

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**27 SEPTEMBER 2007**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION**

**Arts Leisure and Culture – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Womphrey**

#### **PLAY AREA STRATEGY 2007-10**

1. Summary

The Play Area Strategy 2007-2010 forms a companion document to Stockton's Play Strategy 2007-2012 'Play Matters', as presented to Cabinet on 2 August 2007. This document sets out the Council's approach to the management and development of outdoor play facilities, highlighting the Council's commitment to provide a network of high quality play areas across the Borough.

The Strategy identifies a hierarchy of play area sites, which together offer a diverse range of provision. It sets out a number of strategic objectives which the Council is seeking to achieve through the management and development of this hierarchy of sites, and details specific proposals for 'Destination' and 'Neighbourhood' sites.

The Strategy covers a relatively short time period: 2007-10. This reflects a medium term aspiration to incorporate the key elements of the Play Area Strategy into a single Borough Play Strategy, subject to the approval of the Children's Trust Board. This would be accompanied by a detailed Action Plan, with proposals for the development and management of Play Areas informed by the Open Space Audit process. A vital part of this process will be to undertake a full assessment of local needs and expectations in terms of the provision of open spaces (including play areas) and to use this information to help set local standards. This work will be complete by May 2008, enabling the Council to produce a comprehensive Play Area Action Plan by 2009/10.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet approves the Play Area Strategy 2007-2010.
2. Cabinet notes the specific proposals outlined in Appendix 1, 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. Cabinet notes that the report on the Regeneration of Stockton's Parks, also presented to Cabinet on 27 September, recommends that existing capital funds be allocated to the development of some key 'Destination Sites' identified within this Strategy.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To facilitate the strategic management and development of outdoor play provision in the Borough. The strategy will help to inform decision-making and will 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' will also support the delivery of the action plan which accompanies the new "Play Strategy".

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.**

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**27 SEPTEMBER 2007**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION**

**PLAY AREA STRATEGY 2007-10**

**SUMMARY**

1. The Play Area Strategy 2007-2010 forms a companion document to Stockton's Play Strategy 2007-2012 'Play Matters', as presented to Cabinet on 2 August 2007. This document sets out the Council's approach to the management and development of outdoor play facilities, highlighting the Council's commitment to provide a network of high quality play areas across the Borough.
2. The Strategy identifies a hierarchy of play area sites, which together offer a diverse range of provision. It sets out a number of strategic objectives which the Council is seeking to achieve through the management and development of this hierarchy of sites, and details specific proposals for the more major 'Destination' and 'Neighbourhood' sites.
3. The Strategy covers a relatively short time period: 2007-10. This reflects a medium term aspiration to incorporate the key elements of the Play Area Strategy into a single Borough Play Strategy, subject to the approval of the Children's Trust Board. This would be accompanied by a detailed Action Plan, with proposals for the development and management of Play Areas informed by the Open Space Audit process. A vital part of this process will be to undertake a full assessment of local needs and expectations in terms of the provision of open spaces (including play areas) and to use this information to help set local standards. This work will be complete by May 2008, enabling the Council to produce a comprehensive Play Area Action Plan by 2009/10.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 1) Cabinet approves the Play Area Strategy 2007-2010.
- 2) Cabinet notes the specific proposals outlined in Appendix 1, 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) Cabinet notes that the report on the Regeneration of Stockton's Parks, also presented to Cabinet on 27 September, recommends that existing capital funds be allocated to the development of some key 'Destination Sites' identified within this Strategy.

## DETAIL

- 1 This Play Area Strategy focuses on one key aspect of play provision: sites with fixed play equipment which are accessible free of charge at all reasonable times. It refers to 38 such sites across the Borough. These are mainly under the ownership and management of Stockton Borough Council, but others bodies such as parish councils also own and manage facilities. The Strategy does not refer to play equipment within school grounds or other locations not accessible to the wider public.
- 2 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 is also recognised in this strategy and comprises:
  - Destination sites – well-equipped play areas within parks, which serve a large catchment area and offer 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 have a limited range of equipment and serve a local catchment area.
4. Over recent years the Council has removed facilities at a number of Doorstep Sites where these have become out-dated, under-used, damaged or superseded by new provision in the same neighbourhood. This new Strategy re-states the broad principle that the Council will focus resources for play areas primarily into the development of Destination and Neighbourhood Sites, while ensuring all equipped play areas are subject to an agreed inspection programme and are maintained to a high standard.
5. This approach is in line with proposals set out in a parallel report to Cabinet on the Regeneration of Stockton's Parks (also presented on 27 September 2007). This makes 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.
6. It should also be noted that under the Play Strategy Action Plan, a separate funding bid has 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.
7. The Council has developed nine strategic objectives which it will seek to achieve through implementation of the Strategy. These are set out in Section 6 of the Strategy and will underpin the specific actions detailed in **Appendix 1**.
8. Stockton's Open Space Audit process provides an opportunity to further develop the evidence base to shape the future development of the strategy and inform implementation. The Council's existing Open Space Audit provides an assessment of open space provision across the Borough, including play areas. However, no work has yet been undertaken to assess local need for different types of open space. This 'needs assessment' will be completed by May 2008 and will form an essential step in the process of setting local standards for the provision of play areas and other types of open space.

9. In addition the Council has 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.
10. 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 (see 8 above).
11. As with the Play Strategy there has been no specific public consultation carried out in relation to this specific document. Rather it has been informed by the Council’s on-going consultation processes which have effectively engaged with children and young people and adults over recent years. This includes a Viewpoint Questionnaire on Play Areas completed in November 2006.
12. The final version of this document will be made available to the public, and the Council will consult locally on the implementation of any specific proposals set out in the ‘Priorities for Development’ section of the report (**Appendix 1**), following the guidance set out in the corporate Consultation Strategy.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

No specific financial or legal implications as a direct result of this Strategy, although the Strategy may be used as a basis for securing funding for development of play provision (e.g. through developer contributions or grant funding).

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

This Strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

**The Play Area Strategy will impact on the following policy platform areas of the Community Strategy:**

- 1) **Environment:** Well-designed outdoor play facilities contribute towards local environmental quality. In addition play areas located within attractive environments will experience higher levels of use and deliver greater benefits to local communities.
- 2) **Community Safety and Well-Being:** Well-maintained, high-quality facilities support safe play, promoting social interaction and discouraging negative behaviours and attitudes.
- 3) **Health:** Outdoor play makes an important contribution towards children and young people’s physical and mental health.
- 4) **Economic Regeneration:** Innovative or high-profile play facilities contribute towards ‘quality of place’, helping to make an area attractive for work and living.
- 5) **Education and Lifelong Learning:** Stimulating play environments promote exploration and learning.
- 6) **Arts and Culture:** Play areas can incorporate cultural elements, helping to create a ‘sense of place’.

## CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

Presentations on the Play Area Strategy are being given to all four Area Partnership Boards, as follows:

Eastern Area – 25 September 2007

Central Area – 27 September 2007

Northern Area – 1 October 2007

Western Area – date to be confirmed

The Strategy has been informed by the Council's on-going consultation processes which have effectively engaged with children and young people and adults over recent years. This includes a Viewpoint Questionnaire on Play Areas completed in November 2006. Further local consultations will be undertaken in respect to specific proposals set out in Appendix 1 of the Strategy.

**Name of Contact Officer:** Jamie McCann  
**Post Title:** Head of Direct Services  
**Telephone No.** 01642 - 527071  
**Email Address:** jamie.mccann@stockton.gov.uk

### Background Papers

Report to CMT - 6 August 2007

### Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

N/A

### Property

N/A