

**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

to
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
20th November 2018

Promenade Park Play scheme**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the draft designs for the s106 and Capital budget funded Play and Accessible Play scheme proposed for Promenade Park; to seek approval for those designs to proceed to public consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- (i) The Community Services Committee agrees the draft Play design proposals
- (ii) Officers proceed with Public consultation with user groups and residents on the proposed designs
- (iii) Following public consultation feedback, Officers finalise revised designs and costings which will then be submitted to Community Services Committee for approval prior to procurement of the new play scheme.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**3.1 Background**

- 3.1.1 MDC received a £52,000 s106 payment from the development of Lightermans Place, Maldon in February 2017 to be used “*towards the improvement and enhancement of the Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) in Promenade Park*”
- 3.1.2 Officers discussed several options with regard to the most appropriate need within the Promenade Park for improvement and enhancement; these included additional facilities within the Valley, enhancements around the skate park and/or bmx track, creation of new play trail around Delph Ditch/Car Park two, and the early years play site closest to the Museum.

Of these it was decided that the early years play site would best benefit and offer the best opportunity for improvements within the funding available.

The officer review also identified an opportunity through this funding to specifically increase the provision of Accessible play within the park to complement the Splashpark and Beach huts. Although some elements of the existing play sites were already accessible, it was felt that proportionally they were marginal.

3.1.3 Through internal application to the Capital budget programme, MDC assigned an additional £48,000 to improve the provision of Accessible play in conjunction with the enhancement of the LEAP.

3.2 Review of site and existing play provision

3.2.1 The early years play site falls within the Conservation Area. As such an initial site meeting was carried out with the Conservation Officer and officers from the Leisure, Countryside & Tourism team to establish any initial concerns or considerations.

3.2.2 Due to the prominence of the location within the park and importance of sensitive design with regard to any proposals a Landscape Architect was commissioned in order to develop the vision for the area whilst understanding and delivering upon the Play & s106 needs of the project.

3.2.3 The Landscape Architect was tasked with developing a scope for the area that included specifically play design within the budget range, but that also considered future play/landscape development potential outside immediately available funding, inclusion of under-utilised green space in the immediate area, opportunity for revision of long standing features (see 3.2.5), and better connectivity of elements both within the current play site boundary as well as the wider Park environment.

3.2.4 The initial study included an appraisal for condition of current provision and it's play value; the design considerations and LEAP requirements, as well as increasing opportunity for accessibility. Three initial options were proposed of which one was taken forward for further development as officers felt it offered the best balance of early and junior play, natural play elements, social seating areas, and improvement to habitat/wildlife value of the site.

3.2.5 The current play site area that falls within the timber fencing also incorporates a number of features that have been developed and installed over time and in a piecemeal fashion. Some of these features occupy prominent locations but are significantly under-used due to their design, lack of current significance, or deterioration in condition. Officers directed the Landscape Architects to take a holistic approach to the area and to revise, re-imagine, or remove these features within their draft proposals as they saw fit.

Current features include:

- Battle of Maldon Millennium garden (*installed c. 1991*)
- Hedge maze (*incomplete, installed c. 1995*)
- Wildlife Garden (*installed c. 2006, previously maintained by the now disbanded Friends of Prom Park*)
- Informal bowls lawn (*not used or maintained as such for c. 20+ years*)

3.3 Play Area draft design proposal

3.3.1 The draft design incorporates LEAP requirements, accessible play units, conservative redesign of landscape to incorporate natural play, open up site lines, create better social spaces and overall accessibility to this area of the park.

3.3.2 Several key suggestions should be highlighted:

- Creation of centralised social seating area linking hard-surfaced walkways and with clear sight lines throughout new design.
- Complete re-design of Hedge maze; removal of hedges and re-imagining as a ridge & furrow (i.e. historic ‘turf’ maze type)
- Complete removal of Millennium garden and creation of natural play area
- Complete removal of Wildlife Garden (note: whilst retaining the established fruit trees for the site, Countryside & Coast team are proposing incorporation of Wildlife Garden elements into larger scale habitat creation project within Delph Ditch area)
- Areas of future design are identified, some of these may be accomplished with in-house resources but others will require further development and external funding.

3.3.3 Draft design proposal can be found in APPENDIX 1 to this report

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The draft play proposal is within budget and achievable. It fulfils the original brief and subsequent development discussions between officers and commissioned consultants for the provision of an improved Play area within Promenade Park.

4.2 The proposal contains significant changes to the current appearance of the area, however gives due consideration to the funding requirements, majority of users of this area of the park, incorporates parts of the site currently under-utilised, and gives regard to the historic and overall appearance of this area.

4.3 All elements that are being proposed are permissible under Permitted Development. There is no explicit requirement for Planning permission to deliver this project.

4.4 The layout proposal and landscape designs are sufficiently detailed to allow officers to publicly consult on the designs and seek opinion of users, locals and visitors in order to refine the designs further and prior to commissioning any works.

4.5 Following Public Consultation, officers will submit a further report and finalised design to Community Services Committee for approval prior to commissioning any physical works or purchase of play elements.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

5.1 This report and scheme supports the Council’s goal of providing services that are efficient and effective.

5.2 Contributes to Corporate strategies to ‘protect & improve the quality of life’, and ‘To Grow, protect, and improve Maldon District’.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Improved play facilities, increase in accessible space and equipment
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out following finalisation of the Play design.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – There are no corporate risks associated with this report.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – £48,000 Capital budget contribution in addition to £52,000 s106 developer contribution allocated to Promenade Park
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None, the proposal could be managed within existing resources.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Physical minor re-landscaping of area of Promenade Park. Potential removal/redesign of some existing features to facilitate improvements.

Background papers:

Initial scoping report and full costing of draft proposal will be made available to Members in the Members briefing room.

Appendix 1:



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