

**PLAYGROUND RENEWALS 2026-28**

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Council has secured £400k of capital finance over the next two financial years (£200k for 2026-27 and £200k for 2027-28) to allow renewals/refurbishment of Council owned playgrounds.

The Cabinet is recommended to agree and endorse the priority renewal/refurbishment priority list as set out in this report.

The Cabinet is recommended to note the playgrounds on the Playground Priority Upgrade Order List that should be considered by the new authority for future investment from 2028-29 onwards.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report is to set out the order in which the Council owned playgrounds are considered for capital investment and therefore renewal/refurbishment by virtue of priority order. Those sites most in need to be prioritised first. It must be understood that the £400k allocated will not be sufficient to finance all the high-priority sites needing investment.
- 1.2. This is a key decision as impacts across the borough and wards and councillors will be keen that their playground benefits. However, there is insufficient finance to achieve all that is likely desired, therefore, the priority action plan set out will be an important key decision.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The Council has 40 playgrounds within its ownership and historically we have funded from S106 collected from developers seeking to build homes within the borough. Only those sites where development has taken place within a geographical proximity have attracted sufficient S106 and been able to benefit. This funding of playground renewal/refurbishment will continue but sites that benefit is dependent upon the location, speed and volume of local housing development within the borough.

- 2.2. For 2026-27 and 2027-28 finance years the Council has secured £400k (£200k for each finance year) to renew/refurbish playgrounds so some of those sites which are in the most need of refurbishment will benefit.
- 2.3. Playground renewals/refurbishment is a main activity under the Council's priority; Pride in Place: Clean, Safe and Vibrant Neighbourhoods – Invest in refreshing our playgrounds. Additionally good quality playground provision will have a positive impact under the Council's priority; Community and Wellbeing: Active Lives, Healthier and Stronger Communities - Make sure all residents have access to opportunities for physical exercise.

### **3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

- 3.1. The playground action plan updated for 2026 is attached at appendix 1. In summary the sites to be renewed/refurbished are listed in order of action below. There are 16 sites at high priority for renewal/refurbishment, the order below has been based on a scale of need factored by the overall condition of the site and the hierarchy of provision (size of site and catchment it serves).

#### **2026-27**

Keith Lucas Road  
Sunnybank Road & Dart Road

#### **2027-28**

Aspen Grove  
Montgomery Road  
Cumbria Court

#### **Future Years (Assuming additional funding is secured)**

Curly Bridge Close, Herrett Street & Fleming Close - pending land ownership being resolved  
Shelly Rise  
Dene Road  
Richmond Close  
Irvine Drive  
Howard Cole Way/Greys Court  
Tarn Close  
The Lawns

- 3.2. All the playgrounds mentioned above have equipment which is now 25 to 30 years old and the condition is such that keeping them in safe operational condition is challenging. They need renewal/refurbishment to ensure safe and appealing playground provision is maintained.
- 3.3. Cabinet should consider future renewals/refurbishment from 2028-29 as it is important that the Council owned sites are continually refreshed and renewed to keep our playground facilities in good overall favourable condition.

### **Alternative Options**

- 3.4. Given that one of the Councils priorities is to invest in our playgrounds to provide newer and more inclusive equipment there is no other practical alternative.
- 3.5. The only other option would be to remove playground equipment from sites and not replace. This has been discussed at previous PPAB meetings (2020) and the desire to close playgrounds was not generally supported.

### **Consultation**

- 3.6. The Council produced a playground strategy in 2020 that was considered through PPAB; however, no overall agreement was reached. This working document has therefore not been formally adopted, however, forms the basis of the priority action plan proposed.
- 3.7. The priority order for investment was presented to PPAB on 9<sup>th</sup> June with the remit to 'consider and make recommendations in support of the prioritisation of the renewal/refurbishment of Council owned playgrounds that will benefit from the £400k investment over the next two years. The board endorsed the proposed approach, agreeing the first steps to commence renewal of the sites as listed.

## **4. IMPLICATIONS (of proposed course of action)**

### **Risks**

- 4.1. Playground renewals/refurbishments are well received by the local communities that immediately benefit from the improved provision; however, those sites that remain in poor condition can generate enquires and complaint as the local community desire for their local site to be renewed. This is not really a risk, more a consequence but without a time framed response for such sites this can generate dissatisfaction.
- 4.2. Individual ward councillors will likely seek that their local ward playground(s) benefit from this investment but the £400k is not sufficient to cover all high-priority sites of which there are 16.

### **Resource Implications**

- 4.3. The Council has a playground maintenance budget of c£65k and older sites with equipment that is reaching end-of-life will at some point need to be removed for reasons of safety. Such removals would need to be funded from the maintenance budget placing significant strain and risk of overspend. The maintenance budget would not be sufficient to cover replacement of equipment resulting in the loss of facilities and the overall decline of the Council's playground provision. Therefore, the renewal/refurbishment of older sites is a positive step for keeping our sites safe and serviceable within

existing financial resources. Notwithstanding the above, it is not envisaged that this programme will return financial savings.

- 4.4. The renewal/refurbishment of the high-priority sites will require a supported procurement process for each site undertaken. As this is a process that has been previously undertaken, and documentation can adapt between sites it is envisaged that this can be accommodated within the existing resources available to the Council.
- 4.5. The renewals/refurbishment of playground sites is led by the Council's Parks, Play & Open Spaces Manager supported by the Projects Officer which is a part-time resource utilised for specific projects and either funded from developer contributions (S106) where appropriate or existing revenue budget allocations.

### Legal Implications

- 4.6. The Council can be held liable for injuries sustained due to the condition of the playground equipment. Renewal and improvement of the equipment at the identified sites will mitigate the risk of injury which will in turn reduce the likelihood of claims being made against the Council.

### Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.7. Current approved playground capital projects funded from S106 include the following:

Project	26/27 Budget £
<b>Playground Renewals</b>	38,055
Breakdown as below	
Keith Lucas Road	20,313.02
Sunnybank Road	10,665.38
Aspen Grove	1,745.00
Curly Bridge Close	5,331.36
<b>Queens Road</b>	48,875

Further S106 funds for playgrounds are held within the balance sheet. However, these funds are held for specific projects as per the Unilateral Agreement in place with developers. Once the full funds are collected, projects can be brought forward to deliver.

The £200,000 playground budget for 2026/27 was approved at February 2026 Council and is to be funded from Capital Receipts. Therefore, there is no ongoing financing cost impact on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Maintenance costs of playground sites are part of the Council's revenue budget approved each at February Council. Renewal of sites is unlikely to see savings through revenue budgets as detailed above.

Replacing unsafe or deteriorating equipment may minimise future risk to members of the public and potential insurance claims.

### **Equalities Impact Implications**

- 4.8. New playground equipment within the old sites to be renewed will improve accessibility and therefore be a positive impact on accessibility and equalities.

### **Other**

- 4.9. The current condition of some of these older playgrounds is such that they negatively impact the Council's reputation for providing high-quality services and facilities. Sites that look degraded and broken are generally not valued or cared for by their local community and as such can move into a negative spiral.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1. The Council has secured £400k over the next two finance years for playground renewal/refurbishment and this paper sets out the priority order of which sites will benefit.
- 5.2. This decision forms an integral part of the Council's priority action to refresh children's playground provision within the borough.
- 5.3. The Council has 40 playgrounds that it owns and manages and many of these sites are not in the best condition owing to the age of the equipment and safer surfacing therein. This investment is a significant positive step towards better managing our playground provision and improving the playground facilities available to our residents.

### **LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:**

Appendix 1 – Playground Strategy & Action Plan and Playground Upgrade Priority Order

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

Playground Strategy 2020-30 Oversight Document

### **CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Report Author** – Andy Ford (Parks, Play and Open Spaces Manager)

**Head of Service** – David Phillips – Interim Executive Head of Operations



APPENDIX 1

Site	Heirarchy of Provision	Life Expectancy (Years)	Usage	Play Value	Cost to renew / refurbish	Date refurbished	Notes
Keith Lucas Road	3LEAP	0	1High	1Low	£100,000.00		Welding repairs have needed to be undertaken to retain main unit (end of practical life)
Sunnybank Road	3LEAP	0	2Medium	2Medium	£100,000.00		Welding repairs have been needed & safer surfacing tiles are degrading causing potential safety issues
Montgomery Road	4LeAP	0	2Medium	1Low	£60,000.00		Safer surfacing is shrinking & degrading, causing potential safety issues
Curly Bridge Close	4LeAP	0	3Low	1Low	£50,000.00		Ownership resides with Thames Valley Housing, seeking to work in partnership (on hold pending further developments)
Meon Close/Dart Road	4LeAP	0	3Low	1Low	£30,000.00		Needs to be done at same time as Sunnybank due to close proximity. Main unit at end of practical life
Fleming Close /Ship Lane	4LeAP	0	3Low	1Low	£30,000.00		Seeking to resolve land ownership (land in private ownership) cannot renew equipment until resolved
Herrett Street /Highclere Road	4LeAP	0	3Low	1Low	£50,000.00		Seeking to resolve land ownership (transfer from Crown & extinguishing Highway) cannot renew equipment until resolved
Cumbria Court	3LEAP	1	2Medium	2Medium	£60,000.00		Safer surfacing tiles are shrinking & degrading, causing potential safety issues
Aspen Grove	4LeAP	1	3Low	1Low	£60,000.00		Safer surfacing is shrinking & degrading, causing potential safety issues
Dene Road	4LeAP	2	3Low	2Medium	£60,000.00		Welding repairs have needed to be undertaken to retain main units (end of practical life)
The Lawns	3LEAP	3	2Medium	2Medium	£80,000.00		Wooden fencing & gates degraded & beyond practical lifespan
Shelley Rise	4LeAP	3	2Medium	1Low	£50,000.00		Equipment was rubbed down & repainted within recent years removing some urgency
Irvine Drive	4LeAP	3	3Low	1Low	£60,000.00		Equipment was rubbed down & repainted within recent years removing some urgency
Richmond Close	4LeAP	3	3Low	1Low	£60,000.00		Welding repairs have needed to be undertaken to retain main unit (end of practical life)
Tarn Close	4LeAP	3	3Low	1Low	£50,000.00		Main unit is no longer manufactured & no spares available
Howard Cole Way/Greys Court	4LeAP	3	3Low	1Low	£50,000.00		Equipment was rubbed down & repainted and general surface reinstated within recent years removing some urgency
Queens Road Recreation Ground	2NEAP	5	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2005	Dynamic items have had renewed safer surfacing in 2025
Pinewood Park	3LEAP	5	1High	2Medium	£100,000.00		A new roundabout has been installed in recent years
Kingsway	3LEAP	5	2Medium	2Medium	£80,000.00	2006	Safer surfacing renewals in 2025
Prince Charles Crescent	3LEAP	5	2Medium	2Medium	£80,000.00		Main unit has had minor refresh to replace timbers on bridge in recent years
Calton Gardens	4LeAP	5	3Low	1Low	£50,000.00	2019	Equipment was rubbed down & repainted within recent years removing urgency
Water Lane Open Space	3LEAP	8	1High	3High	£80,000.00	2025	Toddler zone was renewed in 2025 & new slide and swings installed in 2024
Fairfax Road	3LEAP	8	2Medium	2Medium	£100,000.00	2008	Safer surfacing is wearing & beginning to fail
Green Way	3LEAP	8	2Medium	2Medium	£100,000.00	2006	Safer surfacing is wearing & beginning to fail
Queen Elizabeth Park (woodland site)	4LeAP	8	2Medium	2Medium	£60,000.00	2021	Installed as a 'temporary' site during ESSO works, retaining whilst in safe operational condition
Aldershot Park	1Destination	12	1High	3High	£200,000.00	2010	Loose fill bark safer surfacing is maintenance burden and needs renewing or replacing with rubber mulch surface
King George V Playing Fields	1Destination	12	1High	3High	£200,000.00	2009	Safer surfacing is wearing & beginning to fail, some areas have been replaced
Blunden Road Recreation Ground	2NEAP	12	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2021	Wooden units have been damaged and causing increased maintenance costs
Moor Road Recreation Ground	2NEAP	12	1High	3High	£200,000.00	2020	High use is resulting in higher maintenance costs
Municipal Gardens	2NEAP	12	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2017	High use is resulting in higher maintenance costs
Osborne Road Recreation Ground	2NEAP	12	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2017	Safer surfacing is wearing
Manor Park	2NEAP	12	1High	3High	£200,000.00	2017	High use is resulting in higher maintenance costs
Rectory Road Recreation Ground	2NEAP	12	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2013	Safer surfacing is wearing & beginning to fail
Pyestock Crescent	3LEAP	12	1High	3High	£100,000.00	2016	Safer surfacing is wearing & beginning to fail
Southwood Country Park	1Destination	15	1High	3High	£200,000.00	2022	High use is resulting in higher maintenance costs. New gates have been installed in 2025.
Queen Elizabeth Park	2NEAP	15	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2024	Safer surface detached due to ground water (site was not installed as per RBC recommendation by ESSO)
Cove Green Recreation Ground	2NEAP	15	1High	3High	£150,000.00	2024	
Redan Hill Gardens	2NEAP	15	2Medium	3High	£150,000.00	2024	
Ivy Road Recreation Ground	3LEAP	15	2Medium	2Medium	£100,000.00	2023	Equipment was refreshed and new safer surface installed 2023
Elles Close	3LEAP	15	2Medium	3High	£100,000.00	2024	