

Review of Equipped Play Progress

The City Council’s Cabinet approved the Review of Equipped Play Areas on the 10th July 2012. The approved report set out *“the policy and standards for the provision of equipped play areas, together with a development plan. The development plan outlines the proposed approach for rationalising and improving equipped play areas throughout the City in order that the spatial, catchment and quality standards set out in the policy can, as far as possible, be met”*.

This February 2019 review looks at progress to date of the development plan and actions for financial period of 2019/20.

This review also compares the Chelmsford City Council position in relation to the UK national environment/position for equipped play. The references for this comparison are as follows; -

1. Landscape & Amenity Play and Activity Latest News – December 2018
2. APSE Performance Networks Benchmarking information per Service and Family group (2016/17 data).

Summary of Development Plan progress.

1. In 2012 the City Council managed and maintained 127 Equipped Play locations; This is now 107 locations. This rationalisation was achieved in conjunction with targeted investment and improvement.
2. The rationalisation and improvement programme can be broken down as follows; -

Description	Number	As % of total
Refurbished/replaced equipped play areas	29	23%
Planned refurbishment/replacement in 2019	3	2.3%
Refurbished/replaced equipped play areas total investment	£1.470mil	
Planned refurbishment/replacement in 2019	£160k	
Play areas maintenance and management transferred to Parish Councils	2	1.6%
Substandard Play Areas removed	12	9.5%
Substandard Play Areas planned to be removed in 2019	2	1.6%

3. In all 29 locations where improvement work was carried out play value has been increased and in all of the 21 locations targeted to become neighbourhood play areas as part of the refurbishment/replacement programme, the bench mark of 70 play value is now in line with the agreed development plan.

Comparison of Chelmsford City Council versus UK National Position.

1. The 2018/19 budget for maintenance and management is in real terms the same as in 2012. Adjusted for inflation there is a modest 10% reduction in budget provision reflecting the rationalisation of provision and improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of the maintenance and management of the Chelmsford City Council equipped play areas.
2. The City Council managed and maintained 127 Equipped Play locations in 2012 and this is now 107 locations with 2 locations now managed by local Parish Council's. This rationalisation of provision has resulted in the closure of 18 play locations or a numerical reduction of 14%.
3. The City Council has refurbished/ replaced 29 play locations increasing play value across all locations and creating 21 locations where the play value is at or above the 70-play value bench mark (as set in the 2012 Development Plan). The level of investment to date is £1.470mil.
4. The local Chelmsford City Council position in terms of spending for management/maintenance and investment compares well against the UK National picture (Landscape & Amenity Play and Activity Latest News – December 2018) reporting a 44% decrease in spending on play facilities.
5. The 2017/18 APSE Performance Networks Benchmarking data shows that for Performance Indicator PI18a; local authority playgrounds only per 1,000 children, Chelmsford City Council scores 2.87 per 1,000 children against the family group average of 2.48. This means a score position above average and performance in 2nd quartile.

Performance to date.

The Chelmsford City Council's performance is on target against the 2012 Equipped Play Development Plan and performance compared to the wider national local authority sector is better than sector.

Current year progress.

In 2019/20, works are in progress as follows; -

- Copperfield Road; the existing small infant play area is being replaced with a neighbourhood play area providing play opportunity for the existing and new communities in the area. This project is funded from S106 planning gain of £101,000.
- Rumsey Fields, Danbury; the existing small infant play area is being replaced with a small neighbourhood play area. The cost of the project is £46,000
- Golden Acres; The existing infant play area is being refurbished, with some new equipment and impact absorbing surfacing being added at a budget cost of £27,000

- Andrews Park; The existing neighbourhood play area is being improved with the addition of accessible equipment at a cost of £16,500 (funded by accessibility grant).

This means that in accordance with the 2012 Equipped Play Development Plan, all of the Category A play areas have been completed with the exception of Crickhollow.

The Crickhollow area requires a neighbourhood facility but the current play space at Crickhollow cannot accommodate a neighbourhood play area due to limited space and access.

Future progress (2021/22 an 2022/23)

We are currently working through Category B. Of those the most urgent would be:-

For 2021/22; -

- Springfield Hall Park - £97,000.
- Compass Gardens/Saltcoats Park – £105,000.
- Churchill Rise - £38,250; There have been several requests to upgrade this play area over the last few years.

For 2021/22; -

- Rookes Crescent – £53,000; This play area is surrounded on all sides by housing and there are a lot of young children on the estate.
- Chislett Row - £64,000; The equipment on the site is spread out over a large area. This is the only original CCC site on the estate and there are a lot of children in the area. Moulsham Junior School is just up the road. The play area has been subject to some vandalism and its condition is poor. For example, all rubber tiles around the timber trim trail have been pulled up and are missing
- Potters Close - £33,000; CCC only have two play areas in Danbury. One is Rumsey Fields, which is being refurbished in 2019 but that is over a mile away and involves crossing the A414 (Maldon Road). The equipment is reaching its end of lifespan in 2020.
- Homestead – £16,500; A small infant play area in Galleywood. There is not much play value and the area could be extended or relocated on the site to cater for children from 2-8 years of age.
- Melbourne Park - £116,000; Melbourne Park currently has two play areas, one for juniors and one for infants. This is not inclusive and we have received several comments about siblings not being able to play together. The equipment is also very dated and for the size of the catchment area and the number of schools close by, a new play area is warranted. Some of the existing equipment has recently been removed due to corrosion as it has reached the end of its lifespan.