

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Approach to Green Space and Play Provision
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) 3rd October 2017
Executive Portfolio:	Councillor Jim White – Executive Councillor for Operations
Report by:	Neil Sloper – Head of Service (Operations)
Wards affected:	All

Executive Summary:

The report provides presents the progress in Green Space and Play Provision in line with the Council's development priorities agreed in the Green Space and Play Provision Needs analysis.

The future programme and related funding needs are also summarised.

Recommendation(s):

The Panel are invited to:

1. note the progress of Green Space and Play Provision making any recommendations to Cabinet regarding future provision and the funding options presented.

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The report provides the Panel with:

- the opportunity to note the implementation of green space and play projects to date
- future funding options
- strategic view of play provision in our District

2.0 IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

2.1 The Green Space and Play Development Priorities were agreed by Cabinet in September 2016 following an in depth audit of the provision of Green Space and Play in the District. An update to the table of priorities can be found in Appendix 1.

2.2 A number of play and green spaces have been created or improvements during 16/17 & 17/18:-

- Bowls Club Play Area improvement, St Neots
- Hill Rise Play Area improvement, St Ives
- Moorhouse Drive Play Area refurbish and improvements, Huntingdon
- Priory Park, new Trim Trail, St Neots
- Stukeley Meadows MUGA, Huntingdon – with HTC
- New Sallowbush Road Play Area, Huntingdon – with HTC
- Football goal ends, Sapley – with HTC
- Football goal ends, French Field, Sapley– with HTC
- 6 Neighbourhood Green projects, to include Hinchingbrooke Hospital & MS Therapy Centre Garden – with HTC
- Pound Lane Green Space Improvements, Yaxley
- Riversmead Play Area, St Neots – with SNTC
- Duck Lane MUGA, St Neots – with SNTC
- Pitch Improvements, Earith – with Earith PC
- Jubilee Garden, Little Paxton – with Little Paxton PC

2.3 Partnership working has increased with local Town and Parish Councils. An excellent example of this is with Huntingdon Town Council where a successful Multi Use Games Area has been installed in Stukeley Meadows as well as Sallowbush Road.



3.0 FORWARD PLANS

3.1 We will continue to work on the priorities identified in the green space and play needs analysis. However, the Council's Transformation programme has given us the opportunity to think more cleverly about how we fund and provide facilities for customers. Central, well maintained and convenient facilities make operational sense and provide greater

opportunities for engagement and social wellbeing. With the Council's strategic priority of enabling communities but supporting them to improve their health and well-being; why look further than your local Park, Green Space or Play Area for healthier living and cost effective fitness opportunities?

- 3.2 Following the implementation of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document in 2012 we are no longer able to collect commuted sums for off-site play provision for developments smaller than 200 dwellings. This change has inevitably led to a decrease in the 'S106' pot from which we could previously fund local, specific projects. Instead we now look to closely work with our Development Management colleagues to influence the Planning application process and ensure quality and relevant Green Spaces and Play Areas are installed as part of an application, whilst keeping the Customer at the centre of what we do.
- 3.3 An example of where we were directly able to influence to secure a fantastic central facility can be seen at Alconbury Weald. Through early intervention we have ensured that play and green space are taken seriously and locked certain features and 'Mega' play areas into the Section 106 for the entire site. More recently the Community Hub has been opened at Alconbury Weald which brings together opportunities for play, exercise and socialising local to residents. We feel that this key centralisation of community opportunities is pivotal to the delivery of the strategic priority of enabling our communities whilst meeting customer needs.



4.0 **FUNDING**

- 4.1 As the Section 106 funds are depleted, we have had to think and work differently to continue to plan for and secure Green Spaces and Play provision. For example, in the past we have kept a rolling capital programme of replacement for Play Equipment which has enabled minor running repairs to previously established play areas. We are now taking a more pragmatic view of our play areas and asking what we can do to make them better for our customers, to offer a better provision, being confident to question whether or not this means removing unused or frequently vandalised spaces, focus spend elsewhere.
- 4.2 We want our Green Space and Play Provision to be outstanding and a number of business cases for capital investment will be presented to the Council within the budget planning process this autumn.
- 4.3 Recently Priory Park in St Neots became the first Green Flag Park in Huntingdonshire, a stamp of approval for the standards and community engagement that we want to drive across all our Green Spaces. As a result of this drive, all of our major parks now have Management Plans that set out their maintenance programmes based within zonal areas across all departments, as well as how we see them developing over the next few years. In the next round of capital bidding we will be submitting our 2018/19 planned project work for all our major parks.

- 4.4 To further improve our Green Spaces we have audited the quality of all our street furniture and fencing to inform a refurbishment programme proposal for the next two years. This is being proposed to present the green spaces in the highest possible standard using materials that are attractive, reduced maintenance and long-lived across the District. The business case will be presented within the Capital Bidding process.
- 4.5 With the real reduction in S106 funding we also want to lead in new ways of funding and providing facilities by way of Crowd Funding and Sponsorship options. Over the coming months we will be working to complement our Capital funding by working with dedicated agencies to bring our customers back into our decision making and funding ideas. A proposal for revenue funding to trail this work and a provision of capital to act as 'seed' funding for projects will be put forward in this year's budget process.
- 4.6 Following success with working alongside Groundwork '*Changing places, changing places, changing lives – one green step at a time*' we also want to continue to support the upskilling of the local Green Teams to feed into our own workforce. During this growing season we were able to recruit a successful student from the programme as a seasonal worker. The benefit of recruiting locally and working within set training programmes means we can nurture a new and robust recruitment process to complement our already successful teams.

6.0 LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 The approach to Green Space and Play provision will contribute to the Corporate Plan's strategic objective of enabling communities, supporting people to improve their health and well-being. Specifically by:
- a) Enhancing fundamentally the safety of the green environment of the District.
 - b) Operations becoming much more business-like and efficient in the way it delivers safe services

7.0 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 The scrutinising of the Approach to Green Space and Play Provision gives the Panel the opportunity to influence the final document submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement and ensures that the panel are aware of the changes in funding available and the ways in which proposals to drive forward green space and play provision are being made for consideration.

8.0 LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Project Schedule

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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APPENDIX 1 – Huntingdonshire Green Space and Play Assessment

Project Schedule Green Space and Play Assessment – Updated September 2017

Location	Assessment	Needs Analysis Findings	Recommended Action	Resourcing, Deliverability & Priority Rating (Short/Medium/Long Term)	Status
Huntingdon	Green Space	Parks and Gardens - Provision is deficient in the West Ward. West Ward does have a high industrial area where the main area of deficiency is showing. The East and North Wards are within the policy requirement.	No Action Development through capital resources of some of the Natural and Semi Natural areas as Parks and Gardens in the south of the West Ward is a consideration. However, because the A14 divides the ward and this would only benefit a small residential area as there is limited access across the A14 there would be a low return on investment, therefore no action is recommended.	N/A	N/A
		Natural & Semi Natural - The North Ward is deficient. The East and West Wards are both over provided for making the total for Huntingdon 126 hectares over the policy requirement.	No Action In the North Ward there are no potential sites that could be converted to Natural and Semi Natural Green Space, therefore no action is recommended because of overprovision within the town as a whole.	N/A	N/A
		Allotments and Community Gardens - North and West Wards are lacking allotments and community gardens. However the allotment in the West Ward is closer to more houses in the North Ward than many of those in the West Ward. There is an overall deficiency in Huntingdon as a whole of three hectares.	Action – In the West Ward the area south of the A14 – Mill Common; currently Natural and Semi Natural Green Space, part of this site could be considered as a community garden. In the North Ward part of the Sapley Playing Fields could also be considered as a community garden or allotments, this would also benefit many of the residents from the West Ward.	Long Term	Complete - Community Gardens and Door Step Green Projects successfully installed in partnership with Huntingdon Town Council

	Play	Huntingdon is made up of 3 wards and when analysed it became clear that there was a need for a limited increase in play provision throughout the wards.	Action - After consultation with Huntingdon Town Council, 4 existing play facilities sites have been identified as potential locations that could be increased in size to ensure adequate play coverage could be reached. These areas are:		
			<i>The Pits, Sapley Road Play Area</i> LEAP (Town Council owned) to increase the existing play area to a NEAP by installing a ball game element along with other facilities.	Short Term – Funding in place	Complete and installed in partnership with Huntingdon Town Council funded by S106
			<i>Sallowbush Road, adjacent to MUGA</i> (HDC owned) to increase existing site to include a play area and redesignating the site as a NEAP.	Short Term – Funding in place	Complete and installed in partnership with Huntingdon Town Council funded by S106
			<i>Devoke Close, Stukeley Meadows</i> LAP (Town Council owned) increase the existing play area by installing a low key ball element with other facilities to make it a NEAP	Short Term – Funding in place	Complete and installed in partnership with Huntingdon Town Council funded by S106
			<i>Elsie’s Way, field adjacent to Huntingdon Gym</i> (Town Council owned) to install ball game element and other facilities to increase to a NEAP.	Short Term – Funding in place	Complete and installed in partnership with Huntingdon Town Council funded by S106
Ramsey	Green Space	Overall there is sufficient green space provision in Ramsey although it is not very well distributed, with just two main areas of amenity green space and very little in the north of the town. The allotment plots are plentiful but their location is not within easy reach of the majority of residents.	Action - There are currently no natural or semi-natural areas but, as there is an overprovision of amenity green space some of these areas could be allowed to grow wild to allow for biodiversity and environmental education.	Long Term – Funding Required	Influencing in Planning process to ensure future development provides for this
			Action - The parks and garden element is also deficient, again part of the amenity green Space could be set aside to allow for this.	Long Term – Funding Required	Influencing in Planning process to ensure future development provides for this

	Play	<p>Ramsey currently has five play areas, four are the responsibility of the Town Council and the fifth is owned and maintained by the District Council. The plan and the figures contained in Appendix clearly show there is a deficiency in play provision in Ramsey. However the main area where there is no play is the town centre which does not have any space that could be set aside for play</p>	<p>Action - There are outline planning applications for two developments in Ramsey. If both of these are successful and the developers provide open space as required, Ramsey Millions Partnership have funding in place to provide a skate park in the north of Ramsey which would alleviate the deficiency</p>	<p>Medium Term – funding to be realised through planning agreements</p>	<p>Complete - Agreement in place with Ramsey Town Council and Ramsey Millions for this to be provided.</p>
		<p>However the main area where there is no play is the town centre which does not have any space that could be set aside for play</p>	<p>Action - If this land is not forthcoming there is funding available the two LEAP's in King George V field and Mill Lane to upgrade into NEAP's which would also provide sufficient play for Ramsey</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>	<p>No action</p>
St Ives	Green Space	<p>Natural and Semi Natural Green Space (N&SN) - Although at a local level the East and West wards are deficient in N&SN as a whole St Ives is over provided by 1.5ha.</p>	<p>Action - In both East and West wards, reallocate approximately 1ha of Amenity Green Space to N&SN, reduction in maintenance regime.</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>	<p>No action</p>
		<p>Allotments and Community Gardens (A&CG) - Provision for A&CG is deficient in East and South ward although when St Ives is assessed as a whole provision matches policy requirement.</p>	<p>Action - Allotments would not always be appropriate in dense urban areas and instead community gardens would be more successful. One location in the East and South Ward should be identified as a site for a small community garden (approximately 100m2 per site).</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>No action</p>
	Play	<p>A serious under provision for play is noted across the whole of St Ives.</p> <p>By increasing the designation of the play areas at Stirling Road and Warners Park (Town Council owned) to NEAP status through investment, adequate play coverage could be reached.</p>	<p>Action - Identify funding to invest in Stirling Road and Warners Park play areas to re-designate them as NEAPs.</p>	<p>Short Term</p>	<p>Working with a local developer to redirect an off-site contribution to invest in these play areas</p>

St Neots	Green Space	Parks and Gardens - The green space provision for Parks and Gardens is only showing as deficient in the Eaton Socon and Eynesbury wards. However, the total Green Space in both of these wards is considerably above the policy requirements.	No Action	N/A	N/A
		Amenity Green Space - Amenity Green Space is in abundance in all of the St Neots wards, well above the policy requirements and it is quite well distributed with a good number of Green Corridors to connect the green spaces.	No Action	N/A	N/A
		Natural and Semi Natural Green Space (N&SN) - All the wards in St Neots are well provided for as far as Natural and Semi Natural green space is concerned so again no action is necessary.	No Action	N/A	N/A
		Allotments and Community Gardens (A&CG) - There are no Allotments or Community Gardens in Eaton Socon, and Eaton Ford and Eynesbury are showing as deficient in this provision. Although the policy requirement for St Neots as a whole is on a par with what is currently being provided, when the private sites are included, there are many residents who would not be able to access a site close to their home.	Action - Amenity Green Space is above the policy requirement in each ward. Consideration should be given to converting some of the Amenity Green Space to Allotment Sites or a Community Garden, for example the green space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford or the western side of Regatta Meadows.	Medium Term	Discussions with St Neots Town Council are positive and S106 funds from a new development could be used to create this.

	Play	Statistically the Play provision is showing as deficient in the town, although the existing play areas are well distributed throughout the wards, with the exception of Eaton Ford where it is distinctly lacking.	Action - If funding becomes available there is Amenity Green Space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Ford that could be considered for play following consultation or part of Regatta Meadows could also be an option.	Medium Term	HDC are looking to increase play provision in the park and create destination play spaces where local play areas are not possible.
Earith	Green Space	Provision is well spread out and accessible to residents, although some categories remain below policy level. the Bulwark and the River Island although separated from the village by water, do form part of a varied portfolio of Green Space opportunities in the village..	Action - If the access to the ECA field could be resolved and the field brought back into public use the provision of Green Space in Earith would be markedly improved Future funding secured to improve Green Space in Earith should be used to help the Parish Council to find a solution to bring the ECA field back into action.	Medium Term	Monitoring
	Play	Earith has two play areas, a skate park and a multi-use games area. Although statistically this appears to be deficient, coverage is adequate for a village of this size.	No action required	N/A	N/A
Godmanchester	Green Space	Overall there is sufficient green space provision in Godmanchester and it is quite well distributed throughout the town. The new development proposed at Bearscroft Farm to the east of the town will provide some additional green space, although sites have not been confirmed. Natural & Semi-Natural – there is a deficiency in this requirement and we should look to increase existing Natural/wildlife areas.	Action - The statistics show a deficiency in natural and semi-natural areas, however there are a number of amenity green space sites for example Wigmore Farm where the wildflower areas could be extended to provide the biodiversity element needed.	Medium Term	Monitoring

		Parks and Gardens - There is also a deficiency showing for but there are no more sites that lend themselves for this purpose.	Action - Further investigation with Town Council required	Long Term	No action
	Play	Statistically the play provision is showing as deficient in the town but with the addition of the play areas proposed for the Bearscroft Farm Development, Godmanchester has sufficient play provision. The north of the town that would benefit from an additional play area but there is not a new site that could accommodate this.	Action - There is an opportunity to upgrade a LEAP play area to a NEAP play area in the north-west, this would assist with the coverage. The funding to increase the size and play designation of a LEAP to a NEAP could be funded through securing a Section 106 funding from local developments.	Long Term	No action
Sawtry	Green Space	Overall there is sufficient green space provision in Sawtry and it is well distributed throughout the village. The new development off Gidding Road will provide extra allotments for the community and also a natural /semi-natural area which includes newt ponds providing a haven for wildlife in the village. The only area of green space that is lacking is Parks and Gardens, unfortunately there is no amenity green space within the village that could be suitably changed.	No Action	N/A	N/A

	Play	<p>Sawtry currently has one play area, a youth shelter and a multi-use goal end. Another play area (Leap) is going to be installed in 2016 on a new development off Gidding Road.</p> <p>Statistically there is a deficiency in play provision across parts of the village.</p>	<p>By increasing such designation as St Judith Field (Parish Council owned) to a Leap/Neap through investment adequate play coverage could be reached additional coverage can be provided.</p> <p>Action - Identify funding to invest in St Judith Field to re-designate to a Leap/Neap.</p>	Medium Term	No action as local group looking into Skate Park facility
Stilton	Green Space	<p>As a whole green open space is deficient, with no provision for allotments, community gardens or wildlife havens, (natural & semi natural). However the amenity grass is very well distributed throughout the village. As the majority of the amenity grass is surrounded by housing, none of these areas lend themselves to anything other than amenity land</p>	<p>Action - If there are any new housing developments within the village consideration should be made with regard to acquiring land for allotments or areas for the community.</p>	Medium Term	No action
	Play	<p>Stilton has two play areas and a skate park. The current play provision is severely lacking for the majority of Stilton residents.</p>	<p>Action - There are currently no green spaces available in the village that would be suitable to accommodate a play area. We would seek to acquire appropriate play provision from any new housing developments in the village.</p>	Medium Term	No action

Yaxley	Green Space	As a whole green open space is deficient in Yaxley with insufficient provision for allotments and community gardens and no provision for parks and gardens. However, the amenity grass is quite well distributed within the main areas in the centre of the village. The two large areas of amenity grass are currently used for outdoor sport so they do not lend themselves to be changed to parks and gardens.	Action - With any new housing developments within the village consideration should be made with regard to acquiring land for allotments or community gardens. If there is a new large development in Yaxley that could accommodate the Parks and Gardens element this would alleviate this deficiency.	Medium Term	No action
	Play	Statistically the play provision for Yaxley is showing as deficient in the town, however with the addition of the play areas installed recently at Shackleton Way and Scott Drive, Yaxley has good coverage as far as play is concerned.	No Action	N/A	N/A