

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Re-opening to the public of all Herefordshire Council Owned Play Areas
Date of decision:	9 July 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Economy & Place
Authority for delegated decision:	Chief Executive Scheme of Delegation updated 2 June 2020 Appendix 1 – SA52 Parks and Countryside
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet Member Commissioning, Procurement and Assets, Cabinet Member Infrastructure and Transport, Section 151 Officer, Solicitor to the Council and Acting Assistant Director Highways and Transport
Decision made:	To re-open the destination parks(listed below) on 11 July 2020 and a phased opening of all other play areas by the 18 July 2020 A full listing of which is available at https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200137/things_to_do/684/parks_play_areas_and_sports_pitches_search#tab3
Reasons for decision:	<p>Closing of the Play Areas:</p> <p>The decision to close the play areas was taken due to the unprecedented threat to Public Health posed by the outbreak of Covid-19</p> <p>The decision to close was in response to the risk posed by Covid 19 and to support recommendations of national government for people to avoid places where people will, as a result of the natural use of Play Areas, particularly by Children and parents, congregate in a way that is contrary to the recommendations of national government in regard to social distancing.</p> <p>The decision to close was taken on the 23 March 2020.</p> <p>Decision to open the play areas:</p> <p>Re-opening Play Areas are recognised by the government as valuable and important to the community providing children with a stimulating and tactile experience and providing the ability to learn through play. Opening will support the easing of restrictions and follow government guidance produced to allow opening as measures are introduced to allow minimizing the risk of infection.</p> <p>Guidance from the government was released on the 26 June 2020, the government has identified that play areas can open from the 4 July 2020 if appropriate measures are in place. The council and Balfour Beatty Living places have inspected all the sites, risk assessed with a planned program of work including erection of signage, distance markings, cleansing of destination sites prior to opening and planned cleaning of other sites being implemented as control measure to mitigate the risks.</p>

	<p>All sites are inspected monthly as well as routine visits for bin emptying and grass cutting, this will add to awareness of the sites and potential concerns, the teams we will respond and react as necessary. There will be comms messaging and if necessary, the sites will need to close if issues arise which merit closing. If there are any reports of Covid 19 where the sites have been visited, the sites will close and cleansed with a comms plan to alert and point to track and trace.</p> <p>There are 67 play areas in Herefordshire of which 9 sites are classified as destination sites as they are an attraction where the public will travel to use. The sites are all in Hereford, Beaumont Gardens, Westfailing Street, 2 no sites on King George V, Luard Walk, Moor Park, Wellington place and Aylestone park. The larger parks in the Market Towns are owned or managed by the Town Councils.</p> <p>Due to the preparation required to open, the 9 destination sites have been prioritised to open this weekend with a phased opening of all playgrounds over the following week.</p> <p>The initial opening will commence with the opening of the 9 destination play areas early morning on Saturday 11 July 2020, with a phased approach to opening the other 61 sites over the following week with all sites up by the Saturday 1 July, 2020.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>Risks: users may not adhere to the social distancing guidelines and that the risk of transmission may still be present. Signage and markings will be introduced to advise of the guidance and to remind and allow people to gauge the appropriate distancing required. This will be monitored and if problematic, may require closure of individual play areas until circumstances allow.</p> <p>Anti-social behavior may cause issues that require intervention and closure, this will be monitored and closed if required.</p> <p>Covid19 situation may change, the teams will monitor and manage if the situation requires further closure across the county or individual areas.</p> <p>There is a cost to the opening as we will be providing additional signage, markings and a cleansing regime. This has been identified and will be supported by any available additional funds provided in support of the impact of Covid 19 by central government. If this is not forthcoming this will become a budget pressure which will need to be managed within the public realm contract. The estimated value of the work to open the play areas is estimated to be circa £6,000.00 for the initial signage, line marking and cleansing with an ongoing need for additional cleaning. The cleansing regime will be reviewed with the guidance from the government and Public Health England. An estimated cost of £3,000.00 will ensure the key sites and those identified as necessitating cleaning can be cleaned through the summer. The need for cleansing will be reviewed to ensure we have the right balance in cleansing the sites and the impact/risk to Covid 19.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Consideration has been given to continuing to close all play areas within the county to ensure the risk of transmission is reduced to a minimum. This has been rejected as the risk assessments undertaken have put measures in place to manage the sites effectively reducing the risk to low. Government guidance supports the decision to re-open the play areas from the 4 of July as long as long as social distancing plus mitigations are introduced which reduce the risk of transmission.</p>

Details of any declarations of interest made:	None
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Signed

Date: 9 July 2020

Name: Richard Ball
Director for Economy & Place