

Agenda Item No: 6

Report to: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 30th September 2013

Report Title: Play and Outdoor Exercise Equipment - review and evaluation

Report By: Virginia Gilbert
Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure

Purpose of Report

To review the operation and use of play and outdoor exercise equipment since its installation and to recommend any improvements or changes necessary.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. The Charity Committee agree that, subject to sufficient funding being identified, the improvements suggested in the report are considered for the budget and Business Plan for 2014/15**

Reasons for Recommendations

The recommended improvements should ensure the continued safe use of the play equipment and reduce the ongoing maintenance necessary as well as making the facilities more appealing.

Introduction

1. The Charity Committee gave authority for the funding and provision of Seafront Play and Outdoor Exercise facilities at its meeting on 12th December 2011. This followed extensive consultation and planning with the local community.

Implementation

2. The two smaller play areas at Sea Road and Warrior Square were completed in May 2012 and the larger playground at Pelham was opened in July 2012. Twelve additional pieces of outdoor exercise equipment were also installed at a number of locations to form a seafront fitness trail.
3. The play areas and fitness equipment have more than achieved their objectives of encouraging use and access to Foreshore Trust land and have provided enjoyment and exercise for thousands of users over the past 12 months.
4. Positive feedback has been received through the Hastings Borough Council website, email messages, letters of praise to the local paper and comments to Councillors and officers. Evaluation has also been carried out with children and parents by the Council's play development workers.
5. The evaluation report is shown in Appendix 1.
6. The play areas have stimulated additional visits to Hastings and to the seafront with many children enjoying the site several times a week. The exercise equipment is also well used and has encouraged both spontaneous and more organised fitness training by individuals and groups.
7. The budget provided was used to maximise equipment and facilities. Internal resources were used wherever possible. Staff from the Adventure Golf check and clean the main site on a daily basis, the Foreshore team carry out more detailed weekly and monthly maintenance inspections. These are supplemented by an annual RoSPA inspection and thorough maintenance inspection.
8. The equipment was carefully chosen and sites designed to take into account the harsh seafront environment. The equipment has stood up well. However, the numbers using the site (particularly Pelham where 250+ have been counted at one time) has meant that repairs and adaptations have been necessary.
9. Some areas of grass have had to be replaced with artificial grass, partly because of weather and partly due to wear. Plastic matting under the roundabout is being replaced with softer and more resilient rubber bonded mulch surfacing (made from recycled car tyres), some fittings have been replaced with stainless steel alternatives. We are building up a stock of commonly used spare parts. Two novelty litter bins have also recently been supplied.

Further enhancements

10. A relatively large part of the Pelham playground site around the two boats uses shingle as its safety surface. This has created problems in that the stones end up all over the play park and have to be constantly replaced. Their efficiency as a safety surface was also raised in a recent safety audit.
11. Officers recommend removing the stones and using 'wetpour' rubber as a safety surface in this whole area. This would greatly reduce the time spent clearing and maintaining the stones and improve the safety of the site.
12. We are also proposing to install a durable picnic table and two benches to supplement those around the site. This has been regularly requested by parents.
13. The estimate for the wetpour rubber is approximately £25,000 for the entire area. P

Recommendation

14. The Charity Committee agree that, subject to sufficient funding being identified, the improvements suggested in the report are considered for the budget and Business Plan for 2014/15.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	Yes

Background Information

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