

PLAY PARK RE-OPENING PROPOSALS

An update on proposals for the re-opening of play parks at Roberts Lodge and Westfield

Recommendation:

1. Committee is invited to note the report.

	Yes	No
Does the decision involve new expenditure?		No
Is there an existing budget for the proposed expenditure (insert code)	N/A	
What procurement level is required?	N/A	
Are there equalities impacts / an equalities assessment required?		No
Does this require a full council decision? (Reports for full council decision should still be sent to the relevant committee where possible.)	Potentially	
Is there a background paper or papers? (provide links below).		No

1. Officers have been asked to consider the potential for re-opening the play parks at Roberts Lodge and Westfield. Roberts Lodge was abandoned before play parks were transferred to BTC, and Westfield was never transferred from Bernicia / 4 Housing as terms for the transfer could not be agreed.
2. Roberts Lodge was abandoned because of complaints from local residents. It is of a style of linear play park on pedestrian walkways that is familiar from other similar play parks we have inherited. It is not a style we would commission in future, bearing in mind our duty to design out crime or antisocial behaviour (ASB) and the way such play parks tend to act as vectors for ASB. This experience is borne out by the accounts of ASB on the site that residents shared with us during our visit.
3. A site visit has been undertaken. Roberts Lodge is a hilly area of the town, and the play park elements have elevation differences of as much as 3 metres between them across approximately thirty metres. The sharp, near vertical elevation changes between elements are surfaced with large rough cobbles set in concrete. These are entirely unsafe, and would have to be removed before formal play equipment could be installed. The eastern and northern boundary of the park is adjacent to a road and parking spaces, and currently there is only one inadequate pedestrian barrier to prevent children spilling onto the road. The southern and western boundaries are marked out by walls to the rear of properties. The cost of engineering out the unsafe elements of the ground would outweigh the costs of play equipment, and we cannot guarantee that the work could be done without compromising adjacent land. There is no way officers could foresee this work being either viable or desirable.
4. Westfield play park has been locked by its owners as a result of dilapidation and damage. There remain some elements of play equipment which could be used, but the zip wire has been removed and the softpour material under the swings is in serious need of repair. This is an obstacle to bringing the park back into use, but officers would like permission to discuss this with the landowners and to understand their plans for the space.

Issues arising from proposal

None.

Rationale for recommendation.

To provide safe accessible play and activity space for children and young people.