

This Report will be made public on 12 October 2021



Report Number **C/21/39**

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 20 October 2021  
**Status:** Non Key Decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Alastair Clifford – Operations Lead Specialist  
**Cabinet Member:** Cllr John Collier, Cabinet Member for Property Management & Grounds Maintenance

**SUBJECT:** PLAY AREA STRATEGY UPDATE 2020-2030

**SUMMARY:** The Play Area Strategy 2020-2030 was formally adopted in April 2020. It detailed how high quality play areas would be provided and maintained throughout the District over the ten year period. The Strategy outlined how Folkestone & Hythe District Council would work with Town and Parish Councils, Community Groups and other stakeholders to provide a network of Priority and Strategic Play Areas across the district that provide high quality play space, are well maintained, have good access and are financially sustainable.

This report outlines the progress to date and the key work to continue over the medium term to meet the objectives of the strategy.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Officers have worked with Town Council and Parish Councils to deliver upon the strategy, as well as investing in destination play areas. Progress so far has been positive and sustainable. Work will continue throughout the strategy period to deliver further outstanding actions.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report C/21/39.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A report; Planning for Play in Shepway 2007-2012 was developed by Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) and the Shepway Play Partnership in response to a commitment from central Government to raise the national profile of Play.
- 1.2 The Shepway Play Area Review (2017) assessed the current provision of play spaces across the district. The findings of the review provided the foundation for the adopted Play Area Strategy.
- 1.3 The key aspects included within the strategy are as follows:
  - Ensure play provision meets the recreational needs of the community for the period 2020 – 2030 and is linked to the Council's priorities, in particular improving health and wellbeing for not just children and young people, but adults and older people.
  - Develop a prioritised network of strategic and non-strategic sites to ensure all residents are able to access a good quality and good value play space.
  - Develop a robust mechanism for consulting towns, parishes and communities about the provision of play in their local areas.
  - Establish a framework to guide the future ownership and sustainable management of play provision in the Folkestone & Hythe District.
  - Utilise the assessment of the volume of play provision for all age groups across the district within the Play Area Review to identify those areas of under and over provision.
  - Consider the financial position of providing play areas with currently available resources and the future implications of this.
  - Consider and utilise the standards of provision to take forward alongside setting key objectives.
  - Raise the overall quality and value of a network of identified priority and strategic play area facilities within the district.
  - Develop a mechanism for securing developer contributions towards the provision and maintenance of a strategic play network e.g. Section 106 planning obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charges.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 When the play area strategy was adopted there were 85 play areas in the Folkestone & Hythe District. Of these 48 were believed to be owned by FHDC corporately or through the HRA. Two since have proven to be in private ownership and all FHDC activities have stopped at these parks.
- 2.2 The other play areas are in the ownership of a multitude of other organisations including Town and Parish Council's and Housing Associations. FHDC have further agreements in place to manage and maintain some of these play areas on behalf of the other organisations.

- 2.3 The strategy provided an action plan to help meet the strategy aims and objectives. Progress to date on this is seen throughout section 3.
- 2.4 The Play Area Strategy supports the Corporate plan and the guiding principles and service ambitions of the council.
- Locally Distinctive: the strategy delivers Local Area Play into the management of those best served to deliver this, including parish and town councils, whilst ensuring the destination areas are maintained by the District.
  - Greener Folkestone & Hythe: The play area review and associated strategy identified areas for development and areas of overall and health deprivation, this information helps to shape the play provision within the district over the lifetime of the strategy.
  - Working effectively with partners; the play strategy requires collaborative working with developers, parish and town councils and community groups to effectively deliver its action plans. Great examples of this can be seen within the report.

### 3.0 Actions Update

3.1 Objective 1: Improve the allocation, quality, value and accessibility of play provision for all children and young people.

Ref	Action	Implementation/Task if applicable	Priority	Update
1.1	F&HDC will continue to maintain and seek to enhance the Priority Play Areas (PPAs) as identified in this Strategy.		High	FHDC has kept all PPA play areas in council ownership. Significant investment has been made to Brabner Park & Cheriton Recreation Ground. Funding of £25k has been received from the Roger D'haan Charitable Trust for works at the Coastal Park.
1.2	Work with Town & Parish Councils to provide a network of Strategically Important Play Areas (SIPAs) based on a 15 minute walking time across the district that meets the needs of residents. FHDC will seek to transfer these assets to Town & Parish Councils.		High	See section 3.7-3.23
1.3	The Non-Strategic Play Areas (NSPAs) identified will be offered out to the community and partners for asset transfer, and where this isn't possible will be removed, returned to open space or sold.		High	See section 3.7-3.23

1.4	Ensure play areas meet or exceed the required location, quality and value score benchmarks.	Review findings and standards identified through the Play Area Review and Strategy.	Medium	Investment has been made in Brabner Park & Cheriton Recreation ground. Broadmead still has a lack of provision in the area, although the development of Radnor Park into a destination area covers the majority of this area. Opportunity for investment at Morehall Recreation Ground would alleviate this (LEAP to NEAP).
1.5	Ensure all Wards achieve the minimum standard for provision.	Ensure any new development provides sufficient play space to achieve the standard for quantity of play and should provide for all age groups where appropriate. NB Proposed standards shown in Table 4.1.	Medium	Investment needed into the shortfalls identified by Ward, primary to this is the significant lack of provision for 11+ years throughout the district. FHDC should work with Parish and Town council to ensure they understand gaps in provision during the transfer process.
1.6	Where feasible residents should be within the catchment area of at least one play area offering features for all age groups and abilities.	Review accessibility buffers and classifications with the <i>Shepway Play Area Review (2017)</i> to inform F&HDC decision making. Where there is an identified lack of provision through gaps in the SIPA network the creation of additional play sites will be recommended, wherever possible, in partnership with others and as part of new developments.	Medium	There is currently generally good provision but some sections of the population are still not in reach of a play space. Broadmead and Folkestone Harbour have limited provision for 11+ age groups with potential for greater quantities of 11+ provision in Cheriton and North Downs West.
1.7	Deliver current commitments to improve play areas including Radnor Park, Coastal Park as		High	Radnor Park and Coastal Park have had significant investment, further

	well as play areas within New Romney.			investment this year at Coastal Park is planned.
1.8	Retain all Destination play areas as core hubs for play and offering well respected play experiences within the wider community.		High	Opportunities for expansion at the Royal Military Canal Area following Princes Parade Development.
1.9	Consider creating new Destination play areas.	Destination play areas should be located in or adjacent to larger open spaces. Consider options in East Folkestone, New Romney and Broadmead. Options at East Cliff and Morehall Recreation Ground which currently offer limited play interest for all age groups, and at The Greens or Greatstone Car Park. Options as Dungeness Nature Reserve would cater for anticipated increase in use.	Medium	<p>Early plans have been developed for a new Priority Play area at East Cliff. Funding has been awarded by KCC to further scope this work and undertake community consultation.</p> <p>The Council are working closely with Taylor Wimpey to develop a new Priority Play Area at Shorncliffe.</p>
1.11	Ensure Strategic/Destination quality play areas are provided within the Shorncliffe Garrison development.		High	As above at 1.9. The smaller play area at the Stadium site has been completed and adopted by FHDC.
1.12	Seek opportunities to provide natural play features and alternatives to fixed play within informal open spaces including natural and semi-natural green space, green corridors and amenity green space.	Review those sites which are closed for maintenance or requiring enhancement in values referring to the <i>Shepway Play Area Review (2017)</i> .	Medium	New play spaces such as Le Quesne (Shorncliffe) have been designed considering best practice guideline with regards to natural play.

				A host of natural features have also been included in the recent Radnor Park development.
1.13	Conduct an audit of play provision every 10 years.	Carry out regular audits in reference to the previous assessment and the latest best practice guidance.	Medium	To be completed 2027.
1.14	Address the barriers to access and comply with the Equality Act (2010) through a disability and access audit.	Produce a disability and access audit for new sites or those sites due for refurbishment.	Low	Investment for accessibility has been made into Radnor Park and will feature in all new play areas and refurbishments.
1.16	Increase the level of play provision for the 11+ age group.	Refer to the <i>Shepway Play Area Review (2017)</i> and coordinate future decisions with reference to the contribution criteria shown in Table 4.2.	Medium	Investment made into Radnor Park, Cheriton Recreation ground and Brabner Park.
1.17	Greater investment required in the management, maintenance and improvement of play spaces throughout the district	Refer to the <i>Shepway Play Area Review (2017)</i> and coordinate future decisions with reference to the contribution criteria shown in Table 4.2.	High	Play budget increased from 15K to £41k (inc HRA).
1.18	Review maintenance arrangements to ensure high standards are achieved.		High	Complete.
1.19	Improve supervision, policing and oversight (e.g. through appropriate vegetation clearance) of public space.		High	Complete.

1.2	New play areas should be sensitively designed to reflect sensitivities of landscapes as well as character of the local Kent coastal area.		Medium	New play spaces such as Le Quesne (Shorncliffe) have been designed considering best practice guidelines with regards to natural play and considering their environment.
1.21	Encourage the community to report issues relating to play areas to F&HDC to enable a quick response to problems.	Advertise appropriate contact details within play areas.	Low	Signage updated at all parks.

### 3.2 Objective 2: Effectively utilise planning policy to benefit play provision

Ref	Action	Implementation/Task	Priority	Notes & Considerations
2.1	Through housing development sites look to enhance current provision for the benefit of both the existing and new community as well as creating new play areas.		High	CIL and S106 money is calculated and tracked through the planning team. Play considerations are checked through the E&B team to ensure minimum play criteria are met by ward. FHDC to work with towns and parishes to understand the gaps. Planning work closely with the E&B team to direct funding contributions to the most appropriate play area/s
2.2	Increase communication and closer working between the planning team and E&B team.		High	Communications with regards to larger scale developments have led to efficient and strategic investment.
2.3	Consider the appropriateness of LAPs (increased maintenance costs) at some locations where other classifications of play areas	Refer to the <i>Shepway Play Area Review (2017)</i> and coordinate future decisions with reference to the contribution criteria shown in Table 4.2.	Medium	Closure of certain LAP's is proposed others have been adopted by Town and Parish Councils.



	are suitably catering for younger age groups within its catchment.			
2.4	Aim to create a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) document: Recreation Open Space Provision & Commuted Space Payments.		Low	To be completed.
2.5	The E&B and planning teams should work together to re-evaluate developer contributions.		Medium	On-going.
2.6	Re-classify and/or review sites for new policy formation.	Refer to the <i>Shepway Play Area Review (2017)</i> .	Medium	On-going. Radnor Park is now a PPA. Meads way is NSPA.
2.7	Seek opportunities to secure land for play area provision.		Medium	Ongoing, regular communication with developers but the district will only adopt strategic sites such as Shorncliffe.
2.8	Create and use policy to support a response to identified need and take a district wide strategic approach to play. This will enable targeted improvements to the quality and value of sustainable play provision across the District.		High	Communication between E&B and Planning ensures strategic delivery of play investment.

### 3.3 Objective 3: Raise awareness of play opportunities and the importance of play.

Ref	Action	Implementation/Task	Prior	Notes & Considerations
3.1	Future plans should be disseminated clearly to the public.	Media options to share information on future plans: existing facilities, newsletters and leaflets, posters, facilities, libraries, websites, local media.	High	Stakeholder meetings have taken place with regard to destination play areas.
3.2	Support parent/carers to access play provision; for example through publicising existing play areas with an online map.	Produce an online map of existing provision and make available to schools, play providers and other outlets.	Medium	To be completed.
3.3	Highlight the risk benefit approach during the play area decision making process.		Low	Officers on PPD courses for best practice.
3.4	Natural play opportunities and their importance and value should be encouraged.		High	Officers on PPD courses for best practice.

3.4 Objective 4: Maximise funding opportunities for the maintenance and enhancement of play areas.

Ref	Action	Implementation/Task	Priority	Notes & Considerations
4.1	Review capital investment and separate play budget to inform capital plan for ageing equipment.	Refer to the Shepway Play Area Review (2017) and coordinate future decisions with reference to the contribution criteria shown in Table 4.2.	Medium	Budget now suitable for ongoing maintenance and cyclical replacement of small equipment. Further capital bids and partnership funding opportunities will be needed to replace large ticket items and improve facilities. An example of this is the £25k recently awarded by

				the RHDCT to replace the pirate ship in the Coastal Park.
4.2	Maximise and protect the potential of Section 106 (S106) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding.		High	Utilise scores by ward contained within the Shepway Play Area Review (2017) and present data to town and parish councils. Opportunity to link to CIL funding..
4.3	Review appropriate developer contributions.		High	Planning reviewed.
4.4	Seek fundraising opportunities and funding through the Landfill Communities Fund. Other funding sources may be identified through searching online with GRANTfinder and through the Association of Play Industries.		High	Ongoing working with community groups where appropriate.
4.5	Seek Government funding schemes if available.		High	Ongoing working with community groups where appropriate.
4.6	The E&B service should work to ensure Destination play areas are included in the 123 list to shape and define CIL funding.		High	Completed.
4.7	Re-evaluate formulae for maintenance contributions.		Medium	To be completed – Planning.
4.8	Utilise design guidance to formulate a landscaped approach which reduces		Medium	New play spaces such as Le Quesne have been designed considering best practice guidelines with regards to

	maintenance costs and provides an interesting space for play.			natural play and considering their environment.
4.9	Potential for reduction in LAPs and subsequent maintenance liability.	Refer to the Shepway Play Area Review (2017) and coordinate future decisions with reference to the contribution criteria shown in Table 4.2.	Low	Parks identified for closure or transfer.

### 3.5 Objective 5: Communicate and engage with key partners and stakeholders

Ref	Action	Implementation/Task	Prior	Notes & Considerations
5.1	Consultation of SIPAs & NSPAs for asset transfer options. Potential stakeholders invited to presentation sessions.		High	Ongoing see section 3.7-3.23
5.2	Work with town and parish councils to ensure there is suitable play provision within their area of interest and encourage local ownership.		High	Ongoing see section 3.7-3.23
5.3	Engage in a programme of user and resident consultation to understand if proposals would be responded to positively and reflect community need. It will also encourage positive community participation in the delivery of local projects.		High	To be completed. On-going with new play areas – East Cliff.

5.4	Collaborate with providers.		Medium	Ongoing.
5.5	If decommissioning sites are proposed, consultation with stakeholders including adjacent residents will be required.		Medium	To be completed.
5.6	Work with other play providers such as Housing Associations and the MoD to ensure their provision is secured.		Medium	Ongoing.
5.7	Encourage responsibility through Trusts and Residents Groups.		Medium	Ongoing.
5.8	Encourage community groups to take responsibility for supervising and maintaining play areas alongside community fundraising.		Medium	Ongoing.
5.9	Strengthen links with the South Kent Coast Health and Wellbeing Board. They may assist in allocating funding for health and well-being priorities. The benefits offered by good quality open space should be promoted to this Board as a potential mechanism for delivering its objectives.		Medium	Ongoing.

3.6 Objective 6: Maximise funding opportunities for the maintenance and enhancement of play areas.

Ref	Action	Implementation/Task	Priority	Notes & Considerations
6.1	Implement the Strategy and make available to staff at all levels and by different stakeholders.		High	Ongoing. To be added to the website.
6.2	Ensure effective monitoring of the Strategy.	A partnership between Environment and Corporate Assets and Communities should put in place a system for ensuring that data is updated as changes occur and reviewed on a regular basis.	Medium	Ongoing.
6.3	Ensure management is financially sound. F&HDC to commit to provide necessary funding to maintain to necessary standard.		Medium	Complete – significant budget increase.
6.4	Provide a presentation to Planning colleagues on the new Play Area Strategy.		Medium	To be completed.
6.5	Ensure that if sites are to be removed or altered significantly there should be appropriate consultation with the community.		High	To be completed as required.

- 3.7 Since the adoption of the strategy officers have been working with the Towns and Parishes to transfer SIPA and NSPA play areas where identified within the strategy. 6 play areas are to be kept by FHDC including the new play provision at Shorncliffe Garrison. A further 6 will be kept as they are FPPG assets. These are all identified as Priority Play Areas.
- 3.8 9 play areas have transferred, 11 have been agreed in principle, 13 are left to be discussed and 2 sites have been identified as unwilling to adopt by the parish council; it is considered one of these should be closed. A further two are agreed for closure. Full details on play areas by parish/town council are found below.
- 3.9 Of the 48 play areas in F&HDC or HRA ownership 4 had identified as key sites to be retained;
- Brabner Park (SIPA, PPA)
  - Cheriton Road Recreation Area (SIPA, PPA)
  - Payers Park (LEAP, PPA)
  - Royal Military Canal Play Area (SIPA, PPA) works planned for this play area considering the princess parade project.
  - A further play area has since been adopted at Shorncliffe garrison, this is a SIPA, PPA site.
  - Greatstone Car Park (NEAP, SIPA) has also been identified to be retained by FHDC
  - Oak Drive (LEAP, SIPA) will also be kept due to its significant SIPA requirements
  - Le Quesne Play area will be adopted this year.
- 3.10 Folkestone Parks and Pleasure Grounds Charity owns 6 play areas all of which are to be retained by the FPPG, the parks are;
- Canterbury Road Recreation Ground (SIPA, PPA)
  - Jocks Pitch – East Cliff (LAP, PPA)
  - Lower Leas Coastal Park (PPA & Destination Play Area)
  - Lower Radnor Park Play Area (LEAP, SIPA)
  - Morehall Recreation ground (LEAP, SIPA, PPA)
  - Upper Radnor Park Play Area (LAP, SIPA) which is now designated as a destination play area (PPA).
- 3.11 Folkestone Town Council have adopted 8 play areas;
- Coniston Road (LAP, SIPA)
  - Downs Road (LAP, SIPA)
  - Firs Lane (LAP, NSPA)
  - George Gurr Crescent (LEAP, NSPA)
  - Naseby Avenue (LAP, SIPA)
  - Pine Way (LEAP, NSPA)
  - Roman Way (LEAP, SIPA)
  - Southern Way Play Area (LEAP, NSPA)
- 3.12 Sandgate Parish Council have adopted 1 play area;
- Enbrook Valley Play Area (LEAP, SIPA)

3.13 Hawkinge Town Council have agreed in principle to adopt 5 play areas and agreed the two play areas should be closed due to other assets within the area (note: Stombers lane to be adopted as an open space); Previously Hawkinge Town Council have already leased 8 open spaces, including 5 with play associated areas.

- Blenheim Drive (LAP, NSPA) – to be closed
- Harvest Way (LEAP, NSPA)
- Heron Forstall Avenue ((LEAP, NSPA)
- Millfield (LAP, NSPA)
- Stombers Lane (LEAP, NSPA) – to be closed and adopted as an open space
- Widgeon Walk (LEAP, SIPA)

3.14 Hythe Town Council have agreed in principle to adopt 4 play areas;

- Palmarsh (St George's Place Play Area) (LEAP, SIPA)
- Peregrine Close (LAP, NSPA)
- Reachfields (LEAP, NSPA)
- Turnpike Hill (LAP, SIPA)

3.15 New Romney Town Council have agreed in principle to adopt 1 play area;

- Station Road (LEAP, SIPA)

3.16 Brenzett Parish Council have one play area within their boundaries, Discussions on this site are yet to take place.

- Moore Close (LAP, SIPA)

3.17 Brookland Parish Council have one play area within their boundaries, Discussions on this site are yet to take place.

- Salthouse Close (LEAP, SIPA)

3.18 Lydd Town Council have five play areas within the boundaries, initial discussions have taken place;

- Lade Fort (LEAP, SIPA)
- Megan Close (LAP, SIPA)
- Oakham Drive (LEAP, NSPA)
- Queensway (LEAP, SIPA)
- The Derrings (LEAP, SIPA)

3.19 Lyminge Parish Council have two play area within their boundaries. Discussions on these sites are yet to take place.

- Meridan Walk (LEAP, SIPA)
- Mount Pleasant Close (LAP, NSPA).



3.20 Lympne Parish Council have two play areas within the boundaries, initial discussions have taken place;

- Manor Farm Close (LEAP, SIPA)
- The Ridgeway Trim Trail (LEAP, SIPA).

3.21 Old Romney Parish Council have one play area within their boundaries, Discussions on this site are yet to take place.

- Elmfields (LEAP, SIPA)

3.22 St Mary's in the Marsh Parish Council have two play areas within the boundaries, they have expressed they are unwilling to adopt these play areas;

- Meads Way (LAP, SIPA) to be closed
- Oak Drive (LEAP, SIPA) to be kept

3.23 Swingfield Parish Council have one play area within their boundaries, Discussions on this site are in process.

- Densole Way (LEAP, SIPA)

3.24 To help deliver the play area strategy funding was provided of £247,000 to ensure the key principles were delivered. (Original report C19/48, Consultation Report C20/04). This funding remains within budget and on track to ensure the delivery of the asset transfers.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 Significant progress has been made into meeting the objectives of the play area strategy.

4.2 Lead officers and councillors understand the importance of play and the purpose of the strategy, this is made clear by the transfers, investment through both capital and revenue budget to ensure play provision is further improved in the district.

4.3 Further work is needed to ensure the towns and parishes as well as any other stakeholders understand the strategy and the gaps within their wards and boundaries.

4.4 Securing funding, whether through CIL and S.106 or other means is important to deliver the appropriate play provision within the district. Officers must continue to seek opportunities and work with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties for funding.

4.5 Officers have been very successful in securing funding from external bodies. The planning team and the Engineering and Buildings team have successfully worked together to ensure funding is used appropriately throughout the district.

## **5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS**

### **Legal Officer's Comments (NE)**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. However, legal will be involved in relation to any transfers or leases of the play parks to third parties.

### **Finance Officer's Comments (LW)**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)**

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. The council as part of its Play Area Strategy has undertaken consultations with both Town and Parish Councils across the district to assess the local need for play site provision and are working with them to transfer identified sites to secure their long term futures within local communities.

### **Climate Change Implications (OF)**

There are no climate change implications directly arising from this report.

The play areas will help improve health and wellbeing and also support natural play. However, consideration should be given to reducing effects of climate change on park areas by including areas of adequate shade, designing parks to help alleviate flooding and enhance biodiversity.

## **6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Alastair Clifford, Operations Lead Specialist  
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