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Agenda Item 7 for Community Services Committee – 17 January 2023

The motion was moved as follows by Cllr O’Driscoll at Full Council on 15 December 2022:

"This Council recognises that accessibility to playground equipment for everyone in our communities should be a right and not a luxury,

Furthermore, this Council recognises that an inequality exists where not everybody in our community is able to access playground equipment and will take steps to make sure this inequality no longer exists.

Therefore, this Council commits to providing playground equipment for those in our District with disabilities a long-term health conditions in locations agreed by members of the Community Services Committee at their next meeting and funding shall be made available to provide these facilities before March 2024."

Scope launched their *Let’s Play Fair* campaign last year highlighting the lack of inclusive playgrounds in the UK and call for the investment in these play areas within local communities. They found that:

- **1 in 2 families of children with limited mobility face accessibility problems with their local playground.**
- **1 in 10 parents of children with limited mobility said their child got hurt using inaccessible equipment.**

Local Case Study

A parent of a child with special needs living in Westway ward shared her experience of taking her son to play at the Caterham Barracks Play Area in The Village, Westway. Her son is a wheelchair user.

There was no piece of equipment that he could use safely apart from the swing with leg holes to hold the user inside. She struggled to get him inside the swing given he was eight years old and lifting him in and out caused his mother to injure her back.

While he briefly had fun using the swing, the other parents in the play area stared at her as if she was doing something wrong, given that the swing was not designed for someone of his age or build. This level of unfairness and unjustness could his parent to become upset at the situation and they haven’t returned to the play area in The Village since this situation, despite this being their nearest play area.

They feel that something needs to be done to address the situation so he is able to form friendships and interact with other children in the local community.

Parents have told Scope that the playgrounds they use were not designed with children with special needs in mind, creating barriers such as:

- Lack of inclusive and accessible playground equipment

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- Inaccessible pathways and tight spaces
- Challenging and uneven terrain

All of these barriers limit choice and the right to play for children with limited mobility.

Actions taken by councils in other areas

Mid Sussex District Council

Mid Sussex has invested in inclusive play equipment for children with limited mobility in seven different locations. Six of these locations have wheelchair accessible roundabouts and Worlds End Recreation Ground, Burgess Hill has an accessible swing, sensory panels and path, accessible climbing frame and a quiet retreat area.



The accessible climbing frame and accessible roundabout at Worlds End Recreation Ground in Burgess Hill



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The accessible swing at Worlds End Recreation Ground, Burgess Hill

The roundabout at Fry Crescent, Burgess Hill is wheelchair accessible and the climbing unit has wheelchair accessible platforms. The slide has been specifically designed at the top and bottom to make transfer to and from wheelchairs easier and the drag ramp has handrails at two different heights to enable children with limited mobility to climb to the top using the rope and soft grips.



The climbing unit and accessible roundabout at Fry Crescent, Burgess Hill

A changing places toilet is also provided by Mid Sussex in these areas. Cllr O'Driscoll is awaiting a report from Mid Sussex District Council on this and will circulate with Members when he receives this.

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Reigate & Banstead have invested in Merstham Recreation Ground and have an ongoing plan to renovate the play area to be accessible for everyone. The following is an extract from a news release from April 2022:

"The new play area will feature a variety of equipment for climbing, sliding, swinging, balancing and being creative. It will also include natural elements and sensory opportunities to provide a fun and challenging play experience for children at different stages of development. The play area is designed to be inclusive and accessible, with the aim of being awarded PIPA (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) accreditation. An initial assessment indicates PIPA Gold Accreditation (the highest level)."

The Council have also invested in inclusive play equipment at Priory Park, Reigate with accessible paving, a wheelchair accessible roundabout, see-saws with back supports and sensory equipment in the play area.