

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 5
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Report of the Commercial Services Director

Report Author – David Denson, Head of Operations, City Services
Contact Details - 425309

PROVISION OF FORMAL PLAY AND RECREATION FACILITIES IN RURAL AREAS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To allow Members the opportunity to scrutinise the provision of play in rural areas.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities scrutinises the current provision of play in rural areas and makes appropriate recommendations.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

- 3.1 Children’s play helps make Peterborough a better place in which to learn and work and supports the agenda for learning and ensuring that children are safe. Play areas can create a vibrant local centre which is attractive and is expected to be visited by pedestrians from the local catchment area rather than individuals using private transport. The vision of the cities play strategy produced in March 2007 is:

“The health and well being of Peterborough’s children and young people will be improved by imaginative and dynamic play provision and management of spaces and opportunities for play”.

- 3.2 The Peterborough Play Partnership was developed in 2007 to progress the outcomes and actions arising from the play strategy. The Play Partnership has been aligned with the Greater Peterborough Partnership (GPP) who chairs the partnership.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2003 Peterborough was found to have an oversupply of play facilities in comparison with other similar Authorities. However, at that time, only 5% of play facilities met National Playing Fields Association (NPFAs) minimum standards. At that time there were 330 designated play areas within Peterborough. It is fair to say that the arrangements in place at that time supported quantity over quality and many of the “doorstep” play areas were inadequate rather than safe. As a result of this Members agreed that the Council would consolidate its play area provision to create high quality neighbourhood facilities which provide safe but stimulating opportunities for children.
- 4.2 As of the date of this report Peterborough now has 180 designated play areas of which over 70% met the NPFAs minimum standard.

4.3 The play area improvement programme was identified as a corporate priority and was registered with the Programme and Project Management Team. Funding for these schemes is provided through a number of sources; the main funding being from Section 106 developer contributions, Big Lottery Fund, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Playbuilder initiative and the Council's capital resources. Good examples of this are Ailsworth, Eye, Glinton and Wittering.

4.4 Members have previously accepted the rationale for prioritising improvement works using the following criteria:

- Level and quality of provision in each Ward with NPFA standards
- Level of Risk Assessment for each site
- Play value of areas and comparison with recognised play standards
- Availability of resources

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 The key issue for Members to consider is the on-going programme of improvements to existing play areas to ensure that all will reach the required Peterborough Play Strategy minimum standards in due course.

5.2 That subject to continued support from the Councils' capital programme, Big Lottery Fund, Section 106 funding and DCSF Playbuilder expand the number of facilities; play areas and wheeled sports facilities and MUGAs. Locations to be decided as indicated in Section 3 above.

5.3 Inspection and maintenance of existing play areas will continue in accordance with the existing schedule of maintenance which has been set according to use and budget together with guidance from the Council's Insurance Section. The recent introduction of BS EN 14974 Facilities for users of roller sports equipment has required the authority to inspect all wheeled sports facilities on a daily basis, increasing budgetary pressures.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report does not have any specific financial or legal implications in respect of existing facilities as they are maintained within defined budget and inspection and maintenance is carried out by or under the supervision of employees qualified in this area.

6.2 New play areas and new MUGAs are funded from the sources as set out in paragraph 3.4 above.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation with community groups, Parish Councils, Ward Members and other Departments is an important aspect of the improvement programme, ensuring that all interested parties are kept apprised of progress. Each new play area will be developed with community consultation, including involvement of young people as appropriate.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 Officers will continue with the programme of inspections, maintenance and installation of new facilities in accordance with the established principles. The next report will be produced in early 2011 unless a request is made to produce an update earlier. By working with the rural communities we explore and expand on the grant opportunities that may be available.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 Report to Community Well Being Policy Overview Committee dated 15 February 2007.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix A identifies the play areas within each Parish area and provides a brief description of the facility and its overall condition. Those play areas marked “amber” or “green” are not considered to require any major work to be undertaken within the next seven or ten years respectively. The facilities marked “red” will, over the next five years, require to be either refurbished or removed.

**APPENDIX A
PLAY PROVISION IN RURAL AREAS**

2007 Report

2009

<u>BARNACK WARD</u>	There are 3 play areas maintained by the City Council in this ward. NPFA minimum standards indicate that the level of provision should be in the region of 5 equipped play areas although this is difficult to achieve with the rural nature of the Ward. The 3 play areas are located in the larger villages. The ward was ranked eighth in the priority ranking.	
<u>Bainton Parish Play Area</u>	The play value score is good and the risk assessment score is reasonable for an area of this size. The size of the play area limits the scope for future improvements at this site. The recent improvements at this site utilised the space and no further improvements are needed in the immediate future.	GREEN Whizzer, Spring platform, Spring see saw, Balance beam & stepping posts, Multiplay unit, Junior swings.
<u>Helpston Dual Use</u>	The Game time multiplay unit has a number of timbers which are in poor condition, replacement parts for this unit are no longer available and the units' age means that the condition of the unit needs monitoring and replacement in the immediate future will be necessary. Minor modifications to exposed fixings would help reduce the risk associated with the unit. Play value is reasonable for a NEAP the score being of 36.	AMBER Hags junior multiplay, Junior swings, Wooden climbing horse, Goal posts, Daisy springy, Aeroplane springy, Assault course, Netball post, Wooden shelter, MUGA

<u>Ufford Parish Playing Field</u>	<p>The site scored moderately well for play value although for a site which is potentially a NEAP the score was poor. The site is the only public play area in the village and should be developed along the lines of the NEAP Standard. The site could be developed to offer far more play opportunities to a wide range of users for the whole of the village. The existing basketball goal needs the backboard replacing and the ground below needs to be upgraded to include an area of hard standing. The swing needs a safer surface installed below to meet EN1177 standards. There is a scope to provide lots of additional equipment; consultation is needed with the Parish Council to identify priorities. The site is not fenced and the introduction of a fence would reduce the risks associated with dog fouling and agricultural activities in the adjoining fields. The play area would benefit from having separate areas for younger preschool children and another specific area for older children with more demanding equipment. The access from the road to the equipment is poor and a casual footpath into the area would improve the opportunities for local people.</p>	<p>AMBER</p> <p>To be reviewed 2010/11</p> <p>Adventure trail, junior swing, infant arch swing, netball posts and goal posts.</p>
<u>GLINTON PARISH</u>	<p>The level of provision in Glinton Ward is in line with NPFA minimum standards and the ward was ranked twelve in the priority ranking.</p>	
<u>Ailsworth Parish Council</u>	<p>The risk assessment was moderate for this particular site. There are issues with the access into the play area these are largely due to the removal of the community buildings adjacent to the play area. There is a very limited range of play equipment aimed at the youngest age group and play value is very poor. If funding became available there is scope to develop play opportunities for a number of age groupings. Consultation is needed with the Parish Council to develop an appropriate action plan.</p>	<p>GREEN</p> <p>Recently developed (August 09) Daisy springy, motorbike springy, set 4 swings, Grizzly multiplay, seesaw, roundabout, MUGA.</p>
<u>Castor Parish Council</u>	<p>The risk assessment score could be lowered by improving the site fencing. The play value score was good at 37. The current size and layout of the site limit the improvements that could be made and the risk assessment was slightly higher than expected partly the result of limited circulation space and the uneven ground within the play area. Improvements to the levels within the play area could be carried out through the play maintenance program. There were some minor repairs to the picnic seats and the trim trail eye bolt inserts and steel cable.</p>	<p>GREEN</p> <p>Infant multiplay unit, Junior multiplay unit, Assault course, Set of infant & junior swings, Car springy, Puffin springy, Cone climber</p>

<u>Crispins - Ashburn Close</u>	This play area score for risk assessment was high for an area with very limited play opportunities. The timber climber has a number of limb traps and has no safer surfacing below and should be removed. The work has been carried out through the play maintenance programme. The play area as a whole should be redesigned as a Local Area for Play which would involve removing the 3 remaining spring toys and fencing in the area in order to provide a more secure area for toddlers play.	RED Review 2010/2011
<u>Glinton Parish Playing Field</u>	The play value score for this area was reasonable but the play area serves the whole of the village and would benefit from additional play equipment. There is very limited equipment aimed at younger children. The risk assessment score was also reasonable but the igloo climber does not meet European standards and would be better replaced with a suitable alternative this would help improve the risk assessment. The cradle swings require safer surfacing. This work would significantly reduce the risk on this site.	GREEN Refurbished as a Playbuilder May 09 - Infant swings, Talk tubes, Springy motorbike, Embankment slide, Netball posts, Football goals, Playhouse, Junior multiplay, Daisy springy, Supanova, Seesaw, Cable runway, Timbertangle, Playdale adventure trail, Cone climber, Hex swings, BMX track
<u>Clarendon Way</u>	The play value score was reasonable for a localised facility aimed at younger children, risk assessment was low but could be improved upon by installing an information sign. Minor work needed to spring toy seat and damaged fence slat.	AMBER Dog springy, Multiplay unit Section 106 monies may be available to refurbish this play area
<u>NEWBOROUGH WARD</u>	The ward was rated fifteen in the priority rating. The number of play areas meets the NPFA minimum standard.	
<u>Newborough Playing Field</u>	The play value score for this site was relatively low for a play area that serves the whole village. The risk assessment was low. The cradle swings do not have safer surfacing and this is something that should be considered as part of future improvements. There are two distinct play areas which are age specific the area aimed at older children should be fenced to reduce risk associated with dog fouling and also the close nature of the drainage ditch at one boundary of the playing field.	AMBER Junior swings, Infant swings, Multiplay unit, Rotating post, Netball post, Springy seesaw, Car springy, Goal posts.

<u>Peakirk Parish Council</u>	The risk assessment for this play area was relatively low the introduction of dog proof fencing would significantly help to reduce risk. One arch swing does not conform to EN1176 and should be removed. The second set of swings requires modifications and safer surfacing this work should be carried out as a matter of urgency through the play maintenance programme. This play area provides play opportunities for the whole of the village and accordingly the play value score should be much higher than it is. Additional fencing and play equipment would help improve opportunities for local residents.	GREEN CHESTNUT CLOSE - Embankment slide, Balance beams, Junior swings, Shark springy, Apple springy, Infant swings, Climbing cone
<u>Quorn Close</u>	The risk assessment was low; the gaps in the dog proof fencing should be gapped up when funding can be identified. There are no obvious division of age groupings on site the multiplay is appropriate for older children, although the size and nature of the site would appear to be more appropriate for younger children. When consideration is next given to major improvements to the site the age specifics of the existing equipment should be considered.	AMBER Seesaw, Horse springy, Spinning pole, Springy playform, Junior multiplay.
<u>NORTHBOROUGH PARISH</u>	The level of provision is in line with the NPFA's minimum standard and the priority ranking for the Ward was thirteenth	
<u>Barn Close (Maxey)</u>	This play area serves the whole of the village and the play value score was relatively poor. The risk assessment score was unacceptably high and urgent work has been carried out to improve the situation. The igloo climber and climbing logs have no safer surfacing, the life expectancy of the logs is very short and they have been removed. The igloo climber requires safer surfacing; however it would be better to replace both items with a modern equivalent with greater play value. The roundabout does not conform to standards and needs to be replaced with a modern alternative.	GREEN Set of 2 infant & junior swings, Hags whizzer, Climbing cone, Hags jeep, SMP see saw, SMP assault course, Hags activity ship, Springy turtle, Elephant slide.
<u>Northborough Parish Play Area</u>	There are two distinct areas at Northborough. The play value of the site was reasonable. The risk assessment score was reasonable, the arch swing no longer conforms to EN1176 standards and should be replaced with an equivalent unit and safer surfacing. The junior swings require safer surfacing and the junior area should be fenced. Additional equipment for older children would help offset the recent loss of the timber climber. There area also some remedial work required to the toddlers multiplay unit which could be carried out by the play maintenance team.	GREEN Recently refurbished (Nov 08) Kompan multiplay unit, Elephant springy, Cradle swings, Kompan springy, Roundabout, 6 Toadstools, 3 Activity stations, Igloo climbing frame, 2 seat rocker, Junior swings, Embankment slide, Teen shelter, Cyclone, Mobilus, Aerial runway, Goal posts.

<u>THORNEY /EYE WARD</u>	The ward was ranked seventeenth in the priority ranking. The overall number of play areas is 8 which are more than the basic NPFA minimum requirement of 4.	
<u>Ixworth Close, Eye</u>	The risk assessment score for this play area was very high. The equipment is now dated and the items do not conform to the EN1176 standards. The equipment does not have any safer surfacing. The equipment should be replaced when individual items of equipment reach the end of their life. The play area should be upgraded gradually to meet the NPFA LEAP standard.	<p>RED</p> <p>Review in 2010/2011 - discussions with Parish Council whether to remove, other play areas could meet the demands of residents in this area, or refurbish</p> <p>Infant arch swing, Infant slide, Climbing frame - No safety surfacing</p>
<u>Little Close, Eye</u>	The play area at Little Close in Eye did not score very well for play value. The risk assessment score was low attention is needed to the multiplay unit including replacing blanking plugs and replacing rotten steps and worn steel cables. The levels around the kick about goal need making good and the timbers of the spring toy need minor work. Consideration needs to be given to providing fencing and additional equipment to raise the play value of this site.	<p>GREEN</p> <p>Junior swings, Infant swings, Springy toy, SMP Infant multiplay, Basketball net, Tortoise springy, Hags seesaw, Hags whizzer, Hags springy, hags spinner, SMP spinning bowl.</p>
<u>Northam Close, Eye</u>	This site is very low key and does not meet LEAP standards. The range of equipment has very limited play value and the play value is limited. The risk assessment was slightly higher than expected as the site lacks ancillary items such as fencing signage and the location of the play equipment in the centre of a turning circle is not ideal.	<p>AMBER</p> <p>Seesaw, Hags lion springy, Sutcliffe rotating pole, Sutcliffe spinning bowl</p>
<u>Cleve Place, Eye</u>		<p>AMBER</p> <p>This area contains a skate park and a play area and the open space is to be improved as a result of Big Lottery funding granted to the Eye Community Space Project</p>

<u>Sandpit Road,Thorney</u>	The location of this play area is not good it is hidden at the rear of properties. The risk assessment was very high, there are various remedial works required to the existing swing surface and the seesaw. The concrete slabs should be removed from the free fall zone of the swing unit as a matter of urgency. The play value score was poor and the risk assessment for an area with limited equipment was quite high. General upgrading of the equipment range is needed to raise the standard of the play area.	AMBER Wicksteed swings, Kompan seesaw
<u>Thorney Park(A)</u>	The central play area is for younger children and scored well for play value. One of the two play structures does not meet EN1176 standards and has been subject to a number of acts of vandalism. This unit is reaching the end of its serviceable life and needs to be replaced. The removal of this item of equipment would help to reduce the risk. There are minor remedial works to the surfaces in the play area which could be carried out through the play maintenance team.	AMBER Infant swings, Wicksteed multiplay, Hags multiplay, Hags jeep, Roundabout, Hags seesaw
<u>Whitehills, Eye Chancery Lane</u>	The area scored low on play value and this was the result of having limited play equipment as the physical layout of the site restricts the equipment which could be provided. The risk assessment score was reasonable and the introduction of a dog proof fence and an information sign would help reduce the risk assessment score significantly. No major changes needed. The introduction of a small social play item for toddlers would help improve opportunities for a toddler which is the main focus of the area.	AMBER Infant arch swing, Plane springy, Slide, Rotating post, Seesaw,
<u>WITTERING WARD</u>	The City Council has responsibility for only one play area in this ward. The rural nature of the ward gives rise to specific needs with the distance between villages presenting difficulties with children having access to play facilities. Ideally according to NPFA standards there should be 5 play areas located within the villages but small catchments numbers make this a less viable proposition to give a reasonable distribution of play opportunities within walking distance from home.	
<u>Wittering Parish Play Area</u>	The site scored poorly for play value and the risk assessment indicated that the introduction of ancillary items particularly dog proof fencing would help reduce the risk. Additional items of equipment would also help to improve play value and improve opportunities for younger children.	GREEN This play area was refurbished in Spring 2009 as a Play builder project, basket swing, Cyclone, Gyrospiral, Multiplay Unit, Adventure trail, Rodeo board, Cone climber, Nexus freeride, Toddler swings, Bexy multiplay, Spinning bowl, Rocker, Lion springy. The whole play area has now been fenced.

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