



Children and Young People Select Committee

Update Report on Adventure Playground (APG) Play Service and Site Maintenance/Development Service Procurement – December 2023

Date: 11 January 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Update

Outline and recommendations

This report provides a status update on the procurement process for the Adventure Playground (APG) Play Service and APG Site Maintenance and Development Service for the CYP Select Committee. The intention is to procure the two services at the same time so that both services are aligned with one another, and they work in partnership with each other. The overall progress has been going well since the start of the project, although some new complexities have necessitated further market engagement and service model reviews, leading to slight delays in the original anticipated timeline.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

June 2023 – Mayor and Cabinet Pre-Procurement Approval

April/May 2024 – Mayor and Cabinet Award of Contracts

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides a status update on the procurement process for the Adventure Playground (APG) Play Service and APG Site Maintenance and Development Service for the CYP Select Committee.
- 1.2. The intention is to procure the two services at the same time so that both services are aligned with one another, and they work in partnership with each other. The overall progress has been going well since the start of the project, although some new complexities have necessitated further market

engagement and service model reviews, leading to slight delays in the original anticipated timeline.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. This report is an update on the procurement process for the APGs therefore there are no specific recommendations resulting from this report. In summary, whilst there have been some delays in the procurement process, the overall progress is positive, with a focus on refining service specifications as part of the quality assurance process to meet our specific requirements of the APG Play Service and Site Maintenance and Development Service. The revised timeline reflects a commitment to thoroughness and quality in procurement practices, ensuring the successful delivery of services when they go live in July 2024. Further updates will be provided as the procurement process advances.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 This report aligns with Lewisham's Corporate Priorities, as set out in Lewisham Council's [Corporate Strategy \(2022-2026\)](#):
- Cleaner and Greener
 - A Strong Local Economy
 - Quality Housing
 - Children and Young People
 - Safer Communities
 - Open Lewisham
 - Health and Wellbeing
- 3.2 This report also aligns to Lewisham Council's [Play Strategy 2023-28](#) vision that all Lewisham children will have a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play within walking distance of their home, and the strategy's three co-produced aims:
- To oversee the development of a high-quality, accessible play service.
 - To ensure that all residents have play facilities within walking distance.
 - To make sure that all play developments are created in consultation with users.
- 3.3 In addition, this report supports Lewisham Council to meet the Key Recommendations from the Play Strategy:
- The council is committed first and foremost to developing and promoting play opportunities in the borough, and in doing so, we will ensure that this is undertaken through ongoing consultation and co-production with children and young people and their families, on design and development of new play provision and play spaces.
 - Ensure that our current play provision and spaces, including the adventure playgrounds, are in locations where they are needed, and for the council to consider how best to manage, maintain and drive their use including financial and legal implications and community engagement.

- The council will ensure that consideration is given to ‘play’ in all plans, designs, and developments within the borough and making sure play is always in mind across all council activities.

4. Background

- 4.1. There are five adventure playgrounds (APGs) in Lewisham: The Dumps; Home Park; Honor Oak; Ladywell Fields and Richard MacVicar. These services form part of the universal offer to children and young people (CYP) and are free to access.
- 4.2. Currently, there are two contracts relating to adventure playgrounds – the Site and Ground Maintenance Contract and the Play Service. Since June 2021, the Site and Ground Maintenance Service is delivered by London Play Design and since April 2021, the Play Service is delivered by Youth First as an added service to their main contract for the provision of youth services. Youth First offers two sessions at three APGs after school and includes activities during school holidays. Play sessions are delivered at the Dumps, Honor Oak and Home Park (Ladywell Fields remains closed due to health and safety reasons). Richard MacVicar is currently operating as a Youth Club but has recently started to provide one APG session per week. London Play Design works across all the APG sites as these sites need continuous maintenance to ensure the safety of CYP.
- 4.3. Lewisham Council is proud to be one of the top five London boroughs in terms of the number of adventure playground sites and is committed to retaining this achievement. However, maintaining and developing the APGs (including the wider sites/grounds) comes with challenges - particularly given the sustained cuts local authorities have faced due to austerity. Since 2009-10, central government funding has reduced significantly and has made it extremely difficult for local authorities, like Lewisham, to maintain APGs and provide sustainable play sessions year-round.

5. APG Play and Site Maintenance Procurement Update

The Service Model

- 5.1. In June 2023, Mayor and Cabinet approved the procurement of two interconnected services – APG Play Service and APG Site Maintenance and Development Service. The contracts for these services will be five-years with the option to extend for a further two-years. Each service carries its own set of responsibilities but will work together in partnership with Lewisham Council to increase play sessions and enhance the APG sites over the lifetime of the contract. The service specific are as followed:

APG Play Service Responsibilities:

- Delivery and growth of APG play sessions across the five sites.
- Income generation – commercialisation and fundraising initiatives.
- Leading the development of a comprehensive five-year master development plan - focusing on reducing and replacing large play structures across APG sites to modernise and increase the life cycle.

Site Maintenance and Development Service Responsibilities:

- Execution of routine equipment and ground maintenance across all five APG sites so they remain safe and open throughout the lifetime of the contract.
- Implementation of the five-year master plan (refreshed annually) formulated in partnership with the Play Service.
- Work collaboratively to ensure the upkeep and development of APG sites.

Overall Objectives:

- Enhance play services and facilities at APG sites so that more Lewisham young people can benefit from the sites.
- Implement the master development plan to increase the life span of the structures.
- Foster collaboration between the Play Service, Site Maintenance and Development Service, and the Council with a partnership approach to meeting our shared objectives.
- Achieve a cohesive and integrated approach to service delivery.

5.2. The service models delineate the specific roles of each service but also emphasise the importance of working together in partnership to achieve our shared goals. The partnership with the Council will further underscore the commitment to a holistic and comprehensive enhancement of our APG sites, recognising that the Council alone cannot meet the challenges of operating and maintaining the sites. The partnership approach is designed to draw on the considerable knowledge and expertise of the voluntary and community sector.

5.3. Procurement Update:

The procurement process for both the APG Play Service and Site Maintenance and Development Service has advanced significantly. The initial stages involved stakeholder consultations and market assessments to ensure a thorough understanding of service requirements and provider capabilities. This was to ensure the services could be procured to meet our objectives of increasing APG play sessions, maximising site usage, and developing a sustainable operating model that will generate funding to replace/redevelop the sites as required over the lifetime of the contract.

5.4. Progress Achieved to Date:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders have been conducted to gather input on service specifications and requirements. Feedback has been instrumental in refining the procurement approach and service models.
- **Market Assessment:** A comprehensive analysis of the market has been undertaken to identify potential providers and assess their capacity to meet our specified needs.

- **Service Specification Development:** The development of service specifications has been a collaborative effort involving engagement with potential providers. This iterative process aims to align service expectations with provider capabilities and the borough's needs.

5.5. Challenges and Delays:

- **Complexities in Service Specifications:** Some additional complexities in defining precise service specifications for both service models and understanding the nuances between them have arisen. This has required additional engagement with potential providers and quality assurance to maximise the chances of a successful procurement. This will also avoid complications in the life of the contract due to uncertainties/ambiguity with the service models. This step is crucial to ensure that the final specifications align with provider capabilities and our expectations for high-quality service provision for our children and young people.
- **Extended Market Engagement:** To address the identified complexities, an extended period of market engagement has been necessary. This ensures that the service specifications and tender documentation adequately reflect the nuances of the APG Play Service and APG Site Maintenance and Development Service. This has taken the form of individual meetings with potential suppliers to test the proposed models and take on board any additional feedback.
- **Complexities with the APG Site Leases:** Good progress was also made at resolving the issues related to seeking permission from the freeholder of Honor Oak APG for the Council to be able to lease the site to another party and the removal of a legal restriction placed by the Community Fund on the title deeds of Home Park APG. In addition, officers also complied with S123 of the Local Government Act 1972 which required for a public notice to be advertised in a local paper that set out the Council's intention to lease the APG sites.

5.6. Whilst the procurement is ongoing, the current APG Play Service, which is provided by Youth First, will remain in place.

5.7. Next Steps / Revised Timeline

Commissioning Task	Timeline	Comments
Extended one to one market engagement sessions	November – December 2023	To maintain the interest of the market and ensure that the service model is deliverable.
Executive Director Contract extension report sign off for extending the contracts for the Play Service and the Site and	December 2024	To ensure that services are running during finetuning of the APG procurement process

Ground Maintenance Service		
Revised specification/tender documents sign off by procurement/legal team:	Early January 2024	The specifications and tender documents are required to be signed off by procurement/legal teams.
Tender Live (Originally planned for October/November 2023)	Mid - January 2024	Tender will be live for a minimum of 30 days.
Tender Evaluation	End of February / early March 2024	Estimated two-week turnaround.
Mayor and Cabinet Approval of Contract Award and granting of leases (Originally planned for January 2024)	April or May 2024	Awaiting confirmation of dates for 2024-25 Mayor and Cabinet to confirm.
Services go live (Originally planned for April 2024)	July 2024	To be confirmed once Mayor and Cabinet dates for 2024-25 are set.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. The costs of the Adventure Playground (APG) Play Service and APG Site Maintenance and Development Service are met from the Commissioned Contracts for Youth Services budget, which is currently £1.743m.
- 6.2. The cost of the APG service in 2023/24 is expected to be £138k and the Maintenance Contract is £94k.
- 6.3. The budget also funds the youth service, currently contracted to Youth First at a cost of £1.25m, with the remainder of the budget funding youth service grants and repairs and maintenance of the estate.

This is an update report and no decisions are required that impact financially.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. This is an update report and no decisions are required and therefore no legal implications.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1. An Equalities Impact Assessment is being completed as part of the tender and procurement plan and will be shared as part of the full Mayor and Cabinet

Report.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

9.1. This is an update report and no decisions are required that impact this area.

10. Crime and disorder implications

10.1. This is an update report and no decisions are required that impact this area.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

11.1 This is an update report and no decisions are required that impact this area.

12. Report author and contact

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