

TITLE OF REPORT: WATER PLAY FEATURE, AVENUE PARK, BALDOCK**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Members of the Baldock and District Committee on proposals to provide a sustainable water play feature at Avenue Park.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Historically, many parks throughout the country had paddling pools which provide the opportunity for children to have wet play.
- 2.2 Due to high maintenance and running costs, along with increasing concerns about Health & Safety, the majority of these have been closed and in many cases filled in.
- 2.3 For many years the paddling pool at Avenue Park has played an important role in providing wet play for the children of Baldock and the surrounding area.

3. CURRENT ISSUES

- 3.1 Due to its age, the condition of the paddling pool has detracted to such an extent that it is now hardly able to hold water. There are numerous cracks and leaks which are constantly being repaired in an attempt to reduce the leakage. The equivalent of two bath taps need to be constantly turned on to maintain the water level.
- 3.2 With standing water there is always the risk of broken glass being hidden on the pool base with the potential of causing serious injury to young children.
- 3.3 To comply with current guidelines and to minimize the danger to users, NHDC are required to employ an attendant to supervise the pool when in use.
- 3.4 The pool surround is also uneven and requires constant maintenance to avoid trip hazards.
- 3.5 Whilst every effort is undertaken to maintain water quality, there is always the risk of contaminants entering the water, either by young children not wearing swimming nappies or by animals entering the water. If this occurs, the pool needs to be taken out of use, drained and cleaned.
- 3.6 The current running cost of the pool is in the region of £20K per annum. In that it is only open for approximately 14 weeks per year, this equates to a running cost of approximately £1,500 per week.

- 3.7 Once the pool is filled, the water needs to be constantly circulated by pumps and filters with chemicals being added to maintain the correct pH and chlorine levels. This is not energy or cost efficient, as often on dull or wet days the pool may receive little or no usage.

4. CAPITAL INVESTMENT

- 4.1 Improvements to town centre parks feature highly in the Council's adopted Green Space Strategy. In view of this, a £150K capital allowance has been allocated for works to provide a wet play facility at Avenue Park.
- 4.2 For the reasons listed in Item 3 in this report, it is not viable to try to continue to provide a paddling pool based on the old design and officers have investigated sustainable options to provide a water play feature that has exciting play opportunity for future generations of children.

5. PROPOSAL

- 5.1 Rather than continue to provide a static body of water of water with limited play value and high running costs, it is intended to use the footprint of the paddling pool to provide an area of interactive water play.
- 5.2 The new facility will comprise of a variety of play features including water jets and fountains. These are activated by children using the feature. When in use the water will drain to form shallow ponds with a connecting stream in which children can also paddle.
- 5.3 The feature would use fresh mains water that would not need to be treated by chemicals or kept running when the feature was not in use. The mains water would only enter the system when activated by a child. After use, the water would drain into a storage tank and be reused to irrigate the bowling green and cricket table. The storage tank would also have a standpipe facility to allow water to be drawn off into a bowser and used to irrigate new trees and plants in the locality.
- 5.4 Due to the lack of permanent standing water there is no need to provide an attendant and the risk from hidden broken glass is greatly reduced. Any litter can easily be swept off the dry surface.
- 5.5 As there is no need for complex pumping, filtration systems or chemicals the ongoing maintenance cost would be greatly reduced.
- 5.6 The proposals for the paddling pool have been widely consulted on and local school children have been involved in selecting the individual water jets they would like to see in the new feature. Appendix 1 details the design of the new feature.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Area Committee note the report.

7. APPENDICES

Design of water play feature.

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Ustigate waterplay



Multiple streams spray water out at symmetrical angles from the Geyser forming an elegant fountain effect. The soft frothy water falling down forms a contrast to the more powerful streams spraying up from the center.



A Splashpad wouldn't be complete without at least one Spray Cannon. Splashpadders can rotate the Spray Cannon to aim the spray higher, lower, and side to side. Perfect for high-energy areas of this Splashpad. Spray Cannons are almost always in full use!



Reminiscent of a car wash with its multiple symmetrical jets, the arch is designed for maximum soaking! Even the tallest family members can stand up completely under the arch to enjoy thorough refreshment.



The Water Tunnel is a wonderful cross-generational play event that encourages active play in a big space. Splashpadders can run under the arch to enjoy the mist or experience the feeling from the powerful water jets spraying up compared to the softer sprays falling down.



A shallow toddlers pool and a deeper wading pool for older children, with beach entry, maintains the paddling element at the park whilst providing the area with a vibrant new design.



VORTEX
Splashpad

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