



Kettering
TOWN COUNCIL

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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:- 2023/048

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	25 th October 2023
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Town clerk
Report Title:-	Play Facilities
Wards Affected:-	Ise, but town wide as well.

1. Purpose of Report

To outline proposals for contributing to the renewal of a play area in Kettering and to establish a broad policy to guide the Council's approach to future requests for investment.

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to

- a) Agree a contribution of £7000 towards the replacement of play facilities on the Ise Valley, on condition that it has a role in the design, consultation and contractor selection process and that its contribution is fully reflected in the communication and promotional work.
- b) Establish a policy and a recurring budget of £5000 to influence the selection, design and implementation of play area investment across town in future years, from 2025/6 onwards, as set out in para 4.3 below.

3. Information

- 3.1. The ownership, provision and management of play areas lies with NNC, which inherited them from Kettering Borough Council. (Play areas are however often a function of parish councils which tend also to own the recreation grounds on which they stand and this is the case with parishes in the former East Northamptonshire Area).
- 3.2. For some time, local people and members have been asking for the play area on the Ise valley to be improved. It is the only equipped children's play area on the Ise estate and it is in a poor condition. A survey of local views was undertaken by Cllr Skinner in 2022, (see para 5.1 below and the appendix) and there was wide support for its replacement. Partly as a consequence of this work, NNC have looked at how to upgrade the play area and have come to the view that both elements of it (the toddlers section and the older children's section) need completely removing and replacing by one new facility.
- 3.3. NNC have asked the Town Council to contribute £7000 to the costs of the new play area.
- 3.4. The total cost of removal and replacement is estimated by NNC to be £80,000. They are intending to submit a bid to the FCC* for a Landfill Tax grant, but need to be able to offer up match funding to maximise the chance of that grant being realised. This means that £17000 of funding has to be locally provided and the proposed split is £10000 from NNC and £7000 from KTC.
- 3.5. Landfill tax grant arrangements are quite complex, but essentially contributing third parties are required to meet a proportion of the total costs of the project, in this case amounting to £10,000 plus 10% of the remaining sum.
- 3.6. *The grant making body is the FCC Communities Foundation (previously known as WREN) – it is a not-for-profit environmental body which manages and distributes funding generated by waste management company FCC Environment through the Landfill Tax.
- 3.7. No detailed designs have yet been drawn up at this stage and it is proposed that the Town Council would make any contribution dependent upon
 - A role in determining the design of the play area, public consultation on options and the selection of a contractor to do the work
 - Appropriate publicity and branding showing the Town Council's contribution
 - A "grand opening " involving the Mayor at the time of its opening.
- 3.8. The expenditure would occur in the 24/5 financial year.

4. Wider implications

4.1. NNC manages 130 equipped play areas throughout their area, and in Kettering town it has 16 play areas and outdoor gyms, plus the Ise Skatepark and MUGA. The broad NNC strategy will probably be to move towards fewer but better facilities over time. Of the Kettering play areas, the Ise Valley is much the worse, but the following are candidates for renewal or replacement on grounds of age or condition:-

- Spring Rise and Langley Way, both in Highfields – it may be that one option is to replace both with a single and much better facility in due course
- North Park – again, one option might be to upgrade the Rockingham Rd park facility to replace this one
- Charlotte Place

4.2. The request in respect of the Ise play area has arisen because the cost is significantly more than the average cost that NNC would commit to a play area and there are also limited opportunities for NNC to apply for landfill tax grants in any one year. It is possible therefore that the Town Council might be approached in future years to invest in other play facilities and a policy to guide our approach in future would therefore be helpful and enable the Town Council to be proactive rather than reactive. .

4.3. A suggested policy could be

- The Council will set aside £5000 each year to invest in play areas across the Town
- In return for its contribution to any replacement or renewed play area, it will expect to be involved in the design, consultation and contractor selection process
- In return for its establishing an ongoing budget, the council will expect to have a role in determining the priority order for play area renewal in the town and that NNC be asked to develop a medium term strategy for play areas, with the Town Council's input.

5. Consultation and Engagement

5.1. In 2022, Cllr Skinner conducted a survey of residents on the Ise estate, which is set out in full at Appendix One below. This showed that people would be significantly more likely to access the park and play area if it were updated and improved. Responses show that people feel the current quality of the facility is poor. The most frequent comments were that it is small, outdated and lacking in variety to meet the needs of the ages of children it should serve.

5.2. Responses show that people are happy with the its location , but some consideration should be given to amalgamating the current small toddler play area and main play area into one larger area. A number of people raised concerns regarding a lack of space for older children and teenagers to congregate away from younger children. A number of respondents raised concerns regarding the lack equipment for children with disabilities as well as the general uneven and often muddy access to (and within) the park itself.

6. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

- 6.1. This would be new expenditure from 2024/5 onwards and would be included in the 2024/5 budget consultation and determination process.
- 6.2. The Council has the powers to invest in play equipment.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. A new play will consume resources in manufacturing equipment but save on the cost of repairs and renewals. A new facility will encourage more local activity and trips and contribute to the principles of “15 minute neighbourhoods”

8. Policy Implications

- 8.1. The corporate plan says that The Council will support measures to improve physical and mental health wellbeing, particularly in the light of the impacts of covid 19, through its own services and in partnership with others.

Background Papers

Email from NNC 31st August 2023

Ise Lodge residents survey results 2022

KBC Play Area Quality Assessment 2020

Landfill tax guidance <https://www.entrust.org.uk/projects/contributing-third-parties/>



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APPENDIX ONE - SUMMARY OF SURVEY OF RESIDENTS OF THE ISE LODGE ESTATE

Ise Lodge Play Park Survey results

In summary, feedback received shows that people would be significantly more likely to access the park if it were updated and improved. Responses show that people feel the current quality of the park is poor. The most frequent comments were that it is small, outdated and lacking in variety to meet the needs of the ages of children it should serve.

Responses show that people are happy with the location of the current park, but some consideration should be given to amalgamating the current small toddler park and main park into one larger area. A number of people raised concerns regarding a lack of space for older children and teenagers to congregate away from younger children. A number of respondents raised concerns regarding the lack equipment for children with disabilities as well as the general uneven and often muddy access to (and within) the park itself.

Method

Data collected between September and December 2022 from Survey Monkey; there were 216 responses to the survey. Residents were asked:

How often do you currently use the play park?

Responses received suggest that the frequency people currently use the play park varied with the majority split between 'a few times per week' (23%), 'a few times a month' (26%) and 'Less than once per month' (27%).

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the play park?

Responses received show that majority of respondents rate the current park as 'poor' which received 50% of responses. This compared with 'Fair' which received 42%, 'Good' which received 8% and 'Excellent' which received less than 0.5%.

How easy is it to access the play park?

Responses suggest that people find it easy to access the park with 80% of respondents choosing 'Very easy' or 'easy'. However, there were a number of comments relating to the actual access to the park being muddy and difficult at times.

What impact would it have on you if the Play Park were replaced/upgraded?

Responses suggest that people would be overwhelmingly more likely to use the park if it were upgraded with over 92% of respondents being either 'significantly more likely' (70%) or 'more likely' (22%) to use the park more frequently.

Of the qualitative responses given the themes which have been identified are:

Positives –

People were asked to comment on '*What do you like about the play park?*' Of the people that commented 87 people commented on the **location and setting** of the park, for example the open green space around and being easy to get to. 34 people commented on the benefits of the park being **fenced off** from dogs. A number of responses were received which were positive about some of the existing pieces of equipment: 13 people mentioned the **Roundabout** and **Swings** respectively, 5 people commented on the **climbing** equipment and 2 on the **seesaw**.

Negatives –

People were asked to comment on '*What do you dislike about the play park?*' Of the people that commented 97 people referred to the park **lacking variety** in equipment or being too small; especially for the size of the estate. 83 people commented that they felt the park was **old and/or outdated**. 60 people commented generally that the park was often **dirty and had litter** (especially broken glass) and/or graffiti in it. 27 people responded negatively in relation to **teenagers/older children** either being too old to use the equipment or having a negative impact on younger children by being intimidating or damaging/littering in the area. 19 people responded that the park is often **wet and/or muddy** in the winter and felt there should be a path which leads to the park. A further 12 people specifically mentioned the **lack of disability equipment** on offer and/or the uneven surfaces within the park itself. There were 9 responses which questioned the **safety of the existing equipment** and park surfaces/layout. 7 people raised issue with the **two parks being separate** and the difficulty when having children of mixed ages with the park for young children being next to the bowls building and the main play park being some distance away.

Results of Survey can be found here https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-wFvbYZf_2FFdutRKY67KjzYQ_3D_3D/