

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

2 AUGUST 2007

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Cllr Cunningham

PLAY STRATEGY 2007 – 2012; “PLAY MATTERS”

1. Summary

Guidance was published in March 2006 by the National Children’s Bureau and the Big Lottery to support local authorities and their partners in preparing strategies for improving children’s play opportunities within the framework of a national policy.

A multi-agency working group has developed a Play Strategy for the Children’s Trust Board in line with the national guidance; “Planning for Play; Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy”.

Funding is available to support the local development of children’s play, and a potential grant of £488K is available to the borough through the Big Lottery Fund Children’s Play Programme. To access this funding the local authority is required to have a Play Strategy in place, and to submit a bid for funding in the form of a portfolio of projects that meet the objectives contained within the strategy.

2. Recommendations

- 1) Cabinet to approve the Play Strategy 2007 – 2012.
- 2) Cabinet to note the proposed schemes that will be contained within the big Lottery Bid (Appendix 3).
- 3) A further report detailing recommendations of the Council's Play Area strategy be presented to the next Cabinet.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

- National guidance is in place to support the good practice development of Play Strategies.
- The Children & Young People’s Plan would meet the requirement of government guidance.
- A Play Strategy needs to be in place to accompany the application for £488K funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

1. Guidance was published in March 2006 by the National Children’s Bureau and the Big Lottery to support local authorities and their partners in preparing strategies for improving children’s play opportunities within the framework of a national policy.
2. A multi-agency working group has developed a Play Strategy for the Children’s Trust Board in line with the national guidance; “Planning for Play; Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy”.
3. Funding is available to support the local development of children’s play, and a potential grant of £488K is available to the borough through the Big Lottery Fund Children’s Play Programme. To access this funding the local authority is required to have a Play Strategy in place, and to submit a bid for funding in the form of a portfolio of projects that meet the objectives contained within the strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet to approve the Play Strategy 2007 – 2012.
2. Cabinet to note the proposed schemes that will be contained within the big Lottery Bid (Appendix 3).
3. A further report detailing recommendations of the Council’s Play Area strategy be presented to the next Cabinet.

DETAIL

1. National Guidance on the development of Play Strategies was published in 2006 to support local authorities and their partners in preparing strategies for improving children’s play opportunities within the framework of a national policy.
2. The strategy has been developed by a multi-agency project team, which has met monthly to consider the content of the emerging document and associated action plan.
4. If the strategy is agreed, the intention is that a Play Partnership is created to manage the action plan and to annually review the strategy. The Play Partnership will report to the Children’s Trust Board

5. The overall aim of the strategy is to meet the play and learning needs of children and young people through the development of locally based, easily accessible play facilities across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees both through the extension of existing provision and the development of new facilities. Play areas are integral to the strategy in the form of free imaginative space as well as more structured play environments. All provision should challenge children and young people whilst ensuring their safety. Where support is provided by directly by staff employed either by the local authority or another organisation, they will be appropriately trained and qualified for the roles undertaken.
6. When gaps in provision are identified, available resources will be utilised to reduce inequality of access for children and young people through the refocusing of mobile facilities and / or the securing of new funding opportunities.
6. This is to be achieved by encouraging increased partnership working where the ethos and culture of the principles of play are shared and services are provided in a manner that avoids duplication.
7. If funding application to the Big Lottery Fund is successful, £488K will be available to the Borough to develop Play services and facilities. Proposed recipients of a successful bid application are listed in Appendix 3.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

8. The strategy is a mechanism to attract capital and revenue funding from the Big Lottery and other funding sources in order to improve access to and quality play opportunities across the borough.
9. The Big Lottery currently holds an allocation of £488K which can be accessed by borough on submission of a Strategy endorsed by cabinet the where this is accompanied by a successful bid application.

Legal

10. There is no statutory requirement to develop a Play Strategy, however Local Authorities in England have a statutory duty, under the children Act (2004), to co-operate in their provision for the enjoyment of play and recreation as part of the five key outcomes for all children.
11. The strategy has been developed in line with the national good practice guidance; "Planning for Play; Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy", was published by the National Children's Bureau and the Big Lottery in March 2006.

RISK ASSESSMENT

12. This Play Strategy 2007 – 2012 is categorised as low to medium risk.
13. Existing management systems, and routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

14. The Community Strategy aims to 'Promote Achievement and Tackle Disadvantage'. The priority theme for children and young people being to "promote the health, well-being and achievement of children and young people, and tackle inequalities and disadvantage experienced by some children and their families"

15. Play is of fundamental importance for children's healthy physical and emotional well-being. The Chief Medical Officer (DH) advises that children and young people should achieve 'a total of at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day', and growing research continues to develop the link between free play and good health.
16. Play includes the development of children & young people's involvement in not only active physical play but, where freely chosen both arts and cultural activities.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

17. Over the last two years a number of consultations have been undertaken with children, young people and their families that were relevant to the development of the Play Strategy.
18. Relevant consultations included:
 - Adult Viewpoint Questionnaire; Parks Survey, September 2005
 - The EzeeLive Questionnaire; October 2005
 - Youth Viewpoint Questionnaire; Parks And Community Survey, October 2005
 - Findings from the 'Youth Matters' Seminar; October 2005
 - 'Somewhere to Go? Something to do?' DfES Questionnaire on Youth Matters; October 2005
 - Consultation on youth cafes; March 2006
 - Learning Together Event; July 2006
 - Student Councils Events; November 2006
 - Youth Viewpoint Questionnaire; Play Areas Survey, November 2006
 - Corner House Youth Project-Interim Report and findings January 2007
 - Adult Viewpoint Questionnaire; Twentieth Viewpoint Survey Results (Play Areas), February 2007.
 - Student Councils Event; March 2007
 - Stockton Youth Assembly; May 2007
 - Voluntary & Community Sector
 - Stockton Parent Support (Children with Disabilities)
 - Children's Fund Projects
19. Comments from the consultation undertaken have been considered by the Play Strategy Group and incorporated into the strategy.

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