

Play Area Working Group – Meeting Notes

11th November 2025

Present:

- **Andrew Briggs** – CSNPC Operations Manager
- **Andy Reeves** – CSNPC Clerk
- **Cllr James Yeowell** – Working Group Chair
- **Cllr John Ballman**
- **Cllr Mick Lucas**
- **Cllr Paul Exell** (online)
- **Mike Ware** – Idverde Grounds Manager
- **Anna Bird** – Mums on a Mission

Apologies:

- Cllr Paul Park
- Becky Maddern

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Cllr Yeowell opened the meeting and apologised for the long gap since the previous meeting.
- Introductions completed.

2. Review of Previous Meeting Notes

- Notes from the May 25 meeting were reviewed.
- One correction noted: minutes were incorrectly dated “9th May 2024” and should reflect the correct year of 2025.
- Actions from last meeting largely complete:
 - Concepts shared with Lewis Bird (now moved roles).
 - Visit to Barnet play sites completed.
 - Tender process for Rodbourne Cheney Play Area completed.

3. Get Swindon Active – Inclusive Play Conference

Report from attendees:

- Conference organised via Swindon Borough Council's Get Swindon Active partnership.
- Good attendance (C. 30), including SBC teams, external organisations, and guest speakers from Play England and advocates for safer spaces for women and girls.

Key reflections:

- Some presentations were not as focused on disability / accessibility as expected.
- Discussion on fenced vs. unfenced play areas highlighted differing views; SEND families often require fencing for safety, while national guidance leans towards open access.
- Real life SEND considerations were emphasised, including:
 - Nonverbal children needing secure environments.
 - Parents needing a safe perimeter to supervise multiple children.
- Conference speakers left before discussions on inclusive play equipment, which was noted as disappointing.

Takeaways:

- Value in continuing town wide conversations on inclusive play.
- Opportunity for future events with improved format, more time for questions, and wider perspectives.

4. Update: Rodbourne Cheney Play Area

- **Project delivered successfully:**
 - On time, on budget, high quality installation.
 - Documentation, warranties, aftercare all provided.
- **Public response positive:** high usage, positive feedback from families including SEND families.
- **Comments from attendees:**
 - Very successful project; considered “one of the best play parks in Swindon” for inclusive design.
 - Further development in the wider area being explored:
 - Refurbishment of changing rooms into community hub.
 - Potential landscaping and footpaths.
 - Ideas for older children’s play area and possible MUGA.

5. Play Area Capital Programme – Budget & Next Steps

- **General play budget for year:**
 - £10,000 allocated; approx. £2,000 remaining (to be used for St Mark’s safety work).
- **Capital budget:**
 - Total approx. £250,000.
 - C. £35,000 already contributed to Rodbourne Cheney.

- £16,000 allocated to Inglesham Road zipwire project.
- Approx. £200,000 remaining for other projects.
- **Earmarked reserves:**
 - Barnum Court: ~£4,500
 - Alanbrooke Crescent: ~£5,000

Direct Award Option via Wicksteed

- As part of the Rodbourne Cheney tender, Wicksteed can provide quotes/designs for future play areas without retendering.
- However, direct award is *not* mandatory; councillors can reject designs/prices and re-tender if desired.

Next priority sites identified:

1. **Barnum Court** – very small site, ageing wooden train structure, large tree complicating groundworks.
2. **Alanbrooke Crescent** – larger site but currently sparse equipment, needs full refurbishment.

Initial discussion points:

- Consideration of different functionality for neighbouring play areas (younger vs older age range).
- Requirement to avoid replicating Pembroke Gardens at every site but retain philosophy of inclusivity.
- Community consultation essential before final design choices.
- Initial designs to be produced and brought to future meeting.

6. Edinburgh Street Rec – Safety & Long Term Plan

- Recent inspections show:
 - Exposed concrete bases.
 - Rotten timber posts and edging.
 - Random collection of older equipment with limited play value.
 - Bark surfacing inconsistent and not accessible.
- Site is regularly used, highly visible, and passed daily by school children, so safety issues must be addressed urgently.

Immediate Safety Actions Discussed:

- Removal of seating and digging out exposed concrete considered highest priority.
- General consensus: the site needs significant redesign, not minor patch repairs.

Longer-Term Options:

- Possible removal of bark surfacing and reinstating grass with ground matting as a temporary solution.
- Full redevelopment to be considered as part of the capital programme.

7. Ferndale Outdoor Gym Proposal

- Councillors exploring installation of accessible outdoor gym equipment along the Western Flyer.
- Total project cost approx. £12k–£15k (equipment + installation).
- Awaiting landowner permission from Swindon Borough Council; follow up email sent.

8. Any Other Business

- Mums on a Mission praised the parish for substantial improvements to inclusive play, especially the Pembroke Gardens project.
- Group availability is more limited due to members' work commitments, but they remain committed to advising on design and equipment selection.
- Agreement that meeting at sites (Barnum Court, Alanbrooke) would be helpful in future.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- To be scheduled once Wicksteed design proposals for Barnum Court and Alanbrooke are received (expected within a few weeks).