

Agenda item 6

For decision - Whether to support the use of s106 for play equipment at two MDC open spaces - Blackbird Way and Hawksworth Close

Authors: Rob Holden, Environment Manager and Nikki Cox, Community Project Officer

Summary

MDC is requesting that FTC support the use of a s106 budget to pay for play equipment that has already been purchased to be installed at Blackbird Way and Hawksworth Close. This report provides some background on the merits of installing the equipment on these two sites and requests that Cllrs decide whether to approve MDC's request.

Background and discussion

[FTC commissioned and is implementing a Play Strategy for Frome which can be viewed on the website here.](#) This strategy is informing not only how we manage FTC's open spaces but also how we move towards making Frome as a whole a more playful town. The production of this strategy included a significant amount of public engagement, part of which was the engagement project on Stonebridge that is highlighted below.

At the Community events on Stonebridge in Summer 2022 organised by FTC, the feedback from local residents was that overall Stonebridge was lacking in social, playful spaces for local community use, and that the residents most valued local resource was at the Old Showfield, which is in the pipeline for renovation.

Blackbird Way has compromised access and it is in an area with a demographic of older residents who reported high levels of anti-social behaviour in the space. Whilst Hawksworth Close is further away from the Old Showfield, and perhaps a better location in terms of spread of resources, it is also 'hidden' within a residential area. There is no connection between the two areas.

Feedback indicated that Brunel Way was the most used space in the area as it was more accessible, visible and larger. On this basis, it's the opinion of FTC staff that investing s106 budgets in these two sites is misplaced and it would be much better to invest in the Brunel Way open space.

In addition, the equipment chosen by MDC has limited play value and is aimed at a small target audience of younger children, which is not representative of the local Stonebridge population. The equipment chosen is also inaccessible and compromises equality for all children and does not offer intergenerational community use.

However, MDC has already bought the equipment for Blackbird Way and Hawksworth Close. MDC is asking FTC to support the use of existing s106 budgets to pay for this equipment. It is for Cllrs to decide whether to do so.

At a recent meeting with MDC Cllrs and staff it was confirmed that, if FTC did not support the use of a s106 budget, the play equipment would either go into long term storage or erected on another site, possibly outside Frome. The implication was that the play equipment would not be erected on the two sites. And, if the equipment once installed proved to be unpopular and/or inappropriate Somerset Council would move it.

Recommendation

To decide whether to support the use of s106 budgets for play equipment at Blackbird Way and Hawksworth Close.