

**Proposal:** Harvestfield Park play facilities improvement

**Applicant(s):** Crockenhill Parish Council

**Ward(s):** Crockenhill & Well Hill

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the **£20,000** applied for, as set out in the report, for the scheme “Harvestfield Park play facilities improvement” be approved on the following grounds:

Principal criteria met:

- Strong social benefit to the community;
- Strong link between new development and the scheme;
- The scheme is identified in an adopted strategy or plan;
- Significant public benefit;
- Clear evidence to show that the scheme will be delivered;
- Strong local support;
- The scheme does not already benefit from CIL funding.

## Introduction

- 1 An application for CIL funding has been submitted for the play facilities improvement at Harvestfield Park. This has been submitted by Crockenhill Parish Council.
- 2 The application was received before the application deadline closed on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023. This proposal has not been previously considered by the CIL Spending Board.

## Description of Proposal

- 3 The proposal is to improve the play facilities at Harvestfield Park. This project includes the installation of a trim trail in the main play area, replacement of the existing swing frames, installation of a multi-use area with markings for various games and a flat surface and space for ball games.
- 4 The new facilities will maximise the potential of existing space by offering an improved play and recreation area for children and young people.

- 5 The application pro forma states that the project forms part of wider improvement works to the park and the wider area to make the park easily accessible, well signposted and well equipped for children's play. The Parish Council is working alongside Sevenoaks District Council Economic Development team to establish ownership of the access road leading to Harvestfield. There is further intention to improve access and signage to the park and future funding opportunities will be explored when funding rounds are available.

## **Funding**

- 6 The applicant, Crockenhill Parish Council, has estimated that the total cost of the project is £43,109.
- 7 Crockenhill Parish Council will be contributing £3,000 towards the project.
- 8 Crockenhill Parish Council has identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support its application to the Board:
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF): £4,000
- 9 It should be noted that the application pro forma states that the applicant has been unable to secure additional funding towards the project. It is not clear from the application submitted whether the outstanding £16,109 is secured to fund the project.
- 10 Therefore, to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, Crockenhill Parish Council has applied to the Board for £20,000 of CIL funding. This equates to 46% of the total project cost.

## **Representations and Support**

- 11 The application submitted indicates that the applicant is not working in partnership with any other organisation to deliver the scheme.
- 12 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
- Councillor Rachel Waterton (Crockenhill & Well Hill)
  - Crockenhill Primary School

## **Officer's Appraisal of Bid**

- 13 Assessment criteria met:
- Strong social benefit to the community;
  - Strong link between new development and the scheme;
  - The scheme is identified in an adopted strategy or plan;
  - Significant public benefit;
  - Clear evidence to show that the scheme will be delivered;

- Strong local support;
- The scheme does not already benefit from CIL funding.

14 Assessment criteria not met:

- Weak economic and environmental benefits to the community;
- Lack of partnership working;
- Funding not maximised from other sources;
- The scheme does not contribute towards the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

Appraisal of strongly performing criteria

*Strong social benefit to the community*

- 15 When considering an application for CIL funding from the Board, it must be demonstrated that there are clear economic, social and environmental benefits to the scheme proposed. This enhances the sustainability case as to whether the scheme should receive CIL funding.
- 16 The proposal demonstrates a strong social benefit to the community by providing improved play facilities at an important area of open space in the parish. Harvestfield Park attracts many visitors in and out of the parish and provides a large, open space for relaxation and recreation. The applicant notes that the park is in dire need of improvement to allow for its potential to be maximised and enjoyed by more visitors. Free and accessible facilities are an integral part of community life and provide a place for children to play and their parents/guardians an informal opportunity to engage with one another. Therefore, the project performs strongly against this criteria.

*Strong link between new development and the scheme*

- 17 As detailed in the above paragraph, the applicant has identified development which is taking place nearby the project's location, namely Swanley. The applicant notes that many children living in Swanley will attend Crockenhill Primary School and Pre-School. As an urban settlement, Swanley is identified as a growth location in the Regulation 18 version of the emerging Local Plan. It is therefore considered sufficient evidence has been provided to link the project to new development.

*The scheme is identified in an adopted strategy or plan*

- 18 The project is not identified in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan or Infrastructure Funding Statement. It should be noted that CIL funding can be allocated to projects outside of these plans.
- 19 The project has been identified in the Parish Council's 4-year plan which assesses local needs annually alongside budget planning for the year. The project meets the requirement for this criteria.

### *Significant public benefit*

- 20 The applicant has identified new development in the nearby areas which typically lack outdoor amenity and play space, in this instance, high density housing of mostly flats and family houses with small gardens. It is considered that improved play facilities will provide a suitable location for play for existing residents and be an attractive option for new residents in nearby locations. It is therefore considered that the project will provide substantial public benefit.

### *Clear evidence to show that the scheme will be delivered*

- 21 The applicant has the legal right to carry out the scheme. The applicant states that planning permission or any other consents are not required to proceed with the project. In the application submitted, it has been stated that the Clerk and the Chairman of the Parish Council will project manage the scheme which is anticipated to take 2 months. Regular updates will be provided to update Sevenoaks District Council on the project's progress. The ongoing maintenance has been considered which will be included in the Parish Council budget plan. Therefore, it is considered the project is likely to be delivered efficiently and would be well-managed in the longer term.

### *Strong local support*

- 22 The applicant has carried out consultation with school children to understand the types of play equipment they would want to play on. The headteacher for Crockenhill Primary School has expressed support for the proposal and the Ward Member, Councillor Waterton, is supportive of the scheme.

### *The scheme does not already benefit from CIL funding*

- 23 The scheme has not previously been considered by the CIL Spending Board so has not benefited from SDC CIL funding.

### Other considerations

#### *CIL exemptions*

- 24 The applicant has confirmed that they have not previously benefitted from a CIL exemption for the project. In accordance with the CIL Charging Schedule, CIL is chargeable on the following developments: residential, supermarkets and superstores and retail warehousing. The proposed works would not fall within these remits and as such would not be subject to a CIL charge.
- 25 Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the applicant has not previously and would not benefit from a CIL exemption for the proposal.

### Appraisal of weakly performing criteria

#### *Weak economic and environmental benefits to the community*

- 26 The environmental benefits stated refer to the wider improvement of Harvestfield Park rather than in relation to the specific project. Whilst it is commendable that works are ongoing to improve the park's environment, it is not clear how this project would have an environmental benefit. Therefore, the project performs weakly on this criteria.
- 27 The applicant notes that the project may attract visitors to the area increasing footfall in the village and patronage at the local facilities and businesses supporting the local economy. It is considered that these are localised benefits. Therefore, the project performs weakly on this criteria.

*Lack of partnership working*

- 28 It is noted that there has been some involvement from school children from Crockenhill Primary School on the choosing of suitable equipment. The applicant will solely be responsible delivering the project. There is no indication of financial contribution from any other organisations. Therefore, the project performs weakly on this criteria.

*Funding not maximised from other sources*

- 29 In regard to the funding, it is not clear from the application pro forma what other sources of funding are in place outside of the Parish Council contribution of £3,000 and external fund of £4,000. Should Board Members be minded to recommend CIL funding be granted, it could be conditioned that all funding is in place prior to the transfer of the CIL funding.
- 30 The applicant will be carrying out further quotes for the works in accordance with the Parish Council's procurement policy. It is noted that should a design be chosen which costs less than £30,000, the Parish Council will reimburse any surplus CIL funding received over £17,000 if required. It should be noted in this case, the requested amount of CIL would be a larger portion of the overall total equating to 51%.
- 31 The applicant states that additional funding sources have been unsuccessful. It would be beneficial to understand the amount and sources of applications to understand whether funding has been maximised. Therefore, the project performs weakly on this criteria.

*The scheme does not contribute towards the Council's commitment to tackling climate change*

- 32 The applicant states that the project, alongside the wider improvement works to the park and surrounding area, will improve biodiversity and enhance the green space. However, there is insufficient information submitted to demonstrate this. Therefore, the project performs weakly on this criteria.

## Conclusion

- 33 Crockenhill Parish Council has submitted an application to the Board for funding to improve the play facilities at Harvestfield Park.
- 34 There would be great social and public benefit in improving the play facilities at the park. The project is supported by the local community and sufficient evidence demonstrates it would be deliverable and well managed. This would contribute as a starting point to the wider improvements of Harvestfield Park and area. The project has not benefitted from CIL previously.
- 35 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £20,000 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project, subject to a condition that ensures that funding for the full cost of the project is secured before the CIL funding is released. It is clearly demonstrated that the scheme provides clear public benefits and approving this bid would provide good value for CIL money applied for, compared to the cost of the overall project.

### Appendices

Applicant's original bid pro-forma and supporting information

### Background Papers

None

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