

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Environment and Amenities Committee
Meeting date	11 January 2022
Report author	Tim Badcock
Agenda item	10

Play area report

1. **Purpose of the report**

1.1 To update members on the progress of play area improvements and a longer-term plan for the future.

2. **Summary**

2.1 Equipment for the agreed 2021/22 play park improvements has been ordered with the remainder of the budget being allocated to outdoor fitness equipment.

2.2 2022/23 improvements are being considered along with other improvements to be carried out over a five-year period which in turn will assist the budgeting process.

3. **Action required and recommendations**

3.1 Members are requested to note the report.

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives**

4.1 Play area improvements are in support of the council's key objectives and in particular:

KO2: To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future

KO3: To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.

4.2 Play area improvements are included in the Forward Plan as project E6.

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5. **Background**

5.1 The council maintains eight play areas:

Chaunterell Way
Masefield Crescent
River Close
Caldecott Recreation Ground
Boxhill Recreation Ground
Chilton Close
Elizabeth Avenue
Hill View

5.2 Each year the council allocates a sum of money in the budget for maintenance and improvement of play areas. During 2021/22 this was £25,000.

5.3 In accordance with the forward plan we are now looking at a five year rolling plan of improvements in order to assist with budgeting, taking direction from members regarding the extent of and priorities of the plan.

6. **Key information and options**

6.1 From the 2021/22 budget new equipment for the expansion of Chilton Close play area and Boxhill Recreation ground has been ordered and we are expecting an installation date of March 2022. I am currently seeking quotes for exercise equipment to be installed in Caldecott Recreation Ground and Chilton Close Park using the remainder of the 2021/22 budget.

6.2 Once these orders are in place, I'll be starting on the 2022/23 improvements.

6.3 This process begins with putting together a spec that considers equipment already installed, knowledge of past equipment and its popularity, age group usage of particular areas, vandalism, requests from users, local knowledge from our team, ongoing maintenance and of course play value. Next is the tendering process which, after discussions with providers normally flags up new considerations for the specification and therefore any alterations are made and finally orders are placed.

6.4 This year I shall be taking an overall look at all of our play areas to enable us to propose a five-year plan for these areas. In the spring of 2021 Members were asked for their suggestions for improvements and these were reported to council in June 2021. These are detailed in appendix 1 and will be brought forward for consideration.

6.5 I will then come forward at the June 2022 meeting of this committee with proposals.

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7. **Climate change/green implications**

7.1 Introducing outdoor gym equipment encourages people to exercise outside rather than in air-conditioned indoor gyms or in the home using electric powered apparatus.

8. **Financial/budget implications**

8.1 The committee has included a sum of £35,000 for play area improvements in the draft budget for 2022/23 play area.

8.2 There may be additional financial implications resulting from any member decisions following the upcoming review which I am undertaking.

9. **HR implications**

9.1 No additional implications beyond existing staffing. However if we were to expand the play area offer more officer time would be required.

10. **Supporting papers and appendices**

Appendix 1: Spring 2021 - Member suggestions regarding play area improvements.

Tim Badcock
Cemetery and Outdoor Services Manager
10 January 2022

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APPENDIX 1

Spring 2021 - Member suggestions regarding play area improvements.

Boxhill	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Range of play equipment - aimed at lower and middle childhood age. Just wondered if it might be possible to install something else for older children? The park at Millbrook in Grove has some excellent examples of equipment for older children. 2. There is currently only one area of seating at the play equipment end - this is situated at the side of the park backing onto Abbott Rd.. Given the bumps in the ground, it's possible a parent may not be able to see younger children on the roundabout from there. So could we think about installing another bench seat perpendicular to the path through the woods, further up in the section with the roundabout ? 3. Floor area in shelter needs improvement. 4. Basket swing 5. Consider installing something for older children - users suggested a large slide, or a zip wire and cited the Castle Play Area in Wallingford as a good example.
Caldecott	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basket swing 2. The old climbing frame doesn't look very interesting perhaps something more challenging 3. Users liked the openness and came from afar to use it - suggestions included Monkey bars (very popular choice amongst children asked), "bouncers" (as at the Abbey), a sunken-into-the ground trampoline, bigger swings (as at Blewbury), an additional bench for parents, and that consideration to extending the fenced area 4. Consider installing exercise equipment around the field .
River Close	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basket swing 2. Roundabout 3. Place a waste bin near to seat.
Masefield Crescent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no fenced area here 2. It's very exposed could have some sort of shelter. 3. Large climbing/adventure structure 4. Consider installing exercise equipment around the field (though note that equipment is already at Chaunterell Way which is not too far away) 5. Consider installing another bench/seat for parents - perhaps by the field boundary so it overlooks all the eqpt
Chaunterell Way	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This one did have quite a dismal feel. 2. It appears quite small for the area could be bigger. 3. Didn't like the stand-up roundabout, prefer the type on Boxhill. 4. Consider installing An "in-the-ground" trampoline 5. (Noted the ground area underneath the roundabout is badly worn)
Hill View	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not much room for improvement unless we could use the area outside the fencing and have a large fort-type climbing structure.
Elizabeth Avenue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Basket swing 2. No gate

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Chilton Close	1. Consider enlarging play area - to include another bench and a range of items for small children (the area is well used by families before and after the school delivery)
General	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Generally the play areas are well kept, no litter, and the equipment all looked at least serviceable.2. The swings whilst mostly mechanically ok do look a little tired.3. Some of the gate bolts are either missing or not particularly nice to use.4. Comment from an adult - if a zip wire is installed could it have an incline as some appear to be horizontal which requires parents to "help"