

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	10 March 2021
Subject:	Open Space and Play Areas Update		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the significant number of open space and play area improvements implemented by the City Council since 2016 using s106 payments.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that progress made in developing new and improving existing open space and play area provision within the City by the successful use of s106 payment be noted.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Throughout the past 5 years, Gloucester City Council has continuously delivered a programme of new sport and play facilities as well as improvements to existing facilities, through the use of section 106 agreements.
- 3.2 Cabinet will be aware that planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as s106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. They are focused on site specific mitigation of the impact of development. S106 agreements may cover a number of issues including the provision of affordable homes, education contributions, highways mitigation and, in the case of this update, the provision of open space and play areas.
- 3.3 In the case of larger developments there is an expectation that open space, sports and play provision will be provided on-site. In the case of smaller developments, or where constraints make this impractical, payments are received by the Council to improve/expand facilities off-site to accommodate residents of the new developments. It is the later case that is the focus of this Report.
- 3.4 Since 2016 the Council has used £1.7 million of section 106 payments to facilitate the creation of 10 new play areas and sports facilities and upgrade and improve 18 open spaces. Schemes which have been developed through the use of section 106 payments since 2016 have included:

Ayland Gardens Play Area and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)



Hempsted Recreation Ground



Fieldcourt Drive New Play Area and Path



Lasborough Drive New Play Area



Bircher Way New Play Area



Tuffley Avenue Rose Garden New Paths



St James Park play improvements and MUGA



3.5 In addition to these projects the Council has also carried out play area refurbishments at Soren Larsen Way, Robinswood Hill and Matson Park. New benches, litter bins, gates and other park furniture has also been provided in Armscroft Park, Tuffley Park and Monks Meadow, and improvements to sports facilities at Innsworth Lane, The Lannett and Heron Way.

Pitch Improvement Grants

- 3.6 In addition to the section 106 projects listed above, the Council has also made £100,000 available to clubs playing on council owned sports fields to assist with improving the quality of their pitches.
- 3.7 Grant information has been provided to sports clubs located at 20 sites across City, and seven grants have so far been awarded, resulting in a total of £35,000 worth of pitch improvement works. The successful awards were to:
- Longlevens Youth FC, Innsworth Lane
 - Longlevens RFC, Longford Lane
 - Matson RFC, Matson Park, Redwell Road
 - Hucclecote RFC, Hucclecote Playing Field
 - Old Richians AFC, Sandyleaze Playing Field
 - Hucclecote RFC, Bircher Way junior pitch
 - Tuffley Park playing field (Various clubs)
- 3.8 The current Covid-19 restrictions, which have resulted in a total shutdown of community sport and associated social activities, has had a significant impact on club incomes throughout 2020 and into 2021. This loss of income will have an effect on the amount of money which clubs are able to invest in pitch improvements in the short to medium term. The Council's grant scheme will be a lifeline in ensuring that clubs are able to continue to improve the quality of their playing pitches.

On Site Provision of Open Space

- 3.9 As previously mentioned, play and sports facilities have also been provided on site by developers as part of the Section 106 process. These facilities have now been adopted by the Council. New on-site open space provision includes:
- Sports provision, play areas and allotments at Kingsway (various sites)
 - New play area at Diamond Jubilee Close, Barton and Tredworth
 - New sports pitch at Bircher Drive, Hucclecote
 - New allotments at Blackbridge

4.0 Social Value Implications

- 4.1 The open space and play improvements described in this Report have all been led by the needs and views of the community within which they exist.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 The setting of each of the open space and play improvements outlined within this Report have been chosen to minimise any adverse environmental impact. In many cases, particularly with open space improvements, a positive benefit is attained.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 This report is a project update, so no alternative options are considered or proposed here.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are asked to note progress and to ensure that the projects identified are supported and promoted by Cabinet.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 8.1 Officers are currently recruiting an Open Spaces Officer to work alongside the Open Spaces Strategy Officer to support the identification, development and delivery of s106 open space and play provision projects. Funded by s106 contributions, the post will allow the acceleration of a number of schemes for which s106 contributions have already been secured as well as supporting the negotiation of appropriate contributions for new applications.
- 8.2 Future s106 projects, for which funding has been secured, include a new play area at Plock Court, refurbishment of changing rooms at Tuffley Park, open space improvements at The Lannett and Oval, play improvements in Podsmead and a new MUGA for the Sebert Street play area. It is recognised that disability access should be considered as an element in all site improvement/development works.
- 8.3 As mitigation for the loss of playing pitches at the former Civil Service club in Kingsholm & Wotton, £1,626,250 of s106 funding will be made available for the new sports hub at Blackbridge.
- 8.4 Finally, the £100,000 Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Fund also provides a valuable resource to support improvements to open spaces across the City. To date £30,000 has been committed from the NEIF for the redevelopment of the Wellington Parade rose garden.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The new post referred to at 8.1 above is being funded on a fixed term basis using the allowance in s106 agreements for off site provision and therefore will not impact upon the Money Plan.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report)

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this Report.

(One Legal has been consulted in the preparation of this report)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 11.1 There are no risks or opportunity management implications arising directly from this Report. However, s106 contributions for open space and play provision are monitored closely to ensure that no contributions are illegally applied.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 12.1 There are no PIA or safeguarding issues arising from this update report.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this update report.

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

- 14.1 None.

Background Documents: None