

Key Decision Details	
Decision Name	A Sustainable Framework for Play in Huntingdonshire
Date of Decision	18 November 2025
Decision maker	The Cabinet
Describe the Decision taken	<p>(a) adopted the Sustainable Play Framework as the strategic approach for play provision across Huntingdonshire, ensuring alignment with the Corporate Plan, Healthy Open Spaces Strategy (2020) and the Council's Climate Strategy;</p> <p>(b) approved the tiered play provision model as detailed in the HDC Final Report (Appendix 1) and phased implementation plan (2025–2030) as outlined in the HDC Final Report (Appendix 1) and supported by the HDC Implementation Guide (Appendix 2), including audit and prioritisation, pilot projects, and District-wide rollout, to deliver inclusive, high-quality play spaces;</p> <p>(c) committed to securing multi-year funding through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to lock in the indicative £730,000 capital investment and enable delivery of the framework;</p>

- (d) delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to identify and co-ordinate the development of income-generating flagship sites to create a commercially sustainable model that reinvests revenue into the wider play network; and
- (e) delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to develop community engagement initiatives and co-design to ensure inclusivity, local ownership, and alignment with the needs of children, young people, and families.

What were the reasons for taking the Decision?

The Sustainable Play Framework provides a strategic, evidence-led approach to improving outdoor play provision across Huntingdonshire. It responds directly to consultation findings, national best practice, and the Council's Healthy Open Spaces Strategy (2020), ensuring that play spaces are inclusive, imaginative, and accessible to all. By prioritising investment in high-impact areas and enhancing flagship sites, the framework supports

improved health and wellbeing, community cohesion, and environmental resilience—delivering on Corporate Plan priorities and statutory duties.

The recommended decisions also enable the Council to establish a financially and commercially sustainable model for play. Through the identification of underused sites and development of income-generating destinations, the framework allows the Council to direct resource appropriately and create opportunities for reinvestment. Embedding the programme within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy ensures delivery is achievable and resilient. Collectively, these measures position Huntingdonshire as a forward-thinking authority committed to delivering high-quality infrastructure that improves lives and supports thriving communities.

What alternative options were considered and rejected?

Option 1: Do Nothing

Choosing to take no action would mean continuing with the current approach without introducing a strategic framework for play provision. This recognises that play provision is discretionary. While this option requires no immediate planned investment

there will be cyclical replacement works carried out. This option does not position the Council to respond to changing community needs, address accessibility requirements, or deliver on the ambitions of the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy (2020) and Corporate Plan. It would also limit opportunities to create a financially sustainable model for play and to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits that high-quality play spaces can deliver.

Option 2: Do Something

This option involves making selective improvements to existing play areas without adopting a comprehensive strategy. While this would provide some visible enhancements, it would not deliver the systemic change required to ensure long-term sustainability, inclusivity, and financial resilience. Investment would be reactive rather than planned, reducing the ability to prioritise resources where they will have the greatest impact. This approach would achieve incremental progress but would not fully realise the potential benefits of a coordinated, evidence-based framework.

Option 3: Do Everything (Recommended)

Adopting the Sustainable Play Framework offers a proactive and strategic solution. This approach focuses on creating a tiered model of provision that prioritises investment in high-impact locations, enhances

flagship and hub sites to deliver inclusive and engaging play experiences, and ensures compliance with national standards such as those set by Fields in Trust. It also incorporates the principles of Design for Play, ensuring that spaces are imaginative, accessible, and integrated into the wider public realm. By aligning with the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy (2020) and Corporate Plan priorities, this option supports improved health and wellbeing, strengthens core service delivery, and contributes to environmental sustainability. It also establishes a commercially viable model by developing income-generating flagship sites, enabling reinvestment across the network, and securing long-term financial resilience. It also positions the Council in a positive way when applying for external funding and working with partners to deliver improvements

Conflict of interest and dispensation

Is the decision a Key Decision? Yes

Was the decision included in the Forward Plan No

Was the decision subject to the urgency proceedings? No

List the background papers to any report considered by the Decision Taker

Person Making this report

Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment

Decision will be effective the day after call-in expires. Call-in expires on

26 November 2025

Accompanying Documents

- 8. A Sustainable Framework for Play in Huntingdonshire
- 8. Play Sufficiency Appendix 1
- 8. Play Sufficiency Appendix 2
- 8. Play Sufficiency Appendix 3
- 8. Play Sufficiency Appendix 4
- 8. Play Sufficiency Appendix 5