



## **Report: Doncaster Play Parks Infrastructure Policy**

---

**13<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

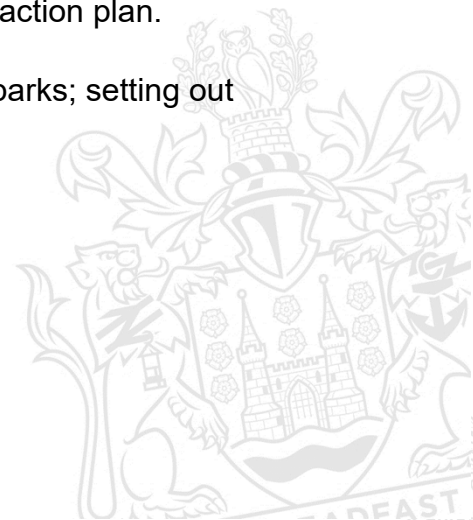
**To: Cabinet**

**Report Title: Doncaster Play Parks Infrastructure Policy**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision?</b>
<b>Cllr Nigel Ball Cllr Joe Blackham</b>	<b>all</b>	<b>yes</b>

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The Play Parks Infrastructure Policy covers the provision of Play Parks within Doncaster. Including play parks within parks and open spaces, and ‘standalone’ play parks in other locations (for example integrated within residential housing areas). The strategy intends to guide the future approach to managing and enhancing existing play parks, but also inform the delivery of new play parks, in the event that new sites are due to be delivered.
2. This policy has been developed to guide the approach to the provision of play parks within Doncaster over the next ten years. This document:
  - Provides an overview of play parks within the city, the extent and type of the current provision, ownership, management and access across the city.
  - Tests and proposes an approach to assessing the quality and value of play parks.
  - Sets out issues and opportunities in relation to the provision of play parks in the city, including a review of social and health indicators highlighting the ‘need’ for play parks within the Doncaster.
  - Sets out an overarching vision, aims and a recommended action plan.
  - Sets out the key principles for design and delivery of play parks; setting out what a good play park should aim to offer.



- Set out proposals for pilot projects for play park enhancement, and recommendations for enhancement of several priority sites.

## **EXEMPT REPORT**

3. N/A

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. It is recommended that Cabinet adopt the Parks Play Infrastructure Policy that will set out our strategic approach of how we best use future investment for the provision of play and its associated equipment within our parks. Ensuring that the approach has positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

5. Currently CDC has no strategic approach to the provision of equipped play areas. This can mean that facilities do not meet the needs of our citizens.
6. We have over-supply of facilities in areas while others have poor provision. At the same time, the amount of facilities: 189 City of Doncaster Council, 75 Parish Councils, 15 St Leger Homes and 7 in private of charity ownership - 286 in total, means it is proving difficult to maintain current stock at a level of quality we would wish to do so.
7. This policy, if adopted by all parties named in paragraph 6, would enable providers to take an enhanced community approach to provision. This, delivered over time, would mean we are able to provide an offer that enables our citizens to access high quality valued children's equipped play provision, providing all the associated benefits including reducing health inequalities, providing safe valued environments for access to green spaces and providing access to facilities that enable a key element of young people's early development.

## **BACKGROUND**

8. Many play parks managed by City of Doncaster Council are located within parks. It should therefore be recognised that play parks are managed as part of a wider network of public space, green space assets and facilities provided for community use. Day to day management and maintenance of play parks is the responsibility of the Street Scene Service, which sits within the Place Directorate. The Street Scene Service includes operatives who are able to undertake a rolling programme of play safety inspections, and independent assessors are engaged to undertake safety inspections as part of the annual cycle of management.

9. The management of play parks is currently focussed around a rolling programme of play safety and condition surveys, and staff are engaged on this task all-year round.
10. Repair and maintenance of equipment is largely undertaken on a reactive basis. Where equipment is deemed beyond repair, or is reported as dangerous, it is removed or isolated until repair/replacement can take place. Equipment that is removed is replaced where possible, generally on a like for like basis, although equipment is not always replaced if funds are not available, and the overall condition of the remaining equipment does not justify the replacement.
11. There is currently no overarching, proactive or strategic planning for providing play enhancements or prioritising where resources may be best placed over a period of time.
12. It should be noted that as with other local authorities, City of Doncaster Council continues to face significant financial challenges setting a balanced budget with reducing funding, strong demand, increasing costs and no reduction in statutory obligations to provide services.
13. With this background it has been agreed we needed to develop a strategy approach to ensure that our resources are managed in a way that maximises their investment and is led by a consultative evidence led approach.
14. Consultation as part of the development of the strategy has highlighted several issues and opportunities related to effective planning and management of play park provision.
15. The current management of parks is at times fragmented. Improved co-ordination of the planning and management of all assets within parks (including equipped play areas) would help to ensure investment and management regimes provide maximum benefit, are cost effective and provide a better experience to communities.
16. Management of play parks by the Street Scene Service is often reactive and generally focuses on essential safety work, with little proactive planning for enhancement work due to lack of time and resources.
17. Opportunities to involve young people in 'active planning' rather than repeated consultation exercises (which could add to 'consultation fatigue') should be considered. There are existing forums (such as the Youth Council), which may provide future opportunities for better long-term engagement.
18. There may be opportunities for parks management to be more entrepreneurial. This may also support the development of 'destination sites' which provide a wider offer for communities and families with young children. This could include

ice cream kiosks, coffee vans or other facilities that can add to the value of a play park. Money from such activities such as car parking at parks should be ring fenced to reinvest on park management.

19. Management and future enhancements to play parks should consider sustainability and consider recycled features within parks and including recycling bins.
20. There is a general consensus of ensuring the quality of play parks over the quantity and number of play parks that are provided. Future maintenance requirements are also a key factor in determining the number of play parks that can be maintained to the highest standard within the current limited resource and management arrangements.
21. Inclusivity and ensuring play parks provide for the needs of a wide range of ages, ethnicities and abilities (both physical and mental ability) should be a priority for the future. This includes creating suitable spaces for teenagers and teenage girls.
22. The work undertaken by the land use consultancy has been thorough and engaging enabling us to map all facilities for the first time and start to assess quality and value of all sites in the city of Doncaster Council's possession and other providers.

### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

23. Not to adopt the Play Park Infrastructure Policy resulting in the status quo being maintained and potential continued decline in the offer available to the citizens of Doncaster.
24. To adopt the Play Park Infrastructure Policy enabling an evidence based investment to Play Equipment across the City's parks and open spaces.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

25. To adopt the Play Park Infrastructure Policy will ensure we have an agreed evidence based approach to maximises investment into Parks Play provision that takes a place based approach to delivery ensuring we have high quality valued sites, having the greatest positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

### **IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES**

26.

<b>Great 8 Priority</b>	<b>Positive Overall</b>	<b>Mix of Positive &amp; Negative</b>	<b>Trade-offs to consider</b>	<b>Neutral or No implications</b>
-------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------------


			- Negative overall	
 <b>Tackling Climate Change</b>	✓			
<p>Comments: the policy will champion use of appropriate materials for play that are a greener choice and look for opportunities for complementary planting that enhances the play experience, as well as, improving the environment.</p> <p>Ensuring high quality play at a local level will reduce need to travel to other sites and therefore reducing the carbon footprint of the individual. However, better destination parks may have reduced impact as they will potentially encourage travel to the site if local sites are left to decline.</p>				
 <b>Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work</b>	✓			
<p>Comments: Play parks provide challenge for children and facilitate imaginative play, which provides a vital role in the healthy cognitive development and develops skills enabling young people to assess risk and challenge through self-guided play.</p>				
 <b>Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs</b>	✓			
<p>Comments: Quality vibrant parks and play facilities are seen as a key part of any vibrant community and intrinsically a positive element of any company or business when considering locating themselves in the city.</p>				
 <b>Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all</b>	✓			
<p>Comments: There is a wide range of research and evidence that demonstrates how essential play is to the lives and development of children and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play encourages physical activity</li> <li>• Play supports healthy physical development</li> <li>• Play supports cognitive development</li> <li>• Play is beneficial for children’s mental health and emotional well-being</li> <li>• Play is beneficial for children’s social development</li> </ul>				
 <b>Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs</b>	✓			

Comments: Good design of Parks Play facilities will reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour. Through good design parks, open spaces and play parks can feel safe and are welcoming; encouraging use by a wide range of groups (e.g. young and old, teenagers, parents and carers)


Through appropriate design Play parks can bring communities together and in particular enable cross-generational engagement reducing miss conceptions of young people with the possibility of reducing isolation of older age groups.

 <b>Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough</b>	✓			
--	---	--	--	--

Comments: Safe well designed play facilities is an essential ingredient of providing a city that is nurturing / child and family friendly

 <b>Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future</b>				X
--	--	--	--	---

Comments:

 <b>Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities</b>	✓			
---	---	--	--	--

Comments: Our parks are an essential part of our cultural offer with many having focus on heritage, sport or informal use. This mix of parks and play facilities within them provides a unique offer that provides opportunities for all to be engaged. This strategy aims to enhance the offer to all through considered community led approach.

<b>Fair &amp; Inclusive</b>	✓			
-----------------------------	---	--	--	--

Comments: The strategy has identified the need to have an inclusive approach to provide which is lacking in many of our parks play facilities. It aims to use innovative approaches to meet the needs of our young people.

**Legal Implications [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 29.08.23 ]**

- Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with a general power of competence, allowing the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council power to purchase goods and services.

28. Although not specifically referred to within the report in the event of significant changes to an area's provision the Council should consult with stakeholders and the wider public before embarking upon any changes.

#### **Financial Implications [Officer Initials:**

29. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report and any further developments arising from adopting the Play Parks Infrastructure Policy should be reported as appropriate as more is known. Any associated financial implications will need to be covered as part of that process.

#### **Human Resources Implications [Officer Initials: PM | Date 29/08/23]**

30. There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

#### **Technology Implications [Officer Initials: PW Date: 29/8/23]**

31. There are no technology implications in relation to this report.

### **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

32. The strategy may only be adopted by City of Doncaster Council meaning the risk may arise of an incomplete approach to provision and reduced impact for the city.
33. Needs outstrip resources available resulting in slower than expected delivery of outcomes resulting in a negative view of the strategic approach.

### **CONSULTATION**

34.

- **Children and young people (borough wide):** Online survey promoted via CDC social media and youth outreach. (69 responses)
- **Schools:** Emails sent out to 48 Schools with a 2-part teacher led exercise. (Responses / engagement with 53 pupils between 5-8 yrs)
- **Parish / Town Councils:** Online survey sent out to all Parish / Town Councils. (8 responses)
- **Site specific consultation to test outline design principles on 2 sites.** Online and in-person consultation.
  - Glasgow Paddocks (responses / engagement with 41 residents)
  - Miners Welfare Recreation Ground (responses / engagement with 123 residents)
- **Internal CDC consultation:** – telephone / MS Teams interviews with the following officers / Directors / members:
  - Chief Exec, Damien Allen
  - Dan Swaine, Director of Economy & Environment
  - Kellie Hopkins, Assistant Director of Environment

- Cllr Sarah Smith
- Cllr Lani-Mae Ball, Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills and Young People, Corporate Parenting Board, Doncaster Schools Forum
- Cllr Rachael Blake, Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care, Communities and Equalities, Health and Wellbeing Board (chair), Corporate Parenting Board, Migration Yorkshire Board.
- Cllr Nigel Ball, Portfolio holder for Public Health, Leisure, Culture and Planning, Health and Wellbeing Board
- Cllr Joe Blackham, Portfolio holder for Highways, Infrastructure and Enforcement, Street cleansing / grass cutting, fly tip response
- Cllr Leanne Hempshall, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

35. Play Parks Infrastructure Policy
36. Play Parks Infrastructure Policy Executive summary

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

37. N/A

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

Andy Maddox, Strategic and Service Lead Leisure Services  
 Tel 01302 737377 Email [andy.maddox@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:andy.maddox@doncaster.gov.uk)

David Ridge, Head of Service - Street Scene  
 Tel 01302 734494 Email [david.ridge@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:david.ridge@doncaster.gov.uk)

Rachael Leslie  
 Interim Director of Public Health  
 Tel 01302 736993 Email [Rachael.leslie@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:Rachael.leslie@doncaster.gov.uk)