

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

9 OCTOBER 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**Arts, Leisure & Culture – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Womphrey
Children & Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham**

DEVELOPMENT OF OUTDOOR PLAY IN STOCKTON BOROUGH

1. Summary

In April 2008 Stockton Council secured £1.1 million capital funding through the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) 'Playbuilder' programme.

This report sets out initial proposals for the development of play areas and play spaces utilising the Playbuilder funding, focusing on the delivery of six play area and play space schemes during 2008/09 at:

- Carlton Avenue, Billingham
- Romano Park, Ingleby Barwick
- Village Park, Thornaby
- Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park
- Willey Flatts, Yarm
- Thorpe Thewles

It also outlines the process for developing further projects during 2009/10 and 2010/11 and seeks approval for Officers to develop a second submission for funding from DCSF in the second wave of the programme.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed Playbuilder allocations for 2008/09 as outlined in the report at paragraph 34.
2. Note and approve the process for identifying priorities for the Borough's Playbuilder programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11 at paragraphs 16-19
3. Authorise officers to develop a Play Pathfinder bid, for submission to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) by 24th October 2008 and that delegation is given to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Arts, Leisure and Culture and Children and Young People to make any necessary amendments to the bid prior to its submission to DCSF .

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

- To authorise officers to progress with the delivery of schemes during the current financial year, working in partnership with local communities and engaging children and young people in those projects.
- To confirm support for the 'Spaces for Play' consultation and the process for identifying Playbuilder projects for delivery during 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- To authorise officers to develop a Play Pathfinder bid under the 'second wave' selection process recently announced by Department for Children, Schools and Families. The closing date for submissions is 24 October 2008.

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

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This report sets out initial proposals for the development of play areas and play spaces utilising the Playbuilder funding, focusing on the delivery of six play area and play space schemes during 2008/09 at:

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed Playbuilder allocations for 2008/09 as outlined in the report at paragraph 34.
2. Note and approve the process for identifying priorities for the Borough's Playbuilder programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11 at paragraphs 16-19.
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DETAIL

National policy context

1. On 3 April 2008, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) launched the consultation on the national play strategy. "Fairplay: A consultation on the play strategy" that sets out the governments aims to ensure that:
 - in every residential area, there is a variety of places for play, free of charge, supervised and unsupervised;
 - local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play;
 - routes to children's play space are safe and accessible for all children and young people;
 - parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well-maintained and well-used;
 - children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours;
 - children and young people behave in a way that respects other people and property;
 - children, young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces; and
 - play places are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, including disabled children, children of both genders, and children from minority groups in the community.
2. Nationally £235 million has been allocated to support delivery of the Strategy over three years, from 2008 to 2011, with Councils being invited to bid to become either a 'Play Pathfinder' or 'Playbuilder' authority. The first wave of 20 Play Pathfinders and 43 Playbuilders was announced in April 2008, with each receiving capital and revenue funding to invest in new and improved play spaces for children. Funding is allocated over three years, with the total sums as follows:
 - Play Pathfinders receive around £2 million capital to deliver 28 new or improved play spaces and one large adventure; plus up to £1 million revenue funding.
 - Playbuilders receive around £1 million capital to deliver 20-25 new or improved play spaces; plus approximately £45,000 revenue funding.
3. Stockton Council secured Play Builder status in this first funding round.
4. The play spaces delivered must be inclusive for all children, especially disabled children, and are aimed particularly at the 8 to 13 age group and those living in disadvantaged areas. Children, families and local communities will help shape the future of this programme, and there is an expectation that MPs and councillors will have a key role in supporting the agenda within communities.
5. In developing new and improved play spaces local authorities and others are being urged to take account of new guidance, published jointly by Play England, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). "Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces" sets out ten principles for designing successful play spaces, stating that they should:
 - be bespoke
 - be well located
 - make use of natural elements
 - provide a wide range of play opportunities
 - be accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children

- meet community needs
 - allow children of different ages to play together
 - build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
 - be sustainable and appropriately maintained
 - allow for change and evolution
6. In addition to play in greenspaces, the guidance also encourages local authorities and other agencies to consider how other spaces can be made more 'playable'. For example, can streets, public squares, fountains and town centres be designed and managed to provide play opportunities, for example, by reducing traffic volumes and speeds?
7. Finally government has announced that from April 2009, the national indicator set that measures national priorities will include an indicator on what children think about the parks and play areas in their local area.

Local strategic context

8. In August 2007 Cabinet gave its approval to the Stockton-on-Tees Play Strategy 2007-2012 "Play Matters". The Strategy aims 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 facilities and the development of new facilities".
9. The Strategy highlights the importance of fixed play facilities, but also recognises that children and young people play and learn in a wide range of environments both indoors and outdoors.
10. The Play Strategy provided a basis for the development of a funding bid through the Big Lottery Children's Play Programme to support the development of children's play. £488,000 was subsequently secured through this programme and is currently being used to deliver a number of projects identified in the Strategy's Action Plan.
11. In conjunction with the Play Strategy, Cabinet also approved the 'Play Area Strategy 2007-2010' in September 2007. This sets out a number of strategic objectives which the Council is seeking to achieve through the management and development of fixed play facilities across the Borough.
12. The Play Area Strategy identifies a hierarchy of sites based on the following categories:
- Destination sites – very well-equipped areas, located in a park or recreation ground and serving a large catchment area. These sites provide additional facilities such as toilets and refreshment outlets, and usually benefit from an on-site ranger service and are monitored via CCTV.
 - Neighbourhood sites – as above, but serving a smaller catchment area and with fewer additional facilities on site.
 - Doorstep sites – smaller stand-alone facilities with a more limited range of equipment and serving a local catchment area.
13. In developing this hierarchy of provision the Council has taken account of management and maintenance issues and the need to develop a network that can be sustained in the long term.

Stockton Borough Playbuilder Programme

14. Through the Playbuilder programme Stockton Council will receive a total of £1,119,903 capital and £44,673 revenue funding from DCSF for the development of outdoor play. The funding requires the Council and its partners to deliver a minimum of 20-25 play area developments by March 2011, with the first six schemes being delivered by 31 March 2009.
15. Given the very tight timescales involved, six projects have been identified which are already well-advanced in terms of planning and have, in most cases, already been subject to local consultation. These schemes are as follows:
 - Carlton Avenue, Billingham – redevelopment of an existing play area, replacing equipment which is of limited play value with a more challenging and stimulating play area, accessible to all users and designed for inclusive play.
 - Romano Park, Ingleby Barwick - creation of a new play space with a diverse mixture of play equipment integrated with an invigorating and stimulating 'Landscape for Play', comprising natural elements and interesting landforms.
 - Village Park, Thornaby - development of a play trail around the perimeter of the park, providing opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to enjoy exercise and play in pleasant welcoming surroundings.
 - Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park – creation of a stimulating, 'natural' play environment. Phase 1 of the scheme (2008/09) will involve the creation of new landforms and features which will be further developed in future years as the play space evolves.
 - Willey Flatts, Yarm - redevelopment of an existing play area, replacing equipment which is of limited play value with a more challenging and stimulating play area, accessible to all users and designed for inclusive play
 - Thorpe Thewles – creation of a new play area being created in response to the needs and wishes of the local community. Though a small space, the area lies at the heart of the community and has landscape features that will contribute to the overall design.
16. The schemes to be funded under the Playbuilder Programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11 have yet to be determined and, as a first stage in identifying priorities, a 'Spaces for Play' event was held on 15 September, with Members and a wide range of community organisations and partners invited to attend.
17. The event was used to launch a Borough-wide 'Spaces for Play' consultation process which aims to:
 - Seek the views of partners and stakeholders on existing play provision in the Borough and to ideas for how this could be improved;
 - Identify specific project proposals which could be funded through Playbuilder or other grant programmes, with community groups and partner organisations being invited to come forward with 'expressions of interest' should they wish to play an active role in developing or managing a play space.
18. Proposals from the public, community groups and partners will be assessed by a 'Playbuilder Panel', which will include representatives from voluntary sector, community organisations, children and young people and Stockton BC.

19. By 31 March 2009 it is anticipated that a list of potential 'Playbuilder schemes for 2009/10 and 2010/11 will have been identified. All schemes will be subject to detailed local consultation and work undertaken to actively engage children and young people in the development of each scheme. It is also proposed that a proportion of the Playbuilder funding is used to support the development of the key 'Destination' and 'Neighbourhood' play areas identified in the existing Play Area Strategy

Towards the development of a Spaces for Play Action Plan

20. Cabinet approved the Borough's Play Area Strategy in September 2007. One of the recommendations agreed by Cabinet at that stage was for the 'Play Area Strategy' and 'Play Strategy' to be brought together into a single document by 2009/10, and for the Council to prepare a comprehensive 'Play Area Action Plan'.
21. The 'Spaces for Play' consultation, together with other recent/planned research and consultation on play and greenspaces, will provide the basis for developing this Action Plan and will incorporate priorities for delivery through the Playbuilder programme, as well as other project proposals to be funded through other programmes.

Play Pathfinder Second Wave

22. As outlined above in paragraph 2, the first wave of 20 Play Pathfinder authorities was announced in April 2008. DCSF has recently launched the second wave selection process to identify a further 10 Play Pathfinders.
23. In addition to the delivery of new and improved play areas or play spaces (a minimum of 28), Play Pathfinders will receive an additional £800,000 capital grant to invest in one major adventure playground, including development of an indoor playspace, kitchen area, toilets and other facilities. A revenue grant of up to £1 million is also available to contribute towards the start-up staffing costs for the adventure playground over the period 2009-11, and to support the development of play across the Borough as a whole.
24. As an existing Playbuilder authority Stockton Borough Council has been passported through to the final bidding stage of the Wave 2 selection process and is invited to submit a Pathfinder bid by 24 October 2008.
25. Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed that officers develop a bid for funding through this scheme and that delegation is given to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Arts, Leisure and Culture and Children and Young People to make any necessary amendments to the bid prior to its submission to DCSF.

Links to other programmes

26. Playbuilder is only one of several possible funding programmes and mechanisms which are being used to deliver improved play spaces. The Council will ensure that the Playbuilder programme is fully integrated with the following initiatives to achieve added value and maximise the benefits for children and young people and the wider community.

Children's Play Programme

27. £488,000 has been secured from the Big Lottery Children's Play Programme to support delivery of four play projects in the Borough:
 - Imagination Explorer (Mobile Play Project) – St John's Community Partnership
 - Romano Park – Countryside & Greenspace, Stockton Borough Council
 - Village Park – Village Park Residents Association
 - Play Area – Thorpe Thewles Residents Association

28. A panel established under the “Play Strategy Group” used a set of criteria to select these projects and a successor group, the “Stockton-on-Tees Play Partnership” have responsibility for overseeing delivery of this grant programme.

Park Regeneration and Development Programme

29. A number of the park regeneration projects currently being planned or delivered by Stockton Council and its partners include projects to improve and re-new play areas, including schemes at:

- John Whitehead Park (Billingham) – new play area installed in 2008
- Newham Grange Park (Stockton) – new play area installed in 2007
- Romano Park (Ingleby Barwick) – new ‘landscape for play’ currently being designed for implementation early in 2009
- Wynyard Woodland Park (Thorpe Thewles) – proposals for new play area and possible ‘play trails’ being considered
- Village Park (Thornaby) - new play area recently installed and proposals to develop a play trail around the perimeter of the park
- Preston Park and Hall – proposals to extend play area

Playing Out

30. In 2007/08 Stockton Council first secured funding from the North Tees Primary Care Trust to deliver ‘Playing Out’; a programme which seeks to address local health priorities by involving children and young people in a variety of play and creative activities in parks and greenspaces. This funding has been used to actively engage children in Ingleby Barwick in the development and design of the new Romano Park.
31. An additional £123,000 has been secured for 2008/09 and 2009/10 to extend this programme to other areas. A proportion of this funding will be used to engage other groups of children and young people in the design process for their local play spaces, as well as delivering other complimentary activities which promote greater use of play areas, parks and greenspaces.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

32. Stockton Council will receive a £1,119,903 Playbuilder capital grant and £44,673 revenue grant funding over the next 3 years as follows:

	Capital	Revenue
2008/09	298,641	12,509
2009/10	410,631	16,082
2010/11	410,631	16,082

33. In line with the proposal put before the Children’s Trust Board and Play Partnership it is recommended that the £1.12 million capital allocation is allocated as follows:

- Approximately £610,000 towards the development of a minimum of 7 ‘Destination’ and ‘Neighbourhood’ play areas.
- Approximately £510,000 towards the refurbishment or development of a minimum of 13 ‘Doorstep’ play areas.

34. In the first year (2008/09) it is proposed to utilise allocations under Playbuilder as follows:

Location	Project Costs		
	Play-builder Contribution (£)	Other secured funding (£)	Total Project Cost (£)
Carlton Avenue, Billingham	50,000	£0	50,000
Romano Park, Ingleby Barwick	100,000	350,000	450,000
Village Park, Thornaby	40,000	50,000	90,000
Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park	30,000	0	120,000
Wiley Flatts, Yarm	50,000	0	50,000
Thorpe Thewles	30,000	25,000	55,000

35. Where possible the Council will seek to increase the amount of funding available for the development of play spaces by using the Playbuilder capital as match funding for other grants.
36. Financial implications from any successful bid for the second round of funding will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

37. Individual projects may require planning consent and this is being sought at the appropriate stage in the development of each scheme. For example, the development of Romano Park has been granted Full Planning Consent.

RISK ASSESSMENT

38. The development of play spaces is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk. The development of play areas will be managed through a combination of internal Council working groups and external 'partnership' or 'consultation' groups.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

39. The development and management of outdoor play provision has an impact on the following policy platform areas of the Sustainable Community Strategy:
 - **Economic Regeneration and Transport:** Attractive and innovative play spaces contribute towards 'quality of place', form part of the area's tourism 'offer', and enhance the image of the Borough as a place to invest and work. Play spaces should also be easily accessible and in developing each scheme consideration will be given to the need to promote sustainable transport and how each site relates to the wider green infrastructure network.
 - **Safer Communities:** Maintaining and improving safety will be a key objective for each play space, achieved through improved security measures and enhanced natural surveillance. Increased levels of use will also help to deter anti-social behaviour and promote positive attitudes and social interaction.
 - **Children and Young People:** Stimulating and challenging play spaces make a vital contribution to children's health, well-being and development. The Council is committed

to giving children and young people opportunities to help design, develop and care for their local play spaces, creating a greater sense of 'ownership' and ensuring these spaces genuinely address the needs and aspirations of children and young people.

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Play spaces encourage children and young people to be physically active and to benefit from a wide range of experiences which will contribute towards their mental and physical health and well-being.
- **Environment and Housing:** Attractive, well-designed and well-managed play spaces make a major contribution towards overall environmental quality – helping to enhance the Borough's parks, greenspaces and residential areas.

Supporting Themes:-

- **Stronger Communities:** Play spaces are places where people meet and interact in an informal and positive way. Communities are also being encouraged to work together to help plan and contribute to the management of play spaces, helping to promote community cohesion and engendering a greater sense of pride in the local area.
- **Older Adults:** As well as providing spaces for children and young people to play, facilities and spaces can also provide spaces for older adults to play and be active. Older adults may also accompany children in their care to play spaces and use these spaces as places to relax and interact with others.
- **Arts Leisure and Culture:** Play spaces are a key element of leisure provision in the Borough and can incorporate cultural and artistic elements into their design.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

40. This report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and has been judged to have a positive impact. An action plan for further improvements has been developed.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

41. Extensive consultation has taken place with Community Groups, local Councillors, Partners and stakeholders to date. As work on these projects continues over the coming months the following groups and individuals will be kept informed of developments, consulted as appropriate and in the case of children and young people, actively engaged in the development and design of their play spaces:

- Children and young people – via schools, youth groups, 'Youth Provider Forums', and through active engagement in play area projects.
- The relevant Area Partnership Board – via written updates and presentations by officers at appropriate stages in the development of each scheme.
- Local and neighbouring ward councillors – for example, via email updates and invitations to attend briefing sessions.
- Relevant cabinet members via updates presented to the Council's Urban Environment Task Group.
- Town and Parish Councils – via written updates and presentations by officers.
- Community groups - via officers' attendance at their meetings where appropriate and on-going liaison.

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Background Papers

Reports to Cabinet:

- 2 August 2007 Play Strategy 2007 – 2012 “Play Matters”
- 27 September 2007 – Play Area Strategy 2007 – 2010
- 17 July 2008 – The regeneration and development of Stockton’s parks

Other papers:

- 3 April 2008 – “Fair Play” press release, issued by the Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF)
- April 2008 – “Fair Play: A consultation on the play strategy” - DCSF and Department for Culture Media & Sport
- 5 June 2008 – “Conditions of grant and guidance 2008-09 – Fair Play Playbuilder capital and revenue grants’ – letter from DCSF to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- July 2008 – “Playbuilder Project Plan” - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- 19 August 2008 – “Selection of Wave 2 Play Pathfinders” – letter from DCSF to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- “Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces” - Play England, DCSF and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

Property

The approach outlined in this report is in accordance with the Council’s Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan (September 2007) which outlines the Council’s commitment to working in partnership with a range of public and private sector organisations to generate inward investment and maximise external funding to achieve the aims for the Borough.