



Subject:	Playground Improvement Programme 2024 – 2025
Date:	6 th August 2024
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Operational Director of Resources, Fleet and OSS
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Operational Director of Resources, Fleet and OSS

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained.
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction.
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision
After Council Decision
Sometime in the future
Never

<input type="checkbox"/>
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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the successful 2023-2024 Playground Improvement Programme (PIP) and outline plans for new playground refurbishments under the 2024-2025 programme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee are asked to agree refurbishment works at the sites below as part of the Playground Improvement Programme (PIP) 2024-2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grampian Avenue playground • Michelle Baird playground • Balfour Avenue playground
3.0	Main report
	<u>Playground Improvement Programme</u>
3.1	Since its inception in 2012, the Playground Refurbishment Programme continues to make a positive impact to the overall quality and play value of the city's playgrounds, providing new equipment, safety surfacing, boundary fencing, site furniture and landscaping works. Under last year's programme the following playgrounds were successfully refurbished (see Appendix 1): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loughside playground • Northlink playground • New Lodge playground
3.2	As agreed at P&C Committee in December 2023, independent consultants undertook an audit of play value and accessibility at all council-maintained playgrounds in April 2024. The audit template combined formats used by Play Scotland and Play England and in consultation with PlayBoard NI, Mae Murray Foundation and council's Play Development Officer. The independent audit allows council to identify playgrounds that, although good in terms of the quality and safety compliance of their equipment, would benefit from an enhanced range of play opportunities and accessible elements.
3.3	Play value is used to describe the value an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to a child's experience of play, with high play value indicating children can play in many different ways. Through play children learn and develop their cognitive skills, problem-solving, social skills, and their fine and gross motor skills. A range of play opportunities is crucial to a child's development and enjoyment of a playground.
3.4	The play value and accessibility audit was undertaken by Play Services Ireland (PSI) Ltd in addition to their annual suite of playground safety inspections. As agreed, scores from the play value and accessibility audit has informed site selection for PIP 2024-25 and will inform subsequent improvement programmes going forward. Total scores allocated for each playground relate to existing features, elements within the playground that are not play equipment but do enhance users experience, and types of play opportunities available and their accessibility for a range of age groups and abilities (see Appendix 2).

3.5	All playgrounds were ranked in order of their total play value and accessibility score, helping to identify which facilities are in most need of improvement. If scores were tied sites were ranked using their combined play score; if these scores were also tied sites were then ranked in alphabetical order (see Appendix 3).
3.6	PSI Ltd. categorised all playgrounds as either Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) or Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP). Members should note that due to their scale, neighbourhood facilities have the potential to offer a wider range of accessible play opportunities than smaller local facilities, therefore neighbourhood facilities would cost more to refurbish than smaller, local facilities.
3.7	LEAPs and NEAPs are colour coded on the results table (Appendix 3) helping to identify their size and the potential scale of investment required. This will determine how many playground sites can be improved annually within the available capital budget.
3.8	In reference to the results table, members will note that Cathedral Gardens, received the second lowest score. It is recommended that this site is not considered for refurbishment under PIP 2024-25 as this is a temporary facility on a site to be redeveloped under the Capital Programme.
3.9	It is also recommended that Bridge End playground, the third lowest scoring playground, is also omitted from selection as this facility is due to be improved using a developer contribution under a Section 76 Planning Agreement.
3.10	<p>Therefore, based on estimated costs to deliver improvements within the available capital budget, three playgrounds were selected for refurbishment this financial year, they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grampian Avenue Playground (LEAP) • Michelle Baird Playground (LEAP) • Balfour Avenue Playground (NEAP)
3.11	Once improvement works are complete, or in the event of other capital investment in any playground, sites will be independently re-evaluated with the results table amended accordingly.
3.12	It is proposed to review the play value and accessibility audit process in five years to ensure it aligns with best practice guidance, with the option to seek approval to update and repeat the audit process if necessary.
3.13	Members should note that independent safety inspections, which informed site selection in previous years, will continue annually to identify essential repairs and ensure ongoing compliance with relevant safety standards. All repairs will be completed in parallel with improvement works under PIP.
3.14	The previous selection process focused on the quality and safety compliance of play equipment and did not consider play opportunities provided or how accessible they were.
3.15	The new audit and selection process provides an opportunity to enhance play value and improve accessibility at those facilities in most need, it also provides a useful tool that will inform future design decisions under PIP.
3.16	Members should also note that accessible parking and toilet provision was also assessed as part of the audit. Whilst delivery of these features would be outside the remit of PIP, findings from the audit will be used to inform future capital projects in our parks and open

	spaces. Subsequently, council officers have had discussions with the Mae Murray Foundation and Playboard NI around the development of concept designs for an exemplar, inclusive play space, with supporting infrastructure, that will meet the varying play needs of every child; initial discussions have aligned with key issues raised under the Notice of Motion, June 2022 – Inclusive Play Parks.
3.17	The December 2023 committee requested that a copy of the Annual Safety Inspection 2023 Playground Mean Quality scores were circulated. This is included in Appendix 4.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.18	All proposed playground improvement works will be funded through the Capital Programme within an allocated budget of £580,000. CNS Landscape Planning & Development Officers will continue to re-design play facilities and project manage all works associated with the delivery of PIP 2024-25.
3.19	As with previous years, CNS OSS Managers will continue to assist with the distribution of information relating to playground improvements to elected members, local communities, and user groups.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.20	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Refurbished Playground Images Appendix 2 – Typical Play Value & Accessibility Report Appendix 3 – Play Value and Accessibility Results Table Appendix 4 – Annual Safety Inspection 2023 Playground Mean Quality Scores