

REPORT TO:		Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
DATE:		26 July 2023	
PORTFOLIO:		Cllr Steven Smithson - Environmental Services	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Craig Haraben (Head of Environmental Services)	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Parks Disability Provision	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	Options	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on disability provision in parks.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

3.1 Green spaces are increasingly being recognised as an important asset for supporting health and wellbeing. Evidence shows that living in a greener environment can promote and protect good health and in recovery from illness and assist with managing poor health. People who have greater exposure to green spaces have arrange of more favourable physiological outcomes. Greener environments are also associated with better mental health and wellbeing outcomes including reduced levels of depression, anxiety, fatigue and a better quality of life for both children and adults.

3.2 During the recent pandemic local green spaces became even more important as people were not permitted to travel or didn't want to travel, and utilised their local green spaces more than usual.

3.3 In Hyndburn there is a significant amount of green space for residents to use with a number of the parks gifted to the Borough by wealthy families fuelled by the industrial revolution during the late 1800's and early 1900's. In addition the Council has the largest local nature reserve in Lancashire at Peel Park and the Coppice.

- 3.4 The Council has for some time recognised the value of green space and its benefits for mental health, physical activity, recreational activities, having a connection to nature and its contribution to social cohesion. Over the last 20 years approximately £11 million has been invested in Hyndburn's green spaces to improve facilities and infrastructure, with approximately £7 million coming from external sources.
- 3.5 Access to the 11 major parks in the Borough is open, with footpaths throughout these parks in generally good condition, although local topography means that many parks are naturally undulating. Seven of the parks have parking for disabled users in the park and the other four parks having on street parking directly outside the park.
- 3.6 Sports venues all have car parking associated with them including parking for disabled users and the pavilions have adaptations to ensure they are accessible.
- 3.7 The Council has 28 play areas, 13 multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and 3 tennis courts. All MUGAs are accessible and the three tennis courts can also be accessed, with recent refurbishment works at the tennis courts at Lowerfold adding an improved footpath access.
- 3.8 The Council has 28 play areas and 18 of these pay areas have at least one piece of play equipment which the Council classes as inclusive. Across the 18 play areas there are 56 pieces of equipment which the Council classes as inclusive.
- 3.9 The proposed playground refurbishments at Milton Close in Great Harwood and Mercer Park in Clayton le Moors will contain some inclusive equipment. In addition as part of the leisure transformation project, funding opportunities are being explored with the intention of building a play facility specifically for children with disabilities adjacent to the proposed new leisure centre.
- 3.10 Many of the buildings within parks are old buildings such as Elmfield Hall or Mercer House which were built before there was a legal requirement to make buildings accessible. However accessibility has been improved in these buildings by the installation of lifts. In new buildings in parks, such as the coach house at Rhyddings Park, the buildings can be designed with accessibility in mind.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Portfolio holder and Parks & open spaces staff have been consulted in relation to this report.

6. **Implications**

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	None from this report
Legal and human rights implications	None from this report
Assessment of risk	None from this report
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	None from this report

7. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:**
List of Background Papers

7.1 There are no background papers to this report

8. **Freedom of Information**

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.