

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 10 January 2022
Title: Quarry Road Play Area – Additional Equipment
Contact Officer: Project Officer - Nicky Cayley

Background

The Council has budgeted £5, 000 to add additional play equipment in Quarry Road Play area. The Project Officer understands the amount was to provide one or two smaller items as an interim before the whole park was renewed.

Current Situation

The Project Officer has made site visits to the Quarry Road play area. What could be added to the existing park is limited due to the space remaining. There are also minimum requirements in terms of siting equipment away from the fencing. This means that any additional equipment would need to be sited centrally in the park. Ideally when adding equipment to a play area, it is better to bring a new type of play value rather than replicate what is already present. Members should also be mindful of the fact that a play park should not be “overfilled” as children need a certain amount of space to run freely and not bump into equipment.

A play company has provided some options of the type of equipment that could be purchased and installed in line with a £5,000 budget for illustrative purposes (attached with site picture).

The Project Officer has also discussed the ideas with the Maintenance and Environmental Officer. He believes that if there were simple items requiring a post/pole type installation, the Works Team may be able to install them, although at present the team is very stretched so an imminent installation would not be certain. Some of the equipment in the quotes would need professional installation and in all cases a post installation inspection.

Another option would be to extend the fencing to make the park larger in size. The Works Team may also be able to install the additional fencing. Due to the location of the path and the trees it would only be possible to extend the park by 4m in length which would provide an extra 64m² of space. This would mean that more equipment could be installed.

However, extending the park would remove a significant amount of free play space for the residents and the Project Officer believes that the size of the existing play area is appropriate for the location. All the equipment is sound in terms of safety and in terms of lifespan it will last for another 5 years, after which it should ideally be renewed.

Options

1. Install a few small items to the value of £5,000 as soon as practicable. This may or may not be able to be carried out by the Works Team depending on availability and what is chosen.
2. Extend the play area to enable more play equipment to be installed – with the existing budget this would reduce the amount available for equipment.
3. Leave the play area as it is and commit to completely renewing the play equipment at the end of its life – approximately 5 years' time. This would give residents a new play area which would then have a 15 – 20-year lifespan. It would also avoid the piecemeal approach that has been taken in the past which results in play areas having a mix of old and new equipment – meaning that a play area never feels truly refreshed and any opportunity for a new and innovative design is lost. As part of this a complete review of all play areas could be done, so that a proper renewals programme can be drawn up rather than putting in odd pieces of equipment ad hoc, in line with the Council's Open Spaces Strategic Action IS1.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Play equipment generates a significant carbon footprint both in terms of the manufacturing process and the delivery process. It reduces the carbon footprint to have a larger amount of equipment delivered rather than items individually.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. The risk in installing a few new pieces of equipment at this point in time is that future options for redesign would be limited.

Financial implications

Examples of play equipment are attached to this report for financial information. If the Works Team were to install, costs would be reduced but there are currently no guarantees that the team would be able to do so.

Extending the play area would require an extra 8m of fencing at a cost of £379.70.

To refurbish the play area completely in 5 years' time it would be recommended to budget for at least £40,000.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and consider which option to recommend to Council.