

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: PARKS DEVELOPMENT PLAN – CAPITAL SPEND 2009-10
Meeting: POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Date: 11TH AUGUST 2009
Author: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides Members with proposals for parks development for the financial year 2009 - 2010.
- 1.2 Members will recall that the Parks Development Plan was agreed on 16th September 2008. The Plan identified and prioritised proposals for Falkirk Council's future capital investment in parks, play areas and associated playing pitches.
- 1.3 The Plan also identified the first tranche of these capital works in 2008 - 2009 which was subsequently ratified at the Policy & Resources Committee on 21st October 2008.

2.0 PARKS DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 Recent consultation, as part of the draft Falkirk Open Spaces Strategy, indicated that people care about parks and the area's environment. This confirmed the earlier feedback from the Young People's Survey and also the consultation findings of the Council Tax survey. It was evident from these reports that young people in particular seek safe places to meet, play and take part in recreation activities.
- 2.2 Play areas and sports pitches provide much of the main formal recreation in the parks. However the benefits of an attractive environment, spaces for meeting and gathering, jogging and walking as well as wildlife habitats all contribute greatly to the formal park 'experience' all of which was taken into account when producing the Parks Development Plan and identifying shortfalls in these areas.

3.0 WORKS TO DATE (CAPITAL SPEND 2008-2009)

- 3.1 In a move to meet the needs identified in the Parks Development Plan, local play areas in Camelon, Fankerton, Limerigg and the Broomage were refurbished and this work has been well received by the local users.
- 3.2 Most of these play areas were categorised in the lowest 2 grades of the Parks Development Plan. The proposals for 2009-2010 will target only category 1 play areas, which are the poorest. To assist delivery of the programme, a "supply

only” procurement process was undertaken with the installation, normally carried out by sub-contractors from outwith the area, being carried out by Falkirk Council’s Roads Section who had capacity to carry out this work. It is proposed to utilise this method for future installations where feasible.

- 3.2 The major redevelopment of the Duncan Stewart Core Park play area was also completed as part of these play area developments and this has been well received by the local community.
- 3.3 In addition to this, £75,000 was also allocated from the Culture and Leisure Strategy Programme for pitch improvements and as part of this, major “off pitch” drainage works were carried out at California and Slamannan to support future proposals for “on pitch” improvements.
- 3.4 A major 30 metre extension to the Herbertshire Playing Fields (number 3 pitch was seriously reduced in length with the new school boundaries) was also completed and will be brought back into play in the forthcoming season.

4.0 ONGOING WORK

- 4.1 In line with the Parks Development Plan, officers have embarked on a number of new initiatives. Two new “friends of” groups have been either set up or are in the process of being inaugurated. These groups will help guide future development proposals at Callendar Park and Dollar Park.
- 4.2 These groups form part of the essential consultation works required for the bid to obtain the highly prized Green Flag Award for Callendar Park. In addition to this focused consultation and community involvement process there is also a considerable amount of specialised auditing work required.
- 4.3 It is proposed to carry out a species and tree audit of both Callendar Park and Dollar Park. This work is essential to enable the required future long term management plans for each park. Regular development meetings have also been arranged with Corporate and Neighbourhood Services to develop an integrated partnership approach to these development plans. In the case of Callendar Park this will assist in reaching the standard for the Green Flag award.

5.0 PROPOSED WORKS

- 5.1 The budget available for 2009 – 2010 is £300,000, plus £100,000 accelerated capital spend giving a total of £400,000.
- 5.2 Play Provision

Work has been ongoing in core parks to upgrade play facilities. The new facilities are well used by communities and provide a more diverse and dynamic range of play equipment. The final core park to benefit from the programme of upgrading is Dollar Park. It is proposed that £75,000 be allocated for this purpose.

5.3 The following play areas previously identified in the Parks Development Plan as assets which fall into Category 1 (i.e. the poorest conditions) have been targeted for this financial years Capital Spend:

- Westfield £25,000
- Letham £30,000
- Maddiston £30,000

5.4 Pitch Improvements

5.4.1 *Gairdoch Park* – Considerable work by the local community group to attract support both financial and in-kind has resulted in the once flooded lower plateau of the park being in-filled and a wetland habitat created. Work is now required to improved access, drainage and formal planting to these new areas The proposed allocation is £50,000.

5.4.2 *Blinkbonny Park* - It is proposed to undertake a major project at the Blinkbonny Park to fully reinstate the Senior and Junior football pitches which have been unplayable due to serious flooding in the winter months. These works will run alongside an external funding bid by the community to improve public access and undertake further reinstatement works. The proposed allocation is £50,000.

5.4.3 *Drainage Works* - It is proposed to carry out main drainage works to improve the following playing fields at a cost of approximately £75,000.

- Airth
- Avonbridge
- California Road
- Letham
- Stenhousemuir Sports Centre

5.5 In addition to this traditional drainage treatment it is also proposed to Verti Drain – 10 Category C pitches. These playing fields have been identified as exhibiting surface flooding problems over the last few seasons. It is hoped that this verti drain technique will improve the surface drainage and reduce the number of cancellations due to flooding at a cost of £50,000.

5.6 Green Flag Award Preparation

5.6.1 As previously mentioned, it is also proposed to commission specialist surveys for Callendar Park and Dollar Park to assist in meeting the requirements for a Green Flag Award. A budget of £15,000 has been allocated for this purpose.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

All of the above costs can be contained within the agreed allocation of capital resources from the Council's General Capital Programme, including accelerated spend of £100,000. Total budget £400,000.

Projects	£'000 2009/10	
Play Parks - Refurbishments		
Dollar	75	
Westfield	25	
Letham	30	
Maddiston	30	
Sub Total		160
Pitches – Major Drainage		
Airth	15	
Avonbridge	15	
California Road	15	
Letham	15	
Stenhousemuir Sports Centre	15	
Verti Drain Pitches (Various)	50	
Blinkbonny Park	50	
Gairdoch Park	50	
Sub Total		225
Surveys	15	
Sub Total		15
Total		£400,000

6.2 Legal and Personnel

There are no implications.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The 2009 - 2010 proposed capital works programme follows the agreed Parks Development Plan and responds to the Council's commitment to improve the quality and value of parks across the area.

7.2 It sets out a balanced approach that prioritises improvements in poor performing local parks, improves consistency of quality across core parks and plans for future development of the tourism and visitor potential of strategic and area parks.

7.3 The Plan recognises the concerns of local communities and prioritises improvements targeting local parks, play areas, litter and dog fouling as well as establishing mechanisms for increasing community involvement in parks development. This will include establishing 2 new "Friends of" groups and

continuing to support local groups to make external funding bids to further bolster the existing Council's capital funding package.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- i Approve the Parks Development Plan capital proposals 2009–2010 as set out in Para 6.1 above; and**
- ii Notes the work on engaging communities to take Parks Development Plan forward.**

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Director of Community Services

6th August 2009.

Contact Officer: John Banks. Ext: 0923.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Parks Development Plan.

Anyone wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01324 5909223 and ask for John Banks.