

BLACKFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAY AREA

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The space assigned for the play area is directly adjacent to the Forest First Children's Centre and the Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre. The redevelopment of Heather Road took place some years ago with a small toddler play area as part of the scheme. Lack of consultation with young people led to a mismatch between needs / expectations and the final design. Difficulties resulted and the equipment was removed in 2001 due to vandalism.
- 1.2 Following wide-ranging local discussion, it was agreed to provide a new play facility for the children, taking on board the lessons learned from the operation of the original facilities. The design of the new scheme has been enhanced and supported by a range of work currently being focused in the area. This work has led to more children and young people than ever before actively participating in the development of this open space. This involvement has fostered feelings of ownership and pride about the proposed scheme, therefore the partner agencies are confident that the new scheme will be a success.
- 1.3 The development of this project could not have happened without the strong partnerships that have been forged locally. In particular, Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre Association and Fawley Parish Council and Forest First Children's Centre have played an essential role in securing funding for the project.
- 1.4 The six Partners involved in developing the project have been:
 - Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre Association (BNCA)
 - Forest First Children's Centre
 - Fawley Parish Council (FPC)
 - Western Challenge Housing Association (WCHA)
 - Swaythling Housing Association (SHA)
 - New Forest District Council (NFDC) (design, policy, play development, community safety & tenant participation officers)
- 1.5 Additional organisations that have contributed to and supported the project are:
 - New Forest and Romsey Mobile Community Project (Forest Bus)
 - PRIME partnership
 - Community First
 - Residents' and community representatives including local young people

2. THE SCHEME

- 2.1 The main requirement was for a football goal and a "meeting point" which the young people would be able to customise. Other items were researched at existing play areas by Kate Peacock and Ben Goldstone of Forest Bus, who took the children to Bournemouth, Southampton and other areas so that they could experience play equipment that attracted them.

- 2.2 The scheme includes the following a goal post, a range of play equipment (some donated by Fawley Parish Council), an Arena Meeting Point, fencing, safer surfacing and surrounding planting scheme.
- 2.3 There is sufficient existing capital budget provision for the works and this is detailed in the financial implications. The implementation of the scheme would be undertaken by the Council's Environmental Design Team.

3. THE NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 There has previously been support from the Council for this scheme. It was originally intended for the operation to be undertaken by local parties but this has not been possible to achieve. Discussions held with Fawley Parish Council and the Trustees of Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre but neither is in the position to undertake that role. So, if the project is to go forward, the Council needs to agree to take responsibility for the maintenance of the area. This will need additional funding because the originally hoped for arrangements are no longer on the table.
- 3.2 Normally, the Council would not consider such a role but there special circumstances with this site given the Council's ownership of the play area and the neighbourhood centre sites, as well as its desire for partnership working to benefit local people where this play facility is very much needed. It is an isolated community in ward with the highest number of children in the District across most age ranges (2069 0-19 year olds). It is also a ward which is ranked in the 20% most deprived nationally in overall indices of deprivation and in the 10% most deprived nationally in terms of income, education and training.
- 3.3 With two community buildings in the vicinity of this site, in future there may be opportunities to come to a working relationship with the managers of those buildings. Officers propose to explore those opportunities, on the basis that the Council is committed to the scheme whether those arrangements transpire or not.
- 3.4 All play areas require regular inspection and maintenance. It is essential that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that if there are any issues due to vandalism, they can be promptly remedied. Due to their role in Test Valley, Commercial Services have the expertise to undertake maintenance and inspection. So, given the funding, the where - withal is there to take the scheme forward. In the event that the level of damage is such that the cost of repairs exceeds the available budget, then equipment which has become defective or dangerous and cannot be repaired, may be removed and not replaced.
- 3.5 Finally, the land for the play area is currently leased by the Council to Western Challenge Housing Association. For the scheme to progress, the land will need to revert to the Council. The lessee supports this arrangement and the process is well advanced.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no capital implications, the allocation of developer's contributions having been the subject of a Portfolio Holder decision. A summary of the cost plan is included for reference:

ITEM	£
Summary estimate for Play Area construction (including 12 months' maintenance).	50,300
Summary estimate for Planting Scheme (including 12 months' maintenance)	2,300
Sub Total	52,600
Contingency	6,400
Sub Total	59,000
+ Fees (Design & Implementation)	5,800
+ Legal fees (lease transfer)	1,000
Total	65,800

ONYX	20,000
Hampshire Playing Fields Association	1,800
Developer's contributions	32,000
Western Challenge Housing Association.	12,000
Total	65,800

- 4.2 With revenue costs, an estimate for maintenance has been provided by Commercial Services which is for £2,600 per annum. There is no budget provision for this sum.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If the grounds around the building are not progressed it will have an adverse impact on the quality of the environment in the area.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is potential that a play area may give rise to nuisance. IN this case, it is hoped that the extensive engagement of people local to the area and the fact it is part of a community provision, will mean that any issues can be managed. The PRIME partnership has been involved in the development of the scheme which has been of great benefit.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The play area has been designed in close consultation with local residents and children and the choice of equipment reflects their wishes. The input the children have had into the design decisions will help ensure that the equipment is taken care of and appreciated.

8. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder supports the recommendations in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that, subject to the resolution of the lease:

- a) The scheme for a play area at Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre be implemented and thereafter maintained by the Council.
- b) The necessary sums for maintenance be submitted through the Expenditure Plan process for 2007/08 as an unavoidable item.

For further Information contact:

Martin Devine
Assistant Director of Leisure Services
Tel: (023) 8028 5456
E-mail: martin.devine@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers:

None