

Agenda Item No:	10	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	23 February 2026	
Report Title:	Fenland Inspire! Play Area Project – call for sites	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 Fenland District Council has been granted £1.5 million from the Government's Pride in Place Impact Fund to support the enhancement of community facilities. Members have expressed a preference that this spend be allocated to open spaces facilities and play areas across the district in line with the Fenland Inspire! project aims.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The deadline for committing the funding is 31 March 2027, therefore the Council needs to move at pace to identify and deliver projects to enhance the local area.
- 2.2 It is a requisite of the funding that some public consultation should take place and the local MP be consulted.
- 2.3 An assessment of current play areas has been undertaken both in FDC ownership, Town and Parish Councils and other organisations such as Clarion Housing to understand the current spread of equipment across the District. We now need local Member knowledge to help inform where the funding should be focused.

3 Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet considers the content of this Report and:

- 3.1 Notes that the deadline for committing the Pride in Place Impact Fund that is funding open space and play area improvements should be committed by no later than 31 March 2027;
- 3.2 That Cabinet notes that work to replace Westmead Play area is underway and is outside of the Pride in Place Impact Fund play area budget;
- 3.3 That Cabinet agrees that the Portfolio Holder for Fenland Inspire! immediately contacts all FDC Members to request ideas of specific locations where the funding should be spent. There are significant constraints set by Government on how this grant money may be spent - FDC Members suggesting that money in their area should be spent on schemes other than play areas should carefully check that any such alternative spending falls within the Government's criteria. Schemes generally must also be deliverable relatively quickly to as to satisfy the Government's timing criteria for spend to be completed.

- 3.4 That, in the interests of fairness across the District, an indicative split of spend shall be that £250,000 shall be spent in each of the four Towns, whilst £500,000 shall be spent in the Parished areas outside the boundaries of the four Fenland Towns. It is appreciated that this precise split will not be able to be achieved because of the discreet individual cost of each selected scheme, but this split is an initial guide to assist in creating a fair allocation across the District.
- 3.5 That proposals will be submitted to Cabinet in March 2026 for approval to progress.

Wards Affected	All	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/15JAN26/01	
Portfolio Holders	Cllr Sidney Imafidon Portfolio Holder for Fenland Inspire! - Play Area Project Cllr Jan French Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Open Spaces Cllr Chris Boden Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance	
Report Originator	Phil Hughes Gemma Newell Heidi Smith	Head of Leisure and Open Spaces Open Spaces Officer Play Area Project Officer
Contact Officers	Phil Hughes Carol Pilson	Head of Leisure and Open Spaces Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer
Background Papers	November 2025 Cabinet Report January 2026 Cabinet Report December 2023 Cabinet Report	

1 Background and Intended Outcomes

- 1.1 Following Cabinet's decision in December 2025 the Council has employed an officer to run the Play Area project.
- 1.2 Their initial pieces of work have consisted of:
 - An assessment of all FDC play areas
 - Commencement on work to replace Westmead Play Area in Wisbech
- 1.3 A mapping assessment all FDC play areas.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 Following any Cabinet decisions regarding play areas or other expenditure under this Grant scheme, the Project Officer must, following the terms of the grant funding, run consultation events for each impacted play area or other scheme for community involvement, alongside local elected Members and the MP will also be informed. This is necessary as per the Pride in Place Impact Fund requirements.

3 Alternative Options Considered

- 3.1 This project focusses on FDC play areas (but does permit alternative uses) and highlights the importance of local elected Member involvement as community leaders.
- 3.2 Finally, each improvement to be delivered will feature community consultation, per PiPIF guidance, to ensure community involvement.

4 Implications

4.1 Legal Implications

Any procurement will be conducted with the Council's Procurement Team, likely using framework agreements that the Council already has access to ensure that all procurement regulations are complied with.

- 4.2 The majority of the work contained in this report will be grant funded by the Government's Pride in Place Impact Fund (PiPIF). Officers will ensure that the Fund's protocols are adhered to. This includes community consultation regarding all projects, as well as ensuring that the local MP is informed as to how the PiPIF is being spent and how local communities have been involved in determining the type of play areas and equipment they would like to see in their play areas, or the details of such alternative spend as may be proposed.

4.3 Financial Implications

- 4.4 This project is funded by Central Government's Pride in Place Impact Fund (PiPIF), with the exception of the Westmead Play Area improvements that are to be funded from FDC's capital programme.
- 4.5 As this is the case, there is no financial impact on FDC for the PiPIF grant funded work that this project is delivering.
- 4.6 The total cost of existing works identified and considerations for Members to consider falls within the budget.

4.7 Equality Implications

- 4.8 Facilities added into open spaces will have an accessible element ensuring that all users are able to enjoy themselves in the Council's open spaces. Recommendations include considerations regarding the use of sound and colour in play equipment, as well as physical accessibility considerations to ensure that the broadest possible number of young people in the area enjoy play together.