

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	8 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO BERESFORD ROAD AND KENSINGTON ROAD RECREATION GROUNDS		
LEAD COUNCILLORS:	COUNCILLOR GITTINGS	PORTFOLIO:	CULTURE, SPORT AND CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	PARKS AND OPEN SPACES	WARDS:	BATTLE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Spend and scheme approval is sought for a range of capital improvements to parks facilities at Beresford Road and Kensington Road.
- 1.2 A summary of the proposals for which scheme and capital spending approval is requested, are outlined in paragraph 4.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That scheme and spending approval be given to carry out a range of improvements at the recreation grounds in Beresford Road and Kensington Road as outlined in paragraph 4.2 and 4.4.
- 2.2 That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the relevant Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services and Head of Finance, be given delegated authority to finalise details of the individual projects within the approval given.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The provision of high quality cultural facilities offering full physical access to the community, is a key element of the Council's Cultural Strategy.
- 3.2 The recreation grounds at Beresford Road and Kensington Road serve an important role in addressing some of the key themes of the Cultural Strategy,

including Access, Health, Learning, Creativity, Social Inclusion, Diversity, Environmental and Economic Sustainability.

- 3.3 Reading's Open Spaces Strategy includes a number of objectives that together will help protect and improve the choice, quality and accessibility of public open space.
- 3.4 Reading's Play Strategy is reviewed annually in conjunction with a number of different agencies to ensure that the latest changes in play policy can be implemented. The overarching aim is to improve play opportunities for children, young people and families across the town.
- 3.5 Following a comprehensive public consultation exercise last year, Policy Committee on 23 September 2013 resolved that a Councillor working group be set up to develop proposals for the use of £1.615m Section 106 financial contribution received as a result of the development of the former Battle Hospital site. Six priority topic areas were identified through the public consultation exercise. Three of the topic areas identified are: Health and Well-being, Leisure Facilities and Green Spaces including Play.
- 3.6 The working group identified two key local recreation grounds, at Kensington Road and Beresford Road, as priorities for capital improvement. The proposed improvements directly align with the three topic areas listed above and reflect the many of the issues and aspirations raised in the public consultation exercise.

#### **4. THE PROPOSAL**

##### **4.1 Current position Beresford Road Recreation Ground:**

- 4.1.1 Beresford Road Recreation Ground has a multi-use games area (MUGA) comprising football, basketball and an artificial cricket wicket. There is also a children's play area. The facility is well used by large number of children of all ages, particularly from the Asian community. The MUGA needs completely refurbishing.
- 4.1.2 To support additional use, more furniture is required such as benches and bins.
- 4.1.3 The existing fencing and gates are approaching the end of their life and their replacement with a new style will improve the street scene.
- 4.1.4 The site is not well overlooked making it vulnerable to antisocial behaviour and lack of clear sight lines significantly reduces passive policing. This restricts use by those who feel vulnerable.

##### **4.2 Proposed improvements for Beresford Road Recreation Ground:**

- 4.2.1 To refurbish the MUGA to include new combination basketball/football goals, new improved surfacing and a new artificial cricket wicket.
- 4.2.2 To improve the provision of furniture through the installation of more benches and bins.

4.2.3 To remove all the mesh fencing alongside Beresford Road and replace it with a more attractive and traditional but robust railing together with new self-closing pedestrian and maintenance gates.

4.2.4 To increase visual permeability allowing passing vehicle traffic, pedestrians and the police to see the whole park by the clearance of scrub and brambles from the sloping banks. Formal tree planting will also be carried out to improve the appearance of the park frontage and the surrounding neighbourhood.

4.2.5 Replacement signs.

### **4.3 Current position - Kensington Road Recreation Ground**

4.3.1 This is an extremely popular site offering separate play facilities for toddlers and juniors. In 2009, the junior play facilities were extended as part of the Playbuilder programme. There is space to extend the area for toddlers.

4.3.2 There is also a MUGA which draws in large numbers of teenagers. With the increase in numbers of high density residential dwellings, the site is at capacity and more facilities are required to cater for additional demand.

4.3.3 Further into the open space there is an artificial cricket wicket which is heavily used during the summer months. The wicket has been damaged following a fire and is in need of refurbishment.

4.3.4 The site is popular for dog walkers and joggers and a petition has previously been presented requesting an exercise trail around the perimeter of the park.

4.3.5 The youth shelter is an extremely popular place for meeting friends. This is evidenced by the erosion around the unit.

4.3.6 There is insufficient furniture within the park to support the high levels of use.

4.3.7 There is a small section of daffodils running parallel to Kensington Road.

### **4.4 Proposed improvements for Kensington Road Recreation Ground**

4.4.1 Extend the toddler play area and install additional equipment.

4.4.2 Install a second sports area next to the existing MUGA to increase flexibility and range of sports/activities available.

4.4.3 Refurbish the artificial cricket wicket.

4.4.4 Create a circular asphalt route around the perimeter of the park and install distance markers every 100m into the surface of the path. Supply and install outdoor fitness stations adjacent to the path at intervals around the park.

- 4.4.5 Install a concrete pad around the base of the youth shelter to prevent further erosion.
- 4.4.6 Install more furniture (seats and bins).
- 4.4.7 Increase the daffodils by planting a further 1m-wde strip along the remainder of the frontage of Kensington Road.
- 4.4.8 Replacement signs.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

5.1 The Corporate Plan fully aligns with the Sustainable Community Strategy and following strategic aims:

- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

### **5.2 Equal Opportunities:**

5.2.1 Being free to visit and open every day, parks and open spaces are particularly important to people with limited income and limited open space at home. There is little barrier to use, whether by ethnic origin, social background or financial means. Consequently, parks and open spaces in general are the most frequented Council service in which people make a choice as to whether to use or not. Given the shortfall in public open space in this area, this facility is particularly valuable.

5.2.2 Access to improved local facilities is essential in order to provide everyone with an opportunity to improve their quality of life.

### **5.3 Sustainability Implications:**

5.3.1 Parks and Open Spaces are a key contributor to a sustainable and healthy environment whilst encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle of those participating.

5.3.2 Well designed and well maintained public open spaces contribute to social well being and help reduce the fear of crime.

5.3.3 Both the recreation grounds are important and valued areas by the local community which provide a location for healthy outdoor pursuits. Enhancing these areas will provide additional opportunities for both young people and adults for years to come.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 The results of the public consultation regarding the spending of the S106 contributions from the Battle Hospital site highlighted the need for additional sports, play and recreational opportunities to support the increased number of residents in the Battle Ward area. The consultation results also demonstrated a clear understanding of the links between improved outdoor facilities and the health and well-being outcomes of local people.
- 6.2 Proposals have been developed following the results of the consultation above with Ward Councillors.
- 6.3 Residents who live closest to the parks will be notified by letter of the improvements and given the opportunity to raise any concerns.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must consider whether the decision will or could have a differential impact on: racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief. Approval of the decisions to carry out any of the improvement work will not have a differential impact on any of the above.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant to the decision in this instance.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The funding of these two schemes includes the appropriate use of Section 106 receipts in accordance with the terms of the individual legal agreement.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 It is proposed that these improvements will be funded from the Section 106 contribution, totally £1.615m made in connection with the redevelopment of the former Battle Hospital site. It is anticipated that the total cost of the improvement works will be in the region of £300,000. Competitive quotes or tenders as appropriate will be sought for each of the elements outlined in Paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 The Council's Cultural Strategy.
- 10.2 Open Spaces Strategy - March 2007.
- 10.3 Reading's Play Strategy - 2010.