

Inclusive Play Policy Statement

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Juliet Barker-Smith
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Ruth Bamford Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services
Report Author	Ishrat Karimi Fini Parks and Events Service Manager Ishrat.karimifini@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk 01527 881204
Wards Affected	Astwood Bank & Feckenham Ward and Winyates Ward (Arrow Valley Country Park) West Ward (Morton Stanley Park) Other Wards: Abbey, Astwood Bank and Feckenham, Batchley & Brockhill, Central, Church Hill, Greenlands, Headless Cross and Oakenshaw, Lodge Park, Matchborough, West and Winyates Wards.
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Yes
Relevant Council Priority	Community and Housing
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- 1) the Inclusive Play Policy Statement be adopted;**
- 2) the detailed audit of play provision at Arrow Valley Country Park (against the Plan Inclusive Play Areas [PiPA] accreditation criteria/checklist) be approved;**
- 3) the proposals for Arrow Valley Country Park improvements will be implemented during 2026/27 and strategic and local sites by April 2028;**
- 4) subject to completion of resolution 3 above, authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to apply for accreditation for the Arrow Valley Country Park play area against the PiPA standard;**

- 5) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to develop plans to make the play space in Arrow Valley Country Park a Borough wide exemplar for accessible and inclusive play;
- 6) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture to commission an assessment of Morton Stanley Park against the PiPA standard, which should include establishing the viability of gaining accreditation;
- 7) the Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist be approved as a tool for improving the accessibility and inclusivity of all other play areas in the Borough; and
- 8) To NOTE that a budget bid of £300,000 in the capital programme was approved by Council in March 2026 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29 to pay for inclusive play improvements and for additional officer support.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Redditch Borough Council owns and manages 44 equipped play areas.
- 2.2 The 2023 Play Assessment showed that 91.6% of households are within a 10-15 minute walk of an equipped play area. However, access varies by ward. The wards with the high levels of deficiency, as identified through the Play Accessibility Study, are Crabbs Cross (42.1% with no access), Astwood Bank and Feckenham (27.7%) and Headless Cross and Oakenshaw (13.7%).
- 2.3 In December 2023, the Executive Committee adopted the Play Investment Strategy with a commitment to investment up to £2 million in equipped play over a 10-year period. This investment will reduce deficiencies in play provision and upgrade existing play spaces.
- 2.4 This policy responds to the legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, which places an anticipatory duty on the Council to identify and remove barriers to access for disabled people.
- 2.5 The policy has been developed through comprehensive research of national guidance from PiPA Play, Fields in Trust, Sensory Trust, Scope UK and Play England, as well as review of emerging play sufficiency frameworks in Wales and Scotland.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The policy recognises that achieving high standards of accessible and inclusive play involves real challenges. Constraints include spatial

limitations, public open space pressures, maintenance budgets and the diverse needs of children with disabilities.

- 3.2 Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) is the UK's only independent accreditation system for evaluating accessible and inclusive play area design. The PiPA standard is exceptionally high. Only one play space in the West Midlands has achieved accreditation. Achieving the highest tier requires inclusive or accessible toilet provision. Currently, only Arrow Valley Country Park and Morton Stanley Park have accessible toilet provision.
- 3.3 The policy takes a pragmatic three phase approach that balances ambition with practical constraints:
- 3.4 Inclusive play will be prioritised at Arrow Valley Country Park and other strategic parks. All remaining play areas will also be reviewed to identify opportunities to enhance inclusivity within the available budget.

1: Arrow Valley Country Park – The Council will carry out an assessment against the Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) standard and use the results to inform proposals for renewal and enhancement. The Council will then seek external accreditation against this national standard. Arrow Valley Country Park will be promoted as an exemplar accessible and inclusive play space.

2: Other Strategic Parks – Learning from the Arrow Valley Country Park audit will be applied to Morton Stanley Park to establish the feasibility, viability and resources required to achieve the PiPA standard.

3: Other Play Spaces – For all other outdoor equipped play areas, the Council will seek to improve accessibility and inclusivity through use of an Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist. This tool will assist with achieving greater accessibility and record the impacts of planned changes at the design stage.

4. Play investment and Audit –The Council will continue to deliver improvements to play areas across the Borough in line with the priorities identified through the existing Play Audit and Investment Plan, over a 10 year period.

- 3.5 The Council will require play companies and contractors to propose changes using the checklist that increase accessibility and inclusivity. This will form part of design briefs and tender evaluation criteria.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In December 2023, the Executive Committee adopted the Play Investment Strategy with a commitment to invest up to £2 million in equipped play over a 10-year period.
- 4.2 The Council has identified that an additional capital allocation investment of £300,000 will be required to deliver the significant contribution of the proposed improvements and supporting inclusive play priorities across the Borough as highlighted through the recent audit. This funding is essential to ensure that identified deficiencies can be addressed comprehensively and that upgraded play areas meet modern accessibility, safety, and quality standards. Without this investment, the programme would need to be significantly scaled back, risking delays or reductions in the delivery of priority improvements across the Borough.
- 4.3 The additional £300,000 will enable the Council to progress a balanced and equitable investment programme, ensuring that facilities across all wards receive the level of enhancement required. This allocation will support the design, procurement, and installation of inclusive play features, as well as associated infrastructure improvements. The funding request reflects both the rising costs of play equipment and the need to create high-quality, accessible spaces that align with the Council's commitment to inclusive and sustainable community amenities.
- 4.4 There is an opportunity for play area improvements to be considered through the Community Investment Reserve, subject to bids being submitted. This means that any potential improvements would not impact the existing capital budgets. The Community Investment Reserve totals £1.6 million, which was approved in March 2026.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010, which includes the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) and the Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments (Section 20).
- 5.2 The duty is anticipatory. This means the Council must identify and remove barriers before disabled people encounter them. The Inclusive Play Policy sets out an ambition to exceed the legal minimum and to provide an exemplar play space at Arrow Valley Country Park and if viable Morton Stanley Park.

- 5.3 The policy ensures the Council meets its legal obligations by embedding inclusivity into design and management of other play spaces from the outset.
- 5.4 The policy aligns with emerging play sufficiency legislation. Wales introduced play sufficiency duties in 2010 and Scotland followed in 2023. England is expected to introduce similar requirements through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The policy establishes a clear framework for inclusive play provision that can be readily adopted or adapted under any future local government reorganisation arrangements. The standards and principles are transferable regardless of governance structure. This initiative offers a helpful "springboard" towards unitarisation in setting out the ambition for any new authority to build on regarding the promotion of inclusive play.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The policy supports the Green, Clean & Safe priority. The Redditch Council Plan commits to "protect and enhance open spaces", "ensure large developments provide better green space and invest in existing open spaces", and ensure "the protection and provision of open spaces through the Local Plan". The Plan aspires to make Redditch "a green and healthy place, preserving our open spaces".
- 6.6 The policy also supports the Community & Housing priority, which includes key objectives to "provide high quality play provision" and "work with partners to improve health and wellbeing". The Plan identifies improvements to play area provision as a key project.
- 6.7 Accessible play provision removes barriers that prevent disabled children and their families from enjoying play opportunities close to home. This contributes to health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 The policy supports the Council Plan's 'green thread' by promoting sensory-rich environments that incorporate natural materials and opportunities to interact with nature. This helps children develop environmental awareness from an early age.

- 6.6 Accessible play provision located within walking distance of homes reduces reliance on car journeys. The policy's focus on connected networks of play spaces supports active travel.
- 6.7 Play equipment procurement will continue to consider sustainable materials and suppliers with environmental accreditation where these meet the performance and safety requirements.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 The policy directly addresses equalities by ensuring children with disabilities can access high-quality play opportunities.
- 6.9 The policy requires co-design approaches for children with disabilities and their families for new play area projects. This ensures provision reflects lived experience rather than assumptions about needs.
- 6.10 The policy takes a family-centred approach, recognising that siblings must be able to play together and that parents and carers (who may themselves have disabilities) need good sightlines and access.
- 6.11 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The assessment concluded that the policy will have positive impacts for children with disabilities and their families by removing barriers to play provision. No negative impacts were identified.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks and mitigating actions are:
- 7.2 Failure to provide accessible play provision would breach the Equality Act 2010. The policy mitigates this by establishing clear standards and embedding inclusivity into procurement processes.
- 7.3 Economic pressures could affect the investment programme. The policy's phased approach allows progress to continue at different rates depending on available budget. The policy recognises that existing sites may have constraints.
- 7.4 Officers may require additional knowledge about inclusive play design. The policy addresses this by requiring play companies to demonstrate understanding of inclusive play principles and by promoting consultation with children with disabilities and their families.
- 7.5 Without clear policy, inclusive play provision may be inconsistent. The policy mitigates this by setting clear standards and requiring inclusive play to be specified in design briefs and assessed in tender evaluation.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A Redditch Play Assessment site list (August 2024)
- 8.2 Appendix B Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist (December 2025)
- 8.3 Appendix C Inclusive Play Policy Statement (January 2026)
- 8.4 Appendix D Redditch Play Investment Strategy (November 2023)

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Juliet Barker-Smith	21.01.26
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Guy Revans	21.01.26
Financial Services	Julie Lorraine	8.02.26
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings/ Jess Bayley-Hill	23.02.26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Rebecca Green	28.01.26
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles	12.02.26