

Project to upgrade the Village Play Park

Following recent communications it has become clear that there are a lot of questions regarding the Play Park Project. Now that we are at the fundraising stage, we feel the need to get more information out to you on the current progress of this project and to clarify the current plans.

What has been the process of consultation with village residents?

The Parish Council has been aware in recent years of the need to renew the children's Play Park equipment. Initial consultation processes were carried out, with the outcomes demonstrating there was overwhelming support for this project to begin. For example, out of the 81 adults who responded to the consultation (representing 177 children who use the facility) 99% supported the plans and agreed for the Parish Council to go out and seek funding. It was recognised that our play equipment is very outdated and greatly in need of modernisation to bring it in line with the quality of provision in nearby villages and current safety standards.

The Parish Council subsequently sought quotes from at least 4 providers, all who carried out initial site surveys, leading to Sovereign Play Equipment being the preferred provider. The public felt this was the best design, providing visual harmony in our rural setting. Residents felt that the use of sustainable timber in the design was of utmost importance in the natural environment and were strongly against any use of plastics and garish colours. Sovereign are a well-established company providing high quality equipment and good value for money.

From the requests in the children's questionnaire, of which there were 90 responses, a design was generated using the most popular and desired pieces of equipment. We wanted to ensure that the chosen equipment would ultimately meet the needs of a range of ages and play value including physical, imaginative and social play. This plan can be found on the Parish Council website www.lwerneminsterparishcouncil.gov.uk

The costs

We recognise that a complete renewal of the play equipment to current British Safety standards is going to be expensive. As with any project of this nature, the goal for the Parish Council is to aim for the best outcome with high quality equipment, longevity, sustainable and best overall value. Modern day play equipment requires safety surfacing and this is a significant part of the cost.

For example:

- A replacement good sized climbing frame with tower and slides etc will be £30,500 plus wet pour safety surfacing costs nearly £20,000.
- To replace and extend the swings to be more inclusive (including toddler, junior and disabled swings) would cost £8,000 plus safety surfacing costs of £14,400. Adding a very popular caterpillar swing £7,600 +
- The removal and disposal of existing equipment will be £6,000 (this includes waste management fees)

So you can see how this could quickly add up to £200,000 for the children's vision. If this goal for funding is not met there will be ways in which we will tailor the design to meet the finances raised. We have worked through processes for costing and once we have the funding this will dictate which variances and choices that can ultimately be made.

We could approach this project in stages over several years. However, to achieve the least amount of disruption and to achieve cost effectiveness it is the Council's desire to complete the project in one single upgrade. There are costs involved in site management and ultimately prices will increase over time.

How will the project be funded?

We have extensively researched funding options and it has become quite clear that to be successful with grant providers for this type of project, we have to demonstrate contributions through our own fundraising. The Parish Council have launched a Crowdfunding page for the first £100,00 and have ring fenced an initial £12,000 for the project. We are seeking community support for local fundraising events over the next 2 years and are looking to form a steering group of willing helpers. We will continue to apply for grants as a Parish Council with the aim of raising as much as possible to reach our goal of creating a Play Park to be proud of.

Will the Play Park be re-located?

There has been confusion over a possible relocation for the Playpark from its current position to the Parish Field. This has not been formally discussed by the Parish Council but is an option that we do need to explore with residents. During the consultation period several members of the community made the suggestion that the Parish Field, in itself a great asset, would be an ideal space for locating play equipment. Not in any way to take over the field, just to combine the Village Clubhouse facilities and better parking with recreational and sporting facilities for children of all ages. We do recognise that this is a significant change for the village and would involve a rethink about the use of our two recreational spaces. Please note that both these sites can only be used for community recreational purposes.

As this was raised as a valued option for families, Parish Councillors will consult and release a consultation process in the near future. All aspects and impact of this change including costs, will be considered and communicated at this time.

Please note: The costs and plans to date have been for keeping the playpark in the existing location.

How will the Parish Council ensure residents are kept updated on progress?

We recognise that residents do need to be kept well informed as we move forward with the project. To do this we will:

- Add information on the project to the Parish Council website
- Provide updates through the village Newsletter including total of funds raised

In addition we are always willing to answer any questions through Parish Council email. clerk@iwerneminsterparishcouncil.gov.uk

Improving our recreational facilities in Iwerne Minster is a significant but much needed project for our village to undertake. It will require support and commitment from our village if we want to achieve the best outcome for our current and future children.

With many thanks for your support.

Councillor Kerry O'Connor and Councillor Heather Overton

Iwerne Minster Parish Council