

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Outdoor Play Provision

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Outdoor Play Provision
Link Officer/s:	Neil Mitchell
Action Plan Agreed:	June 2024

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 2:	To encourage a greater sense of community ownership, consideration be given to approaching relevant Town / Parish Councils and the local business community within the vicinity of existing outdoor play spaces to potentially support the development / maintenance of a site.
Responsibility:	Neil Mitchell
Date:	At draft Strategy stage (see 7)
Agreed Action:	Approach Town and Parish Council to determine whether they are willing to provide additional financial support to maintain / develop play provision in their local area. Business sponsorship / involvement to be discussed with individual organisations and within forum opportunities.
Agreed Success Measure:	Third parties contribute towards costs of maintaining, renewing or developing outdoor play provision.
Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	This area of work will commence when we have completed the analysis of play provision utilising the principles agreed at Cabinet on the 17 th July 25.
Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	n/a
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	Following the adoption of the full Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 on 16 th October 2025, the principle has been established that adoption of sites by Town or Parish Councils will be explored where a site is at risk. In addition, officers will engage with town and parish councils on an ongoing basis, as time allows, to determine willingness to provide financial support to maintain / develop play provision in their local area.

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Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	Explicit inclusion in the approved strategy.

Recommendation 5:	Regarding inequality of outdoor play provision across the Borough, SBC clarifies where it is deemed there is little / no provision and possible steps to address these inequalities (including, in exceptional cases, the provision of new play spaces).
Responsibility:	Graham Clingan
Date:	At draft strategy
Agreed Action:	To be addressed through the proposed Strategy (see 7).
Agreed Success Measure:	Principles agreed via strategy.
Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	First stage of Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 agreed by Cabinet 17/7/25. The strategy document highlights areas of inequalities and over provision. Following cabinets decision, officers are preparing the second stage of the strategy document which will identify specific sites in which to invest, and which may be decommissioned at the end of equipment life.
Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/documents/s18385/Appendix%20A%20-Strategy%20for%20Stockton-on-Tees%20Borough%20Council%20Outdoor%20Play%20Provision%202025%201.pdf
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	The full Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 agreed by Cabinet 16/10/25. The strategy document highlights areas of inequalities and over provision. Following Cabinet's decision, officers have identified specific sites in which to invest, and which will be decommissioned at the end of equipment life.
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	Strategy for outdoor play provision 2025.pdf.pdf

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Recommendation 6:	As part of a required rationalisation process in relation to the existing outdoor play offer:	
	a) Informed by the recent (March 2024) RoSPA assessments and an analysis of the distribution of existing outdoor play provision, proposals for the removal / repurposing of sites be developed with the aim of reducing pressure on the overall parks budget.	
Responsibility:	Graham Clingan	Graham Clingan
Date:	31 July 2024	31 December 2024
Agreed Action:	Recommendations to be formulated on the basis of that analysis and to form part of the proposed strategy (see 7).	Recommendations to be formulated on the basis of that analysis and to form part of the proposed strategy (see 7).
Agreed Success Measure:	Analysis of distribution.	Overlay financial breakdown.
Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	<p>First stage of Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 agreed by Cabinet 17/7/25. Strategy contains several principles designed to manage our assets in a sustainable manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principle 6: We aim to limit the overall scale of provision to a level which is sustainable in terms of Council resources for management and maintenance. <p>Cabinet resolved that:</p> <p>The requirement of additional revenue funding of £150,000 per annum from 2026/27 onwards be noted. This would enable the Council to retain approximately 30-35 play areas in good condition, in addition to the new play area at Stockton Waterfront urban park. Approximately 7 to 12 play areas would be subject to removal of play equipment at end of life and repurposing of sites for recreational open space. Funding would be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan Update & Strategy report to Council in February 2026.</p>	

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Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)	
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/documents/s18385/Appendix%20A%20-Strategy%20for%20Stockton-on-Tees%20Borough%20Council%20Outdoor%20Play%20Provision%202025%201.pdf	
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	<p>On Wednesday 16th October 2025, Cabinet agreed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet approve the full strategy document. 2. That Cabinet approve the site-specific recommendations, subject to financial approvals of the additional £150,000 pa contained within the 2026/27 MTFP report to be presented in February 2026. This would enable 23 Council-owned play areas to be prioritised for retention, development or redevelopment, ensuring high maintenance standards and delivering good play value. A further 9 play areas will also be retained subject to availability of resources, while 11 sites would be subject to phased decommissioning and repurposing. 3. That Cabinet note the series of additional cross-cutting actions relating to the development, design and management of play provision. 	
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)	
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	Strategy for outdoor play provision 2025.pdf.pdf Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 (Part 2)	
	b) Complementing sub-section a), SBC undertakes a piece of work around those sites requiring more urgent attention to ascertain costs of either removing the play area or raising it to an appropriate standard.	
Responsibility:	Steve Bowerbank	
Date:	Compiled list by 30 June 2024	
Agreed Action:	List of sites requiring urgent attention to be compiled (and note of sites already earmarked for refurbishment, e.g. Newham Grange Park).	
Agreed Success Measure:	List compiled which feeds into analysis and strategy development.	
Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	All play areas have been assessed and tables developed identifying individual items of equipment at each site, the play value of each item, it's life expectancy and replacement costs (including surfacing). This information will be invaluable with the development of the second phase of strategy to be presented to Cabinet.	

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Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	n/a
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	<p>All evidence was collated and used to evaluate the entire play estate. This evidence was essential information in order to prepare a site specific recommendation.</p> <p>Following Cabinet's approval of the full Play Provision Strategy on the 16th October 2025, officers can now enact the principles for each site. It should be noted that recommendation 2 states:</p> <p><i>That Cabinet approve the site-specific recommendations, subject to financial approvals of the additional £150,000 pa contained within the 2026/27 MTFP report to be presented in February 2026. This would enable 23 Council-owned play areas to be prioritised for retention, development or redevelopment, ensuring high maintenance standards and delivering good play value. A further 9 play areas will also be retained subject to availability of resources, while 11 sites would be subject to phased decommissioning and repurposing.</i></p> <p>As set out above, raising of standards is a principle enshrined in the approved strategy and the decommissioning of the selected sites, is informed by the assessment of the current condition.</p> <p>On that basis, the commitment to either improve the facilities or remove the play equipment, has been adopted.</p>
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	n/a
	c) Further detail be provided around the anticipated longer-term maintenance requirements of the new Stockton waterfront park and the impact that this may have on the available funds for maintaining other existing outdoor play spaces.
Responsibility:	Town team
Date:	Compiled and submitted by September 2024
Agreed Action:	Costs to be identified and potential impact on other play spaces to be assessed.
Agreed Success Measure:	Provision of information which clearly demonstrates long term maintenance obligations including warranty consideration.

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Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	An inspection and maintenance package is being negotiated with the play park contractor. This will form a multi-year package purchased up front using a capital allocation.	
Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)	
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	n/a	
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	<p>An allowance for maintenance has always been made. At the point Esh (lead contractor) were appointed, the play equipment was not designed (but an allowance for delivery and maintenance was made in the budget). The play equipment subcontract was competitively tendered and delivered by Timberplay as a subcontract package for what is a specialist item. Therefore, the ongoing maintenance of equipment supplied by a specialist sub-contractor sits with the sub-contractor (as the supplier / manufacturer of said equipment) and not the lead contractor.</p> <p>An allowance of £40,000 has been made within the waterfront project budget for repairs, maintenance and or spare parts.</p> <p>In addition, an additional sum has been built into the MTFP for the Waterfront Park grounds maintenance. As has been referred to in other sections, the Play Area Strategy also established the need for a further non-site-specific allocation of £150,000 towards play area maintenance.</p> <p>The combined effect of these changes are expected to ensure that all play areas can be adequately maintained in future.</p>	
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)	
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	n/a	
	d) With due regard to the SBC <i>Powering Our Future</i> initiative, appropriate consultation (particularly with Stockton Parent Carer Forum and SBC Ward Councillors) is conducted around any proposed changes to existing outdoor play provision.	
Responsibility:	Keith Mathews	Graham Clingan
Date:	n/a	Dec 2024 - Feb 2025
Agreed Action:	Appropriate consultation to be carried out in relation to current planned developments.	Consultation process for changes identified in proposed strategy to be developed as part of the process for strategy delivery.
Agreed Success Measure:	Ongoing, fully developed process.	Process confirmed as part of strategy development.

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Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	Consultation is embedded for new play provision. We will consult with stakeholders when considering outcomes for specific sites affected by the strategy principles.	
Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)	
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	n/a	
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	<p>The need for consultation is embedded in the Play Area Strategy. Consultation with the Parent Carer Forum has occurred already and will continue in relation to future developments and changing circumstances.</p> <p>The decommissioning process for the identified sites could take several years, so the consultation will be ongoing, but the requirement for that involvement is now fixed.</p>	
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)	
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	n/a	

Recommendation 7:	<p>Reflecting the main outcomes from this review, SBC develops and publishes an outdoor play provision strategy which includes the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's aims in relation to the provision of outdoor play spaces. • The locations and assessments of existing and outdoor play provision, as well as any planned developments. • The key challenges associated with providing these spaces. • How the Council will seek to address these key challenges (including guiding principles). • Timelines for action and who will be accountable. 		
Responsibility:	Graham Clingan	Graham Clingan	Graham Clingan
Date:	28 February 2025	31 March 2025	31 May 2025
Agreed Action:	Develop draft strategy for internal consultation.	External consultation / engagement regarding any major changes to play area provision.	Final strategy published.

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Agreed Success Measure:	Draft strategy circulated for comment.	Draft strategy circulated for comment.	Draft strategy circulated for comment.
Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	First stage of Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 agreed by Cabinet 17/7/25. Second part of strategy will be submitted to cabinet identifying which sites are affected after applying the principles and data.		
Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)		
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/documents/s18385/Appendix%20A%20-Strategy%20for%20Stockton-on-Tees%20Borough%20Council%20Outdoor%20Play%20Provision%202025%201.pdf		
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	<p>On Wednesday 16th October 2025, Cabinet agreed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Cabinet approve the full strategy document. 2. That Cabinet approve the site-specific recommendations, subject to financial approvals of the additional £150,000 pa contained within the 2026/27 MTFP report to be presented in February 2026. This would enable 23 Council-owned play areas to be prioritised for retention, development or redevelopment, ensuring high maintenance standards and delivering good play value. A further 9 play areas will also be retained subject to availability of resources, while 11 sites would be subject to phased decommissioning and repurposing. 3. That Cabinet note the series of additional cross-cutting actions relating to the development, design and management of play provision. 		
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)		
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	Strategy for outdoor play provision 2025.pdf.pdf Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025 (Part 2)		

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Recommendation 8:	This final report be shared with the SBC Planning Committee for information only.
Responsibility:	Gary Woods
Date:	June 2024
Agreed Action:	Share final Action Plan and Strategy with SBC Planning.
Agreed Success Measure:	Circulated strategy document.
Evidence of Progress (July 2025):	The Committee's final report was circulated to the SBC Planning Committee in June 2024. The associated Action Plan and new outdoor play provision strategy will be shared with the SBC Planning Committee for information once the latter is agreed.
Assessment of Progress (July 2025): (include explanation if required)	2 (On-Track)
Evidence of Impact (July 2025):	n/a
Evidence of Progress (October 2025):	The Action Plan in relation to the review's recommendations (approved by the Committee in June 2024) and the subsequent new Strategy for SBC Outdoor Play Provision 2025 (endorsed by Cabinet in October 2025) were circulated to the SBC Planning Committee in October 2025.
Assessment of Progress (October 2025): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
Evidence of Impact (October 2025):	n/a

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
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