

SAFETY SURFACING REPLACEMENT AT HORNDALE INFANT AND JUNIOR PLAY AREA

AGENDA ITEM No. 12

MEETING: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: 9TH SEPTEMBER 2026

REPORT BY: WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider, as part of the approved 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget, the proposed priority works for the improvement of the safety surfacing within the Council's play areas this year, consider the quotes received, and agree the award of the contract.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The Town Council manage thirteen play areas all of which have varying amounts of safety surfacing which requires regular maintenance.
- 2.2 All the safety surfacing appears in good condition as works operatives spend a substantial amount of time patching up the wet pour rubber crumb as problems develop.
- 2.3 Most of the larger play areas including Town Park junior play area, Moore Lane Park, St Oswald's Park, Scott Place and School Aycliffe have all been re-covered in recent years, resulting in reduced repair costs and significantly prolonging the life of the safety surfaces.
- 2.4 Officers regularly inspect each site to determine the state of each surface, with a view that improvements should only take place when the state of wet pour is starting to deteriorate to the point that significant repairs will be required, and before any safety issues arise.
- 2.5 Financial provision has been set aside in the Medium-Term Financial Plan Capital Budget Forecast for a rolling programme of improvements to and replacement of play area safety surfacing.
- 2.6 A budget sum of £50,000 is available in the 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget for play area safety surfacing works, with the original budget having been boosted from £25,000 to £50,000 via a carry forward of unspent monies from last year. Any spare monies are to be set aside for improvements to Simpasture Junior play area, when external funding has been secured.

3.0 Current Situation

- 3.1 During the last survey within each play area to prioritise works, it was determined that the next play areas to be prioritised would be those at Horndale Park. This is borne out in the fact these areas are regularly sustaining damage to the play surface and small defects are then exploited by youths using the facility, making the problem worse.

- 3.2 The wet pour safety surface is also contracting around the sides of many joins in the design resulting in regular repairs being required. The proposal is to reduce this shrinkage by removing pin kerbs and sloping the edges into the grassed surround where possible.
- 3.3 Substantial areas with high user numbers were repaired in the Town Park, Moore Lane and St Oswald's play areas in recent years by over laying the existing safety surfacing with rubber crumb wet pour. This is a cost-effective way to ensure a suitable safety surfacing is maintained and has proved to be a great success in reducing ongoing maintenance in these areas.
- 3.4 However whilst an overlay of rubber crumb is an effective way to rejuvenate the play surface and significantly prolong its effective life; it should be noted that this cannot be done numerous times. Therefore, there is one section within the junior play area where an overlay has already been completed when a new item of equipment was previously installed, in this one area, the top layer will need to be totally removed, disposed of and replaced with a new wearing surface.
- 3.5 Previous overlays in the last three years were completed by the safety surfacing contractors; RTC and DCM to a high standard and there have been no issues with the ongoing maintenance of these large areas. However there are other national safety surface providers and more local play equipment providers available who are recognised installers recommended by play providers, who should still be considered.
- 3.6 Four suppliers were therefore contacted to supply a quotation for supply and overlay of the wet pour safety surface at the Horndale Park play areas. The surface will be solid black to minimise the risk of joins separating and causing unnecessary maintenance.

4.0 Impact on Great Aycliffe Town Council

- 4.1 Investing in play area safety surfacing will ensure compliance with safety requirements, reduce repair costs, refresh the look of the play areas, and prolong the use of the safety surfacing.

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 This report complies with the Council's Strategic Aims 2 and 5.

"To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner".

"To contribute to the environmental improvement of Great Aycliffe by managing and developing parks, play areas and green spaces".

6.0 Staffing implications

- 6.1 To ensure effective management of Council resources, Works Section staff time will be utilised prior to the arrival of the approved contractors to remove pin kerbs as previously outlined.
- 6.2 Completing these safety surfacing works will result in time savings for works operatives by reducing the level of ongoing repairs and maintenance to the current surfacing.
- 6.3 Works management time will be required to oversee the delivery of the project.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Four suppliers were contacted for quotes for the play area safety surfacing works and two quotations subsequently received on time, ensuring compliance with the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement.

7.2 Set out below is a breakdown of the quotes from the four companies. All prices are excluding VAT:

Contractor	Horndale Play areas
RTC	No quote submitted
DCM	No quote submitted
Abacus	£28,457
Streetscape	£27,490

7.3 A sum of £50,000 is available within the 2026/27 Capital Programme Budget for safety surfacing works.

7.4 It should be highlighted that the remaining resources in the play area safety surface budget were established and included with a view that if external funding could be secured for Simpasture Park or any other play areas, the safety surfacing budget would be used to support the installation of any new equipment.

7.5 RTC and DCM are both nationally recognised safety surface installers and have completed similar safety surfacing works in the last ten years for the Town Council but have stated they are both busy with work and unable to quote for the work within the necessary timeframe.

7.6 Streetscape have recently installed new equipment into the Town Park and completed the safety surfacing upgrade as part of the install. They have a team who regularly complete wet pour safety surfacing install on a regular basis and so are equipped to complete the work tendered. Officers were impressed with the quality of their work and responsiveness to queries when required.

7.7 Abacus have not provided maintained safety surfacing works for the Town Council directly in recent years, but are also established installers, who are trusted by many of the top play equipment providers, so should also be considered.

7.8 Both quoting suppliers have provided comparable quotations to supply an overlay of 20mm thick solid black rubber crumb and remove and dispose of previous overlay.

8.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

8.1 None

9.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

9.1 None

10.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 Unfortunately rubber crumb safety surfacing is a fairly niche market with no significant trusted providers in the North East, therefore all contractors will need to travel to the area, Abacus is based outside Edinburgh and Streetscape contractors will be coming from Altrincham, Manchester and so are broadly the same distance from site.
- 10.2 Both companies will be using comparable volumes of the same materials, which will include UK sourced rubber and so there is very little between them environmentally.

11.0 Risk Assessment

- 11.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

12.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- 12.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR? NO

13.0 Recommendation

- 13.1 It is recommended that Members:
- i) Receive the report.
 - ii) Agree the priority safety surfacing improvement works identified in the report at Horndale Park.
 - iii) Agree to award the contract to Streetscape at a total cost of £27,490.

Works and Environment Manager