

Update on capital investment to implement the Play Park Improvement Strategy

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report to Cabinet on 17 February 2026

Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board met on 4 December 2025 to consider an update on the Play Park Improvement Strategy. The report set out the progress made to date including the consultation and engagement. The report proposed a focus on capital investment using the £500k for essential safety works whilst developing Masterplans for each park, with prioritisation given to destination play parks.
2. Margaret Forbes Hamilton, Tormohun Community Partnership and Chair of Torbay Greenspace Forum made oral representations in respect of the engagement carried out to date and the importance of some of the smaller play parks to the local community.
3. Members raised the following questions:
 - What was the timeframe for developing the Masterplans?
 - How and who will conduct the consultation and engagement?
 - How do we prioritise sites for early consultation?
 - How were destination play parks decided?
 - Was the small consultation sample representative of Torbay's children across all areas?
 - Which voluntary groups were engaged?
 - How would different funding streams (Ward funds, donations, Community Infrastructure (CIL)) be tied together?
 - How will local schools be involved in consultation?
 - Why was engagement limited in deprived wards like Tormohun?
 - Why were some parks being decommissioned without replacements?
 - What was a cableway?
 - Could funding be used for bins and benches in parks?
 - When will the Council hear about the Lottery Funding?
 - Will skateparks be included in later phases?
 - What was being done to access £18m government funding?

4. The following responses were received:

- There was an aim to complete the Masterplans by Easter for high-priority sites.
- SWISCo staff would lead the work on the Masterplans, working with Play Torbay, schools, and community associations etc.
- Destination parks were based on Member visits and feedback from Play Week; larger parks offer more opportunities to more people.
- It was acknowledged that the sample size was small; future engagement would broaden the reach.
- SWISCo would look to combine Ward funds, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), donations and other funding opportunities during the Master Planning.
- Schools will be involved in site-specific consultations.
- Deprived areas had been considered, there was a commitment from the Managing Director of SWISCo and the Cabinet Member to visit Tormohun parks before Christmas; Barton Downs and Watcombe had been prioritised in the proposals.
- A cableway is a zipline, often decommissioned due to safety concerns.
- Benches and bins could be explored but had not been included in initial funding tranche.
- The previous bid for Lottery Funding was unsuccessful; feedback had been received and further bids and match funding opportunities were being explored.
- Skateparks were included in Phase 3 of the proposals.
- The Government's £18m investment in play parks requires groundwork and Master Planning; no immediate start date had been provided by the Government.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Board reflected and debated the information provided to them, both verbal and written and formed the following recommendations to the Cabinet. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.

6. Recommendations

6.1 That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. to provide written clarity on the proposed engagement process, to include in consultation with key community groups such as Torbay Communities, Torbay Greenspace Forum etc.;
2. to ensure that young people are engaged with in a meaningful way in respect of all play parks;
3. that the first tranche of funding should be focussed on repairs and not landscaping and that landscaping should be picked up as part of the later tranche;

4. that the Board note the emerging Play Park Improvement work and acknowledged that this is work on play improvement which will be further developed into a Strategy and used to inform Masterplans; and
5. to provide a written list of which groups have been engaged to date.

Background Papers

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Board on Thursday, 4 December 2025, 5.30 pm](#)