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Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	3rd November 2026
Report Title	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Outdoor Spaces
Agenda Reference	17
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Officer's Recommendation:

1. **To note the report and the findings of the SEND Consultation Brunch and ongoing engagement.**
2. **To support continued consultation with children, young people, families, people with SEND and mobility needs, local schools, community organisations and nearby residents.**
3. **To consider the development of a business plan, including indicative capital costs, ongoing maintenance costs, funding strategy, project timescales and risk assessment, and agree the appropriate allocation of Officer time.**
4. **To request a further report setting out the findings of the initial site assessments, consultation, funding investigations and business planning, together with options for progression and any decisions required.**
5. **To note the timeline of proposed milestones.**

Executive Summary

This interim report asks the Community Development Committee to note consultation findings and support further feasibility work for inclusive outdoor provision for children, young people and adults with special educational needs, disabilities or mobility needs. It does not seek selection of a preferred site or approval of a final project.

Consultation identified demand for provision beyond age 12; genuinely inclusive equipment integrated throughout the space; accessible routes and surfacing; sensory, natural-play and quiet areas; and continued involvement of people with lived experience. It also emphasised durability, maintenance, safety and improvements to accessibility across existing play areas.

Possible locations will be discussed with the Play Area Working Party Each site presents questions concerning land availability, accessibility, competing uses, planning, neighbour impact, parking and transport.

Funding routes have yet to be identified and will be picked up by the Play Area Working Party in due course, possible avenues include grants, Council funding, partnerships, sponsorship, fundraising and phased delivery.

The Committee is also asked to consider the development of a business plan to support the initiative.

SEND Consultation Brunch – Key Findings

The SEND Consultation Brunch hosted and presented by Councillors L Stevenson and V Manro, provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with parents, care givers, support workers and people living with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) to gather views on the need for more inclusive play provision and accessible community spaces.

A key message from the discussions was the importance of creating an inclusive space for everyone, where children and young people of different ages, needs and abilities can play, socialise and enjoy the outdoors together. Key topics included:

1. **The need for provision beyond age 12**
   The consultation highlighted a significant gap in provision for older children, teenagers and young adults with SEND. Participants emphasised that sensory, recreational and social needs do not end at age 12, and that existing facilities can quickly become unsuitable as children grow and their mobility needs change. The aspiration is to create a space that supports users across a wider age range and helps reduce social isolation.

2. **What an inclusive play space should look like**
   Feedback stressed that an inclusive play area must offer more than a wheelchair-accessible swing or roundabout. It should provide a variety of equipment and activities that accommodate different physical, sensory and developmental needs, while enabling children and young people to play alongside family and friends. The design should integrate accessible equipment throughout the space rather than segregating users into separate areas.

3. **Specific features to consider**
   Ideas raised included wheelchair-accessible swings, roundabouts, seesaws and trampolines; accessible pathways and level surfacing; sensory trails and tactile play panels; musical features; raised planters; and quiet, calming areas. Equipment must accommodate larger wheelchairs and older users, with sufficient space to manoeuvre safely. Bespoke equipment and specialist options, such as hoists, could also be investigated, subject to feasibility, safety and ongoing supervision requirements.

4. **Meaningful consultation throughout the project**
   A strong message from the brunch was that families and people with lived experience must remain involved throughout the project, from identifying needs and selecting equipment through to reviewing designs and delivery. Previous experiences highlighted that equipment marketed as inclusive does not always work in practice. Where possible, visiting existing installations and assessing equipment in person before procurement could help ensure the final design is genuinely accessible and fit for purpose.

5. **Accessibility across all existing play areas**
   While a dedicated inclusive space could provide a valuable local destination, participants also highlighted the importance of improving accessibility across existing play areas. A new facility should complement, rather than replace, efforts to make other local spaces more welcoming and usable for families with different needs.

6. **Maintenance, durability and long-term value**
   The Parks and Open Spaces team and playground specialists highlighted the importance of selecting robust, high-quality equipment that can accommodate older users and larger mobility aids. Maintenance requirements, warranties, safety, accessibility of routes and long-term replacement costs must be considered from the outset to ensure the facility remains safe, reliable and usable over time.

7. **Funding and partnership opportunities**
   The consultation confirmed that external funding and partnership working will be important to progressing the project. Further discussions with SBC, grant providers, community organisations and potential funding partners could help identify opportunities beyond the Council's existing budget. The project has also been identified as a budget aspiration within Parks and Open Spaces, providing a basis for continued consideration.

8. **Equipment & Accessible Facilities**
   The feedback highlighted the potential value of incorporating a combination of features, including:
   - Inclusive play equipment suitable for children with a range of physical, sensory and additional needs.
   - Sensory spaces that support different sensory preferences and provide opportunities for calm, exploration and engagement.
   - Planters and natural play features to encourage interaction with the natural environment.
   - Open green space for informal play, family activities and socialising.
   - Accessible facilities, including wheelchair-accessible play opportunities and equipment suitable for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
   - Consideration of older children and young people, including feedback from teenage girls gathered through the CLAP and engagement with local schools.

The consultation reinforced the importance of considering the needs of the whole community rather than focusing solely on traditional play equipment. A well-designed space could provide opportunities for play, wellbeing, social interaction and connection with nature.

Further engagement will be required to ensure that the views of children, young people, families and SEND communities are fully reflected in any future proposals.

Consultation Next Steps
The consultation remains live. Ideas include:

1. Going into local SEND care homes and speaking with residents directly
2. Hosting an assembly/ parent evening with SEND Secondary School parents and colleges
3. Ongoing engagement with partnership organisations and those who attended the Consultation Brunch or responded to surveys
4. Continuation/Development within the Community Led Action Plan engagement sessions

Potential Locations and Initial Ideas
Discussions are continuing with the Parks & Open Spaces Team to identify and assess suitable locations. Several initial possibilities have been identified for further consideration. Any final location will be subject to further Council approval and community consultation to properties living nearby.

The Council must also consider whether there is an opportunity to enhance a play area that needs refurbishment and change the scope to meet some of the SEND criteria.

This will be discussed further with the Play Area Working Party in mid-November ahead of budget setting and presented at the Parks & Open Spaces Committee meeting early-December.

Funding Opportunities
Funding opportunities are being investigated and options will be presented to the Play Area Working Party.

Create a Business Plan
The next step should be creating a business plan should include:
- **Project aims and objectives:** The needs the facility will address and the benefits for children, young people, families and people with SEND or mobility needs.
- **Location and demand:** Potential sites, accessibility, local demand and consultation with residents and intended users.

- **Capital costs:** Estimated costs for design, equipment, groundworks, installation and associated infrastructure.
- **Funding strategy:** Potential grants, Council contributions, precept, reserves, sponsorship, donations and partnership funding.
- **Ongoing costs:** Inspections, maintenance, repairs, insurance and future equipment replacement.
- **Delivery plan:** Proposed timescales, key milestones and the possibility of a phased approach.
- **Partnerships and community engagement:** Opportunities to work with Swindon Borough Council, neighbouring parishes, schools, SEND organisations, local businesses and community groups.
- **Risk assessment:** Financial risks, planning requirements, site suitability, safeguarding, accessibility and long-term management responsibilities.

The business plan would help the Council compare the available options, establish realistic project costs, support funding applications and make an informed decision about whether and how to proceed.

Further evidence of community need is paramount for creating a business plan. The Council must scrutinise whether the parish is the correct location for this provision given the scale of the investment.

Proposed Timeline and Key Milestones
The following timeline sets out the proposed stages for progressing the inclusive SEND outdoor space project. Dates beyond the scheduled meetings are indicative and may be subject to Officer capacity, consultation requirements, site assessments and funding opportunities.

Date / Period	Activity	Intended Outcome
3 November 2026	Community Development Committee	Present this interim report, note the consultation findings and initial location options, and consider the proposed next steps, including business plan development and allocation of Officer time.
Mid-November 2026	Play Area Working Party	Review the condition and refurbishment costs of existing play areas, consider opportunities to incorporate inclusive features into refurbishment programmes, and discuss potential locations for a dedicated inclusive play space.
November 2026	Initial site and funding investigations	Begin gathering information on site suitability, land availability, accessibility, planning considerations, indicative costs and potential funding sources, subject to available Officer capacity.
End of November 2026	Full Council	Consider the initial findings and any recommendations arising from the Community Development Committee and Play Area Working Party. Agree the direction of further feasibility work and any necessary actions in preparation for budget setting.
As required during budget setting	Budget-setting meetings	Consider potential budget provision, reserves, annual funding contributions, match funding and the feasibility of a phased approach. Ensure any proposed allocation is considered alongside the Council's other financial commitments.
December 2026 – January 2027	Business plan and feasibility development	Subject to approval and available resources, develop an initial business plan covering potential locations, project scope, capital and ongoing costs, funding strategy, risks, consultation and delivery options.

January – March 2027	Further consultation and funding enquiries	Continue engagement with families, young people, SEND organisations, schools, community groups and nearby residents as appropriate. Investigate relevant grants, partnership opportunities and supplier costs.
Spring 2027	Further Committee / Council report	Present the findings of the feasibility work, consultation and funding investigations, together with an initial business plan, preferred options and indicative costs for consideration.
Following Council approval	Detailed design and delivery planning	Subject to approval, funding and any necessary permissions, progress detailed design, procurement, funding applications and a delivery programme.
Future delivery phase	Implementation and review	Deliver the agreed project, potentially in phases depending on funding and priorities, and establish arrangements for maintenance, accessibility reviews and ongoing user feedback.