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| Crime and Disorder Select Committee |
| Review of Outdoor Play Provision: Quality and Distribution, Maintenance, and Physical Accessibility |
| Outline Scope |

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| <p>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</p> <p>The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2023-2026 key objectives (and associated 2023-2024 priorities):</p> <p><i>A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and enhance provision and support for children and young people with additional needs or accessing alternative provision. • Support people to live healthy lives and address health inequalities through a focus on early prevention, long-term conditions, substance misuse, smoking, obesity, physical activity and mental health. • Work with our communities and partners to develop our approach to healthy places, in the context of regeneration plans and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. |
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| <p>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</p> <p>It is widely accepted that play is an essential part of every child’s life and is vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. Play facilities are therefore seen as an essential element to allow people to live healthy lives and help ensure activity is established at an early age, thus reducing long-term health conditions.</p> <p>Previous analysis has indicated that outdoor play provision is uneven across the Borough, with significant variations in the play value, age and accessibility of equipment and sites. Many older play areas are in decline and, as is being felt by Local Authorities up and down the country, there is insufficient budget to maintain all the current sites.</p> <p>In terms of new sites, the majority of these are established through planning obligations and consequently increase provision in areas where new development is taking place. Conversely, there are limited opportunities to establish or improve play areas in existing residential areas. In either case, it should be noted that all sites are subject to challenge relating to accessibility and play value.</p> |
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Play areas can be an emotive topic and have elicited a range of comments (both positive and negative) from the public with regards the existing offer. Like so many other Council-related activities, balancing public expectation with the realities of deepening Local Authority funding pressures is becoming an increasing challenge. There is a well-established need to maintain an effective portfolio of high-quality play area assets within the Borough's communities, but this must be sustainable, provide value-for-money, and be accessible to as many people as is feasibly possible.

The main aims for this review will be to:

- Examine the Borough's existing outdoor play offer in terms of play value and distribution, and identify locations where there is currently an imbalance in provision.
- Ascertain who is responsible for individual facilities and what the management / maintenance and sustainability requirements are now, and are likely to be in the future (including revenue costs).
- Consider accessibility / inclusivity factors in relation to play provision so practical and financial implications are understood and factored into decisions around existing and future plans.
- Contribute to future policy around play area provision, giving an appraisal of potential options.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What is meant by the term 'outdoor play provision' – what does this encompass (what does it not)?

How is 'meaningful play' determined – what are its characteristics and how does / should this impact upon play provision?

Are there any legislative requirements around outdoor play provision?

What is the Borough's existing outdoor play offer – where are these sites located, what do they provide, what is their play value, and where are the identified gaps in provision?

How should the provision of major new play facilities planned for Stockton Waterfront influence decisions around the distribution and management of play provision elsewhere in the Borough, and will it have any impact on budgets to maintain existing facilities?

How are existing sites managed / maintained and what is the cost of this to the Council? How has this changed over time and what are the future projections based on the current offer?

What is the process around new play provision created as part of new developments? What are the responsibilities of developers and the Council, how does this change over time, and what are the implications of this?

What are the accessibility / inclusivity requirements around outdoor play sites? Has the Council been challenged regarding this and what is realistically achievable in the context of available space and financial constraints?

What feedback has been received from the public regarding outdoor play provision?

Can we learn anything from other Local Authorities who are likely to be wrestling with similar challenges regarding outdoor play provision?

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| <p>What are the potential future options around outdoor play provision (including alternative funding possibilities)? How does / might this feed into key corporate policies such as Fairer Stockton-on-Tees / Powering Our Communities?</p> | |
| <p>Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?</p> <p>Council, Cabinet, developers, public.</p> | |
| <p>Expected duration of review and key milestones:</p> <p>5 months (report to Cabinet in April 2024)</p> | |
| <p>What information do we need?</p> <p>Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC review of outdoor play and informal sport provision (2019) • RoSPA Play Value Assessments (available for specific play area sites in the Borough) • Resources available from the charity Play England: www.playengland.org.uk | |
| <p><i>Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)</i></p> <p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure • Care For Your Area • Town Centres Development • Planning / Place Development <p>Association of Play Industries (API)</p> <p>RoSPA</p> <p>Play England</p> <p>Stockton Parent Carer Forum</p> <p>Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF)</p> <p>Local Government Association (LGA) / Other Local Authorities</p> | <p><i>What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ‘Outdoor play’ terminology / definitions ➤ Existing outdoor play provision offer ➤ Process / implications of new sites ➤ Maintenance of existing assets ➤ Plans for play provision in town centres ➤ Role of these SBC teams around this topic ➤ Equal play campaign ➤ Best practice / Local Authority engagement ➤ Safety and management of play areas ➤ Previous analysis of the Borough’s offer ➤ Design / Quality in Play approaches ➤ Resident views on the existing play area offer ➤ Young people views on existing provision ➤ Experience of this issue |

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| <p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p> <p>Committee meetings, reports, research, site visits (TBC).</p> |
| <p>How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p> <p>Committee meetings, information submissions.</p> |
| <p>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p> <p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.</p> |
| <p>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</p> <p><u>Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): Physical inactivity:</u> recommended levels of physical activity significantly worse than the national average; specific sectors of the community less physically active than the general population; not all residents derive the same level of physical activity opportunities from the Borough's outdoor public spaces due to variations in quality, quantity, accessibility and connectivity (Dec 2018).</p> <p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live well and live longer.</u> We know that socio-economic and environmental factors influence health-related behaviours. Therefore working with partners to shape the infrastructure across the Borough which can impact on whether or not a healthy lifestyle is an easy and accessible choice is key.</p> <p><u>All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities:</u> We know that a range of factors including; good housing, warm homes, access to green space and healthy food, opportunities for physical activity, good transport links, air quality, antisocial behaviour and crime are all linked to physical, mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Planning policies and subsequent decisions can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing through the design of neighbourhoods, buildings and public space in the way they encourage people to be socially integrated, physically active or limit the growth of take-away and alcohol outlets.</p> |
| <p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear strategic guidance upon the development of new play facilities and priorities and rationalisation of existing play provision.• Budgetary provision for maintenance of play provision is proportionate to the number of play areas that are retained. |

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| Project Plan |
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| Key Task | Details/Activities | Date | Responsibility |
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| Scoping of Review | Information gathering | September 2023 | Scrutiny Officer Link Officer |
| Tri-Partite Meeting | Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review | 09.10.23 | Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer |
| Agree Project Plan | Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee | 19.10.23 | Select Committee |
| Publicity of Review | Determine whether Communications Plan needed | TBC | Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer |
| Obtaining Evidence | SBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure Community Services SBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive Growth and Development (Planning / Place Development) SBC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Centres Dev. S'ton Parent Carer Forum Play England Other Local Authorities | 09.11.23 21.12.23 25.01.24 22.02.24 | Select Committee |
| Members decide recommendations and findings | Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations | 21.03.24 | Select Committee |
| Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders | Circulation of Report | March 2024 | Scrutiny Officer |
| Tri-Partite Meeting | Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations | TBC | Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer |
| Final Agreement of Report | Approval of final report by Committee | 25.04.24 | Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director |
| Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee | Consideration of report | 07.05.24 | Executive Scrutiny Committee |

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| Report to Cabinet / Approving Body | Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet | 16.05.24 | Cabinet / Approving Body |
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