

# Report

Report to:	<b>Community and Enterprise Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>13 December 2022</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Scottish Government 5 Year Play Investment Programme</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ♦ provide an update on the work undertaken to date on the Scottish Government's proposed Play Area Investment Programme
- ♦ propose a strategic, place-based approach to allocating funding from the programme

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s): -

- (1) that the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) that the proposed place-based, local approach is approved rather than a blanket spend approach.

## 3. Background

3.1. The Scottish Government has launched a £60 million fund to renew play parks in Scotland, in order that children have access to high-quality outdoor play in their own communities. £10 million of funding was distributed across councils in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, with the Council's share totalling £594,000. The Scottish Government has now confirmed the full allocation which would see South Lanarkshire receiving a total of £3.58 million up to 2025/2026.

3.2. The original intention of the Government was to renew and transform all play areas in Scotland. However, it was clear from the proposed funding package that this would not be achievable. Due to the potential shortfall in funding, the Scottish Government agreed that councils could identify their own investment priorities. Previously, Committee approved the appointment of two temporary Landscape Architects for 2 years utilising the Scottish Government funding received to date. However, only one post was able to be appointed, and the post holder has been able to independently assess what was required in each play area to bring it up to a basic standard. This employee will also be responsible for any consultation going forward as well as associated designs, procurement and contract management relating specifically to Scottish Government spend.

- 3.3. The Council has now completed an initial exercise to identify potential costs to bring all 233 play areas up to an appropriate standard rather than full renewal. This has identified a funding shortfall of approximately £620,000 to bring all play areas up to an appropriate standard.
- 3.4. Prior to the assessment process starting, the Council also carried out a high-level survey on play in general with 6,395 responses received. The consultation response will be utilised as the Council begins implementation of the programme, with the comments received for each site considered in more detail and further consultation undertaken with local children, families, and ward members as proposals are developed.
- 3.5. Separate to this, there is a forthcoming review of planning regulations and the Planning Service is leading on the development of an Open Space Strategy which incorporates new play sufficiency requirements, albeit the exact criteria for assessing play provision and surrounding open space has not yet been confirmed. It is hoped that by ensuring that all play areas meet a basic standard, this would help contribute to meeting future play sufficiency requirements. To support the implementation of the Programme, the service is also investigating an IT solution to capture and maintain up to date play inspection and investment information.

#### **4. Investment programme**

- 4.1. The Scottish Government has now confirmed the profile of spend that South Lanarkshire Council will receive for the investment programme, including funding already received. The Council will also continue to explore opportunities for external funding or developers' contributions that could be utilised to supplement the investment programme and maximise the benefit of individual projects.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Allocation (£m)</b>
2022/23	0.594
2023/24	0.597
2024/25	0.896
2025/26	1.493
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.580</b>

- 4.2. As highlighted in section 3.3, initial inspection of all play areas has shown a funding shortfall of £620,000 to bring all sites up to an appropriate standard. A simple allocation of the funding available across all current play areas, regardless of any other considerations, would see minimal impact in many play areas. For some, funding would only go some way to addressing accessibility issues, environmental conditions or applying modern safety standards to historic locations i.e. new fencing for play areas near roads.
- 4.3. The shortfall in funding provides the opportunity to consider a more strategic place-based approach to allocating specific investment that could see targeted investment in priority play areas. The initial assessment of all play areas against appropriate standards will be used as the basis of funding in each identified locality. This approach would be developed in collaboration with the local community and local ward members, building on the consultation already undertaken and delivering local investment based on local priorities.

- 4.4. Given the multi-year profile of the funding, the following programme is proposed with focus on specific localities each year. Within the programme there will be flexibility to bring forward or push back projects as funding and staffing resource allows.

Year	Areas	Number of sites
2023/24	Larkhall, Rutherglen, Cambuslang	31
2024/25	Hamilton, Bothwell, Uddingston, Blantyre, Strathaven and surrounds	36
2025/26	East Kilbride	65
2026/27	Clydesdale	101
Total		233

- 4.5. Taking the programme forward will require a mix of resource usage. The Resource has recruited one temporary Landscape Architect dedicated to the programme and the service has 3 further permanent Landscape Architects who work on a variety of different projects at any given time. As the programme develops, work will be prioritised accordingly internally and there will also be a requirement to commission specific work packages or projects as determined by resource capacity. Further consideration will also be given to additional managerial support as the programme develops into a more complex programme of individual projects.
- 4.6. Current market conditions will also have an impact on programme implementation. With all 32 councils accessing a small number of specialist approved contractors across Scotland, lead in times to commence projects have already increased significantly and some contractors are not bidding for tenders in outlying areas due to the amount of local work available.

## **5. Employee Implications**

- 5.1. The temporary Landscape Architect post has been recruited on a 2-year basis and is due to terminate in February 2024. It is expected the programme will continue for two years beyond this date and so will be reviewed as future resources are considered.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. South Lanarkshire Council has been allocated £3.58m for the investment programme with £0.594m received to date and the remainder due to be received over the next 3 years as shown in section 4.1. Applying an appropriate standard investment to the Council's 233 play areas has identified a funding shortfall for this purpose of £0.6m. The proposed place-based approach of identifying priority work within a locality will allow the funding to be applied to local priorities.
- 6.2. The current market for contractors and equipment is exceptionally volatile and the initial assessment was based on best estimates at that time. The actual cost of projects will not be known until the tender process is underway. Additionally, RPI over the 5-year period will have an impact on costs over this time and, therefore, reduce the amount of work that will be able to be undertaken. This will be continually reviewed as the investment programme is developed.
- 6.3. It should also be noted that the investment programme is one off funding and does not account for any increased maintenance costs over the long term of new and additional play equipment. In addition, the Council may not be able to meet ongoing public expectations to maintain these standards and this is something that COSLA has raised with the Scottish Government on behalf of all councils.

## **7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 7.1. All potential play area improvements will create a more inviting and pleasant environment for children and families to gather and, where possible, we will utilise natural site characteristics more effectively to enhance the play experience and will increase tree canopy cover and add other vegetation to improve climate change resilience.

## **8. Other Implications**

- 8.1. There are no implications for risk currently identified in terms of the information contained within this report.

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 9.1. The report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

**David Booth**

**Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)**

21 November 2022

## **Links to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes**

### **Values**

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others

### **Priorities**

- ◆ We will work to put people first and reduce inequality

### **Outcomes**

- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ People live the healthiest lives possible

## **Previous References**

- ◆ None

## **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ None

## **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:

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