

SAFETY SURFACING REPLACEMENT AT SCOTT PLACE AND SCHOOL AYCLIFFE PLAY AREA

AGENDA ITEM No. 10

MEETING: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: 22ND JANUARY 2025

REPORT BY: WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider, as part of the approved 2024/25 Capital Programme Budget, the proposed priority works for the improvement of the safety surfacing within the Council's play areas this year, consider the quotes received, and agree the award of the contract.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Town Council manage thirteen play areas all of which have varying amounts of safety surfacing which requires regular maintenance.

2.2 All the safety surfacing appears in good condition as works operatives spend a substantial amount of time patching up the wet pour rubber crumb as problems develop.

2.3 Most of the larger play areas including Town Park junior play area, both junior and infant areas at Moore Lane Park and the infant and junior area within St Oswald's Park have all been recovered in recent years, resulting in reduced repair costs and significantly prolonging the life of the safety surfaces.

2.4 Officers regularly inspect each site to determine the state of each surface, with a view that improvements should only take place when the state of wet pour is starting to deteriorate to the point that significant repairs will be required, and before any safety issues arise.

2.5 Financial provision has been set aside in the Medium-Term Financial Plan Capital Budget Forecast for a rolling programme of improvements to and replacement of play area safety surfacing.

2.6 A budget sum of £72,700 is available in the 2024/25 Capital Programme Budget for play area safety surfacing works (this included a significant carry forward of unspent resources from the previous year) and this has been classified by the Council as an essential project for 2024/25.

3.0 Current Situation

3.1 During the last survey within each play area to prioritise works, it was determined that the next play areas to be prioritised would be Scott Place and School Aycliffe. This is borne out in the fact these areas are regularly sustaining damage to the play surface and small defects are then exploited by youths using the facility, making the problem worse.

- 3.2 The wet pour safety surface is also beginning to contract around the sides of many joins in the design resulting in regular repairs being required.
- 3.3 Substantial areas with high user numbers were repaired in the Town Park, Moore Lane and St Oswald's play areas in recent years by over laying the existing safety surfacing with rubber crumb wet pour. This is a cost-effective way to ensure a suitable safety surfacing is maintained and has proved to be a great success in reducing ongoing maintenance in these areas.
- 3.4 However whilst an overlay of rubber crumb is an effective way to rejuvenate the play surface and significantly prolong its effective life, it should be noted that this cannot be done numerous times. Therefore, when these safety surfaces require renewing again, consideration will need to be given to not only the replacement of the existing surface but also the taking up and disposal of the previous surface. Depending on the site in question this will not be for another 5 to 10 years, but this will require consideration in the medium-term financial planning and will be discussed with the Finance Manager with a view to ensuring that sufficient financial provision is set aside.
- 3.5 Previous overlays in the last three years were completed by the safety surfacing contractor; RTC to a high standard and there have been no issues with the ongoing maintenance of these large areas. However there are other national safety surface providers available who are recognised installers recommended by play providers, who should still be considered.
- 3.6 Four suppliers were therefore contacted to supply a quotation for supply and overlay of the wet pour safety surface at Scott Place and School Aycliffe play areas. The surface will be solid black to minimise the risk of joins separating and causing unnecessary maintenance.
- 3.7 It should also be noted that Simpasture junior play area is also in need of a significant safety surface refresh. However, Officers are currently attempting to source external funding, potentially from Section 106 Agreement monies, to renew either the entire play area or aspects of it, depending on the amount of external funding which can be obtained. Refurbishment of the safety surfacing in this play area has therefore been deferred pending further development of this project and the securing of external funding.

4.0 Impact on Great Aycliffe Town Council

- 4.1 Investing in play area safety surfacing will ensure compliance with safety requirements, reduce repair costs, refresh the look of the play areas, and prolong the use of the safety surfacing.

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 This report complies with the Council's Strategic Aims 2 and 5.

"To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner".

"To contribute to the environmental improvement of Great Aycliffe by managing and developing parks, play areas and green spaces".

6.0 Staffing implications

- 6.1 Completing these safety surfacing works will result in time savings for works operatives by reducing the level of ongoing repairs and maintenance to the current surfacing.
- 6.2 Works management time will be required to oversee the delivery of the project.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Four suppliers were contacted for quotes for the play area safety surfacing works and two quotations subsequently received, ensuring compliance with the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement.
- 7.2 Set out below is a breakdown of the quotes from the four companies. All prices are excluding VAT:

Contractor	Scott Place	School Aycliffe	Total
RTC	No quote submitted	No quote submitted	No quote submitted
DCM	£22,248	£10,900	£33,148
Abacus	£24,457	£9,034	£33,491
Fawn Play	No quote submitted	No quote submitted	No quote submitted

- 7.3 A sum of £72,700 is available within the 2024/25 Capital Programme Budget for safety surfacing works.
- 7.4 It should be highlighted that the remaining resources in the play area safety surface budget were established and included with a view that if external funding could be sought for Simpasture Park or any other play areas, the safety surfacing budget would be used to support the install of any new equipment.
- 7.5 RTC and DCM have completed safety surfacing works in the last ten years for the Town Council.
- 7.6 Abacus have not provided maintained safety surfacing works for the Town Council directly in recent years, but are also established installers, who are trusted by many of the top play equipment providers, so should also be considered.
- 7.7 After agreeing to a site visit Fawn Play declined to submit a quote on the grounds that they were aware of the other suppliers and would not be able to complete price wise against them.
- 7.8 Unfortunately, RTC could not provide a quotation within the time frame due to poor weather conditions both stopping existing projects and reducing their ability for them to travel to the sites for a site meeting.
- 7.9 Both quoting suppliers have provided comparable quotations to supply an overlay of 20mm thick solid black rubber crumb.
- 7.10 Both DCM and Abacus have provided quotes for previous projects and have narrowly missed out to RTC, who could not submit a suitable quote on this occasion.

7.11 Officers would highlight that contractors who repeatedly provide quotes and do not get any business from their efforts are often more reluctant to submit quotes in the future, therefore this provides an opportunity to award a significant contract to another contractor who has narrowly missed out on the work in the past.

8.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

8.1 None

9.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

9.1 None

10.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

10.1 Unfortunately rubber crumb safety surfacing is a fairly niche market with no significant trusted providers in the North East, therefore all contractors will need to travel to the area, Abacus is based outside Edinburgh and DCM in Manchester. DCM is slightly closer but this will make minimal difference to either companies carbon emissions in undertaking the work.

10.2 Both companies will be using comparable volumes of the same materials, and so there is very little between them environmentally.

11.0 Risk Assessment

11.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

12.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

12.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR? NO

13.0 Recommendation

13.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Receive the report.
- ii) Agree the priority safety surfacing improvement works identified in the report.
- iii) Agree to award the contract to DCM at a total cost of £33,148.
- iv) Agree that the remaining resources in the play area safety surfacing budget are retained and carried forward to support the replacement of the safety surfacing in Simpasture Park at such a time as external funding can be obtained for the refurbishment of the play areas in this park.

Works and Environment Manager