

## **MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT PDG 10 MARCH 2015**

### **Review of Mid Devon's play area provision**

**Cabinet Member** Cllr Neal Davey  
**Responsible Officer** Head of Housing and Property Services

**Reason for Report:** To inform members of the consultation with parish and town councils on the future provision of play areas and offering them the opportunity to take ownership.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S): that**

- 1. Members note the progress made with offering parishes the option to take control of Mid Devon's play areas.**
- 2. Officers consult with parish and town councils on the future of the play areas listed in Annex 5 to this report.**

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Community well-being will be enhanced when residents have the confidence to use well maintained play areas.

**Financial Implications:** When a play area is closed there is often a cost to decommission the site. Any overall reduction in play area provision will help reduce our revenue budget to meet further government cuts in grant.

**Legal Implications:** The Council must have an inspection and maintenance regime for its play areas as stated within the Health and safety at Work Act 1974.

**Risk Assessment:** There is a potential cost of litigation should the Council be found negligent with regards to maintenance of its play areas.

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 A report was brought to this group on 2 September 2014 which informed members of the condition of the Council's play areas and gave details for consideration of their future.

1.2 As the result of that report, the PDG requested that parishes should be approached to offer them the opportunity to take ownership of Mid Devon's play areas located within their boundary.

1.3 At the PDG on the 2 September the Council's Open Space and Play Area Strategy was discussed because it was thought likely to influence decisions made regarding the Council's own play area stock. The committee resolved that a copy of the Parish Area Profiles, created within the strategy should be made available. The profiles have been placed onto the Mid Devon web site and each parish has been sent a link by email allowing them to view their profile.

### **2.0 Consultation with Parishes**

- 2.1 To assess the reaction of the relevant parishes to Mid Devon's proposal, a letter was sent on 17 December 2014, (Annex 1). The letter outlined the current financial situation regarding the provision of Mid Devon's play areas and offered them the opportunity to consider taking ownership of some or all of the play areas within their parish.
- 2.2 Attached to the letter was a questionnaire consisting of four questions to gauge their interest in Mid Devon's proposal, and a list of play areas requesting them to indicate the usage of Mid Devon's play areas, (Annex 2). Finally, they were given a chance to add any comments.
- 2.3 The results of the four questions can be seen in Annex 3. There have been 17 replies from the 21 letters sent. Tiverton and Cullompton have given a verbal response to the questions.
- 2.4 It is important to note that there was generally a positive response from CREDITON, CULLOMPTON, TIVERTON and WILLAND which accounts for 79 of Mid Devon's play areas; equal to 75%.
- 2.5 In question 2 parishes were asked if they required Mid Devon staff to inspect their play areas and any they may take responsibility for; we currently carry out inspections for Willand. This offer could be extended to all parishes that are responsible for their own play areas.
- 2.6 The results of question 3 appear to show sufficient support to consider re-launching the "Play Area Warden" initiative.
- 2.7 In an attempt to gain some meaningful data regarding play area usage, each parish was asked to comment on how well each play area is being used. (Annex 4). Some parishes have had difficulty in supplying this information and have agreed to continue to visit sites in an attempt to supply accurate data for future use.
- 2.8 There were some relevant points raised by the parishes that require to be discussed in further depth:
- Land transfer
  - Insurance
  - Are the play areas committed in perpetuity to be play areas?
  - What is the residual value of the play area and equipment?
  - What is the residual life of the play area?
  - What is the expected cost to run the play area?
  - What is the cost of inspecting a play area?
  - What is the cost of grounds maintenance for play areas?

### **3.0 Sites identified for further detailed consultation**

3.1 Following the completion of the Council's Open Space and Play Area Strategy it is now possible to draw up a comprehensive list of sites to be considered based upon quantity, access and quality. These are shown at Annex 5 to this report.

### 3.2 Quantity Standards

- The standard for Mid Devon play areas in the main parishes is 0.06 ha/1000 population, this is slightly lower than the average standard of 0.10 ha/1000 population. The play space standard for rural parishes is 0.05 ha/1000 population.
- The quantity standard for Mid Devon teen facilities is 0.02ha/1000 population

### 3.3 Access Standards

- Main parishes access for play areas is 300m between sites, 6 to 7 minutes straight line walk time
- Rural parishes access for play areas is 600m between sites 12 to 13 minutes straight line walk time
- Main parishes access to teen facilities is 600m between sites 12 to 13 minutes straight walk time

### 3.4 Quality Standards

Play England are keen to see a range of play spaces in all urban environments and Mid Devon aims to provide.

- Door step places close to home
- Local play areas
- Neighbourhood spaces for play
- Destination Parks

3.5 The selection of sites to close is not always straight forward, in annex 5 the larger parishes are listed showing the number of sites per parish, existing play area provision m<sup>2</sup>, required play area provision m<sup>2</sup> and the difference as a + or – figure m<sup>2</sup>. A plus figure indicates over provision.

3.6 Sites for each parish that could cease to be provided by Mid Devon District Council in the same way are listed with its area in m<sup>2</sup> with notes. The final columns show the latest condition survey for each site under the following headings equipment, surface and fencing. Items scoring 4 are in good condition, items scoring 1 are poor.

3.7 The cost of any decommissioning is a financial cost that must be considered. Following recent quotations received it appears that the average cost is likely to be £4,200 per site.

- 3.8 It will not be necessary to have further detailed consultations with the parish and town councils involved in those play areas identified in annex 5. This will involve addressing their concerns listed in 2.8 above and any other points specific to the identified sites.
- 3.9 Once these consultations have been concluded, officers will be in a position to present a comprehensive report on future play area provision that is affordable and sustainable for the future.

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**Circulation of the Report:** Management Team, Cabinet member

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Date:

Dear

**Play Area provision within Mid Devon**

Having agreed next year's budget the District Council is now looking at budget shortfalls that are likely to affect services in 2016 – 2017. Currently the provision and the maintenance of play areas is underfunded which has led to a policy of managed decline; resulting in equipment at the end of its useful life being removed and not being replaced; Mid Devon currently has three sites without equipment.

The purpose of this letter is to keep you informed of the situation regarding play area provision and to offer your parish the opportunity to consider taking control of some or all of the play areas in your parish. There is a risk that more play areas will become un-equipped resulting in local children missing out on out-doors play. At present Parishes unlike District Councils have the option to increase their precept to fund amenities such as play areas.

The advantages to the parishes that take control and fund their local play areas are:

- Continued provision of play areas within the parish
- The parish is able to tailor the play area to the local needs of the residents.
- The local community can take ownership of this valuable asset.

As you will be aware the responsibilities of providing a play area goes beyond funding, other issues such as risk assessment, regular inspections and maintenance must be considered along with insurance. Mid Devon already has a robust inspection regime based on risk assessments that have stood up to scrutiny in the past. Should your parish consider taking over one or more of the council's play areas you may consider it prudent to outsource the Annual and Operational inspections to Mid Devon.

A recent survey of our stock has shown that there are areas within Mid Devon, according to the most recent Open Spaces Strategy, of over provision. For your information I have enclosed a provisional list of sites that could be considered for closure.

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**Requests for alternative formats will be considered on an individual basis.**  
**Please telephone 01884 255255 or email [customerfirst@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerfirst@middevon.gov.uk)**

I have been asked to report back to the Environmental Policy Development Group on my consultation with the parishes in March 2015. I hope that your council shall be able to discuss this proposal at your next meeting and to feedback your thoughts to me early in the New Year by completing the attached questionnaire.

Yours Sincerely,

Adrian Cook  
Open Spaces Manager

Enclosures  
Copies to:

# Play Area Questionnaire

## Parish

### For Parishes with MDDC Play Areas

	Yes	No
Our Parish is interested in Mid Devon's proposal and request further information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our Parish would consider employing Mid Devon Staff to inspect our play areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We would like more information on how residents can become Play Area Wardens.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our Parish would like to receive help and advice on our play areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

It would also be appreciated if you could give an indication on how well Mid Devon Play Area's are used within your Parish.

Site	Play area is well used, children are often on site	Play Area is moderately used , children are occasionally on site	Play area is under used, children rarely on site	Unable to supply information	Any other comments

	<u>Question 1</u>	<u>Question 2</u>	<u>Question 3</u>	<u>Question 4</u>
<b>Parish</b>	<b>Our Parish is interested in Mid Devon's proposal and request further information</b>	<b>Our Parish would consider employing Mid Devon staff to inspect our play areas</b>	<b>We would like more information on how residents can become Play Area Wardens</b>	<b>Our Parish would like to receive help and advice on our play areas</b>
Bampton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bow	No	No	No	No
Bradninch	No	No	No	No
Cheriton Bishop	No	No	No	No
Colebrooke	No	No	No	No
Crediton	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Crediton Hamlets	No	No	No	No
Cullompton	Yes			
Hemyock	Yes			
Holecombe Rogus	No	No	Yes	Yes
Morchard Bishop	Yes			
Puddington	No	No	No	No
Sandford	No	Yes	No	No
Tiverton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uffculme	No	Yes	No	Yes
Wembworthy	No			
Willand	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Replies received from parishes 14 from 22 = 64%				
Question 1 reponse 5 Yes 9 No				
Question 2 response 5 Yes 7 No				
Question 3 response 5 yes 7 no				
Question 4 response 5 yes 7 no				

## Play Area Questionnaire results from Parishes

### Usage

		Play area is well used children are often on site	Play area is moderately used children are occasionally on site	Play area is under used children rarely on site	Play area is under used	Unable to supply information	Any other comments
Bampton	Shillingford		X				Safety walking to the play area is a concern to many people.
Bow	Godfrey Gardens			X			
Bow	St.Martins Close	X					
Bow	Village Hall	X					
Bow	Iter Park	X					
Bradninch	Townlands	X					
Bradninch	Barnes Close	X					
Burlescombe	Station Road						
Westleigh	Westleigh						
Cheriton Bishop	Glebelands	X					
Colebrooke	Coleford		X				
Crediton	Greenway						Never used
Crediton	Beech Park					X	
Crediton	Newcombes Meadow	X					
Crediton	Barnfield	X					
Crediton	Tuckers Meadow					X	
Crediton	Lords Meadow	X					
Crediton	Walnut Drive					X	
Crediton	Spinningpath Gardens					X	
Crediton	Queen Elizabeth Drive (1)					X	
Crediton	Beacon Park					X	
Crediton	Lords Meadow "In Line Skating"	X					
Crediton	Fulda Crescent						Empty
Crediton	Queen Elizabeth Drive (2)						
Crediton	Cromwells Meadow					X	
Crediton	Monks close					X	

**Play Area Questionnaire results from Parishes**

**Usage**

Crediton	Kirton Drive				x		
Copplestone	Sunnymead						
Copplestone	Fernworthy Park						
Cullompton	Knightswood						
Cullompton	Rivermead						
Cullompton	Ash drive						
Cullompton	Conifer Close						
Cullompton	Linden Road						
Cullompton	Headweir Road						
Cullompton	Ploudal Road						
Cullompton	Stoneyford						
Cullompton	Tufty Park						
Cullompton	Bockland Close						
Cullompton	Meadow Lane " In Line Skating"						
Cullompton	Clover Drive						
Cullompton	Spindlebury						
Cullompton	Siskin Chase						
Cullompton	Starlings Roost						
Cullompton	Water Meadow						
Cullompton	Haymans Close						
Cullompton	Haymans Green						
Cullompton	Chaffinch Drive						
Cullompton	Dove Close						
Cullompton	Crossparks						
Cullompton	Bullfinch Close						
Cullompton	Linear Park						
Cullompton	Saxon Way						
Cullompton	Windsor Close						
Cullompton	Hanover Gardens						

**Play Area Questionnaire results from Parishes**

**Usage**

Hemyock	Hollingarh Way	X					
Hemyock	Logan Way	X					
Hemyock	Millhayes	X					
Holcombe Rogus	Holcombe Rogus	X					Always used daily
Lapford	Church Close						
Morchard Bishop	Greenaway			X			
Puddington	Puddington	X					
Sampford Peverell	Cornlands						
New Buildings	New Buildings		X				
Sandford	Town Barton	X					
Ellerhayes	Ellerhayes						
Tiverton	Trickey Close						
Tiverton	Palmerston Park						
Tiverton	Amory Park						
Tiverton	Colesmead						
Tiverton	Cotteylands						
Tiverton	Queensway						
Tiverton	Peoples Park						
Tiverton	Westexe Recreation						
Tiverton	Wilcombe						
Tiverton	Lowman Priory						
Tiverton	Marguerite						
Tiverton	Hawthorn Road						
Tiverton	Halsbury Road						
Tiverton	Ashley Rise						
Tiverton	Cudmore Park						
Tiverton	Starkey Close						
Tiverton	Orchard Leigh						
Tiverton	Banksia Close						

## Play Area Questionnaire results from Parishes

### Usage

Tiverton	Amory Park "In Line Skating"						
Tiverton	Everett Place (1)						
Tiverton	Everett Place (2)						
Tiverton	Bolham Road Skatepark						
Tiverton	Waylands						
Tiverton	Spencer Drive						
Tiverton	Popham Close						
Tiverton	Marley Close						
Tiverton	Amory Park BMX						
Uffculme	Pippins Field	x					Very well used, minimum equipment, needs to be kept open.
Uffculme	Pathfields			x			Suffers from vandalism, guided by MDDC re issue of closure
Uffculme	Culm Valley Way	x					Needs to be kept open
Wembworthy	Wembworthy	x					
Willand	South View	x					Recently refurbished, now appeals to a wider age group.
Willand	The Orchards	x					Has a high use as a meeting point, new bench has helped, equipment for younger children required, keep out dogs.
Willand	Harpitt Close			x			Poor selection of equipment which does not encourage use, no alternative sites within this area.
Willand	Gables Lea	x					Well used, occasional queues for equipment, only 1 piece of MDDC equipment.
Willand	Chestnut Drive	x					Poor location because of trees but could be made workable, recent refurbishment has removed used by toddlers
Willand	Victoria Close	x					Very well used as part of a greater area of open space, would benefit from more equipment especially if close play areas were to close.
Willand	Worcester Crescent			x			Poor selection of equipment only for very young. Used by young mothers as a meeting place. If closed equipment could be moved to Orchard Way.
Willand	Mallow Court		x				Only equiped for very young, used at weekends by families with toddlers.
Willand	Buttercup Road	x					Well used and very busy at times, site adjacent to larger area allowing ball games and inventive play, families regularly use site.

**Play Area Questionnaire results from Parishes**

**Usage**

Willand	Gables Lea (Parish Equipment).	X					
Yeoford	Yeo View	X					Kids on it every day, a very popular facility.

# Mid Devon sites identified for further detailed consideration

Annex 5

Parish	No of sites	Existing Provision M2	Required Provision M2	Plus/Minus provision M2	Sites	Area of Site	Notes	Equipment survey score	Surface survey score	Fencing survey score
Bow	4	2200	700	1500						
					St Martins Close	72m2	Only 1 piece of equipment on site	2	2	1
					Godfrey Gardens	140m2	Fence poor	4	2	3
Copplestone	3	1500	800	700	Fernworthy Park	854m2		4	2	3
Crediton	14	8500	4600	3900						
					Beech Park	185m2		4	2	2
					Spinning Path Gardens	1001m2	No equipment on site	0	2	2
					Fulda Crescent	410m2	Never equiped	0	4	2
					Greenway	750m2	No equipment on site	0	1	2
					Q E Drive 2	375m2	Never equiped	0	0	0
Cullompton	28	14100	5100	9000						
					Head Weir Road	1220m2	Poor equipment, damage to Oak			
					Ash Drive	91m2		4	4	0
					Conifer Close	130m2		4	4	0
					Tufty Park	985m2	Wooden equipment deteriorating	2.3	2.2	3
					Clover Drive	80m2	Select 3 sites from 6	2	4	2
					Spindlebury	147m2		4	3.3	2
					Siskin Chase	111m2		4	4	3
					Starlings Roost	192m2		4	4	2
					Chaffinch Drive	117m2		4	4	2
					Dove Close	117m2		4	3	3
Morchard Bishop	2	1900	600	1300						
					Greenway	415m2		3	3	2
Tiverton	26	17900	12800	5100						
					Coles Mead	228m2		3.5	3	3
					Hawthorn Road	177m2		4	3	3
					Halsbury Road	193m2		1	4	3
					Priory Road	1095				
					Tricky Close	225m2		3	3.5	3

## Mid Devon sites identified for further detailed consideration

## Annex 5

Uffculme	5	3700	1800	1900					
					Pathfields	1900m2	2	2	1
Willand	10	3000	2000.00	1000					
					Worcester Close	404m2	4	3.7	3
					Mallow Court	151m2	4	4	3
					Chestnut Drive	321m2	4	4	2