

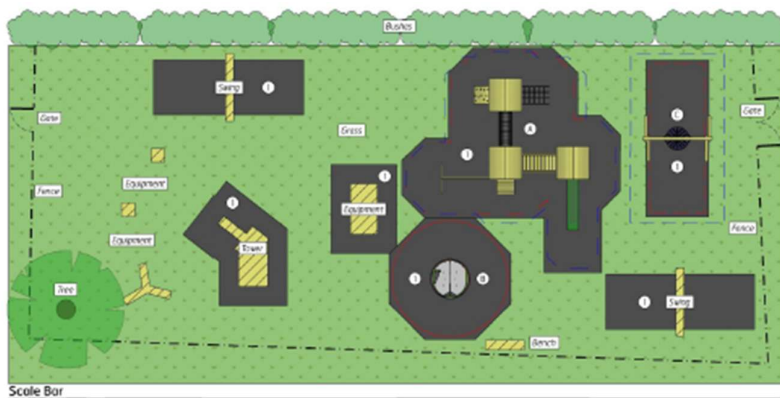
Briefing on the modernisation of the Children's Play area

1. Background

- 1.1. The children's play area is in a tired state with safety inspections consistently being at the high end of amber – just short of “unsafe”.
- 1.2. There have been a number of complaints from parents over the poor state of this key facility in the hub community of Wickham Market.
- 1.3. A project has therefore been initiated to modernise the area by replacing some equipment and refurbishing other pieces. This will propose all weather surfacing round each piece of equipment.

2. Example plan

- 2.1. The initial plan is to remove the large climbing piece and the canted roundabout. These could be replaced with a nest swing, an accessible roundabout and a new centre piece with climbing, bridges and slides. The existing swings and toddler equipment would remain. See draft illustrations below.



3. Costs and funding

- 3.1. The expected cost is likely to be £70k - £80k which will clearly require some serious grant funding.
- 3.2. There are some grants available but some are looking for match funding. This means that the grant may be capped to the value that the Parish Council is investing from its own resources.
- 3.3. It is therefore proposed that WMPC reinstate the reserves fund that has been eroded over the years to demonstrate commitment to the project.

4. Play area Reserves Review

- 4.1. The play area reserve was £23k in March 2023 but has since been eroded by other priorities down to £13.2k
- 4.2. There is an opportunity to review this reserve by reviewing the priorities in the budget for 2026-27.

Funding Source

Current Reserves that are unutilised. These could be reinstated next year if required.

Outreach reserve – unlikely to be utilised in the current financial year so could be transferred.	£k
Emergency Plan reserve £1.9k. transfer £1k	2.6
Climate Action reserve £4.5k with no current suggestions to use. Transfer £3k	1.0
	3.0

2026-27 budget that is unlikely to be utilised in the current year. Funds could be budgeted next year.

FP10 surfacing - reprioritise	8.0
New accounting system – currently no resource available to instal this before year end – move to next year	6.0
Social event – currently no plans for current year	2.0
Health Classes – As the village hall will soon close for modernisation, this is unlikely to be used in the current year	3.0
Tree safety work resulting from tree inspections. Tree inspection budget will remain but there is currently no proposal for safety work.	2.0
Playing Field boundary work – currently no plans to do more than has already been completed	3.0

Total funds potentially available to support a match funding application.

30.6

- 4.3. Adding some or all of these funding elements to the Play Area Reserve could support match funding grants up to £43.4k.

5. The Way Forward

- 5.1. WMPC to approve the modernisation of the play area in principle with an understanding of the likely costs.
- 5.2. Increase the Play Area Reserve with an agreed figure based on the above information.
- 5.3. Apply for grant funding to support the modernisation of the play area.
- 5.4. Consult users on the proposed design based on the funding available.
- 5.5. Bring a final costed and funded proposal back to the full council for final approval.