

CABINET
24 July 2007

Wiltshire Play Strategy

Purpose of the paper

1. To seek Cabinet's approval for the Play Strategy and the further development of the action plan to raise the profile of play across Wiltshire and promote inter-agency working to improve the play opportunities available.

Background

2. In March 2006, a fund of £155m became available nationally through the Big Lottery in response to the Government's 2004 play review, 'Getting Serious About Play'. 80% of this fund has been ring-fenced for allocation at district council level, and £16m of the remainder has been placed in the Playful Ideas fund, for allocation to charities and local voluntary groups to realise creative and innovative play initiatives.
3. Each district council in Wiltshire has been allocated a ring-fenced amount of lottery funding in order to improve play within their districts, and in order to draw down this funding, each district has been required to produce a play strategy, including a full audit of existing play opportunities, gapping identification and consultation with the public, specifically including young people and those who provide services for them.
4. The district councils have been allocated between £200,000 and £247,000 each to carry out this work. This has been allocated based upon child population and deprivation indices.
5. In order to engage the district councils in producing their play strategies the Local Authority appointed a Play Development Adviser to work closely with them. Two districts were reluctant to engage in this work, so it was decided to write a county-wide play strategy with individual input from each council into sections which were specific to their district. This work was carried out by the Play Development Adviser working in partnership with the districts.
6. As the strategy was nearing completion, it was recognised by the districts that it would be much more valuable to their councils to have their own documents, largely derived from the county strategy but much more personalised to their particular area. The result has been an individual strategy for each district and an 'umbrella' county-wide play strategy, with more wide-reaching strategic action points and a more over-arching content.

Main considerations for the Council

7. In March 2007, the Wiltshire Play Partnership was launched, consisting of senior strategic managers from many partner organisations who have an agenda for play, and chaired by the Wiltshire Play Champion, Nancy Bryant. This strategic group will achieve many of the action points in the strategic plan and will be fundamental in the mission to raise the profile of play across the county and increase play opportunities. The play strategy is fundamental to the work of the partnership.

8. The approval of the play strategy is also crucial to the ongoing work in encouraging external agencies to apply for Playful Ideas funding to further enhance Wiltshire's play provision.
9. A thorough audit of the opportunities currently available in Wiltshire and the areas which could be improved has been carried out by the Childcare team and the district council partners, and has revealed areas where there are opportunities to work in partnership to create better play opportunities.
10. Large sections of the county-wide play strategy and the district strategies are the same. The current status of the district strategies is as follows:
 - Kennet District Council – approved by Cabinet June 2007
 - North Wiltshire District Council – approved by Cabinet as a working document May 2007
 - Salisbury District Council – due to go to Cabinet 11 July 2007
 - West Wiltshire District Council – due to go to Cabinet on 5 September 2007
 As these strategies are in the process of approval, it is important that the county-wide strategy, with broadly similar content, also receives Wiltshire County Council Cabinet approval.
11. An increase in the provision of play opportunities in Wiltshire will help enable Wiltshire County Council to achieve the statutory Every Child Matters outcomes of Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Economic Well-Being. More detail regarding how play can help to achieve these outcomes is detailed in the strategy (see Appendix 1).
12. Approval of the play strategy will help to achieve the following Corporate Goals:
 - **to provide supportive services in ways that increase people's independence and choice while protecting vulnerable people** – this can include play as a means to increase independence and the play strategy gives particular emphasis on encouraging vulnerable people to experience play opportunities in a safe environment;
 - **to enable Wiltshire people to live healthier and safer lives by working with health, police, District Councils and other partners** – the play strategy can lead to healthier and safer children through play and is achieving this partly through solid partnerships with relevant agencies and departments
 - The County Council aim to **become the healthiest county in England in which to live by 2012** – active play clearly supports this aim
 - County Priority Outcomes (within the five strategic goals) include
 - **to increase civic participation among Wiltshire citizens, particularly young people** – through active consultation with children and young people we are encouraging this
 - **to promote independence through integrated provision and partnership working** – this can be done through play and encouraged through the Wiltshire Play Partnership
 - **to improve services for young people** – including play provision
 - **to improve community safety and reduce the fear of crime** – through encouraging young people to take part in constructive activities rather than resort to criminal activities.
13. If the application to become a Single Council is successful, it will be necessary to consider how the actions shown in the District Council Play Strategies are implemented, including the management and completion of lottery-funded projects.

Environmental impact of the proposal

14. Potential better use of open and natural areas and play resources throughout Wiltshire.

Risk assessment

15. Failure of district council bids to the Lottery leads to projects, where consultation has been carried out, not going ahead.

Financial implications

16. There is currently a small budget to cover the start-up of the Wiltshire Play Partnership and to allow the Play Development Adviser to take opportunities as they arise for supporting partners in delivering play ideas. The actions in the strategy largely require no additional financial resources but rely instead upon partnership working with the Play Partnership and the district councils. The remaining actions will be funded from existing resources.

Equalities Impact

All aspects of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Equalities Act have been considered in the writing of this paper. This Play Strategy will not have a negative impact on different groups of people within the community. The Play Strategy is planned to increase civic participation among Wiltshire citizens, particularly young people.

Reasons for proposal

17. The proposal to approve the play strategy will give strength to improving the play opportunities in Wiltshire for children and young people aged 0-25.
18. The Wiltshire Play Partnership will have an approved action plan from which to carry out its work.
19. The county-wide play strategy will support and encourage the districts in increasing their own play provision.

Proposals

20. It is proposed that the play strategy is approved and adopted by Cabinet.

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