**District Dispatch – 23 July 2024**

Back in January, we announced that refurbishing some of our key play parks in Chichester would be a council priority, and this month I was really pleased that this project has now been given the go-ahead by councillors.

We will be spending just over £814,000 on refurbishing Sherborne Road; Whyke Oval; the Amphitheatre; Priory Park; Florence Park; and, Oaklands Park.

The amount of work needed in these play areas varies. At some of sites the equipment is very worn and needs to be completely replaced, while there are a couple of areas that need more modest refurbishment such as resurfacing. We are also looking to enhance certain areas by installing some inclusive play equipment which can be used by disabled children and those with health conditions and impairments. This will help make our community much more accessible. As part of the project, we’re also looking to collaborate with Chichester City Council.

Outside play areas are so important in helping our children develop in all sorts of ways. They allow our little ones to test themselves physically in a safe environment. They are places where children, their parents and carers can meet up with friends and family and get away from electronic devices. Playing outdoors allows children to be creative, think up their own games and test out new skills, and they also enable children to meet other youngsters from all walks of life. As you will appreciate, playing outdoors is crucial, and there’s nothing more joyful than hearing a playground full of happy, energetic and excited youngsters running around having fun. I know that this project will make a huge difference to families across the area. Over the next few months our Green Spaces team will carry out much of the planning work, so that work can hopefully start next January. All being well, we are aiming for the play areas to be open ready for the Easter holidays 2025.

As it’s Love Parks Week, we thought it would be a good opportunity to start gathering the views of children, parents and carers who use these play parks. From now and over the summer holidays officers from our Green Spaces team will be out and about at the parks speaking to people to find out about how they currently use the parks and what they would like to see, which will help us when putting together proposals for the sites.

We are also liaising closely with Chichester City Council around what is needed at the Priory Park play area and so we will continue to work with them on this over the coming months.

On **Saturday 27 July** as part of ‘Love Parks Week’ officers from Chichester District Council’s Green Spaces team will be out and about at several of the city’s play areas to gather ideas and feedback from children and their adults. The team will be at Parklands play area 10am-1am; Priory Park 11.30am- 1pm; Florence Road park 1.30pm-2.30pm; and, Whyke Oval 3pm-4pm. The team will also be visiting Oaklands Park and the Amphitheatre play areas - once we have the details about these then we’ll let people know on our social media channels.

‘Love Parks Week’ is a great time to remind ourselves about all the fantastic green spaces that you can visit in the district. We’re lucky to have Bishop’s Palace Gardens and Priory Park right in the heart of Chichester, while in Midhurst South Pond is a wonderful place to sit and relax and simply watch the world go by.

We’ll be sharing some interesting facts about the parks and gardens that we care for so please head to our Facebook, Instagram and X (previously known as Twitter) pages to find out more. And if you’re in one of our parks this week, please do give your thanks to our Green Spaces team who do such a wonderful job looking after these important areas.

Best wishes,

Councillor Mark Chilton, Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Chichester Contract Services at Chichester District Council

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