

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny

Date: 4 December 2025

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Update on Play Park Improvement Strategy

When does the decision need to be implemented? None

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Play Improvement Strategy was previously considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in May. An updated version has now been prepared to reflect feedback and progress since that time. The purpose of this report is to present the revised strategy for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Board.

2. Reason for the Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 Torbay's play facilities require investment to ensure that sustainable play facilities are provided for the communities of Torbay in line with the Council's mission and approach.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That Overview and Scrutiny notes the emerging Play Improvement Strategy and provides the advice to Cabinet it deems appropriate for the further refinement and subsequent adoption and implementation of the Strategy.

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The Play Strategy sets out Torbay Council's vision and approach to improving play opportunities across the Bay, ensuring that children and young people have access to safe, inclusive, and high-quality play spaces.
- 1.2 The strategy recognises that play is a vital component of childhood development, supporting physical health, mental wellbeing, social interaction, and creativity. The strategy recognises the importance of play in building resilient communities and fostering a sense of pride in place among residents.
- 1.3 This updated draft incorporates feedback from stakeholders, community consultations, and emerging best practices in play provision. It identifies priority areas for investment, including upgrading existing play facilities, introducing inclusive equipment for children with disabilities, and ensuring that play spaces are environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient.
- 1.4 The strategy is closely aligned with the Council's Community and Corporate Plan, under the 'Pride in Place' theme. This theme emphasises creating vibrant, attractive, and healthy environments that residents can take pride in. By improving play spaces, the Council aims to enhance the quality of life for families, encourage outdoor activity, and strengthen community cohesion.
- 1.5 Undertaking a review of Torbay's Play Parks is a project under Priority C2 of the corporate and community plan. The improvement plan was scheduled to be approved in quarter 2 but this has slipped to quarter 3 for the report to be considered by Cabinet informally. If the strategy is taken to a Cabinet meeting that will be in quarter 4. Linked to this report a new corporate risk relating to the future delivery of play parks will be considered.
- 1.6 Furthermore, the Play Strategy supports wider objectives such as promoting health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities, and contributing to the Council's climate and sustainability goals. It also seeks to leverage partnerships with schools, community groups, and external funders to maximise resources and deliver long-term benefits. The updated strategy provides a clear roadmap for implementation, setting out phased delivery plans, funding opportunities, and mechanisms for monitoring progress.
- 1.7 Since the Play Strategy was last considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in May, several key developments have occurred:
 - Community Consultations Completed: Engagement sessions were held with local residents, schools, and community groups to gather feedback on proposed improvements. This input has informed the updated strategy and priority areas.
 - Funding identified: Applications have been made to external funding bodies, including national play improvement grants and local partnership schemes, to secure additional resources for implementation.

- Early Implementation Steps: Initial site assessments have been completed for priority play areas, and preliminary design work has commenced to ensure readiness for phased delivery.
- Partnership Development: Discussions with voluntary organisations and local businesses have progressed to explore opportunities for co-funding and community-led maintenance initiatives.

These actions demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering the Play Improvement Strategy and ensuring that improvements are responsive to community needs and financially sustainable.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 There are no options under Consideration

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 As previously reported like for like replacement will exceed the available funding and is not financially viable. Opportunities for external grants will need to be pursued alongside identification and prioritisation of internal resources if that were to be the agreed route. The Strategy proposes a blended approach which will target external investment where possible.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 No legal implications were identified.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 As outlined in the report ward members and community groups have been involved in the preparation of the strategy.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 Where appropriate the Council's commercial services team will be engaged in the purchase of goods and services and the appropriate processes will be followed.

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 No Impact

8. Associated Risks

8.1 Key risks that may impact successful delivery include:

- **Funding Constraints:** Limited capital and revenue budgets for play area improvements and maintenance.
- **Asset Condition:** Existing play infrastructure may require significant investment to meet safety and accessibility standards.
- **Community Engagement:** Ensuring meaningful consultation and co-design with local communities to avoid delays or opposition.
- **Supply Chain and Contractor Availability:** Potential delays in procurement and delivery of equipment or works.
- **Environmental Factors:** Climate resilience and sustainability considerations may increase costs or complexity.

Mitigation measures will include exploring external funding opportunities, phased delivery plans, and partnership working with community groups and stakeholders.

9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	X		
People with caring Responsibilities	X		
People with a disability			X
Women or men			X
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			X
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			X

People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			X
People who are transgendered			X
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			X
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			X
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	X		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	X		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 Minimal

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 As above