</i>	15	8	23

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved.

ALBERT STREET - CHILTON

Play Value Rating – 6 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 3 out of 8

Action Required

- The low play value provided by the equipment and the high anticipated costs to install the required items from the National Playing Fields Association report suggests that the Trim Trail which is the only item of equipment on site is removed and replaced with two sets of small-sided football goals. The remaining grassed area on this large site would be used for informal play. The nearest play area with fixed equipment is The Downs (Pentlands).

Result of the Action

The site will be used as an informal games area.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 200 residents surrounding the play area. In total 25 responses were received (13%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	16	1	17
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	8	0	8
<i>Total</i>	24	1	25

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved.

EDEN DRIVE - SEDGEFIELD

Play Value Rating – 29 out of 89

Number of Performance Indicators achieved – 7 out of 8

Action Required

- Replace a piece of play equipment and replace the safety surfacing within the site
- Provide “grass matting” around the Trim Trail which is located outside the specific site
- Provide public signage
- Provide metal fencing and self-closing gates around the site

Result of the Action

The play value rating will increase to 42 out of 89.
Performance Indicators will increase to 8 out of 8.

Consultation Outcome

A letter outlining the action required, as detailed above, and a comments slip was distributed to 190 residents surrounding the play area. In total 64 responses were received (34%). The results of these responses are detailed in the table below:

	<i>Agree with Action</i>	<i>Disagree with Action</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Adult Residents</i>	46	2	48
<i>C+YP Residents</i>	16	0	16
<i>Total</i>	62	2	64

RECOMMENDATION:

That the required action be approved.

FIXED PLAY EQUIPMENT SAFETY AUDIT REPORT**Estimated Cost Plan**

<i>Play Area</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
<i>North Road</i>	<i>£ 3,000</i>
<i>Timothy Terrace</i>	<i>£ 1,500</i>
<i>Tudhoe South</i>	<i>£ 4,000</i>
<i>Water Board Site</i>	<i>£ 1,500</i>
<i>Eade Close</i>	<i>£ 2,500</i>
<i>*Kimblesworth</i>	<i>£ 15,000</i>
<i>*Baliol</i>	<i>£ 11,000</i>
<i>*Tessdale</i>	<i>£ 3,500</i>
<i>Laural</i>	<i>£ 3,500</i>
<i>Dalton</i>	<i>£ 3,500</i>
<i>Albert Street</i>	<i>£ 3,500</i>
<i>*Eden Drive</i>	<i>£ 48,000</i>
<i>Total Repair Costs</i>	<i>£100,500</i>
<i>Provision of New Play Area – Tudhoe South</i>	<i>£ 70,000</i>
<i>Total Cost</i>	<i>£170,500</i>

**** Sites where replacement of safety surfacing is necessary.***

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