

MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP

AGENDA ITEM: [Date]:

An introduction to the revised Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy

Portfolio Holder Cllr Neal Davey
Responsible Officer Head of Housing and Property Services

Reason for Report: **To make members aware of the recently reviewed Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy.**

To allow members to comment on the strategy before it forms part of the Council's local Plan

RECOMMENDATION: **That the Managing the Environment PDG recommends the Open Spaces and Play Area policy to Cabinet.**

Relationship to Corporate Plan: **Mid Devon has to produce an Open Spaces and play area Strategy as part of its Local Plan. A well-managed council requires an Open Spaces and Play Area Policy.**

Financial Implications: **The current annual budget of open space and play area provision is £617,220. In order to reduce this budget, consultation is currently taking place with town and parish councils regarding them accepting responsibility for some or all of Mid Devon's play areas.**

Legal Implications: **None**

Risk Assessment: **There is a risk in cases of over provision that play areas will be closed.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council through its Planning Department has to produce an Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy as part of its Local Plan; this strategy covers the period up to 2033, consistent with the Local Plan review (2013-2033).
- 1.2 The Strategy encompasses all open space and play area provision throughout Mid Devon. It has to be evidence based and be able to stand up to scrutiny when challenged.
- 1.3 Ethos Environmental Planning a company specialising in this field was awarded the contract to produce the plan in conjunction with officers from Planning and Environmental Services.

- 1.4 As this PDG makes recommendation regarding how the council's play area stock is managed, it is important that members are aware of the revised standards set for the provision of open spaces.

2.0 Scope of Strategy and Objectives

- 2.1 The strategy provides an audit of all open space in the district and recommendations for how the Council should prioritise investment and plan for new development, based on a robust assessment of need.
- 2.2 The study assessed the amount, quality and fitness for purpose of open space, including the following:
- Playing pitches – grass and artificial
 - Public open spaces
 - Public Parks
 - Play areas
 - Street sport areas
- 2.3 The objectives of the strategy are:
- To set locally derived open space and recreation provision standards.
 - To identify deficiencies or surpluses in provision.
 - To provide a robust and comprehensive evidence base to underpin the development of detailed planning policies in the emerging local plan.
 - To provide information to justify the collection of developer contributions.
 - To provide information to help inform the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 receipts.
 - To advise on a suitable programme for transfer of play area maintenance responsibility to parish/town councils, community groups and residents.

3.0 Key Stages of the study

- 3.1 There were five key stages identified to provide an overall approach for the study:
- Step 1: Identify local needs.
 - Step 2: Audit local provision.
 - Step 3: Set provision standards.
 - Step 4: Apply provision standards.
 - Step 5: Draft Policies/Recommendations.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 Recommendations regarding quantity and quality of open spaces have been made in 8.1.3 and 8.1.4 of the policy.

- 4.2 Where over provision is identified, 8.1.7 of the policy sets out how best to dispose of these sites and to ensure that there is a balance of open spaces throughout the district.

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Neal Davey and Management Team