

Subject:	Improvements to Whitaker Park Play facilities	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	5 th June 2024
Report of:	Head of Environmental Services	Lead Member:	Environment And Corporate Services
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	N/A
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	N/A
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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Cabinet approves the improvements to play facilities at Whitaker Park and the project is added to the Capital Programme.
- 1.2 That authority is given to officers to obtain external funding for the works.
- 1.3 If successful, delegate the acceptance of the external funding to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Lead Member.
- 1.4 That Cabinet approves the tendering of the works and delegates acceptance of the successful tender to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Lead Member.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Play improvements are the priority for development in the Whitaker Park Masterplan.
- Public Consultation has been undertaken and there is strong support for the improvements.
- UKSP funding for park improvements has a deadline of end of March 2025 so the project needs to be delivered in 2024/25

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Whitaker Park is one of the Council's two parks which the authority is working hard to ensure is a destination site, along with Stubblelee Park in Bacup. Like with Stubblelee, the Masterplan approach has been utilised to identify key areas and projects for improvements over the next decade to ensure the park has the quality facilities that will draw visitors.
- 3.2 The Council has been working with the local community and councillors on the Masterplan since 2022, with the first item to be addressed being drainage, which is currently underway. The second priority is refreshing the toddler play equipment and provision of facilities for youths, which are currently lacking in the park.
- 3.3 Specific consultation has taken place in January and February 2024 which have given the team ideas to develop a concept design which will in turn form a cost estimate to enable bids to be submitted for the required funding from various sources.
- 3.4 The process is now at the stage of submitting funding applications.

4. DETAILS

- 4.1 Funding applications are proposed to the following sources:

Lancashire Environmental Fund- £40,000

FCC Community Action Fund- £100,000

Valencia- £100,000

- 4.2 The Council has £75,000 for park improvements at Victoria and Whitaker Parks in 2024/25, and it is proposed that £55,000 is used as match funding to increase chances of success in the bids mentioned above. This this will give an approximate budget of £295,000 for completion of the works, development costs and third party contributions. The third party contributions are payments that have been made by the Council or community group to the funders to release the grants.
- 4.3 Improvements in the toddler area include replacing three items of equipment, replacing the entire safety surface, repairing the natural play area where deteriorated and addition of picnic facilities for families. The youth area will then introduce more challenging and adventurous equipment such as large embankment slide, double zip wire and something to develop climbing skills.
- 4.4 Once the funding streams have been confirmed, it is proposed that officers will go out to tender to obtain the most advantageous tender for the Council. This tender will be designed to match the funding available.

5. RISK

- 5.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- Failure to invest in the site will risk deterioration leading to increased maintenance liability and health and safety issues.
 - Failure to pursue the project will result in loss of funding from UKSP.
 - Extensive consultation has taken place with local residents who have voiced their desire for the area to be improved. To ignore this would negatively affect the Council's reputation.

6. FINANCE

- 6.1 The expenditure and financing for the scheme are set out in the table below:-

Project Budget		£
Expenditure		
Whitaker Park Improvements		295,000
Total Expenditure		295,000
Financed by		
RBC UKSPF - Whitaker capital scheme	Secured	55,000
FCC Community Action Fund	Not-Secured	100,000
Lancashire Environmental Fund	Not-Secured	40,000
Valencia	Not-Secured	100,000
Total Income		295,000
Surplus/(-)Deficit		0

- 6.2 The RBC match will be funded from the UK Shared Prosperity scheme for park improvements. Should the external funding bids be unsuccessful the scheme will be revised accordingly.

7. LEGAL

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- 7.1 Under the Constitution, prior approval must be obtained from the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet to seek tenders for anything over £100k. Corporate Management Team has considered this matter and recommends its approval.
- 7.2 All tenders and works contracts must be carried out in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the grant funding requirements of each funder.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no policy or equality implications arising.

9. REASON FOR DECISION

- 9.1 The development of Whitaker Park Play facilities will mean that the Council is investing to ensure the park's destination site status. Much needed refurbishments of the existing area will ensure it is safe and remains an asset to residents, while provision of challenging and exciting equipment for youths will mean the parks fills a much needed gap in Rossendale's play provision.

No Background papers.