



Project Proposal: Playground Upgrade 2025

Introduction

This proposal is submitted under the powers afforded to the council in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19, the power to provide a wide range of recreational facilities.

The estimated value attributable to any one contractor does not exceed the maximum £25000 that would make it subject to Regulations 109-114 of the Public Contracts Regulations, 2015 – the requirement to select a supplier through Contracts Finder.

This Proposal represents the first element of the procurement process as stipulated in council policy CP19, Procurement Policy, for council to accrue a fiscal liability. The simplified stages of the Procurement Policy are outlined in Appendix I.

At a General Meeting of Council held on 23 July 2024 it was accepted the ground surface of the playground has deteriorated to such an extent as to render it unfit for purpose and now represents a significant driver of poor resident perceptions of council oversight.

It was agreed this could be attributed, at that time, to the removal of original wooden play equipment, alleged to be unsafe and an exceptional spell of dry weather - combining to render the condition of the playground surface unacceptable for both current and future development as a community amenity.

In addition, since then, the ground surface deterioration was further exacerbated by the installation of new items of play equipment in June 2025, following an inappropriate, contractual ground surface specification and unprofessional installation [albeit independently signed off on completion].

In order for council to fully consider a rectification strategy, the General Meeting of 22 July 2025 authorised the convening an Extra-Ordinary Meeting to be held on 5th August 2025 to also consider any contractor proposals/ submissions to hand at that time.

This Proposal now details the recommended strategy for addressing the situation now pertaining in Financial Year 2025-26 and includes necessary council resolutions arising and Fiscal Risk Assessments by the RFO (Ref: Council Procurement Policy CP19).

Proposal

The short/medium term strategy naturally falls into two parts with a longer-term expansion plan to follow, which may extend over multiple financial years depending on the availability of earmarked reserves and the successful acquisition of external, third-party grant awards as they may arise:

Part 1 Reconstitution of ground condition.

(a) Existing condition –

Following the removal of original equipment considered to be unsafe in 2024, depressions and undulations in the ground surface are consistent with potential hazard and an unsatisfactory visual appearance compromising the perception of council oversight.

(b) Rectification of substandard installation -

The ground cover system, under new equipment installed in June 2025, although installed as commissioned and quoted and signed off as safe on completion, has proved to be unsuitable and unfit for intended purpose. A single layer of plastic matting, laid to untreated ground contour, resulted in a significant trip hazard and source of multiple adverse user comments. The installer has been contacted to make immediate reparations under warranty and without cost to the council. The trip hazard around the edges of the plastic matting has been addressed but the ground covering remains less than professional. Whilst it was expected that the visual appearance of the natural ground contour will improve over time, as grass grows through the plastic covering, it is felt rectification should be progressed more urgently and without delay.

The Chairman has contacted three groundwork contractors. Two have attended site visits and quoted. These are detailed in Appendix II.

The Chairman has undertaken to reconstitute all affected areas, arising from both the removal of old equipment and the installation of new equipment, with two layers of top soil and grass seed and to maintain by regular watering with assistance from the Village Hall providing access to water.

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The council would like to thank EKFB (HS2) for their rapid provision of safety fencing around the area during works and signage preventing access.

Fiscal Risk Assessment by the RFO (Ref: Council Procurement Policy CP19) – it is noted the warranty work will be executed without charge to the council but regular maintenance activity is required to prevent recurrent hazard.

The Chairman has agreed to resurface with top soil and seed areas affected. Purchase of necessary materials to be authorised by resolution.

It is recommended, therefore, so far as fiscal risk is concerned, council consider initiating a standing agreement for the provision of scheduled professional third-party support to minimise contingency risk and to maintain active council oversight at all times.

Resolution of full council (dated 5th August 2025): to invoke warranty as applicable to reconstitute ground surface following incorrect specification and substandard installation; to authorise purchase of top soil and grass seed sufficient to cover affected areas; to authorise purchase of ground maintenance watering equipment; to negotiate costing for access to village hall water supply; and to setup third-party regular maintenance.

Part 2 Acquisition of substantive new equipment.

It is recognised a now vacant area of the playground is suitable for a substantive new piece of equipment. It is proposed the specification criteria for this be to maximise multiple activity types, encourage healthy outdoor activity, suitability for a wide age profile ranging from 7 to 15 years.

The Chairman has invited seven equipment suppliers to submit proposals/ recommendations and to quote, five of which have attended site visits and quoted. The contractors involved are detailed in Appendix II.

At the EGM of 5th August 2025, the Chairman made a visual presentation of the proposals submitted. The Kompan proposal was accepted by unanimous resolution. The Chairman would ensure any non-cost-effective items be removed from the quote. The meeting authorised the issue of the purchase order in line with the revised, final quote.

In addition, it was confirmed the ground surface would be addressed for viable sustainability and resilience in line with purpose. All proposals, except Wicksteed, included the area beneath each item of equipment, extending to a statutory diameter, be provided in wet pour. This reduces long-term maintenance fiscal risk while ensuring safety and fitness for purpose.

Fiscal Risk Assessment by the RFO (Ref: Council Procurement Policy CP19) – it is noted council is progressing multiple sources of third-party grant funding. Council has so far been successful in obtaining commitments from several third-party grant providers which, together with council earmarked reserves, specifically earmarked for subject purpose, indicate there is sufficient fiscal headroom to action the PO.

Resolution (dated 5th August 2025): to accept the Kompan proposal in specification and cost. To issue the purchase order against a revised quote.

Part 3 Long term development of Parts 1 & 2.

The Council will continue to maintain an earmarked reserves balance for playground development and will pursue grant funding from third party grant awarding bodies and organisations.

Pending availability of adequate funding, council will seek quotes from relevant expert contractors for both equipment and/or surface improvement as it may become available.

Fiscal Risk Assessment by the RFO (Ref: Council Procurement Policy CP19) – it is noted council intends to progress multiple sources of third-party grant funding as they may become available. Council has a good track record of successful grant applications and policy ensures accruing a fiscal liability will be subject to funding availability and council resolution. Given these provisos, council will ensure there is sufficient fiscal headroom to action any PO.

Resolutions to follow as development plans are submitted to council.

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**APPENDIX I – SIMPLIFIED PROCUREMENT PROCESS
FOR PROJECTS OF TOTAL VALUE ABOVE £500 AND LESS THAN £25000**

Any Councillor may raise a proposal to procure a product or service by raising a Project Proposal in the approved format. Any Procurement process authorised to follow these steps;

- 1) Submit the proposal to full council for authority to proceed, by resolution. The Proposal to include a fiscal risk assessment, by the RFO, of any council liability to include any potential for amendment;
- 2) On approval, council may authorise the Clerk to obtain at least two quotations, identifying the council objective(s) and providing a closing date for submissions;
- 3) Quotes, as available, are reviewed, all at the same time, by full council following the closing date and a supplier selected at which time the clerk is authorised to raise a purchase order on the chosen supplier and issue;
- 4) On acceptance of the PO, by the supplier, the Clerk will establish a start and finish date, monitor progress to full realisation and submit any amendments, to specification or timing, to full council, with input from the RFO, prior to acceptance, such as to identify any fiscal or operational risk posed by the amendment;
- 5) On acceptance of the amendment by council, the Clerk will liaise with the supplier to minimise any impact on the project objectives.
- 6) On completion, the Clerk will submit the supplier completion report and any safety or other certifications, issued by an independent third party professional capable of issuing an industry standard certification of the deliverable, as may be applicable, to full council for acceptance;
- 7) The RFO will monitor throughout and recommend payment of due invoice(s) or to delay payment subject to any outstanding actions by the supplier being completed.
- 8) By agreement of full council to proceed, the Chairman to pay due invoice(s) at the next payment run.

APPENDIX II – CONTRACTOR SELECTION

For ground works.

The following were contacted. Two quotes were forthcoming.

- Colin Rickard
- Garden Force Ltd
- Dearn Brothers

For equipment supply & installation

The following made proposals:

Kompan was selected by unanimous resolution

The following have been notified, with thanks, as unsuccessful (email 5th August 2025):

- Caloo
- Wicksteed
- Redlynch
- Proludic

Proposal ends. Author: Acting RFO Dated: 5th August 2025