

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY - 3 JUNE 2008**

**QUESTION FOR PORTFOLIO HOLDER**  
**UNDERSTANDING ORDER NO.20**

Question from Cllr Mrs Danks for the Portfolio Holder - Environment and Leisure

Could the Portfolio Holder please explain why the installation of play equipment for Kings Heath has not been implemented. The consultation took place in October the day the area was passed to the Council and was promised to be in by the summer. This was the most successful of the neighbourhood pilot projects but this lack of commitment makes the Council look inept

*Answer*

*The design for the play area at Kings Heath is almost finalised and we have now reached the stage of planning its installation with a local installer. The initial consultation event was held on site on Sat 17 Nov '07, and at the time it was hoped that equipment would be installed before the school holidays this summer, although this was not promised or guaranteed. The delay has largely been due to the fact that Kings Heath represents a change in approach to play areas from the traditional metal or wood equipment. As opposed to simply selecting equipment and arranging for it to be installed as has been the case with sites in the past, we are shaping the play area around a large naturalistic feature which will itself provide many different play opportunities. Getting this feature right has caused us the most delay, as it has involved elements of work we haven't encountered in this field before, such as using an artist, using landscape design techniques, producing detailed technical drawings etc so that equipment and materials selected for the feature are suitable. Furthermore actually sourcing materials for the feature such as stone for the walls has proved quite complicated and time consuming.*

*It is now hoped that the play area will be fully installed this autumn, but as it will not be ready for the summer holidays we have decided to install a few items in the eastern end of the Park as soon as possible. These will not be traditional items of play equipment but will fit in with the feel of that area of the Park and can also be used as informal play equipment. There will be two timber features designed for climbing, hiding or simply sitting on, these will add to the large granite sculptural stone installed earlier this week, which can again be used for various play activities and is also a striking visual feature. It has been suggested that some goalposts could be installed temporarily within the play area to be used throughout the summer and taken down when we install the play equipment in autumn, as the area is clearly heavily used for kickabouts (even though a Multi Use Games Area has already been provided). This is an excellent idea, and the Parks and Open Spaces Manager is aiming to have a set erected as soon as possible.*

*To summarise - the project is progressing well, and we are treating the project as a priority. We have scheduled an autumn installation for the play area and we are confident that it will be of a high quality, and much enjoyed by residents. It will be unique within the city and will also incorporate aspects requested by residents at the initial consultation and subsequent residents association meetings that we have attended.*

*In conclusion, we would like to apologise to residents for the delay, and ensure them that the Leisure team is doing everything it can to get the facilities on site at the earliest opportunity.*

