

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting27th September 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Play Area Strategy 2007 - 2010

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a proposed Play Area Strategy 2007 – 2010. The Strategy was a companion document to Stockton’s Play Strategy 2007 – 2012 which was approved by Cabinet at its meeting held on 2nd August 2007.

It was explained that the Strategy focused on one key aspect of play provision: sites with fixed play equipment which were accessible free of charge at all reasonable times. It referred to 38 such sites across the Borough. These were mainly under the ownership and management of Stockton Borough Council, but others bodies such as parish councils also owned and manage facilities. The Strategy did not refer to play equipment within school grounds or other locations not accessible to the wider public.

Following an audit of the Borough’s play areas in 1998 it was recommended that the Council adopted a hierarchy of play area sites as a basis for targeting resources effectively. This hierarchy was recognised in this strategy and comprised:

- Destination sites – well-equipped play areas within parks, which served a large catchment area and offered a good range of supporting facilities such as toilets and refreshments.
- Neighbourhood sites – again, well-equipped areas within parks, but with fewer supporting facilities.
- Doorstep Sites – smaller, stand-alone play areas which had a limited range of equipment and served a local catchment area.

Over recent years the Council had removed facilities at a number of Doorstep Sites where these had become out-dated, under-used, damaged or superseded by new provision in the same neighbourhood. This new Strategy re-stated the broad principle that the Council would focus resources for play areas primarily into the development of Destination and Neighbourhood Sites, while ensuring all equipped play

areas were subject to an agreed inspection programme and were maintained to a high standard.

This approach was in line with proposals set out in a parallel report to Cabinet on the Regeneration of Stockton's Parks , to be considered later in this meeting. This report made recommendations for how the £500,000 capital fund allocation for parks should be utilised, with some of those funds being made available to support the development of play facilities at Destination Sites.

It was noted that under the Play Strategy Action Plan, a separate funding bid had been submitted to the Big Lottery Fund Children's' Play Programme for the development of Play Facilities at Romano Park, Ingleby Barwick, as part of a larger package of projects across the Borough.

It was explained that the Council had developed nine strategic objectives which it would seek to achieve through implementation of the Strategy. These were set out in Section 6 of the Strategy.

Cabinet was informed that Stockton's Open Space Audit process provided an opportunity to further develop the evidence base to shape the future development of the strategy and informed implementation. The Council's existing Open Space Audit provided an assessment of open space provision across the Borough, including play areas. However, no work had yet been undertaken to assess local need for different types of open space. This 'needs assessment' would be completed by May 2008 and would form an essential step in the process of setting local standards for the provision of play areas and other types of open space.

In addition the Council had made a commitment to "develop a new strategic vision for parks and greenspaces", as set out in the Council Plan 2007-2010: this would provide the context for any future strategy revision.

Subject to the approval of the Children's Trust Board and the Stockton Play Partnership it proposed that by 2009/10 the 'Play Area' and 'Play' Strategies should be brought together into a single document. Linked to this the Council would also produce a comprehensive 'Play Area Action Plan', informed by the on-going Open Space Audit

As with the Play Strategy there had been no specific public consultation carried out in relation to this specific document. Rather it had been informed by the Council's on-going consultation processes which had effectively engaged with children and young people and adults over recent years. This included a Viewpoint Questionnaire on Play Areas

completed in November 2006.

Members noted that the final version of this document would be made available to the public, and the Council would consult locally on the implementation of any specific proposals set out in the 'Priorities for Development' Appendix to the Strategy, following the guidance set out in the corporate Consultation Strategy.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Play Area Strategy 2007-2010 be approved.
- 2) the specific proposals outlined in Appendix 1 of the Strategy be approved, to be delivered as and when funding is made available: from existing budgets, via external partners or contributions, or subject to subsequent bids for additional Council resources.
- 3) subject to the approval of the Children's Trust Board and the Stockton Play Partnership, Cabinet supports the integration of the 'Play Area Strategy' and 'Play Strategy' into a single document by 2009/10. Linked to this Strategy, the Council would produce a comprehensive 'Play Area Action Plan', informed by the revised Play Strategy and the Council's Open Space Audit.
- 4) a progress report on this current Play Area Strategy is presented to Cabinet in Autumn 2008.
- 5) It is noted that the report on the Regeneration of Stockton's Parks, also presented at this meeting, recommends that existing capital funds be allocated to the development of some key 'Destination Sites' identified within the Strategy.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To facilitate the strategic management and development of outdoor play provision in the Borough. The strategy would help to inform decision-making and would be used as a basis for securing funding for the development of play provision (e.g. through developer contributions or grant funding). The formal adoption of the 'Play Area Strategy' would also support the delivery of the action plan, which accompanied the new "Play Strategy".

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not later than midnight on Friday 5th October 2007

Proper Officer
01 February 2007