
Disposal of Ramsbury Drive Play Area to Hungerford Town Council

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	21 May 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Nigel Foot
Report Author:	Matthew Hart

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider Hungerford Town Council (HTC) request for the leasehold transfer, and all future maintenance responsibility, of Ramsbury Drive Play Park not including the open space.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the land is transferred to Hungerford Town Council (HTC) on a long lease of at least 75 years.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>There will be a future small saving to West Berkshire Council as HTC will take on all future maintenance of the site both in terms of revenue and capital.</p> <p>HTC have asked for a capital sum of 13k which WBC had previously identified as being required for key upgrades to be passed to them as part of the transfer.</p>
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	<p>Heads of Terms have been agreed in principle between both parties. The disposal of Ramsbury Drive Play Park will be advertised in accordance section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.</p>

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	<p>The usual covenants preventing disposal or development form part of the heads of terms and will also be included in the lease.</p> <p>Discussions will have to take place with the grounds maintenance contractor as this play park will be removed from the Grounds Maintenance Contract. There is a minimal saving but a benefit in terms of contractor capacity.</p>
Risk Management:	<p>There is a reduction in risk to West Berkshire Council as HTC become responsible for the playground. All liabilities for the play park pass to the Town Council.</p>
Property:	<p>None</p>
Policy:	<p>This proposal supports the council's commitment to locally-led service delivery.</p>

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		The town council may need to take their own advice on equalities provision when the playground has to be upgraded. This advice is however available from suppliers. HTC will know their local community requirements better than WBC.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		As above there may be some positive outcomes in this respect.

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Environmental Impact:		✓		No negative environmental impacts.
Health Impact:	✓			Children's play has undoubted mental and physical health benefits.
ICT Impact:		✓		None
Digital Services Impact:		✓		None
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			Ensures sustainable play and open space provision through innovation and partnerships
Core Business:	✓			As above this proposal ensures sustainable play and open space provision through innovation and partnerships. Play provision is core business within Environment.
Data Impact:		✓		None

Consultation and Engagement:	Hungerford Town Council, Devolution Working Group, which includes Legal and Property Service representatives.
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Hungerford Town Council (HTC) submitted a request to have this playground transferred into their care on a long lease in accordance with our devolution commitments. At their last meeting they agreed to a draft heads of terms for the transfer of play areas and want to progress this transfer as soon as practicable.
- 4.2 The play park at Ramsbury Drive is a small children's play area which is generally in good condition, but which requires some capital investment to bring some items of play equipment up to modern standards.
- 4.3 Routine annual maintenance costs for Ramsbury Drive play park are minimal. One off repairs and maintenance costs are approximately £500/annum. HTC have asked for a capital sum of 13k which WBC had previously identified as being required for key upgrades to be passed to them as part of the transfer.
- 4.4 This play park can be devolved to the town council on a long lease on terms to be determined in line with other lease arrangements.
- 4.5 This proposal offers an opportunity for West Berkshire Council to support the devolution agenda and place this play park asset at the appropriate level of government to ensure that they are maintained appropriately and continue to meet the requirements of the local community into the future.
- 4.6 Hungerford Town Council will potentially have greater access to the necessary CIL funding required within HTC, specifically capital funding, to ensure these play assets remain available to the public.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 HTC expressed an interest in the transfer of this play area some time ago and have formally agreed a draft Heads of terms for the transfer. This accords with WBC's devolution aspirations and the recent Parish Brochure which sets out which assets and functions that WBC are seeking to transfer to local town or parish council's.
 - 5.2 HTC will be provided with the most up to date RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) report prior to transfer. This report will confirm the condition of the play equipment at that stage, which is in a good condition.
 - 5.3 If this proposal is agreed by this council then HTC will undertake and fund all ongoing maintenance costs and capital investment in the play park from the point of transfer.
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Background

5.4 A plan of Ramsbury Drive is provided within the supporting information below. Ramsbury Drive is an area of open space with a small play park which transferred to West Berkshire Council after the area was developed for housing. The children's play park is in good condition with no faults reported in the last RoSPA inspection on the 9th December 2025.

5.5 Location Plan:



5.6 Hungerford Town Council are seeking the capital sum of £13000 to cover planned upgrades to the play park and bring up to a standard.

5.7 Ramsbury Drive play park offers the more common play equipment features in its design. This equipment is now more than 10 years old and will need to be replaced at some point in the future, perhaps well before the average lifespan of 20-25 years. Ongoing maintenance costs generally increase as the equipment ages.

5.8 This Council has a legal responsibility to ensure children's play areas under our control are maintained in as safe a condition as reasonably practicable. In addition play provision also has to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and other directives such as the Disability Equality Duty 2006. This requires significant management time and financial investment over time.

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5.9 Although no playgrounds have had to close in West Berkshire, as budget pressures become more acute the responsibility for maintenance and investment in playgrounds and play equipment becomes more difficult to fulfil. According to the Association of Play Industries (API) between 2014/15 and 2015/16 local councils in England closed 214 children's playgrounds.

5.10 Current annual maintenance costs are set out below:

- i. Routine Annual Maintenance Costs are minimal, this is to maintain the grass and weeds in the play park.
- ii. One off Repairs and Maintenance. These costs, mostly relating to the play park (replacement of worn/damaged equipment) are approximately £500 per year. Note however this figure can go up or down each year depending on the findings of the quarterly Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) inspections. The play park equipment in Ramsbury drive will need some significant capital investment in the future.

5.11 Current CIL arrangements have an implication for the future maintenance of playgrounds. It is increasingly likely that there will be less capital funding available to the Environment Department in order to manage these assets as they near end of life, or when equipment needs to be replaced. As local councils have a greater CIL allocation, then the likelihood is that this Council will have to approach the relevant parish council for a contribution towards the cost of replacement play park equipment. It makes sense therefore to transfer these assets to the local parish or town council who are better placed to manage the assets into the future.

6 Other options considered

6.1 None. The principle of devolution of open space and built assets to local councils has already been established, most notably the arrangements currently in place with Thatcham Town Council and Hermitage Parish Council. This proposal, alongside other devolution projects, supports West Berkshire Council's commitment to locally led service delivery.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Hungerford Town Council (HTC) are best placed to manage the future of the play park in Ramsbury Drive. HTC are closer to the local community, have greater understanding of their leisure needs so as to ensure the future ongoing maintenance and development of the play park.

7.2 This proposal offers an opportunity for West Berkshire Council to support the devolution agenda and place this playpark asset at the appropriate level of government to ensure that they are maintained appropriately and continue to meet the requirements of the local community into the future.

7.3 This play park should therefore be devolved to the Parish on a long lease on terms to be determined in line with other lease arrangements.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees or Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected: Hungerford Town Council

Officer details:

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West Berkshire Council Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Place Directorate, Countryside.
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Devolve Ramsbury Drive play park to Hungerford Town Council on a long lease. They will manage the asset thereafter.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	No
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	Service remains the same only the responsible body changes.
Completed By	Matthew Hart, Grounds Maintenance Team Leader.
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	06/03/2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>Service remains the same only the responsible body changes</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our</p>	<p>Service remains the same only the responsible body changes</p>

Equity Impact Assessment

ability to deliver our climate commitments.	
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	Service remains the same only the responsible body changes

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Displaced communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Care experienced people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

EDI employee related EQiA's should now be sent to Human Resources
