

Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 29 February 2024

Playparks Investment

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Culture and Communities Committee notes this update on investment in playparks in 2023/24 and the proposed projects for 2024/25.

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Playparks Investment

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report provides an update on the Council's play investment programme and the projects delivered in 2023/24 and sets out the current pipeline projects that have so far been confirmed for 2024/25.

3. Background

3.1 With increasing demand on open space for other purposes, the importance of providing good quality, accessible play parks is more important than ever. Children need the social and play opportunities purpose-built play areas can offer and the benefits they provide in physical and mental health, social cohesion, and overall wellbeing.

3.2 In recognition of this, in 2021 the Scottish Government established a five-year capital funding programme to support children having access to quality play parks. There has been no indication as to whether further grant funding will be allocated post 2025.

3.3 Edinburgh's allocated share of funding, from 2023 onwards is as follows:

- £0.419m 2023/24;
- £1.216m 2024/25; and
- £2.027m 2025/26.

3.4 The Scottish Government recognised that a multi-year grant settlement would allow Local Authorities to plan accordingly. Distribution was based on population 0-14 years (93%) and rurality (7%) and is paid via the monthly General Capital Grant.

3.5 The extra funding can only be used to continue a programme of play area renewal. The extent of renewal, and refurbishment varies across the whole play estate and is influenced by local plans, investment priorities and engagement and consultation with children and young people.

3.6 An eligible play park for investment is one which is:

3.6.1 Local authority owned, managed, or maintained;

- 3.6.2 Designated for play; and
- 3.6.3 Free to access and open to all.
- 3.7 Play parks in private ownership, those that require an entry fee or those only available to specific groups or with conditions for entry are out with scope. Play parks with equipment (swings, slides etc) aimed at children aged 0-14 are included, as are other facilities used by the same age group (for example pump tracks or skate parks), but Multi Use Game Areas (MUGAs) or dedicated sports fields are outwith the scope.
- 3.8 Excluding sport specific areas, the Council has 189 play areas with over 900 items of play equipment. The provision of play areas themselves is not a statutory duty however their routine inspection and maintenance is a mandatory requirement.
- 3.9 The British Standard BS EN 1176 informs the design and installation of play equipment, and BS EN 1177 supports the safety surfaces required to reduce the consequences of a child falling. All play areas are designed and built to comply with these standards.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Appendix 1 provides a summary of expenditure to date far and the expected funding for the remaining years of the agreement. Elected Members will note that the funding for 2023/24 was £811,000 with a revised budget of £419,000 due to acceleration of the programme in 2022/23. Given the multi-year nature of the funding, money can be reprofiled to suit the range and cost of projects being delivered.
- 4.2 Appendix 2 provides a summary of the play areas across the city, with details of the projects delivered in 2023/24 and those planned for 2024/25.
- 4.3 The play investment programme is structured to target play areas that are most in need of refurbishment. This is achieved by balancing the local demand for play, the current condition of equipment (determined by an annual independent evaluation), the assessed play value and a site's proximity to other play areas.
- 4.4 In 2023/24, 12 projects have been successfully delivered. Five of these were improvement projects and the remaining seven focused on continuing to maintain the existing play value with smaller scale replacement or refurbishment projects.
- 4.5 The cost of refurbishing a play area is dependent on several factors (including condition of existing equipment, whether there is a local requirement to maintain or to upgrade the play value and the durability/longevity of the equipment installed). Except for vandalism or new localised funding, the frequency of refurbishment or the replacement of equipment is entirely linked to a site's usage. For example, the high popularity of the East Meadows Magnet Play results in the regular replacement of worn-out equipment and safety surfaces.

- 4.6 One of the most notable projects delivered in 2023/24 was the refurbishment of the Montgomery Street play park which was completed in the early part of 2024. A potential replacement for the helter skelter is still under consideration.
- 4.7 On the 26 April 2022, Culture and Communities Committee [noted](#) the intention to improve skatepark facilities and to carry out community engagement to seek the views on the potential refurbishment/upgrade of the skatepark within Burdiehouse Valley Park. This consultation is now concluded and there was clear support for new skatepark facility. Discussions are ongoing with SportScotland on the potential to secure an external funding contribution for this, with the expectation that the project will take place in 2024/25.
- 4.8 In addition to the Burdiehouse project, a contract has been awarded for the full refurbishment and inclusion of more accessible play equipment for Princes Street Gardens. It is currently anticipated that installation will begin in March 2024 for completion before the school summer holidays.
- 4.9 Play areas at Leith Links and Taylor Gardens have been added to the investment programme and join Keddie Gardens and Tolbooth Wynd as part of the wider Edinburgh Nature Network – Linking Leith parks projects.
- 4.10 The programme for 2024/25 is an ambitious one and, subject to the cost estimates for each project, there may be some projects deferred to 2025/26.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The programme of investment detailed in Appendix 2 will continue as currently set out. Committee will receive an annual Business Bulletin update on progress.
- 5.2 All other play areas are maintained and kept safe using revenue funding. Should an estimated project cost exceed £10,000, inclusion within the capital programme is considered.
- 5.3 Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust continue to work in partnership with the Council to support the development, community engagement and delivery of play projects and to source extra funding for play and the wider estate.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Investment in play areas is delivered via £4.9m of Scottish Government funding and any other third party or Section 75 contributions that can be secured.
- 6.2 Whilst play park projects (as standalone projects) do not typically attract additional, external funding, where opportunities exist to unlock external funding for a wider improvement project these will be explored.
- 6.3 Projects that do not meet the capital de minimis of £10,000 will, wherever possible, be funded through revenue budgets where available.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Young people, regardless of circumstances, need the social and play opportunities that purpose built play areas can offer and the benefits they can provide in respect of mental health, physical health, social cohesion and overall well-being.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity.
- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 Prioritisation is given to play equipment and play areas that have reached the end of useful life. Where significant refurbishment projects are undertaken the community are consulted and have an influence over design.
- 9.2 Regular programmes of play area inspection, play equipment operational maintenance, and an independent ROSPA certified inspection helps ensure equipment and areas remain safe and functional.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 None.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 Play Area Investment

Appendix 2 Play Projects

APPENDIX 1 - Play Investment 2021 -2025

Financial Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Extra Play Funding	0.414	0.406	0.811	1.216	2.027	4.874
+Slippage/-Acceleration	0.121	0.263	-0.416			
Income/Realignment	0.052	0.084	0.024			
Revised budget	0.587	0.753	0.419	1.216	2.027	5.002
Less Actual spend	0.324	1.169	0.418			
Slippage/Acceleration	0.263	-0.416	0.001			
(to Dec 23)						

APPENDIX 2 - Play Area Investment Projects 2023 onwards

Principal Reason for Action	Location	Outcome/Action	Planned /Delivery Year	Project Status	Original Estimate	Revised estimate / spend *
Inc	King Edwards Way, Kirkliston	Continue to maintain/safety surface	23/24	Completed	£10,000	£2,316
PAP	Spylaw Park	Improve play value to very good. Community consultation on more play equipment and the replacement of the loosefilled safety surface with a wheelchair friendly alternative.	23/24	Completed	£35,000	£52,402
EF	Meadowfield Park	Continue to maintain/safety surface	23/24	Completed	£10,000	£14,895
EF	Meadowfield	Continue to maintain play value. Replace worn cableway.	23/24	Ongoing due April 24.	£12,000	£12,000
Age	Victoria Park, Toddlers	Improve to good standard	23/24	Completed	£79,942	£74,692
Age	Montgomery Street Park	Improve to very good standard	23/24	Completed	£272,000	£312,172
Inc	Blackford Pond	Continue to maintain/safety surface	23/24	Completed		£2,866
Age	Dean Park Place / Square	Improve to good standard/new swing & safety surface	23/24	Completed	£21,600	£15,680
Age	Dumbryden Grove	Maintain play area/refurbish	23/24	Completed	£55,109	£47,948
EF	Hailesland Gardens No: 9	Improve to good standard/refurbish	23/24	Completed	£74,600	£70,681
Age	Morvenside	Maintain play area/refurbish	23/24	Completed	£19,007	£33,300
Inc	Prestonfield Park	Continue to maintain/safety surface	23/24	Completed		£17,000
EF	Bruntsfield Links	Continue to maintain/new multi-unit	23/24	Completed		£24,561
EF	Burdiehouse Valley Park	Maintain play area/replace skatepark	24/25	ELGT: Consultation completed. Developing proposal for a new skatepark and updates to play equipment. Potential Sports Scotland support funding (£70k).	£200,000	£200,000
EF	Princes Street Gardens	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area and introduce more inclusive play equipment.	24/25	ELGT: Ongoing due May/June 24.	£169,875	£219,875
Inc	City Wide	Replace or modify worn/old play equipment with alternatives that have more inclusive qualities	23/24	Ongoing. See Prestonfield Park, Bruntsfield Links & Blackford Pond	£60,000	
Age	Allison Park	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the park's play areas. Introduce more inclusive play equipment, an access path and wheelchair friendly safety surfaces.	24/25	Initial design drafted consultation ongoing.	£122,000	£122,000
Age	King George V Park, Farquhar Terrace	Improve from play value from good to very good. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the park's play areas. Introduce a secure area, more inclusive play equipment, an access path and wheelchair friendly safety surfaces.	24/25	CEC to draft initial design. ELGT to take forward consultation on design.	£122,000	£122,000

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Principal Reason for Action	Location	Outcome/Action	Planned /Delivery Year	Project Status	Original Estimate	Revised estimate / spend *
Age	Kirkliston Sport Centre	Continue to maintain play value. If available, replace or modify worn and old play equipment with inclusive alternatives.	tba	Continuing to maintain existing equipment. Project paused while developments in area are being considered.	£57,000	£57,000
Age	Glendevon Park	Continue to maintain play value. If available, replace or modify worn and old play equipment with inclusive alternatives.	25/26	No update/continue to maintain equipment.	£47,000	£47,000
EF	Clermiston Park	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area and introduce more inclusive play equipment.	24/25	ELGT: Proposals for wider park drafted. CEC to draft play design for consultation.	£122,000	£122,000
S75	Granton Gas Works	Contribution towards a new play area as part of a wider regeneration project.	24/25	Funded through developers. Awaiting site hand-over.		
MP	Inverleith Park	Continue to maintain play value. Contribution towards a wider master planning project to improve the park and the play area. Improve inclusion.	24/25	Consultation undertaken by friends group and options developed for play. Concept design for flood management (blue/green network) in progress. Improvement to play are paused while the impact of this is understood, expected 24/25.	£47,000	£47,000
S75	King George V Park, Eyre Place	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the replacement of worn and old play equipment with more inclusive equipment and the replacement of the loosefilled toddler area safety surface with a wheelchair friendly alternative.	24/25	ELGT drafted proposals for section 75 funding to incorporate play and green space improvements. Consultation with friends group ongoing. Works involve replacement slide, drainage and access improvements, expected 24/25	£120,000	£120,000
EF/MP	Tolbooth Wynd	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area and introduce more inclusive play equipment.	24/25	Ongoing project initial designs completed for play and the wider park as part of Edinburgh Nature Network - Linking Leith's Parks Project. Funding/grant options being assessed details, expected 24/25.	£27,000	£27,000
Age/MP	Keddie Gardens	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area with a strong inclusive focus.	24/25	Ongoing project initial designs completed for play and the wider park as part of Edinburgh Nature Network - Linking Leith's Parks Project. Funding/grant options being assessed with details expected 24/25.	£122,000	£122,000
MP	Taylor Gardens	Enhance park facilities	24/25	Ongoing project initial designs completed for play and the wider park as part of Edinburgh Nature Network - Linking Leith's Parks Project. Funding/grant options being assessed with details, expected 24/25.	tba	tba

APPENDIX 2 - Play Area Investment Projects 2023 onwards

Principal Reason for Action	Location	Outcome/Action	Planned /Delivery Year	Project Status	Original Estimate	Revised estimate / spend *
MP	Inch Park	Continue to maintain play value. Contribution towards a wider master planning project to improve the park and the play area.	25/26	No leveling up fund secured; developing other funding bids for the park including National Heritage Lottery.	£47,000	£47,000
PAP	Moredun Maze	Continue to maintain. Engagement with the community to improve the resilience of play equipment installed.	25/26	No progress continue to maintain.	£27,000	£27,000
Age	Magdalene Community Centre	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the partial refurbishment of the play area with a strong inclusive equipment focus.	25/26	No progress continue to maintain.	£47,000	£47,000
Age	Murieston Park	Continue to maintain. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area with a strong inclusive focus.	24/25	ELGT: Consultation on design. CEC to draft initial design.	£122,000	£122,000
EF	Sighthill Park	Continue to maintain play value. Replace the aging "voyager" multi play unit and incorporate an access path.	24/25	Procurement progressing.	£47,000	£47,000
Age	Westfield Court	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area with a strong inclusive focus.	22/23	Completed - funded by Housing.	£0	£0
MP	West Pilton	Improve play value. Contribution towards a wider master planning project to improve the park and the play area. Improve inclusion.	tba	ELGT: External funding identified and designs being developed.	tba	tba
MP	Leith Links	Continue to maintain play value. Contribution towards a wider master planning project to improve the park and the play area. Improve inclusion.	25/26	Designs to RIBA Stage 3 developed. Fund-raising due to commence 24/25.	tba	tba
Age	Dumbiedykes	Continue to maintain play value. Community consultation on the full refurbishment of the play area with a strong inclusive focus.	24/25	ELGT: Consultation on design. CEC to draft initial design.	£122,000	£122,000

*Estimate - projects are sometimes delivered in groups with costs apportionment applied.

Principal Reason Key

Inc - Improve inclusion

PAP - Play Action Plan

Age - Obsolete Equipment

EF - External funding support

S75 - Section 75 funding provided

APPENDIX 2 - Play Area Investment Projects 2023 onwards

Principal Reason for Action	Location	Outcome/Action	Planned /Delivery Year	Project Status	Original Estimate	Revised estimate / spend *
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MP - Master Planning