

<b>Committee(s):</b> West Ham Park Committee – For information	<b>Date(s):</b> 13 Oct 2020
<b>Subject:</b> West Ham Park Playground Project - Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Information</b>
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### Summary

The refurbishment of the playground at West Ham Park was approved by committee in January 2019. This included increasing the size of the playground, changing the waterplay and improving use of ancillary buildings (Option 3). Funding was granted by the City for 70% of the project. The remaining £350k was intended to be raised externally. The COVID19 pandemic has changed the funding landscape and raising this amount has not been achievable in the timescales. This report provides Members with an update on the project progress and highlights the issues that have arisen. Officers are drafting a report for Corporate project board to recommend that the scope of the project is reduced to fit the available budget with Option two being implemented (refurbishing the playground within the existing footprint) rather than the more extensive option three. However, planning approval for the extension of the playground and works to the ancillary buildings is proposed to continue so that if funding becomes available these elements of the project could still be realised in the future.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The Playground at West Ham Park needs to be refurbished to ensure its equipment and ancillary buildings are fit for purpose and meet current safety and safeguarding standards. Initial proposals were presented in a Gateway 1-2 report in 2017, with more detailed design being presented in a Gateway 3-4 report in 2019.
2. Three options were proposed for the playground:
  1. Repair and replace damaged play equipment only, and surfacing and retile the existing children's lido
  2. Redesign playground within existing footprint
  3. Playground redesigned, footprint extended. Playground office converted to a café concession, toilets reconfigured and refurbished.
3. Two options were proposed for water play
  - A. New waterplay facility with water fountains (operated by hand)

## B. New splash pad style water play facility with automatic jets

4. Members agreed with the recommended option 3 for the playground refurbishment and A for waterplay (Appendix 1 shows diagrams of the three schemes). The funds required to deliver the project were made up of a request to of £723,200 to the Resource Allocation Sub and Policy and Resources Committees, with the remaining £350k to be identified from external funding.
5. The scheme was placed on hold as part of the Fundamental Review in 2019 along with all other projects while a review was undertaken. The request for funding for the project was re-submitted as part of the new annual capital bidding process. On 12 December 2019, Resource Allocation Sub Committee and Policy and Resources Committees agreed to allocate a total of £1.279M central funding for this project. This request was made with an assumption that £350k would be raised from external grants.

### Current Position

6. Detailed designs were revisited in the spring of 2020 and a consultation with staff, local user groups and the public held to obtain any last comments. The City Surveyor completed tests on the electrical loading of the office system and completed detailed designs for the conversion of the toilet block and playground office to a small concession. Tree surveys and constraint reports were commissioned and documents required to obtain planning permission have been completed.
7. Stage one funding applications to Veolia (for £75k) and the London Marathon Charitable Trust (LMCT for £150k) were approved, and stage two applications were submitted in March and April 2020. However due to COVID19 many of the expected sources of funding have closed or been re-directed e.g. LMCT had reduced funding available to allocate as the London Marathon did not take place and the round two funding application for the playground was turned down in September. Heritage Lottery Funding is closed and will not open until 2021. The application to Veolia was also unsuccessful due to the company re-purposing available funds to support Covid19 related hardships. Possible funding or sponsorship from Livery companies and/or other private investors would not be sufficient to raise £350k as grants are for less than £10k and very few are open for applications. Other funding sources could be applied for, however these would not be in place in 2020 which would delay the implementation of the project and there is no guarantee that funding requests would be successful.
8. The age of equipment and infrastructure is an growing cause for concern. The paddling pool was closed in 2019 and 2020 due to the tiled surface failing. A quarter of the aged equipment has had to be removed (4 out of 15 pieces) f due to safety concerns. Two thirds of all picnic benches have been removed due to wood rot. If the refurbishment project does not go ahead in 2021 (already two years behind the initial implementation date) it is likely that further pieces of equipment will be removed or the playground closed on health and safety grounds.

## Options

9. Three broad options exist for the future of the project and are currently being explored:

- **Apply for more external funding to deliver Option 3 and delay the project:** The project could be placed on hold and officers apply for external funding and wait for other funds to re-open, however this would delay the project which is already 2 years behind completion and there is no guarantee that we would be awarded any external funding. The increasing age and associated maintenance issues of the equipment and infrastructure would increase yearly repairs and maintenance costs. There is also an increased likelihood of further equipment having to be removed or whole areas of the playground becoming unusable due to safety risks thus reducing the amount of play equipment and play space for children.
- **Apply to RASC for more funding to deliver Option 3** – given resource implications of COVID19 and the impacts of fundamental review to the City's budgets it is not felt that this is appropriate. Also we would be unable to bid for further capital until October 2021 as the current annual capital bidding process has closed.
- **Change scope of project and deliver Option 2 but proceed with planning approval for Option 3 so that this could be implemented as a 'phase 2' at a later date.** Funding already approved by RASC would permit Option 2 of the playground and waterplay refurbishment to be delivered – this would see the playground re-furbished but within the current footprint. However, the conversion of the park office to a concession and improvements to the toilet block layout would be delayed and the playground would remain the same size, until funding could be obtained for phase 2. The existing food concessions would be re-licenced on current terms to ensure that these offers are still available to park visitors and that these income streams are maintained.

## Proposals

10. An Issues report is currently being drafted for submission to the Corporate Projects Board to seek approval to reduce the scope of the project and deliver Playground Option two (and Waterplay Option A), whilst still permitting a planning application to LB Newham for the playground extension and improvement of ancillary buildings. The issues report will then be presented to Project sub-committee and West Ham Park Committee before going onto and Resource Allocation Sub Committee.

## Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. The proposals in this report support the Corporate Business Plan as follows:

- Contribute to a Flourishing Society
  - People enjoy good health and wellbeing

- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need
- Shape outstanding environments
  - Our Spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained.
  - We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable environment

12. And the Open Spaces Business Plan outcomes:

- Open Spaces and Historic Sites are thriving and accessible
- Spaces enrich people's lives
- Business practices are responsible and sustainable

## Implications

13. Risk: A number of repairs have had to be carried out to the play equipment since January 2019 totalling £10k to ensure that safety standards are met. Some of this is being claimed back via costed risk provision. Every delay to the project risks further expenditure to keep the aged equipment and infrastructure in a safe and useable state or risks the closure of the playground altogether.

14. Financial: Originally a shortfall of £723,200 was approved by Project Sub-committee to fund the implementation of Option three. This was to be increased by £350k of external funding which we have been unable to raise. Option two was expected to cost £864,775, it is proposed that this option be value-engineered to bring it in line with the budget approved. This can be done by refurbishing the railings around the perimeter of the site, rather than replacing them, altering some of the play equipment originally chosen and reducing the amount of bespoke planters/seating units in the scheme for 'off the shelf' products than cost less.

15. Legal: The objects of the West Ham Park charity are to "...for ever maintain and preserve [the Park] in a proper and ornamental condition as open public grounds and gardens for the resort and recreation of adults and as a playground for children and youth..." The successful completion of the project even if the scope is reduced, will still meet the Charitable objectives.

## Conclusion

16. This report updates committee on the progress that has been made with the playground project and the challenges faced through our failure to secure external funding. It outlines options for the future of the project. An issues report will be submitted to Corporate Projects Board, Project-Sub Committee and this committee to agree the way forward in the coming months.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Design options for the West Ham Park Playground.

## Background Papers

- West Ham Park Playground refurbishment: Gateway 1&2 Project proposal (2017)

- West Ham Park Playground refurbishment: Gateway 3/4 Options appraisal (Regular) (2019)

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