

Recommendations from the Play Area Working Party on the future of Beranburh Play Area

Introduction

Following the CA&OS meeting in March, the Play Area Working Party were tasked to bring forward recommendations on the future of the play area. The lease of the play area at Beranburh Field which was previously with the Codrington Family, is now being managed by Savills Land Agents, and is due to expire in September 2027. If the Parish Council wishes to extend the lease, notice must be served on the landlord prior to 25 December 2025. Under the terms of the current lease, the new lease would be for a further term of 21 years on identical terms, other than the amount of rent.

Report

The play area constitutes equipment which was in the main inherited from the Ministry of Defence over 20 years ago. Wroughton Parish Council installed a replacement Kompan climbing frame. Equipment on the site includes a slide, toddler swings, flat swings, a bench and litter bin. These are all serviceable but tatty in appearance.

No major safety issues are highlighted on the most recent play area inspection for this site. Some large mature trees are within the Beranburh play area site have been assessed by Bawdens in their recent assessment of the trees for which the Parish Council is responsible, as requiring work. This will be carried out as part of the tree works contract.

There is another very well equipped play area nearby at Alexandra Park which has a junior area, teen area and a multi-use games area (hard-standing) with basketball hoops and football goals.

A resident survey of the Beranburh play area took place from 21 March – 6 May 2025 spanning a period of good weather and the easter holidays. A QR code was displayed for residents to log their visits. This showed that the site is visited on average 2.5 times a week by residents with almost all of these being within a 5 minute walking distance of the site, the majority coming from Alexandra Park.

Having considered public feedback from current users and noting the minimal usage of the site, the Play Area Working party are recommending that the site is retained by Wroughton Parish Council and a new lease signed. Even without replacing play equipment as it becomes unserviceable, the working party deem this site an important asset for residents to enjoy some quiet space or a picnic.

Ringfenced Section 106 monies held by Swindon Borough Council for this site should become available soon and once received, further consideration could be given to its future. Given the 21 year lease, it is feasible that £15,000 would easily be spent on future repairs of the equipment/safety surfacing and tree work.

Currently no rent is paid to the landlord and this will be reviewed as part of any contractual discussions. Legal costs relating to any lease renewal could be met from the WPC Professional fees budget. Savills may expect the Parish Council to pay the landlord's legal costs.

Annual independent play inspections take place for all WPC owned and leased play areas together with weekly safety inspections by the Grounds Team, daily visual inspections and emptying of the litterbins.

Recommendations

- 1. The Clerk or Deputy Clerk liaise with the landlord's agent to secure a new 21 year lease on the same terms as current, excepting the rent which would be brought back to Committee if it was anything more than a peppercorn rent, subject to (2) below.**
- 2. The Clerk continues to chase Swindon Borough Council for payment of circa £15,000 of Section 106 money which is due to Wroughton Parish Council and ringfenced for use at the Beranburh Play Area, with an agreed deadline for receipt of these funds of 10th December 2025, being the date of December's Community Assets and Open Spaces meeting, in order that Members have assurance that these funds have been received prior to entering into renewal of the lease, the deadline for which is 21st December 2025.**
- 3. Any legal costs for the renegotiation of the lease, both Wroughton Parish Councils and those of the landlord/ the landlord's agent, could be met from budget 4170 /100 for professional fees - £5,000, or from General Reserves if the professional fees budget is exhausted by that time.**