

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

12 APRIL 2022

PLAY AREA EQUIPMENT

MACANDREW'S FIELD

Background

At the last Parks Committee meeting on 8 February Members considered a report from the Assistant Town Clerk regarding the deteriorating MacAndrews Field play equipment installed in 2014, funded by the Big Greenspace Challenge Fund. The play area had been closed due to safety concerns over the rotting timbers, and an engineering inspection required rectification of some of the equipment within one month.

Earthwrights, the original installers, had produced a condition report, proposing repair of decayed timbers and replacement of others at a cost of £6162. The premature decay was challenged with the installers, however they have since responded advising that remedial works were carried out under warranty but any further deterioration is no longer covered due to it expiring after 5 years.

Members would like to see the play area retained, and agreed wholesale replacement of the timber structure rather than patching up the rotten parts with replacement timbers. They delegated to the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk to liaise and obtain quotations for a replacement of a similar natural timber structure in place of the current play equipment, and bring their findings back to either Full Council, where all committee members would be present, or the next Parks Committee meeting.

Funding

A total of £1297 would come out of Restricted Reserves to fund the project, and the balance from the Parks, Woods and Open Spaces Reserve. Based on a budget of around £6,000, in line with the Earthwrights quotation for repair, the Assistant Town Clerk approached four local natural play equipment providers, and was also spontaneously contacted by another from Bournemouth. They were invited to provide a quotation, with scope to add additional equipment should further funding become available. They all confirmed that the current play equipment needed ripping out and replacing. The budget was considered very limited to provide a similar play scheme, and a considerable proportion of this would be taken up with removal of the existing equipment, the lowest estimate being around £1500. Height of any new structures would need to be factored as fall heights over 600mm require impact absorbing surfaces which would involve further expenditure.

In view of the financial constraints and the desire to replace on a similar scale, the Assistant Town Clerk contacted South Hams District Council regarding the OSSR report for the Wain Homes Reserved Matters application on their site at Rutt Lane.

The report referred to their proposed play equipment valued at £100,000 within the terms of the 106 agreement, recommending the design of the play equipment takes into account the existing local play provision in Weatherdon Drive and MacAndrews Field, aiming to complement rather than duplicate provision.

South Hams were informed that the MacAndrew's Field play provision is now defunct and as it was unlikely that it will be replaced with a play area of equivalent scale it could no longer be factored into their decision making. She enquired whether there would be a possibility for the natural play element to be located in MacAndrew's Field instead, with the Town Council undertaking the responsibility of the inspect and insure of the equipment.

The South Hams Officer responsible for 106 allocations stated that approval of the Wain Homes play equipment was imminent and was doubtful of any scope for change but would make some enquiries. This is still pending.

Quotations

South West Play, Newlyn, Cornwall - No site visit undertaken, but provided the quotation from images sent of the site and current equipment. Quotation is for four items of equipment plus removal of existing for £6,000 exc VAT. Material is pressure treated pine, with a 10 year guarantee, the netting 1 year guarantee, and steel based components 5 year guarantee.

Rhino Play, Ipplepen, Devon – Visited site and met with the Assistant Town Clerk and undertook a thorough inspection. Quoted for two options both manufactured in pressure treated renewable superior Scandinavian Redwood, factory machined and pressure treated timber. Trim Trail £5969, Castle Tower £5983. The timber guarantee is for 15 years, 1 year parts and labour, 14 years parts only. The quotation is based on the Town Council arranging removal of existing equipment and some of the willow.

Alastair Guy Playgrounds, Stoke Climsland, Cornwall – Visited site alone and quoted for the removal of all timber play equipment £3703 and reinstalment of new play equipment using a similar design for £9390. They recommended replacement equipment be upgraded to oak timber to ensure a longer life span and galvanised steel brackets with concrete footings to keep the timbers out of the ground to prevent rotting. They would not be replacing the timber arch and satellite stepping-stone stumps. They appreciated this was a higher than budget quote but would give an idea of how much a replacement would be. Guarantee - Installed timber structures in steel feet (10-year guarantee); Horizontal timbers and all parts, except wear parts (5-year guarantee); Wear parts (against structural failure), Ropes, Chains, Coupling Links and Shackles (2-year guarantee); Installation and Site Works, including workmanship and materials (1-year guarantee).

Outdoor Play UK, Ipplepen, Devon – They did not perform a site visit, but advised on receiving the images of the site that it would be tight to provide a design within the budget given but would provide some figures. On chasing a quotation they stated that they use Robinia wood, and due to supply issues from Scandinavia and uncertainty of prices once stock arrives, they were unable to provide a quotation.

Russell Play, Bournemouth, Dorset – They undertook a site visit and met with the Assistant Town Clerk and performed a thorough inspection, however they were unable to make a substantive offer by the time they had taken into account preliminaries, even allowing for removal of existing equipment in-house. They provided designs should further funding become available.

VICTORIA PARK

In September 2021 the annual play area inspection in Victoria Park highlighted a number of defects with the play area. The main area of concern was the roundabout having insufficient clearance between the base and the playground surface.

An independent inspection by RoSPA was arranged and undertaken in March 2022, and this has also concluded that the roundabout clearance is incorrect and the timber is rotting. It also highlighted medium risks with various other equipment, including the junior swings which have loose fittings between the swing suspension and crossbars, and there is shrinkage of the play surface under the multiplay equipment. Some risks can be dealt with in-house, however the play equipment is ageing and Members will need to factor in using reserves to upgrade this in the near future, and a decision about the carousel needs to be addressed.

Members are therefore requested to consider the refurbishment of the Council's play equipment and advise how they wish to proceed.

Julie Gilbert
Assistant Town Clerk