

Environment and Sustainability Committee



Date of meeting 30 June 2021

Title	Outdoor Gyms
Purpose of the report	Authorise the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services to initiate a public consultation exercise related to the installation of 10 outdoor gyms in parks across the borough.
Report Author	Francesca Lunn - Neighbourhood Services Jackie Taylor - Group Head of Neighbourhood Services
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Committee decision
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Authorise the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services to initiate a public consultation exercise
Reason for Recommendation	Consultations give people in all walks of life a chance to get involved in the work of the Council and they play an important part of the decision-making process when there is scope to influence the outcome.

1. Key issues

- 1.1 Outdoor Gym Equipment (OGE) can play a vital role in the community, providing people of all ages and abilities an opportunity to improve personal fitness and mental wellbeing. Members of the community who experience financial constraints can greatly benefit from unrestricted access to such facilities in their local environment and are seen as a great way to improve fitness without the need for a costly gym membership.
- 1.2 The health and social benefits associated with outdoor gym equipment can encourage both social & exercise participation with families, friends, and colleagues and allow people to exercise in a green environment surrounded by nature.
- 1.3 It is proposed to offer the use of no cost outdoor gym facilities in specific parks around the borough, to anyone at any time. This free use has the potential to eliminate one of the barriers that many people face when trying to access physical activity and aims to reach lower socio-economic groups who are typically less active.

- 1.4 The National Health service (NHS) has been under great pressure for many years with ever increasing numbers of issues related to addiction and mental health. The Coronavirus Pandemic will increase the strain on the NHS and will have implications for healthcare delivery in both the short and medium term.
- 1.5 Research shows that a visit to a local open green space for daily exercise can have healing benefits on both physical and mental health. It is also a known fact that nature helps improve our overall mood and reduces stress and anxiety levels. It also provides long-term benefits, including reducing the risk of developing chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity.
- 1.6 Providing opportunities to increase participation in outdoor physical activity has the potential to have a noticeable impact on the health and wellbeing of the community.
- 1.7 A Sports England survey carried out during a period of November 2019 to November 2020 show that Spelthorne is one of the most physically inactive Boroughs in Surrey. The same Sports England survey also shows that the female population and older people (aged 55+) are also more likely to be inactive.

2. Options analysis and proposal

- 2.1 **Option 1** do not carry out a consultation exercise with residents and start a procurement exercise to purchase and install OGE equipment in parks considered by officers **Appendix C** to be the best possible locations. This may invoke criticism mainly related to the Council not being willing to engage with, listen and respond to resident's and their perceived needs within their locality.
- 2.2 **Option 2** (preferred option) Carry out a consultation exercise with a defined set of questions to ensure that we take the opportunity to engage with and listen to residents with the aim where possible to meet residents needs in terms of outdoor gym activities in their local parks.
- 2.3 See **appendix C** – Link to maps of proposed locations [Click here](#) (Ctrl & click)
- 2.4 See **appendix B** – Consultation questions

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 In March 2021 the Spelthorne Joint Committee agreed to fund the purchase and installation of 10 outdoor gyms across the borough. The report attached at **Appendix A** approved the allocation of £610k from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.
- 3.2 This scheme is funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL is intended to support local communities, the provision of outdoor equipment will provide several health and wider community benefits as well as meeting a strategic objective to promote health and wellbeing borough wide.
- 3.3 There are ongoing revenue costs associated with the provision and maintenance of outdoor gyms. An outdoor gym like the type to be installed under this project was installed in a park in Ashford in 2017. Aside from an element of petty vandalism when the equipment was first installed little maintenance is required. All parks play & gym equipment are inspected by

our own parks team monthly with additional annual inspections carried out by an external and independent assessor and the Councils insurance company.

- 3.4 It is estimated that additional revenue funding of £5,000 will need to be provided yearly to cover the cost of maintenance, insurance, and inspection regimes for the 10 new gym areas.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1 It is anticipated that each location will require planning permission as the equipment will be installed in our parks which are situated within the greenbelt and/or in areas of flood plain.
- 4.2 A comprehensive compliant procurement exercise will need to be carried out with the Councils procurement officers. The UK is no longer subject to EU regulations and now follows UK domestic legislation. Tenders will now be published on a new e-tendering portal, called Find a Tender Service (FTS) instead of on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).
- 4.3 There is a risk that residents will not want the introduction of such facilities within their local green spaces. Residents' comments will form part of the evaluation of the consultation exercise and will be considered in a later report when officers seek authority to start a procurement exercise.

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 The installation of the outdoor gyms acknowledges the diverse needs of our communities and will ensure equal access to gym facilities across the borough. It is anticipated that the new facilities will be focusing on a range of groups including older people, young people, people with a range of abilities and any other disadvantaged individuals or groups.
- 5.2 The equipment will be inclusive for all adults and can potentially help to improve long term health conditions.

6. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The Council is committed to the principles of Sustainable Development, Environmental Management, and protection of biodiversity. The Council is dedicated to furthering the conservation of biodiversity and requires tenderers to be mindful of this and where appropriate ensure that goods and services do not adversely affect local or global biodiversity.
- 6.2 The proposed locations for the new outdoor gyms around the borough are detailed in **Appendix C**. The sites will be accessible by foot for many residents reducing the need to travel by car.
- 6.3 Standard build indoor gyms are associated with high energy consumption such as heating, lighting, and water all of which are not required in outdoor gym facilities.

7. Timetable for implementation – Provisional dates

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|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 7.1 Committee approval | 29 June 2021 |
| Consultation Exercise to start | 5 July 2021 |

Consultation exercise to end	20 July 2021
Consultation exercise reported back to committee	14 September 2021
Procurement report to P & R committee	15 November 2021

The tender award to the chosen supplier will be dependent on the outcome of the procurement exercise. It is anticipated that due to the value of the tender and the new committee structures the new outdoor gyms will not be ready for use until 2022.

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A	CIL Strategic funding application form
Appendix B	Consultation questions
Appendix C	Link to Maps showing the proposed location of each gym. Click here (Ctrl & click)