

Report of the Executive Director

Update: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Council Parks

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the ten recommendations made following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 28 November 2024, regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity across the Borough's parks.

2. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

3. Detail

There are 62 Parks and Opens Spaces across the Borough, of which 37 have a play area. These play areas vary in size, as does the variety of play equipment pieces available at each site.

There are 323 pieces of play equipment installed and maintained in these play areas. All equipment is installed to BS EN 1176 (which is the British and European Standard for playground equipment) and BS EN 1177 (which covers playground surfacing and provides guidance on critical fall height and impact safety). Of the 37 play areas in the Borough, 33 feature inclusive or accessible play equipment.

Accessible play areas

According to a report by Scope, the disability equality charity, it was found that less than half of playgrounds in the UK are currently accessible for people that have a disability. This sparked a national campaign aimed at enhancing inclusivity in play areas.

Various strategies exist for enhancing inclusivity in park play equipment. This involves incorporating accessible and inclusive pieces of equipment. The definitions of accessibility and inclusivity used by Scope are derived from a joint position statement by the Children's Play Policy Forum and the UK Play Safety Forum regarding the inclusion of disabled children in play provision.

These are:

- 'Accessible' Play Space is a space which is barrier-free, allows users access to move around the space and offers participation opportunities for a range of differing abilities. Not every child of every ability will be able to actively use everything within an accessible play space.

- ‘Inclusive’ Play Space provides a barrier-free environment, with supporting infrastructure, which meets the wide and varying play needs of every child. Disabled children and non-disabled children will enjoy high levels of participation opportunities, equally rich in play value.

(Source: <https://playsafetyforum.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/including-disabled-children-in-play-provision-2022.pdf> referenced 23 May 2024)

Following the meeting of this Committee on 28 November 2024, the working group presented a summary of findings to the Committee from the review conducted in late summer 2024. Ten recommendations were made. **Appendix 1** provides an update on those recommendations and sets out the status and actions taken.

4. Financial Implications

The comments from the Assistant Director Finance Services were as follows:

The accessibility improvements highlighted in the Parks accessibility audit will be captured in next year’s Capital Programme for the Pride in Parks initiative. This will then be aligned with the Play Strategy review which is being undertaken this financial year.

A detailed cost estimate and funding plan will be provided after the Play Strategy review, to ensure that implementing accessibility enhancements and ongoing maintenance requirements is in line with existing budgets.

5. Legal Implications

The comments from the Head of Legal Services were as follows:

The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in April 2011, s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Councils when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

This is to:

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The recommendations support compliance with the above legal obligation.

6. Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

7. Union Comments

Not applicable.

8. Climate Change Implications

Not applicable.

9. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

11. Background Papers

Nil.