



Report of: **Executive Member for Children and Families**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Executive	15 May 2012	D1	All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
-----------------------	--	------------

SUBJECT: Islington Adventure Play Review

1.0 Synopsis

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the work of the Adventure Play Review Project Board which was established by the Children and Families Board in February 2011. The review has been addressing one of the Children and Families Board's four key priorities – 'Maintaining Play, Youth and Leisure Opportunities for Children and Young People and this report sets out recommendations on the future of delivery of adventure play in Islington.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the findings of the Adventure Play needs assessment and consultation as set out in *Appendix B*
- 2.2 To support the proposed core objectives and draft service specification for the adventure play service in Islington as detailed in paragraph 4.1 and *Appendix C*.
- 2.3 To support the proposed changes in management and governance for adventure playgrounds in Islington by terminating existing contracts with voluntary sector adventure playgrounds and the Islington Play Association from 31 March 2013 and tendering the six adventure playgrounds sites currently being managed by the voluntary sector (Timbuktoo; Toffee Park; Martin Luther King; Hayward's, Crumbles and Lumpy Hill) under one contract for two years from 1 April 2013 with the option to extend for up to a further year and to allocate an indicative budget of £550k p.a. for this contract.
- 2.4 To support the proposed policy for free access to adventure play as set out in paragraph 6.1.

- 2.5 To note the action taken to further secure the current land used for adventure play as detailed in the report and pursue the option of establishing a Deed of Dedication which would dedicate the 12 adventure playground sites as public playing fields specifically for open access adventure play and only allow the council to develop or dispose of the sites with the agreement of a third party and to present final proposals to the Executive in November 2012

3. Background

- 3.1 Maintaining Play, Youth and Leisure Opportunities for Children and Young People is one of the four key priorities of the Children and Families Board. The council's Executive has prioritised young people in its budget for 2012-15 and is maintaining its investment in adventure playgrounds. Adventure playgrounds have been a key feature of play opportunities in Islington for 40 years reflecting the need for children to have access to play in a borough with the 2nd lowest level of open space per head nationally. There are 12 adventure playgrounds in Islington, 6 managed by the council and 6 by the voluntary sector (inc. 1 under temporary council management).
- 3.2 In the current financial climate it is essential that the considerable investment being made by the council in adventure play is supported by ensuring that the provision is of the highest quality across all playgrounds.
- 3.3 There have been longstanding concerns from the voluntary sector that the funding for adventure play needs to be fairer as the perception is that council APs are funded far more generously for the core adventure playground service than voluntary sector APs. n.b. some council APs are additionally funded to provide youth work.
- 3.4 The council has also had considerable concern about the strength of governance overall in the voluntary sector adventure playgrounds. The committees, in some cases have few members with a heavy reliance on senior workers to fulfil all aspects on leadership and governance. The demands on committees in terms of employment, safeguarding, financial management and ability to lever in additional resources have increased significantly over the years and it is judged that the current capacity of governance overall is not fit for purpose for the future.
- 3.5 The aim of the Adventure Playground Review is, therefore, to support the development of a sustainable plan for Islington adventure playgrounds from 2012/13 onwards. A Project Board, comprising representatives from all voluntary sector adventure playgrounds, the council and public health established to review the governance, funding and commissioning arrangements for adventure playgrounds. An interim presentation was made to the Children and Families Board in October 2011 and a final report in March 2012. The Project Objectives are set out in *Appendix A*.
- 3.6 To date, the Project Board has met eleven times to discuss the considerable wealth of material and evidence gathered during the review period through data profiling, research and consultation. Members have been presented with details including population by ACYPP area, demographics of adventure playground user groups, attendance at adventure playgrounds, the range and averages of spend across the 12 adventure playgrounds as well as key messages emerging from the consultations. A summary of the main findings from the needs assessment are attached as *Appendix B*.
- 3.7 The Project Board also established three main sub groups:
- Stakeholder Engagement and Communications sub-group which developed and implemented a range of consultations as well as internal and external communications with stakeholders and the wider resident population.

- Property and Asset Management sub-group which has implemented audits on land ownership and building conditions and considered a number of options around potential asset transfers and the link to service level agreements. The sub group also considered how the land for adventure play can be secured for the longer term.
- Governance sub group which organised a consultation, including two major stakeholder events, on management and governance.

4.0 The Core Objectives for Adventure Play

4.1 The outcomes of the needs assessment and the evidence gathered through the review allowed the project board to consider and set out the key values of and proposals for adventure play service development. It was agreed that these must:

- maintain opportunities for children to engage in adventure play, upheld by the *Playwork Principles* and balancing effective risk benefit assessment and appropriate health and safety arrangements;
- improve the quality of the adventure playground offer and its contribution to improving outcomes for Islington children, young people and families;
- support quality staffing and appropriate safeguarding arrangements;
- deliver good value for money;
- be in the best position to lever in additional resources for children's adventure play;
- maintain the capital facilities;
- secure adventure playground land and facilities for children now and in the future.

4.2 The Board has also considered the key characteristics for an adventure play service specification. This is set out in *Appendix C*. The *Playwork Principles* are set out in *Appendix D*.

5.0 Governance

5.1 A specific consultation was undertaken on governance through a set of questions sent to all senior playworkers as well as voluntary sector management committees to gain an understanding of the current strengths and areas for development across the adventure playgrounds. The questions also enquired about current and potential capacity of adventure playgrounds, as well as the current skill levels of both the playworkers and management committee members. The outcome of these questionnaires is summarised in *Appendix E* and was used as the basis of discussions exploring the current and potential future ways that adventure playgrounds can be staffed, managed and governed. The questionnaires were completed anonymously in order to encourage colleagues to respond openly and honestly.

5.2 Consensus has been reached that the current capacity of governance overall is not fit for purpose for the future and that the council should tender the service and seek a suitably qualified and experienced organisation to manage the adventure playgrounds .

5.3 The advantage of this is that the provider will be able to develop a consistent borough-wide service and use the resources flexibly to meet need whilst meeting the minimum

requirements of the service specification. The specification requirements have been informed by the discussions of the review board.

5.4 The key requirements for any provider will include the minimum service levels on each site and the quality required. It is expected that the provider will be able to lever in considerable external resources for the service across the borough whilst maintaining strong links with the local communities at each adventure playground and ensuring children's involvement in programming and parental involvement where possible and appropriate.

5.5 The review board agreed to consider two options:

Option A - A single management organisation

- The organisation would be commissioned by Islington and becomes the employer of all playworkers on the adventure playgrounds, creating an Adventure Playground Service.
- HR, finance, safeguarding, health & safety and quality would all be held centrally within the organisation.
- Funds and staff could be redistributed across the Service if needed.
- Current management committees to become 'Friends of' groups to support more with local fundraising, publicity, volunteering and events.
- All adventure playgrounds remain individual settings within the Service but have consistent ways of working, terms and conditions, etc. through the single organisation.

5.6 **Option B - A single management organisation – 2 stage approach**

- The council establishes a new fair funding formula for adventure playgrounds.
- The council establishes a consistent SLA and monitoring process for all playgrounds.
- One organisation is commissioned to manage the 6 voluntary sector adventure playgrounds for a set period of time (e.g. 2/3 years).
- The council adventure playgrounds remain part of the council for a set period (e.g. 2/3 years) while the arrangement is monitored and they are prepared for inclusion under a single provider model.
- Following the transition period, an organisation is commissioned to manage the 12 adventure playgrounds. This organisation would have to demonstrate a proven track record, adventure play ethos, an understanding of local issues and individual sites' unique features, in addition to good value for money.

5.7 The Children and Families Board was asked for its view on the above two options. There was an acknowledgement that moving to one contract for all 12 playgrounds may prove a risk depending on the soft market test and the calibre of applications. On the other hand, the Board was concerned about the potential 'competition between the two contracts' – one with an external provider and one within the council. The Board also felt that division of the budget would be difficult in relation to different historic funding and individual playground differences.

5.8 The council undertook a 'soft market test' between 23rd February and 15th March to gauge the potential interest from prospective bidders to manage the adventure playgrounds. 6 charitable organisations responded to the market test, 5 of which stated that they have experience of managing adventure play. All 6 said that they would be interested in bidding for the 6 adventure playgrounds. However, only 3 of the organisations clearly stated that they would be interested in bidding for all 12. 2 said they would consider all 12 within a consortium. One of the issues raised in relation to

'all 12' was the complexity and risk in taking over contractual commitments (including pension contribution obligations) of staff members employed by the local authority.

- 5.9 In considering the two options, it is being recommended, on balance, to tender the six adventure playgrounds sites currently being managed by the voluntary sector (Timbuktoo; Toffee Park; Martin Luther King; Hayward's, Crumbles and Lumpy Hill) under one contract for two years from 1st April 2013 with the option to extend for up to a further year. The council would consider at that stage whether to retender the six playgrounds or include all twelve. Each existing contracts with the voluntary sector would therefore come to an end on 31st March 2013.
- 5.10 This proposal also has implications for the council's contract with Islington Play Association (IPA). The principal purpose of this contract is for the IPA to provide support to the voluntary sector adventure playgrounds in relation to service planning, quality, governance, finance etc. As the council will specifically be tendering a single organisation where these aspects will be tested through the procurement and secured through the contract, it is not considered necessary to continue funding IPA for this function. The new adventure play provider may choose to purchase specific support from external organisations such as IPA. It is therefore being proposed that the IPA be given notice of the end of its current contract with the council as from 1st April 2013. The resources released will be included in the total sum available for the adventure play provider

6.0 Finance and Fair Funding

- 6.1 An important principle of the provision of adventure play has been that it has been free for children at the point of access. The review group is recommending that this principle be maintained in the commissioning of the adventure playgrounds. This would apply to the core offer of open access adventure play as funded by the council. Organisations would be free to charge for additional services such as trips, child care during breakfast/lunch times, walking bus services and residential.
- 6.2 One of the key policy issues identified is the need to provide a fair funding framework for adventure play. With the governance Option A, this is straightforward as the identified council budget for adventure play services would be available for a single tender. With Option B, careful consideration has been given on how to divide the budget to take into account: historical differences; site capacities; ability to lever in external finances; structural staffing costs (e.g. salaries, pensions); full-cost recovery etc. Consideration will also need to be given to transition arrangements and the additional funding that some playgrounds receive for youth work delivery.
- 6.3 The Project Board considered a potential finance model based on current income and expenditure, including a zero-based budget build exercise to inform this consideration.
- 6.4 The principles adopted to inform the budget allocation were as follows. For staffing that each playground should have 2 qualified full-time staff plus sufficient sessional hours to ensure 3 staff on site when open and additional staffing resources for holiday periods. In addition, funding for management overheads. The indicative budget envelope being proposed is 530k which is 120k more than currently allocated to the 6 voluntary sector adventure playgrounds. This funding would provide for sufficient funding to cover opening times required in the specification plus a contribution to running costs and overheads. The additional funding will be found by transferring the budget previously allocated to the IPA and funding from the council's management costs of adventure play, thus addressing a long standing concern from the voluntary sector about the disparity of funding between the voluntary and statutory sector playgrounds. The council budget will retain current levels of front line delivery but still be greater than that allocated to the voluntary sector APs in order to reflect the additional structural staffing costs and the potential ability of the new provider to lever in external charitable and other funding.

7.0 Property and Asset Management

- 7.1 The Property and Asset Management Sub Group has considered a range of issues through its meetings.
- 7.2 Firstly, the protection of land for adventure play. The group has considered the existing protections that exist and the proposal for the establishment of a 'Land Trust' through which to secure the 12 adventure playground sites for children's play in perpetuity. Immediate action was taken to extend protection of adventure playground sites by formally designating them within the Council's Development Management Policies. This was considered by the Executive in November 2011 and is now subject to the agreement of the Secretary of State for potential adoption in 2012. A proposal for the establishment of a Land Trust has also been considered.
- 7.3 The Sub Group has also clarified site boundary and land ownership issues for each adventure playground site. Currently the Council owns the freehold of the land on which all of the adventure playgrounds are situated and none of the Adventure Playground Providers have any written occupational agreements with the Council.
- 7.4 The Sub Group has also undertaken a basic audit of condition and suitability. This has informed the outcome of the review and identified what improvements need to be made before moving into formal leasing agreements with providers. The sub-group has identified urgent repairs and maintenance requirements on adventure playground sites in preparation for potential lease agreements. Initial surveys have been undertaken and some works initiated.
- 7.5 In addition, a partnership has been agreed with the Royal Bank of Scotland to inject some much needed additional funding to support capital improvements on adventure playground sites. RBS will provide match funding of £150k specifically to support adventure playground repairs and improvements. An audit was undertaken for all adventure playground sites to identify needs and priorities against the £300k programme for 2012/13. There is potential for continued financial support should the programme work well.
- 7.6 The Sub Group has also held discussions on the terms under which leases will be provided i.e. to clarify the landlord and tenant responsibilities. Any lease will be subject to the Council's asset management transfer process and associated assessment of the capacity of the organisation to manage the tenants' responsibilities.
- 7.7 Finally, the group has also considered the link between leases (for which the working assumption is a term of 25 years) along with SLAs for service provision which may be for 3 years or more. This will be taken forward in line with the Council's Asset Transfer Policy and guidelines on 'fair procurement'.
- 7.8 Three options have been considered:
- Option A - Grant of a 25 year lease to the Adventure Playground Provider
 - Option B - Freehold Transfer of Adventure Playgrounds to a Land Trust
 - Option C – Establish a Deed of Dedication for each adventure playground
- 7.9 The Children and Families Board considered Options A & B and considered B to be preferable in that it would definitely secure the land for children's play in perpetuity. However, the steps already taken to secure this land for adventure play mean that it would be highly unlikely for the council to change the use of the current adventure playgrounds sites without securing a suitable alternative.
- 7.10 The advantages of each option are summarised in *Appendix F*. In light of all the factors presented, it is recommended that the council at this stage continue with its current

planning policies to secure the sites for adventure play and further pursue Option C with regard to establishing a Deed of Dedication for the adventure playgrounds.

8.0 Quality Assurance

8.1 As part of the questionnaires sent out to senior playworkers and management committees, there were a number of specific questions around quality assurance. This area has been highlighted as one for further exploration, as there are currently a number of quality assurance models being utilised simultaneously across the borough.

8.2 A quality assurance framework is in place that has been used by all council adventure playgrounds for approximately 3 years. There is also the Quality in Play national kitemark that all adventure playgrounds are currently working towards achieving over the next 12 months. Adventure playgrounds are also either listed on the voluntary or compulsory Ofsted registers, and either receive compliance visits or full inspections to ensure that they are operating quality services within the legal specifications.

9.0 Implications

9.1 Financial Implications

The overall budget for adventure play in Islington is approx £1.345m p.a. It is proposed that this sum be used as the 'financial envelope' within which to provide adventure playground services through to March 2015. The budget available for the tender proposed for the six adventure playgrounds currently being managed by the voluntary sector would be up to £550k p.a. There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations of the report.

9.2 Legal Implications

The Council is required under section 507A of the Education Act 1996 to secure adequate recreation and social and physical training facilities for children under the age of 13. This can include the establishment, management and maintenance of playgrounds. When making arrangements, the council must have particular regard to the expediency of cooperating with any voluntary bodies whose objects include the provision of similar facilities or activities.

The existing contracts with Timbuktoo, Toffee Park, Martin Luther King, Hayward's, Crumbles and Lumpy Hill would come to an end on 31 March 2013. After this time the council may re-procure these services. In doing so the council may package the services in any way it thinks fit, and may if it chooses to, let a single contract as proposed.

Adventure play services are Part B services for purposes of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. The threshold for application of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 is currently £173,934. Although Part B services do not need to strictly comply with the provisions of the Regulations, there is a requirement under EU rules for part B services to comply with the principles of equal treatment, non discrimination and fair competition. The council's Procurement Rules require contracts over the value of £100,000 to be subject to competitive tender. If these services are to be re-procured as recommended in the report a competitive tendering procedure with advertisement should be used.

The proposed Deed of Dedication is in accordance with the Council's legal powers under the Local Government Act 1972 to appropriate land for the purposes of specific functions and to grant rights in relation to council owned land.

The deed of dedication would require the Council to dedicate the land for future use as a public playing field to provide open access adventure play, the effect being to limit the Council's ability to deal with the land both in terms of future development and disposal without the consent of a third party e.g. the National Playing Fields Association, operating as Fields in Trust (FIT). In terms of future disposals entering into either of the deeds would mean that the council could only dispose of an adventure playground if it was able to replace it with an alternative of at least equivalent size, quality and accessibility and serving the same community.

9.3 **Environmental Implications**

The maintenance of land for adventure play will have a beneficial environmental impact by retaining much needed play space for children. Most adventure playgrounds now incorporate nature and vegetable gardens within their sites and deliver relevant activities within their programmes around food growing, healthy eating and environmental awareness. By maintaining this land for adventure play, the council is also working to the Core Strategy, the London Plan 2011 and the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for London, which emphasise improving quality and increased access to nature and play spaces.

9.4 **Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the process of the Review to identify potential issues that may arise due to changes in the management, governance, funding or ways of working regarding adventure playgrounds in Islington. The assessment focused on the impact of changes to the service for the users themselves.

Through the detailed needs analysis, it became clear that many of Islington's most vulnerable children and families access adventure play, including those experiencing multiple disadvantages. If the current level of service is reduced, these children and families may not have access to universal services that provide a range of ways for them to engage with professionals who offer support through early intervention and prevention.

Through data and anecdotal evidence, adventure playgrounds demonstrate that they work well with hard to reach families, especially those who may present challenging behaviour or have a statement of a special educational need or disability. Alongside this universal offer, it should also be noted that the Hayward Adventure Playground currently supports a large number of disabled children to access adventure play who would otherwise find it difficult to attend open-access settings.

The assessment also looked at involvement of organisational stakeholders, considering their inclusion in the Review and the potential impact on the resulting recommendations. To prevent exclusion of any of the affected organisations and stakeholders, a range of meetings, consultations and stakeholder events have been held throughout the period of the Review. Through the engagement that took place as part of the Review process, a robust service specification draft has been developed in partnership with stakeholders, ensuring that clear outputs and outcomes have been agreed at project board and making any future tendering opportunities accessible to both small and large, local and national organisations.

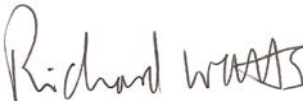
10.0 Summary and Next Steps

- 10.1 The tender process would commence after the call in period following any decision made by the Executive. A report to the Executive to recommend the successful bidder, together with any proposals for a Deed of Dedication and related leases, would be made to the council's Executive meeting to be held in November 2012

Background documents:

1. Project Initiation Document
2. Presentation 1 of Adventure Play Needs Assessment
3. Presentation 2 of Adventure Play Needs Assessment
4. Property and Asset Management Sub-group Reports
5. Needs Assessment and Consultation Reports
6. Adventure Play Review Board Papers

Final Report Clearance

Signed by		2 May 2012
	Executive Member for Children and Families	Date
Received by
	Head of Democratic Services	Date

Contact: Thanos Morphitis
Director of Strategy and Commissioning, Children's Services
T: 020-7527-3508
E: thanos.morphitis@islington.gov.uk

Adventure Play Review

Project Objectives

- To engage a range of stakeholders to develop options for a sustainable model for adventure playgrounds that has the greatest potential to deliver to high quality adventure play opportunities for children and young people.
- To identify a number of potential governance and delivery model options for the management of adventure playgrounds, ensuring good value for money, supporting quality staffing and appropriate safeguarding arrangements.
- To consider the feasibility of long term scoping (for example in the case of the Children and Families Strategy to 2020) and reflect on what maintaining an offer means for now and for the future, in regard to staffing, resources, assets and capital.
- To consider how Islington can be in the best position to lever in additional resources for children's adventure play in the future.
- To engage a range of stakeholders in identifying how we can maximise the use of adventure playgrounds by children and young people and provide progression to the youth offer.
- To consider the potential impact to youth provision that proposals for funding, delivery and governance of adventure playgrounds may have.
- To identify options to maintain and improve the quality of the adventure playground offer to Islington children, young people and families.
- To identify options to maintain opportunities for children to engage in adventure play, upheld by the Playwork Principles through effective risk benefit assessment and appropriate health and safety arrangements.
- To identify key success characteristics of individual adventure playgrounds relating to different styles of offer, utilisation of resources and approach to fundraising.
- To consider asset transfer of adventure playground land and facilities (i.e. issuing of formal leases to adventure playgrounds) as well as the proposal for a Land Trust.
- To develop a clear evidence base that illustrates the links between adventure playgrounds and the health and well-being of children and young people.

Adventure Play Review

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Stakeholders have been engaged through a number of events and consultation exercises to gain their views of adventure play, now and in the future. This has taken place through:
 - 2 adult stakeholder events attended by more than 60 people
 - Paper and web-based consultations outreaching to parents, carers and other stakeholders with more than 150 responses to date
 - Consultations at a number of large events including the Cally Festival and Playday, engaging with children and families to listen to their views
 - Adventure playgrounds have undertaken consultations with the children and young people who attend to gain an understanding of how they feel about the adventure playgrounds and their experiences there
 - Parents and carers have been approached through a school gates consultation in order to capture those who may not currently access adventure playgrounds
- A range of data has been acquired through the needs assessment in order to inform discussions around the links between adventure playgrounds and other key factors such as local demographics and health & well-being
- National details regarding children's health and well-being have been accumulated to look at the relevant local impact (for example <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120486/play-and-health-policy-brief-03.pdf>)
- Specific details regarding children's health and well-being by ACYPP have been gathered to look at how health impacts on local communities and any potential links to adventure play provision
- Financial data has been acquired in order to assess the running costs of adventure playgrounds and consider the range and averages of these costs across the borough
- Stakeholders and Project Board members have offered a number of ideas around how to better utilise adventure playground facilities and maximise their use throughout the day, year round
- Visits are being made to each of the 12 adventure playgrounds to identify their unique attributes and range of success characteristics
- A number of options have been explored by the Property and Asset Management sub-group to look at the best ways to safeguard the land where adventure playgrounds are located for the use of children's play in the long-term

Of the adults consulted, the general responses indicate that:

- Just under 80% of children and young people attend an adventure playground 3 times per week or more.
- More than 65% of children and young people attend an adventure playground both in term time and during school holidays.
- More than half of the families who responded do not have access to a garden.

Key headings from this consultation were:

- The top three reasons why adult stakeholders think adventure playgrounds are important are that they are free, children enjoy going to them and children feel safe.
- Adult stakeholders were concerned that if the adventure playground was no longer there or had to change its patterns of opening, that children and young people would have less to do and that antisocial behaviour would increase.
- The consultation indicates that adults value playworkers because they keep children safe, they are part of the local community and they offer support and advice to families.
- Parents and carers told us that they trust adventure playground staff with children and young people, including when their children have additional needs or a disability.

- Parents and carers who are in employment value adventure playgrounds because children and young people have a place to go after school and during the school holidays.
- Adult stakeholders noted that adventure playgrounds support children's learning and development, including the opportunity to make new friends, explore new challenges and have the freedom to try different things.
- Parents and carers shared that playworkers being professional, having experience and holding nationally recognised qualifications gave them confidence in the quality of the adventure playground and the work of the staff employed there.

During the summer holidays, children and young people across Islington were consulted about why adventure playgrounds are important to them. Using a range of creative methods, playworkers and other children's services professionals asked a number of questions including:

1. What do you like about adventure playgrounds?
2. What don't you like about adventure playgrounds?
3. What makes the adventure playground so good?/What makes an adventure playground better than other places?
4. If you could make the best adventure playground ever, what would it be like?

Some children were engaged through discussion groups, while others were observed while playing or supported to make their own film or podcast. The methods used were inclusive to ensure that all children and young people were able to contribute their views. Through large events like the Cally Festival and Playday, as well as on adventure playgrounds themselves, it is estimated that more than 300 children and young people have been consulted.

Key headings from this consultation were:

- Across the consultations, children and young people said that they feel safe to attend adventure playgrounds, where they can meet up with their friends and be themselves in a supportive environment. The fear of bullies came up for many children, and they feel more confident knowing that playworkers and the adventure playground ground rules are there to support them.
- Children and young people consistently said that they value their relationships with playworkers, which they highlight as different to their relationships with other adults and professionals.
- Children and young people like that they have the opportunity to discuss and decide the ground rules with playworkers.
- The range of activities and resources on offer at adventure playgrounds are important to children and young people, especially as they can be used flexibly during the play sessions and not according to a specific schedule.
- Children and young people felt that at adventure playgrounds, they could play in different and more exciting ways than in other settings.
 - Children and young people noted the value of emotional risks and having the chance to play in ways that challenged potential stereotypes (eg. playing dress up as a 13 year old boy with friends, girls building dens, boys and girls of different ages playing games together, a boy with autism who doesn't like being off of the ground climbing a play structure).
 - The value of physical risks were also noted (eg. being up high, using swings that are exciting, riding bicycles and learning to do tricks on them, cooking over an open fire).
 - Nature play came up consistently in the consultation, with children noting their enjoyment with playing with water, in the sand, getting muddy/dirty and participating in activities like pond dipping, gardening and mini-beast hunts.
- Children and young said that they felt ownership of the adventure playground space more than other settings.
- Playworkers are consistently seen as advocates by the children and young people, who feel that their views are listened to and that any issues that arise on or around the adventure playground are dealt with fairly.

Adventure Play Review

Draft Service Specification

Service Outcomes

1. To improve, through play, children's physical and emotional health
2. To improve, through play, children's safety and welfare
3. To improve, through play, children's enjoyment and achievement
4. To improve, through play, children's opportunities to make a positive contribution
5. To improve, through play, children's economic well being

Service Outputs

1. To increase the number of children accessing adventure play
2. The 12 adventure playgrounds provide a range of unique settings that are of different sizes and environments, which presents different levels of staffing on each site. They also respond to specific local needs, so may work with different groups of Islington residents that could require additional support around accessing adventure playgrounds. The minimum expected requirements for delivery of all adventure playgrounds in Islington is as follows:
 - 39 weeks term time delivery (4 days after school, one day at the weekend), a minimum of 18 hours per week
 - 9 weeks school holiday periods (Monday-Friday), a minimum of 35 hours per week

Service Requirements

1. Although they are open-access, adventure playgrounds in Islington should prioritise access for local children and young people that live in the borough
2. Core adventure play services are free at the point of access – affordable charges for childcare elements (i.e. breakfast and lunch clubs, walking buses) and trips should not impact on access for local children and young people to the core adventure play offer
3. Islington adventure playgrounds are child-centred, ensuring that decisions made around management, funding and programming suit the needs of local children and families first
4. Quality of services, including the range of play types and opportunities, are of the highest standard at Islington adventure playgrounds
5. Safeguarding arrangements, health and safety and other legal obligations are consistent and of high quality across Islington adventure playgrounds
6. Risk benefit is embedded across adventure playgrounds in Islington, including how they are built and maintained as well as the way in which they provide activities

7. Opportunities for disabled children and young people to engage in adventure play are improved and developed
8. Access to adventure play is improved across all communities
9. Financial arrangements are secure, with additional funding for both capital and revenue streams levered in to improve the quality of the adventure playground offer
10. Policies, procedures and practice are consistent across the 12 adventure playgrounds without reducing the individuality of each site
11. A clear business plan is developed and implemented with robust financial management, a proven track record and the ability to lever in resources
12. Adventure playgrounds and supported and enabled to demonstrate values, outputs and outcome while recognising play for play's sake
13. Work with current and new partners to increase capacity of the adventure playgrounds, including utilising the buildings and outdoor spaces when they are not currently in use
14. Ensure that work incorporates a transition from the adventure playgrounds to youth provision across the borough
15. Utilise the current workforce and their local knowledge in skills, as well as the current volunteers, parents and other community members who are involved in the adventure playgrounds

The provider would be required to provide direct line management, support, strategy and development across the adventure playgrounds. This includes:

- Human resources
- Finance and budget management
- Revenue and capital generation through fundraising
- Safeguarding accountability, including clear procedures in line with the All London Child Protection Procedures as well as named, designated persons within the organisation
- Support and training for staff around legal requirements as well as ongoing professional playwork development
- Appropriate legal health and safety requirements relevant to adventure play facilities, taking into consideration the unique nature of each of the 12 sites
- An internal quality assurance system in conjunction with external challenge (i.e. through Quality in Play and Ofsted)
- Partnership working with local community and 'friends of' groups, as well as regional and national organisations

Adventure Play Review

Playwork Principles

These principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork, and describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people.

They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities:

- All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.
- Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
- The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
- For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult-led agendas.
- The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
- The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
- Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
- Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well being of children.

Adventure Play Review

Outcome of consultation on governance

Some of the key messages that emerged from the senior playworker responses were:

- Senior playworkers on council adventure playgrounds feel that their management is either effective or very effective.
- Sixty percent (60%) of senior playworkers on voluntary sector adventure playgrounds feel that their management is effective or very effective. However, 40% felt that their management was ineffective or very ineffective.
- The support that senior playworkers feel that they receive e.g. from the Islington Play Association and the Strategy and Commissioning Team is mixed, with some valuing it and others feeling that it is ineffective.
- Quality assurance visits were valued on the whole. Overall, senior playworkers felt that the feedback and development as a result of visits mainly support them with safeguarding (80%), health and safety (70%) and record keeping (70%).
- The main areas identified by senior playworkers where they would like increased or continued support are fundraising and marketing. Following these, they highlighted outreach, staffing, safeguarding and quality assurance as other key areas where support is useful.
- In regards to capacity, some senior playworkers felt that they were currently running at full capacity because of their building and land footprint as well as the legal requirements of Ofsted. Other senior playworkers felt that with additional funding to support the employment of more playworkers, they could increase their capacity by more than 70%.

Some of the key messages that emerged from the management committee (3/6) responses were:

- Committee members' length of service as a committee member ranges significantly, with some members joining committees in the last month and others involved for 14 years.
- Some committees feel that their skills and experience are mainly around finance and staffing issues, with areas like fundraising, quality assurance, marketing and outreach falling more to the senior playworkers.
- Other committees feel confident in their skills and experience across most areas relating to the management of adventure playgrounds, with members holding qualifications in areas like finance and human resources.
- Quality assurance and facilities management seem to be the most consistent areas across the committees where increased or continued support is needed.

Committees also raised the need for bespoke, accessible, affordable training for both the committee and for staff to ensure that they were up to date with mandatory training as well as opportunities to develop professionally and improve playwork practice.

Adventure Play Review

Land and Lease options

Background and summary of options

The council has launched consultation on the final drafts of three important planning policy documents. Policy DM 36 in chapter 6 of the Development Management Policies document has a policy which looks to protect play space and adventure playgrounds. Appendix 4 contains a list of the adventure playgrounds. The council is also consulting on the changes to the Proposals Map which identifies which areas of the borough are subject to policies and proposals contained within planning policy documents. The adventure playground sites to be protected are mapped within this document.

Option A - Grant of a 25 year lease to the Adventure Playground Provider

One of the expected outcomes of the review was to move to secure lease arrangements for the Adventure playgrounds provider(s). The general approach being adopted is to offer a 25 year lease in accordance with the Council's Asset Transfer Policy to provide the organisation security in relation to leveraging external resources, particularly for site developments. The lease would, however be tied to a Service Level Agreement with respect to the satisfactory delivery of services and be subject to termination and transfer of lease to another provider in the event of a material failure to comply with the terms of the Service Level Agreement .

Option B - Freehold Transfer of Adventure Playgrounds to a Land Trust

A proposal has been received from the Islington Play Association for the adventure playgrounds sites to be transferred to the ownership of a Land Trust on a charitable basis and thus protect them in perpetuity for the purposes of adventure play.

There are a number of benefits which come with charitable status. There are also certain limitations and obligations. Some of the restrictions may affect the ability of the Trust to lease the land to the Adventure Playgrounds providers.

- The property and income of the charity can only be applied for recognised and defined charitable purposes, the objects of the charity.
- Charities can only act within their legal powers as laid out in the 1993 and 2006 Charities Acts as amended and their own specific charitable objectives.
- Charities need to take particular care in organising the trading activities of the charity, as these may not be regarded as charitable. Some of the Adventure Playgrounds make charges for some services and may fall foul of this requirement
- The property of the charity must be managed appropriately and protected.
- In England and Wales charities with income of over £5000 a year are required to register with the Charity Commission. All registered charities must prepare a Trustees' Annual Report (TAR) and accounts. However the amount of information that has to be provided varies according to the size of the charity. The larger the income of the charity the more information needs to be made available.
- There is a legal requirement to comply with charity legislation and all charities are subject to the jurisdiction of the Charity Commission as the regulatory body.
- Requirements under charity law which relate to disposal and land exchanges can be more onerous than under statutory law. For example disposal must be in the best interests of the charity, subject to independent valuation by a suitably qualified professional whose advice must be followed, be at open market value and in some circumstances require the permission of the Charity Commission.

Option C – Establishment of Deed of Dedication for each Adventure Playground

With this option, a non-charitable deed of dedication is established whereby the council as freeholder dedicates the land for future use as a public playing field specifically for open access adventure play through a deed which only allows the council to develop or dispose of the site for another purpose with the agreement of a third party e.g. National Playing Field Association (operating as Fields in Trust) with the APs designated as Queen Elizabeth II Fields. The council currently has such an agreement in place with Fields in Trust in relation to Gillespie Park.

The deed of dedication would require the Council to dedicate the land for future use as a public playing field to provide open access adventure play, the effect being to limit the Council's ability to deal with the land both in terms of future development and disposal without the consent of a third party e.g. the National Playing Fields Association, operating as Fields in Trust (FIT). In terms of future disposals entering into the deeds would mean that the council could only dispose of the open space if it was able to replace it with an alternative open space of at least equivalent size, quality and accessibility and serving the same community.

The main advantages of *Option A* are: -

- Occupation status and repairing responsibilities between sector and LBI are clearly identified
- Use secured for duration of lease and service level agreements
- Local community ownership and empowerment achieved with minimal risk to council
- Increased access to funding and income streams for organisations(s) with 25 year leases
- The council retains overall control of the asset and can easily maintain the link between the asset and required level of service delivery
- The council can better manage risk of failure of organisation to develop, maintain, and refurbish the asset for the benefit of the community.
- Accords with Council's existing asset transfer policy
- Use of the land for adventure play receives a further layer of protection through the new planning designation.
- The council can recover the asset through termination of the lease if the organisation ceases to keep it in use as an adventure playground
- Overcomes risk that Land Trust management of AP sites may not reflect Council's ethos for APs
- Supports establishment of clear specification for APs and the services they provide

The main advantages of *Option B* are:-

- Future use of the land for adventure play secured through imposition of positive covenant with reversion of land
- Long term sustainability and security of use
- Increased feeling of community ownership and empowerment
- Increased access to funding and income streams
- Once and for all transfer with no ongoing landlord maintenance responsibility for the council
- Council divests itself of liability for backlog maintenance

The main advantages of *Option C* are:-

- Increases security of land for adventure play for children in the longer term
- Occupation status and repairing responsibilities between provider and LBI are clearly identified
- Use secured for duration of lease and service level agreements
- The council can determine the length of the deed of dedication i.e. for fixed length or in perpetuity
- The council could define the purpose of the playing fields as providing open access adventure play
- The deed of dedication would provide certainty to potential funders that any investments would be secured in the long term and increase access to funding and income streams
- Potential additional benefits if designated as Queen Elizabeth II Fields
- Long term sustainability and security of use
- Overcomes risk that Land Trust management of AP sites may not reflect Council's ethos for APs
- Supports establishment of clear specification for APs and the services they provide
- The council can better manage risk of failure of organisation to develop, maintain, and refurbish the asset for the benefit of the community.