



Item: 9

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 5 February 2025.

COVID-19 Play Park Equipment Renewal Funding.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Overview

- 1.1. The Education, Leisure and Housing Service is responsible for the health and safety, ongoing maintenance and regular inspection of 45 play parks across Orkney.
- 1.2. The Education, Leisure and Housing Service has no annual budget for any repairs and maintenance of play areas, therefore, repairs can only be carried out using any surplus funds from other service budgets, something that has become virtually impossible due to ongoing budget pressures.
- 1.3. At its meeting on 21 December 2021, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended the establishment of a one off £500,000 Play Park Equipment Fund from the COVID-19 Recovery Funding.
- 1.4. The aim of the Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund was for it to be used as seed corn funding to incentivise community organisations in their fundraising or match funding for Council delivered investment that could attract additional external funding.
- 1.5. On 9 November 2022, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended approval of a scheme for the distribution of COVID-19 recovery funding relating to the Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund.
- 1.6. As part of the Council's 2023/24 budget setting process, on 23 February 2023, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended top slicing a range of budgets, resulting in the budget for the Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund being reduced by 20% to £400,000.
- 1.7. There have been 17 applications for funding received to date, 14 of which have been successful, resulting in a total funding commitment of £270,913.
- 1.8. There is £129,087 of unallocated funds.

- 1.9. The Service wishes to reallocate unspent finance to the two areas outlined in the recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Note that an unallocated balance of £129,087 remains within the Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund established in 2021.
 - ii. Agree that the following allocations be made from the unallocated balance in the Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund:
 - £50,000 towards establishing a Play Park and Open Space annual maintenance budget of £10,000 per year for 5 years.
 - The remaining unallocated balance, amounting to £79,087, be used to upgrade equipment in Council Play Parks and Open Spaces in line with the Council's Play Area Strategy.
 - iii. Delegate powers to the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing to determine spend from the remaining unallocated balance of £79,097, referred to above, on Council play areas and open spaces.

3. Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund

- 3.1. The Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund has been open for four rounds of applications, with all applications being reviewed by a panel of Council Officers and Elected Members.
- 3.2. The Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund is coordinated by the Team Manager (Sport and Leisure), who also provides support to all applicants before and after the submission of their application.
- 3.3. Following four rounds of applications and feedback from communities on some of the challenges they face in applying for funds, and wishing to ensure the funding continues to be used for its original purpose, it is suggested that delegated powers be given to the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing to determine spend on Council play parks and open spaces from the unallocated balance.

For Further Information please contact:

Katell Roche, Team Manager (Sport and Leisure), extension 2430, Email: katell.roche@orkney.gov.uk.

Implications of Report

1. **Financial** – The Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund has £129,087 of unallocated funding, additional financial information has been included in the body of the report.
2. **Legal** – There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.
3. **Corporate Governance** – n/a
4. **Human Resources** – n/a
5. **Equalities** – n/a
6. **Island Communities Impact** – n/a
7. **Links to Council Plan: The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:**
 - Growing our economy.
 - Strengthening our Communities.
 - Developing our Infrastructure.
 - Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan: The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:**
 - Cost of Living.
 - Sustainable Development.
 - Local Equality.
9. **Environmental and Climate Risk** - None
10. **Risk** – n/a
11. **Procurement** – n/a
12. **Health and Safety** – n/a
13. **Property and Assets** – n/a
14. **Information Technology** – n/a
15. **Cost of Living**– n/a

List of Background Papers

Policy and Resources Committee, 21 December 2021, Item 4 - COVID-19 Funding – Proposed Allocations.

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee, 9 November 2022, Item 5 – Play Park Equipment Renewal Fund.

Policy and Resources Committee, 23 February 2023, Item 4 – General Fund Reserves Strategy.