

# Crawley Borough Council

## Consideration Report for Delegated Decision by Cabinet Member for Wellbeing.

Expected Date of Decision 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020

### Unsupervised Play Area Investments

Report of the *Head of Community Services* - Report no. HCS/22

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#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To report on the interim continuation of play area restoration projects.
- 1.2 A decision is now needed in order to utilise a portion of S106 funds with a spend deadline of June 2021.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing is recommended to:

Approve the Unsupervised Play Area Investments Programme (Year 1) as set out in section 6 of this report.

#### **3. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 3.1 The proposed investment projects for Year 1 have been developed following detailed analysis and consulted through the Unsupervised Play Investment Plan Working Group (UPIPWG).
- 3.2 Due to the critical time dependency on spend of available S106 funds it was agreed the delivery should be expedited, subject to the necessary approvals. The recommendation has been supported through a cross party process.
- 3.2 The future projects for Year 2 onwards will then be considered by the working group as part of a long term strategy that will be returned to Cabinet for approval.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The most recent Unsupervised Play Investment Strategy (2014 – 2019) came to an end in March, at that stage there were 12 forecasted projects remaining in the investment programme consisting of several sites that did not require investment at that time.
- 4.2 A full review was then conducted to assess the requirements for the outstanding sites, as well as all other play areas within the portfolio, all of which have now been reprioritised and incorporated into a new draft investment plan. This draft plan will continue to be developed through the cross party working group in order to produce a new strategy.

- 4.3 The investments that are now proposed for this current year are the only viable combination of projects that ensures the most effective prioritisation of S106 funds within the spend deadline.
- 4.4 Medlar Close, also featured in these priorities was also one of the remaining projects in the original 2014-2019 strategy. At the point of review Medlar Close had already been consulted upon, tendered and awarded, therefore in that particular case a Significant Operational Decision has already been taken due to the projects advanced stage.

## **5. Description of Issue to be resolved**

- 5.1 The key justifications for progressing year 1 in this way are:
- Due to the nature of the previous policy decision having now expired, in addition to a spend deadline of June 2021 for the relevant funds, an interim programme is needed.
  - The projects proposed in Year 1 are the only viable combination of projects that will meet the S106 spend deadline.
  - The funding cannot be used for any other purpose therefore the commitment needs to be made for Outdoor Play Facilities.
  - Approving them as a group of investments is consistent with the fact that the programme is already covered by the oversight of a cross party working group.

## **6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation**

- 6.1 The short term reprioritisation of the investments and the assessment of the portfolio in conjunction with the spend criteria for S106, has established the most viable prioritisation for the current year.
- 6.2 The play area investments being recommended for approval are:  
Dormans Play Area – Gossops Green  
Chichester Close – Tilgate  
Newbury Road – Pound Hill  
Ninfield Court - Bewbush
- 6.2 Other combinations of play area investments were reviewed however the recommendation is based upon the optimum list of projects that meet the combined criteria of Safety; Condition; Play Value and Location relating to S106.
- 6.3 As there are no other investment options that would currently meet the same spend criteria, changing or withdrawing any schemes from the programme or if a timely decision is not made, this would risk the loss of crucial S106 funds and leave the play areas in need of investment.
- 6.4 Approval of the recommended schemes ensures the important continuation of investments which in turn will protect revenue budgets.

## **7. Implications**

- 7.1 The decision requires the use of capital funds to invest in four play area improvement projects.
- 7.2 The capital budget will be met by S106 allocations, the approvals for which are managed via the Economic Regeneration team.

7.3 The projects will be managed by the Community Services Capital Projects Team, following established processes for capital investments.

**8. Background Papers**

None.