

Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	21 July 2025	
Report Title:	Fenland Inspire! Project: Play Equipment	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the options for the scope and budgetary considerations of the Fenland Inspire! play areas project, asking for Cabinet decisions regarding the scope and also delegations necessary to move the project forwards.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council currently offers 48 play areas in various locations throughout the District. These play areas differ, from spaces with a single item of equipment up to more comprehensive offers such as the Wenny Recreation Ground in Chatteris with 14 items. In total there are more than 300 pieces of play equipment managed by the Council in Fenland. The equipment is assessed annually by ROSPA for safety whilst also being checked on a regular basis by our grounds maintenance contractor to ensure everything is safe for use throughout the year. Whilst the equipment is safe and a lot of equipment is in good order, there are items that are nearing the end of their life.
- 2.2 Additionally, the Council manages 6 skate parks across the District. These are popular facilities used by a wide range of the local communities from younger users with parents all the way up to adult users. A recent addition is a BMX pump track in West End Park. This project has been managed by the County Council and funded by CCC matched by the Mick George Community Fund. FDC will manage this site, within our park, and take on repair responsibility after the 1 year defects period has expired.
- 2.3 A further popular community facility is the Splash Pad in Wisbech Park, open throughout the summer and managed by the Council.
- 2.4 The Council also manages 6 multi-use games areas (also known as MUGA's) throughout the District. These are multi-sport, fenced facilities that are popular for basketball, football and netball. In addition to the MUGA's the Council offers tennis courts in Wisbech Park and at the Manor Field in Whittlesey. The Manor tennis facility management is to be switched to Whittlesey Town Council, with this arrangement now likely to take place after the summer, with Freedom currently facilitating bookings.
- 2.5 As part of the Fenland Inspire! initiative Members wish to increase the number of play areas available to local residents in Fenland. This paper covers the planned approach to achieve this aim, consideration of the current stock of play equipment and the necessary move of the skate park at the Manor Field as a result of the Fenland Inspire! Manor Leisure Centre Enhancement project.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the report and the current comprehensive offer to the community in terms of play areas, skate parks, a splash pad and MUGA's across the District.
- 3.2 That Cabinet notes the General Fund Budget Estimates and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Report, agreed by Cabinet and Council in February which projects a

financial shortfall for 2025/26 of £1.432m increasing year on year amounting to around £3.4m by 2027/28.

- 3.3 That Cabinet instructs officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to assess requirements for new play areas on FDC land close to residential areas, or in the event that there are limited options available, to suggest enhancements to existing play areas with a rationale for the play areas selected. Any final decision on these new or enhanced play areas is to be made in the future by Cabinet.
- 3.4 That Cabinet approves the development of a new play area to replace the existing poor quality play area at Westmead Road in Wisbech, to an adjoining position in the same open space, with a maximum budget of £60,000 from the Fenland Inspire! capital project.
- 3.5 That Cabinet instructs officers to develop a database of current play equipment with an assessment of the useful life left in each piece of equipment, and that any equipment with a life of less than three years is replaced as part of this project, with the capital funding coming from the Fenland Inspire! capital fund.
- 3.6 That Cabinet notes that the refurbishment of the Manor Leisure Centre will mean the necessary movement of the skate park at Manor Field in Whittlesey, and that Cabinet notes that this work will form part of this play area project in conjunction with other proposed works. The budget will be from the Fenland Inspire! programme but will form part of the overall Manor Leisure refurbishment project costs.
- 3.7 That Cabinet authorises the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Fenland Inspire! and the Leader of the Council, in his role as Portfolio Holder for Finance, to execute and complete all requisite legal and governance documentation in relation to Cabinet decisions made regarding the matters outlined above, and that Cabinet authorises the Section 151 Officer to make all necessary financial arrangements within the Fenland Inspire! capital budget to carry forward decisions made by Cabinet as a result of this report.

Wards Affected	All wards	
Forward Plan References	KEY/14MAR25/01	Fenland Inspire! Project regarding play equipment
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Chris Seaton	Portfolio holder for Fenland Inspire! Projects
	Cllr Chris Boden	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
	Cllr Jan French	Portfolio Holder for Parks & Open Spaces
Report Originator	Phil Hughes	Head of Leisure Services
Contact Officers	Carol Pilson Phil Hughes	Corporate Director Head of Leisure Services
Background Papers	Open Spaces – play area capital investment policy – Cabinet report of December 2023	
	February 2025	Budget and Business Plan Agenda Items
	June 2025	Fenland Inspire! Projects Update Agenda Item

4. BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 4.1 A list of all play areas, equipment numbers, skate parks and MUGA's may be found in **SCHEDULE 1** – Play areas, skate parks and MUGA's across Fenland.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the Fenland Inspire! Play Equipment project could be potentially structured as follows:
Any single item end of life piece of play equipment that requires replacement by 2028, will be replaced.
- Westmead Play Area, Wisbech – up to £60,000
 - Relocation of Whittlesey Skate Park
 - Officer Review and recommendation of potential enhancements to be brought back to Cabinet
 - Members to set a total budget to encompass all of these works.
- 4.3 Development of new play areas**
- 4.4 The development of new play areas in the District may be interpreted in two ways;
- A play area developed in a location where one did not currently exist.
 - The total refurbishment of an existing play area to offer a far better experience to local residents.
- 4.5 To achieve either aim the process to move this aspect of the project forwards is relatively simple and will take time following steps:
- Assess current play area locations to identify any 'cold spots' within residential areas and then determine what sort of facility would be realistic in such areas, delivered on FDC owned land. In the event that there are fewer than 4 new play

area options available, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, a Cabinet report would then offer options to improve existing key play area(s) and a rationale as to why those play areas should be expanded or refurbished.

- Approximate play area costs are as follows and any future options presented to Cabinet will highlight what sort of area is required and an approximate cost:
 - £60,000 will provide a basic play area of 3 or 4 items of junior or toddler equipment
 - £100,000 will provide a good-sized facility with a mixture of equipment for differing age ranges
 - £150,000+ will provide a destination play facility, where people will travel to visit the new facility. A good example is the play area in Wisbech park.

4.6 Assessment of current play areas

4.7 An assessment of current play area equipment and a replacement programme of equipment that is reaching the end of its useful life within 3 years is recommended.

4.8 This work would:

- Create a database holding information about all play area equipment that the Council is responsible for, including an assessment of the likely necessary replacement date for each of over 300 items.
- Consider the most recent ROSPA assessment of play area equipment and cross reference this with the assessment of end of life.
- Identify equipment requiring replacement in the next three years, with replacement programme developed through FDC's grounds maintenance contractor and work undertaken in 2026.

5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Fenland Inspire! initiative details new play areas and this paper highlights how this work may be taken forwards. Alongside this, ensuring the quality of current play areas is also included to ensure that the play areas in Fenland remain fit for purpose into the medium-term.

5.2 This work will determine a budget necessary to deliver the projects concerned from the Fenland Inspire! capital budget and determine a firm scope for the projects for officers to work within.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation will be undertaken regarding the replacement skate park at Manor Field. Additionally, for any new play areas local consultation will be undertaken on site with local residents, as well as elected Members, able to offer their thoughts on draft proposals.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Cabinet has been offered options within this paper, but much work remains outstanding and cannot be determined until approval to proceed is in place.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Legal Implications

8.2 Appropriate procurement processes will be followed in relation to this project.

8.3 Financial Implications

- 8.4 Cabinet and Council has recently approved the Council's Business Plan which includes this project specifically in the Fenland Inspire! Section, with budget allowed for the Fenland Inspire! Projects within the Council budget for 2025/26 and in later years.
- 8.5 The General Fund Budget Estimates and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Report, agreed by Cabinet and Council in February, projects a financial shortfall for 2025/26 of £1.432m increasing year on year amounting to around £3.4m by 2027/28.
- 8.6 Although there are currently many uncertainties regarding the budget for 2025/26 and the MTFS, there remains a significant structural deficit which the Council will need to address.
- 8.7 Any additional costs for items not already included in the budget will incur additional revenue costs of circa. £81k p.a. for every additional £1m required based on an assumed 30 year borrowing profile.
- 8.8 There may be an opportunity to apply for external funding from 3rd parties to offset the costs of play area equipment.
- 8.9 There may be s106 funding available in certain geographical areas that could be used for match funding.

8.10 Equality Implications

Any new play area and replacement of aging play equipment will include consideration of accessible play equipment.

SCHEDULE 1 – Play areas, skate parks and MUGA's across Fenland

		Equipment
Play Areas x 48	High Street, Benwick	9
	Cricketers Way, Chatteris	6
	Furrowfields, Chatteris	9
	Hunters Close, Chatteris	4
	Huntingdon Road, Chatteris Infant	7
	Huntingdon Road, Chatteris Junior	1
	Larham Way, Chatteris	6
	St Pauls Drive, Chatteris	3
	Wenny Road Recreation Ground, Chatteris	14
	Willey Terrace, Chatteris	2
	North Green, Coates	7
	South Green, Coates	2
	Beech Avenue, Doddington	4
	Beech Avenue, Doddington	6
	Walden Close, Doddington	2
	Springfields, Eastrea	5
	Thornham Way, Eastrea	5
	West Drive, Friday Bridge	5
	Williams Way, Manea	4
	Alberts Drive, March	6
	Dagless Way, March	6
	Gaul Road, March	8
	North Drive, March	6
	Robingoodfellows Lane, March	9
	Southwell Close, March	9
	The Avenue, March	8
	West End Park, March Play Area	12
	West End Park, timber equipment	4
	Main Road, Parson Drove	8
	Burdett Grove, Whittlesey	8
	Manor Recreation Ground, Whittlesey Play Area	11
	Pinewood Avenue, Whittlesey	3
	Snowley Park, Whittlesey	17
	Station Road, Whittlesey	7
	Tower Recreation Ground, Whittlesey	8
	Yarwells Headlands, Whittlesey	6
	Honeymead Road, Wimblington	1
	Barton Road, Wisbech	3
	Burcroft Road, Wisbech	2
	Conference Way	5

	Copperfields, Wisbech	4
	Fenmen Place, Wisbech	6
	Heron Road, Wisbech Junior	1
	Heron Road, Wisbech Infant	2
	Jasmin Close, Wisbech	3
	Malt Drive, Wisbech	4
	Westmead Avenue, Wisbech	2
	Wisbech Park, Wisbech Play Area	16
Outside Gym / trim trail	West End Park	16
Skate Parks x 6	Huntingdon Road, Chatteris Skate Park	
	Bath Road skate park	
	Wenny Road skate park	
	Manor Skate Park	
	West End Skate park	
	West End Skate bowl	
MUGA x 6	Wisbech Park	
	Huntingdon Road, Chatteris	
	Larham Way, Chatteris	
	Furrowfields, Chatteris	
	Wenny Road, Chatteris	
	High Street, Benwick	
Sports Court x 2	Manor Field - netball/ tennis court	
	Wisbech Park tennis court	
Splash Pad	Wisbech Park	