

**From:** Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director of Growth and Communities

**To:** Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

**Subject:** Country Parks Play Areas Improvement Programme

**Key decision:** Yes

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All Divisions.

**Summary:**

This report details the Country Parks play areas improvement programme where eight sites will have new playpark equipment installed or enhanced. The source of funding and procurement strategy have been finalised to deliver this programme within 2022.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree to procure and delegate authority to the Director for Growth and Communities to award and enter into appropriate contractual arrangements to install new playpark equipment and/ or enhance existing playpark equipment across the Kent County Council portfolio of Kent Country Parks as shown at Appendix A.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Kent County Council has secured funding to enlarge or install new playpark equipment and outdoor seating/picnic areas. The equipment would be funded via the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to provide further outdoor provision to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The funding to districts would have a particular focus on improving the park facilities in areas of higher deprivation.
- 1.2 Having new and improved facilities should encourage people to choose outside activities which should reduce the transmission of COVID when compared to indoor activities.
- 1.3 Children and those in deprived areas are more likely to have been impacted by the pandemic. Providing the facilities on their doorstep will help those that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
- 1.4 The improvements over winter will ensure there are continued outdoor activities that are accessible and safe, even if low level restrictions begin to be reintroduced which may prevent families and individuals from attending their usual activities.

- 1.5 Individuals who may not have re-engaged with their usual activities since the pandemic began due to feelings of being unsafe (i.e., soft-play, gym, seeing friends and families) will have alternative safer locations to engage in activities.
- 1.6 Individuals with excess weight are at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Installing outdoor activities/equipment will help reduce the barriers to promoting a healthier and more active lifestyle.
- 1.7 The initiative will also help with Public Health priorities in encouraging exercise and helping families and friends to meet in a COVID-19 safe way that will benefit mental health and child development.
- 1.8 COMF funding was awarded to the department on 15 November 2021. Clarity of the funding restrictions were detailed early December 2021. There is a risk that should the work not be completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2022, the funding cannot be rolled over in financial year 22/23.
- 1.9 Due to the lead times to order, manufacture and deliver the playpark equipment required in early January at the latest, this will not have the required time to be presented at the appropriate Cabinet Committee.

## 2. Country Parks Sites

### Overview of site requirements

- 2.1 It is required that the play areas include engaging equipment, suitable for all ages under 12. This will include both creative and imaginative play elements for toddlers, and challenging and risk-taking elements for older children, such as climbing and balancing. All play areas must be inclusive and provide DDA compliant elements allowing access for all.
- 2.2 The Council have expressed a preference for wooden play equipment, as it is in keeping with the surroundings of the Country Parks, and where the park is located near water, nautical or coastal themes have been requested.
- 2.3 Is it required that all wood used is sustainability sourced, and that all wet pour flooring must adhere to EN1176 and EN1177 standards. The play equipment must be able to accommodate numerous children at once, due to the high foot fall the parks receive.
- 2.4 Details of the core sites that required within scope of the programme are as follows:
  - **Pegwell Bay.** 100,000 visitors. Budget £160,000.
    - Located near water, costal theme preferred.
  - **Grove Ferry.** 100,000 visitors. Budget £150,000.
    - Located near water, nautical theme preferred.
  - **Manor Park.** 120,000 visitors. Budget £150,000.
    - Located near trees / woodland, natural wooden equipment preferred.
  - **Teston Bridge .** 150,000 visitors. Budget £150,000.
    - Located near water, nautical theme preferred.

- **Trosley (New).** 120,000 visitors. Budget £100,000.
  - Located near trees / woodland, natural wooden equipment preferred.
- **Shorne Woods (New).** 400,000 visitors. Budget £185,000.
  - Located near trees / woodland, natural wooden equipment preferred.
- **Brockhill (New).** Budget £100,000.
  - Located near trees / woodland, natural wooden equipment preferred.

2.5 There are additional maintenance and improvements requirements at Shorne Woods, Brockhill and Lullingstone circa £230k. The work includes replacement of slides, resurfacing of play areas and improvements to bench areas.

### 3. Procurement Strategy

3.1 Due to the time restrictions to deliver this programme, an open tender procurement would not be achievable. To mitigate this, it was identified that the ESPO Framework (115\_21 – Lot 2 Outdoor Playground Equipment), would be used to conduct the Competition Exercise for the core sites identified in 2.4.

3.2 All suppliers on this framework have been selected for their experience and ability to provide customers with a comprehensive range of products that combine quality and excellent value. As the pre-qualifications checks have already been completed, using this framework will allow delivery of this procurement to be streamlined.

3.3 An expression of interest was submitted to all suppliers that reside on this framework in November 2021 to gauge an understanding that the programme was achievable, and to ascertain the level of interest in the potential upcoming procurement. The below risks were identified:

- **Leadtime** - The lead time for wooden equipment, which is the Councils preference, is longer than metal.
- **Availability** - Playground business is experiencing a busy period.
- **Deadline** - The end of the financial year deadline, and fees associated to the late running of the project was a significant area for concern for many tenders and would most likely stop them from submitting a bid.

3.4 All Suppliers awarded on Lot 2 of the Playground Equipment Framework were invited to submit a tender. All tenders received (that are compliant i.e., submitted in accordance with the tendering instructions) will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria which includes the design, appropriateness of site requirements, programme and value for money.

3.5 Contracts will be awarded to the Tenderer which scores the highest marks across quality and price. In this instance, the Customer has a set budget for each site and therefore bidders must submit a price that is within this.

3.6 It is worth noting that tenders have been asked to identify which parks they wish to tender for, therefore the sites may be awarded to multiple suppliers. This will mitigate against the risks identified in 3.3 to ensure not one supplier is overburdened with the programme.

3.7 The procurement timetable is as follows:

<b>Stage / Activity</b>	<b>Indicative Date</b>
Invitation to Tender document issued	1 December 2021
Closing date for clarification questions	13 December 2021, at 12pm (noon)
Closing date for submission of tenders	15 December 2021, at 12pm (noon)
Preliminary evaluation of tenders	16/17 December 2021
Contract award	17 December 2021
Contract start date	20 December 2021

3.8 The additional work identified in 2.5 will be procured following KCC procurement procedures so request for quotations will be sought through the Kent Business Portal. These contracts will be between £8,000 and £50,000.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 The total budget for the delivery of this programme is £1.2m. This will be split across a number of sites dependent on the complexity of the equipment. Circa £950k is split across seven sites with ad-hoc improvements being delivered across the rest of the assets.

4.2 This is one-off capital spend and is required to be spent by 31st March 2022 in accordance with the COMF. There is a risk that COVID, weather and manufacturing issues could delay all sites being completed by this date. There is currently no scope to roll forward unspent money if the construction is not completed this financial year.

4.3 This risk totals £200k (25% of the programme) which would be unspent if there is a delay in the construction at all sites. Following an assessment of the programmes submitted by the tenderers, this figure is forecasted to be no more than £100k. This is on the basis that some projects will be delivered early March and have appropriate float. The programme team will work closely with the awarded suppliers to minimise this risk.

4.4 GET will under write any funding that is not rolled over beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. This risk will be removed if COMF funding is rolled over into 22/23 financial year or all sites are completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

#### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 The award of any contracts will be in full compliance with all relevant procurement regulation.

#### **6. Equalities implications**

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and no implications have been identified at this early stage. This will be continually reviewed as the programme continues and has been attached in Appendix B.

6.2 The initial screening identified that a Data Projection Impact Assessment will not be necessary as no personal data is collected for this commission.

## 7. Other corporate implications

7.1 The decision to award these contracts has no significant impact in other areas of the Council's work. If this funding is not allocated and spent, the funding will have to be handed back to COMF.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 Eight sites have been identified where playpark equipment will either be newly installed or enhanced. An appropriate procurement strategy has been identified to deliver this requirement in early 2022.

8.2 This will be predominately funded by the COMF, and should the project not be delivered by 31 March 22, there is a risk that GET will be required to underwrite any unallocated work.

## 9. Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services is asked to agree to procure and delegate authority to the Director for Growth and Communities to award and enter into appropriate contractual arrangements to install new playpark equipment and/ or enhance existing playpark equipment across the Kent County Council portfolio of Kent Country Parks as shown at Appendix A.

## 10. Background Documents

Appendix A – Record of Decision

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

## 11. Contact details

<p>Report Authors: Tom Marchant Interim Head of Countryside and Community Development 03000 413412 <a href="mailto:Tom.Marchant@kent.gov.uk">Tom.Marchant@kent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Robert Clark Procurement and Commercial Manager 03000 415951 <a href="mailto:Robert.Clark@kent.gov.uk">Robert.Clark@kent.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>Relevant Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle Director of Growth and Communities 03000 412064 <a href="mailto:Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk">Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk</a></p>
--	--