
Subject: PLAY AREA IMPROVEMENTS FUNDED BY KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S COVID-19 CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND

Date: 8 December 2021

Decision to be taken by: Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Leader of the Council

Report of: Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property

Decision Type: Executive Non-Key Decision

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To progress the improvement of Cowdray Square Community Park, Deal and carry out improvement works to Connaught Park play area utilising external grant monies.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Leader of the Council:

1. Accepts the grant of £157,000 from KCC's Covid-19 Contain Outbreak Management Fund to finance the project.
2. Approves delivery of the upgraded Cowdray Square Community Park play area.
 - a. The capital purchase of the identified equipment.
 - b. The revenue purchases of associated equipment to deliver the project.
 - c. The on-going associated revenue costs to resource and deliver the project.
3. Approves delivery of refurbishments to Connaught Park play area.
4. All decisions including award of contract and, if necessary, decision to terminate, are delegated to the Head of Assets and Building Control in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property.
5. The decision-maker is of the opinion that this decision is an urgent one and should not therefore be subject to call-in.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has been awarded additional funding from KCC from its Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to be spent on community parks within the district. All Kent authorities have had similar awards. The total funding allocated to DDC to spend on community parks is £157,680. This report requests the approval of acceptance of the funding and of the capital purchases for the Community Park improvement at Cowdray

Square, the approval of ongoing revenue expenditure and the approval of refurbishments at Connaught Park play area.

- 1.2 The Chairman of the Council has consented to the suspension of call-in due to the tight deadlines associated with these projects.

2. **Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 The funding provided by KCC, as per the agreed award letter (see appendix 1) will be used to provide essential and well overdue upgrades and enhancements to the Community Park in Cowdray Square, Deal and Connaught Park.

- 2.2 The Councils play area inspections have identified the demise of certain play items within Connaught Park Play area. The refurbishment of these items can be delivered quickly, and indicative costs have been obtained from the Councils approved play consultant, Play Safe of in the region of £40,000.

- 2.3 IMD data highlights the deprivation data in the Mill Hill ward that justifies improvements in Cowdray Park to an area with very limited Community Park provision.

- 2.4 Recent extensive local public consultation to Mill Hill has already taken place to understand the community need and requirements of the local area and Cowdray Square (Appendix 2)

- 2.5 The Cowdray Square project will help support the most vulnerable in our district, targeting social isolation and the improvements to the Community park will provide accessibility specifically for children with special needs, the elderly and the disabled.

- 2.6 It is important to know that items funded under this Grant must be purchased and delivered by the 31st March 2022. This is a significantly tight timeframe and is highlighted in the enclosed Draft Programme of Works and the Risk Register (see appendices 3 & 4)

- 2.7 By providing funding to enhance community parks, it is anticipated communities will be encouraged to utilise outside spaces where the chances of onward transmission of COVID-19 are lower when compared to indoor activities. Furthermore, community parks provide free access for families as well as exercise, play and learning for children

- 2.8 The aim of the project is to deliver a new play provision in Cowdray Square Park. The design and style of equipment will be influenced by the feedback from the consultation outcomes.

- 2.9 The project will also address the main entrance to the Park which is currently through the play area itself. It is intended to create a more welcoming, open entrance to the overall Park that is segregated from the play area.

- 2.10 Other aspects to be delivered as part of the project will include tree planting throughout the wider context of the park, a dog exercise area, as well as seating and a wildflower area. This will also include the maintenance and aftercare of the planting for a period of no less than 12 months.

- 2.11 There is the prospect of having a goalpost installed to encourage an informal kick about area.

- 2.12 The future maintenance of this site will be supported from the HRA budgets ensuring DDC's long term commitment to its upkeep.

3. **Procurement**

- 3.1 To meet the timescales associated with the award of the grant it is necessary to expedite the design and enhancement of Cowdray Square, Deal. The funding award is to deliver an immediate response identifying and delivering community parks to support for those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

- 3.2 A minimum of three companies are being invited to tender for the project in compliance with Contract Standing Orders. Those suppliers to be invited have previously delivered similar projects to the Council and have expertise in this service.
- 3.3 Because the tendering process will result in the submission of a design for the play area in accordance with the consultation outcomes and requirements, by restricting the tenderers will allow more time to comprehensively review each tender submission within a very strict timeframe.
- 3.4 The Council will be required to pay for a large amount of the project before it has been signed off and snagged. There is a medium to high risk that the Council have no leverage on rectification works or additional items that may develop throughout project delivery.

4. Identification of Options

- 4.1 Option1 - Accept the grant funding and deliver the project in accordance with the grant award.
- 4.2 Option 2 - Reject the grant funding and do not progress the project.

5. Evaluation of Options

- 5.1 Option 1 - Accepting the funding and progress with the identified park improvements in an area of increased deprivation as per the funding guidance to deliver a transformational and innovative community focused park area for individuals and communities identified as being most at need. This is the recommended option.
- 5.2 Option 2 - The funding cannot be used for other uses, failure to agree the decision would result in having to return the awarded funding back to KCC for re-allocation to other areas in the county, resulting in detrimental impact to identified communities and individuals most at need in the district with no alternative substitution. This option is not recommended.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1 The £157k external funding being received will cover the costs of all enhancements and additions to the Community Park, Cowdray Square, Deal and identified improvements to Connaught Park Play Area, Dover. There is no further cost implication to DDC in year one however future maintenance costs will need to be considered going forward.
- 6.2 An approximate breakdown of costings are:

	£
Refurbishment of play equipment in Connaught Park	£40,000
Supply and install new play area as per design following tender award	£95,000
Dog Control fencing	£17,000
Tree Planting and wild meadow area	
Seating	
DDC Officer Time	£5,680
Total	157,680.00

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The play area will include equipment made from renewable sources where available to minimise its impact on the environment. Additional tree planting will also be carried out in-situ as part of the scheme and ongoing commitment from DDC to reduce its

carbon footprint. Local doorstep provision will also help prevent individuals having to travel into other Dover district to access the services on offer.

8. Corporate Implications

- 8.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment. (DL)
- 8.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 8.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report highlights a positive impact for some of the protected characteristic groups. Members are reminded that in discharging their duties they are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
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9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – KCC COMF funding award letter

Appendix 2 – Cowdray Square Community Consultation results

Appendix 3 – Programme of Works

Contact Officers:

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