

24<sup>th</sup> September 2015

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks - Councillor A Khan

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director, Place

**Ward(s) affected:**

Woodlands

**Title:**

Petition Update Report - Juniper Drive Play Area

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

In January 2015 the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks considered an e-petition which had been organised by Councillor Julia Lepoidevin, a Woodlands Ward Councillor.

The petition was signed by 115 residents who live in the vicinity of Juniper Drive. It called on the Council to update and replace play equipment in the park area Juniper Drive/Woodridge Avenue in consultation with local residents as there had been no update of the equipment for a number of years.

The report identified that most of the equipment at Juniper Drive Play Area was at the end of its practicable life that refurbishment costs were estimated at £29,400, and that adequate play provision was located at Allesley Park just 600m away from Juniper Drive and well within its catchment area.

It was highlighted that the Parks Service budget was to be reduced by £1m from April 2015 and that part of the Parks Service Financial Strategy was to review the replacement of equipment when it became beyond practicable repair.

It was agreed that as refurbishing and replacing the equipment at Juniper Drive would be unsustainable in the present climate, the play equipment would be removed and the affected areas reinstated to grass. The Council would however work with the local residents' group to explore external funding opportunities for the replacement of the play equipment at the Juniper Drive Play Area. Cabinet Member requested a progress report on this work be submitted to a future meeting.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made by the Allesley Green Residents Association in seeking external funding to remove the old play equipment at Juniper Drive Play area and replace with new.
2. Endorse the actions of Council Officers in assisting the Association to seek and submit external funding bids.
3. Agree that the removal of the play equipment at Juniper Drive be postponed until November 2015 (subject to any necessary action arising from safety or maintenance issues) allowing the Association adequate time to explore funding sources.
4. Agree that the Council continues to inspect and maintain the equipment at Juniper Drive Children's Play area until November 2015.

**List of Appendices included:**

N/A

**Other useful background papers:**

Report to Cabinet Member on the 8 April 2014 entitled: Allesley Park Play Area  
Report to Cabinet Member on the 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 2015 entitled: Juniper Drive Play Area Petition – Request that children's play equipment in the park is replaced with updated equipment following consultation with local residents.

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## 1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In January 2015 the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Sports and Parks considered an e-petition which had been organised by Councillor Julia Lepoidevin, a Woodlands Ward Councillor. The petition was signed by 115 residents who live in the vicinity of Juniper Drive. It called on the Council to update and replace play equipment in the park area at Juniper Drive/Woodridge Avenue in consultation with local residents as there had been no update of the equipment for a number of years.
- 1.2 Juniper Drive Play Area is located in the west of the City and contains equipment designed for the younger age group (ages 4 to 7 years). The play area is managed by the Parks Service within the Place Directorate, and regular inspections have found that most of the equipment was nearing the end of its practicable life, with some items showing signs of wear and tear and vandalism.
- 1.3 It was recognised that Juniper Drive Play Area is located just 600 metres from Allesley Park (the Area Park for the west of the city) and has benefitted from significant investment in recent years. Juniper Drive and Woodridge Avenue fall well within its catchment area. The Allesley Park play area provides good, safe, well-maintained and serviceable equipment offering a wide range of play experiences which caters for age groups 7-13 years and 4-7 years.
- 1.4 The Parks Service operational budget will be reduced by £1m from 2015/16 and, as part of its financial strategy, the service will be reviewing the replacement of play equipment as and when its practicable life ends. This review will be on an item-by-item and site-by-site basis and will take into consideration cost, remaining equipment, and location to other play areas.
- 1.5 The cost of refurbishing Juniper Drive play area was estimated at £29,400: this was considered inappropriate under the Council's economic circumstances, particularly as the play area fell within the catchment area of Allesley Park.
- 1.6 As adequate play provision was located at Allesley Park, it had been agreed that the play equipment at Juniper Drive could be removed and the site reinstated to grass. It had also been agreed that the Council would work with the local residents' group to explore external funding opportunities for the replacement of the play equipment at the Juniper Drive Play Area.
- 1.7 During February 2015 local residents formed the "Allesley Green Residents' Association". The group has expressed an interest in seeking external funding to remove the old play equipment at Juniper Drive and replace with new. In May 2015 the Head of Streetpride and Greenspace advised the Association that the Council would continue to inspect and maintain the equipment for a further 6 months only (until Nov 2015). The purpose was to give the Association adequate time to explore funding sources, submit applications, and receive notice of success. Council Officers have offered their support to the group in the application process.
- 1.8 The of Head Streetpride and Greenspace also attended a residents' forum arranged by the Allesley Green Residents Association in June 2015 to outline the circumstances surrounding the decision to remove the play equipment at Juniper Drive and respond to questions. The opportunity was taken to reinforce the commitment to delay the removal of

the equipment whilst the Association pursued external funding opportunities and the offer of Council Officer support in that process.

- 1.9 A member of the Residents' Association Committee has been appointed as fundraiser, who has experience of successfully exploiting external funding opportunities. Initial discussions with WREN (who grant fund community projects) have taken place and the response has been positive. In addition another member of the Association has offered a free design service as he is a landscape designer.
- 1.10 Further meetings between the Association and Councils officers have continued with a view to progressing a funding application.

## **2. Results of consultation undertaken**

No consultation has taken place on this issue

## **3. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 3.1 To be agreed subject to approval of a recommendation within this report

## **4. Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

### **4.1 Financial implications**

The cost of removing the existing items of equipment, safer surfacing, fencing and subsequent reinstatement of the area would be approximately £13,500.

These one-off works, if approved, could be funded from the Parks and Open Spaces revenue budget and, given the likely reduction in the Parks service operational budget, would remove any on-going liability relating to the existing equipment.

### **4.2 Legal implications**

No legal implications associated with this matter.

## **5. Other implications**

None

### **5.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

N/A

### **5.2 How is risk being managed?**

The continued programme of play area and equipment safety inspection will ensure that facilities are maintained in a safe and usable condition.

### **5.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure facilities are maintained in a safe condition

#### 5.4 Equalities / EIA Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The Service will continue to provide a level of provision which will ensure that all children within the City have access to park play facilities.

#### 5.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

Continued provision of safe, attractive and stimulating play environments.

#### 5.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

#### Report author(s):

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Directorate: **Place**

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#### Appendices

None