ABSTRACT: This report seeks approval of funding and authority for the Director of Neighbourhood Services to progress the proposed project to final design and tender stage and sets out the timescales related to the project.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that Angus Council:-

(i) note the background to the project coming forward and the objectives which are being pursued;

(ii) approve the use of up to a maximum of £500,000 of resources from the Local Capital Fund to finance a new play area at West Links, Arbroath;

(iii) authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to develop detailed designs on the basis of a maximum £500,000 budget for a new West Links Play Area and table further reports to the Neighbourhood Services Committee indicating progress and seeking further authorisation (including procurement authority) as required.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Arbroath West Links seaside award beach and recreation areas are popular visitor tourist attractions, incorporating a number of varied outdoor recreational facilities including catering facilities and unique miniature railway. However, many of these facilities are in need of upgrading in order to meet increasing visitor expectations.

2.2 In May 2010 the Neighbourhood Services Committee gave approval for Council Officers to approach private sector stakeholders on options for the regeneration of the area, with a view of improving recreational facilities for the local community, visitors and tourists to Angus (Report No. 383/10 refers).

2.3 Following these discussions with private businesses, several concept proposals for the area were drawn up by Neighbourhood Services. A major part of these draft proposals was the enhancement and relocation of the play area. As recent developments at Monifieth and Carnoustie Seafronts and the Neverland Play Area at Kirriemuir Hill have shown, major redesign of these play areas now provides a far greater play experience, significant increase in visitor numbers and a revitalisation of the whole area in general.

3. CURRENT POSITION

3.1 It has been determined through meetings and discussions with all parties that although extremely popular with locals and visitors alike, the existing play area facility at the West Links is in decline with ageing equipment and safety surfacing, and is deemed to be no longer fit for purpose. The willingness of the businesses in the area to get involved with the Council on a partnership basis to redevelop the area, as outlined in Report No. 344/11, has brought the need for investment by the Council to the fore ahead of the 2012/13 capital budget setting process which will commence later this year. This report, therefore, sets out the background and objectives of the project and seeks the Council’s approval to develop the project further, utilising uncommitted resources available in the Local Capital Fund (LCF).

3.2 In order to revitalise the area in general, it is proposed that a new play area in a more prominent location at the entrance to the Links would enhance the visitor experience greatly and to this end, concept plans will have to be developed.
3.3 These concept plans will be used to determine viable possibilities for the site and for discussion basis with interested entrepreneurial parties who are in consultation with Angus Community Planning regarding private sector interest in forming partnerships on a wider scale in the area.

3.4 The proposed works aim to achieve a number of objectives for the West Links recreation area:-

- To develop the tourism potential of the West Links area and Arbroath as a whole;
- To upgrade the play provision to maintain the area’s status as a major play facility of regional importance;
- To relocate the play area to the strategically and visually important entrance area to West Links, with easy access to car parking;
- To encourage private partnership participation and investment.

Corresponding to corporate and departmental priorities, the West Links proposals contribute to a sustainable high quality Greenspace Network across Angus with the aim of providing excellent opportunity and inspiration for a healthy lifestyle and enhanced mental wellbeing through the Physical Activity Strategy and Paths for Health Initiative. The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy currently being proposed by the Department focuses on providing fewer play areas and concentrating available resources on high quality play areas catering for a range of age groups and users expectations.

3.5 Project Timescale

The overall timescale of the project given below is very tight and takes into account, in view of the nature and scale of the works i.e. £500,000 in cost, that a planning application will require to be submitted to the Development Control Section of Planning & Transport in November 2011. It is anticipated that the application will be considered by the Development Standards Committee in January 2012. The proposed timetable could be subject to change dependant on the length and outcome of public consultation and for example, if planning consent could not been achieved as timetabled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Target date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept design &amp; budget cost</td>
<td>Completion of design work</td>
<td>July 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Services Committee</td>
<td>Approval of design; Programme; Approval to go for Planning Application; Approval to award contract under delegated authority</td>
<td>18 August 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public consultation on concept design, development of proposals</td>
<td>West Links partnership and other local businesses at West Links, Community Council &amp; Arbroath Partnership</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Application</td>
<td>Submit by early October 11</td>
<td>24 January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Design</td>
<td>Design Work Consultation for Play area</td>
<td>December 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project out to tender</td>
<td></td>
<td>January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender return</td>
<td></td>
<td>February 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorisation under delegated authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start on Site</td>
<td></td>
<td>Late May 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Capital Expenditure

4.1.1 The estimated cost for the proposed project is £500,000 as detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Links Play Area Improvements</th>
<th>Total Cost £000’s</th>
<th>Prior Years £000’s</th>
<th>2011/12 £000’s</th>
<th>2012/13 £000’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works</td>
<td>360</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminaries</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contingencies</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROSS COST</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>461</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the proposals still have to be worked up in detail, the project seeks to provide the development of a toddler and inclusive play area for children of all ages and abilities in one section and an adjacent adventure play area for older children. The use of coloured surfaces and wall units and of high towering play equipment aim to make the play area visible from the distance.

The intention is to characterize the local setting by installing a climbing wall shaped to represent features of the Seaton cliffs. The existing bund would be increased in height to provide some wind shelter and a lookout to the sea at the same time. A network of access paths, seating, litter bins and signage complement the play development.

4.1.2 There is currently no provision within the 2010/2014 Financial Plan (Report No.109/11 refers) for this project due to the many other calls on the Council’s capital resources.

4.1.3 Notwithstanding the lack of funds and in view of the partnership developments at the West Links, a Capital Project Appraisal was presented to the Capital Budget Sub Group (CBSG) at their meeting of 13 May 2011 for consideration, in particular with regard to potential funding sources for the proposed development. Discussion focussed on the use of part of the £700,000 contribution made to the Local Capital Fund in 2011/12, as agreed at the budget setting on 10 February 2011. This sum was set aside as a contingency, to be available if funding difficulties emerged following, for example, the severe winter weather and the impact this has had on the roads network and the Council’s building assets. Alternatively, it was also noted that if not required at this time on a contingency basis, the monies could be utilised for other priority works identified.

4.1.4 In relation to the Council’s property assets, the Director of Corporate Services has confirmed that there are no immediate calls on the contingency funding in the LCF due to the winter weather. Members will, however, appreciate that the extensive and unbudgeted works to County Buildings will require funding and this may require use of part of these LCF resources if no other funding sources are identified.

4.1.5 The Director of Infrastructure Services confirmed that although the backlog of maintenance on the Council’s roads, footpaths, etc. continues to grow, he could address the worst effects of the winter weather from other resources available to him and, in particular, from headroom due to a less than initially projected overspend on winter maintenance in 2010/11, which would mean circa £500,000 of works and funding moving from 2010/11 to 2011/12.

4.1.6 On this basis, the CBSG confirmed that the Local Capital Fund £700,000 contingency would not be required for road repairs in 2011/12 and agreed that based on the Capital Project Appraisal submission, presented the CBSG, the use of £500,000 of the contingency sum for the West Links project, could be proposed for Members to consider.

4.1.7 It should be noted, however, that this is the maximum contribution which will be available from the Local Capital Fund and whilst it is envisaged that the opportunity for external funding may be relatively limited, this avenue will continue to be explored. The use of any additional
external funding received in terms of augmenting or reducing the contribution from the Local Capital Fund will need to be considered based on the terms of such funding.

4.1.8 Subject to Members’ approval, the project will be captured in the Council’s Financial Plan at its next review in September 2011.

4.2 Revenue Expenditure

4.2.1 The existing play equipment and associated furniture and surfacing is maintained by the Environmental Management Division of Neighbourhood Services. The maintenance costs associated with the existing play area are £5,090 per annum. The maintenance costs of the relocated play area are difficult to estimate until detailed designs have been concluded but are unlikely to be significantly higher.

4.2.2 The running costs associated with the new West Links facility, once constructed, will be assessed in more detail as part of the overall revenue budget setting process for 2012/13, the partnership arrangement developments across the West Link site and the ongoing audit of play provision within the Angus area.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

7. RISK ISSUES

7.1 As this project is relatively straightforward, the main risks of any significance are potential cost overruns and not achieving Planning Approval as timetabled. This can, however, be avoided by robust contract management by the Council’s in-house professional staff.

7.2 The risk of competitive tenders being significantly higher than anticipated is considered to be small as the pre-tender estimate was updated recently. In the unlikely event that this occurs, adjustments would be made to the project to contain it within the available budget.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Infrastructure Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The West Links is a popular and extensive recreation area which has been very successful in the past, providing a wide range of leisure facilities for the local community, visitors and tourists to Angus. The West Links Play Area enhancements will improve the quality of the play facilities, enhancing the image of the town and potentially increasing visitor numbers.

9.2 This project will provide a new play facility offering considerable play value as most of the current play area provision is relatively basic and fairly old. It will provide interesting design and equipment to a range of age groups in conjunction with improved access and visibility.

RON ASHTON
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

EnvManagement/NS/RA/DFI