

EXECUTIVE

6 SEPTEMBER 2007

A TIME AND PLACE FOR PLAY: A PLAY STRATEGY FOR GUILDFORD

SUMMARY

This report seeks approval by the Executive of a new comprehensive Guildford Borough Play Strategy, which has been produced by amalgamating the three existing strategies associated with play and youth facilities. The new document is entitled '*A Time and Place For Play – A Play Strategy for Guildford*'.

This report also includes the portfolio of projects proposed for external grant funding for approval by the Executive, to allow an application to the Big Lottery Fund to be made prior to their deadline of 10 September 2007.

To enable the application to be submitted by the deadline, the Executive and Chairman of the Community and Health Scrutiny Committee are also invited to determine that the call-in procedure under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 69 (f) should not apply in relation to the decision on this matter.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2005 the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) announced a key funding stream entitled the 'Children's Play Programme'. £124 million has been allocated to local authorities across England on the basis of size and need to provide free, local and inclusive play opportunities. Local authorities are invited to work with partners to develop a Play Strategy and portfolio of projects as the basis for an application for their allocated sum.

1.2 As part of the BIG Lottery Fund's Children's Play Programme, Guildford Borough Council has been allocated £210,425 over a 3 year period. Whilst the money has been allocated to Guildford in principle, the Council must produce a comprehensive Play Strategy and a portfolio of projects for funding that satisfy the criteria set down by the BIG Lottery Fund to be able to make an application to access the funding. Additionally, in order to obtain the grant allocation, local authorities need to ensure that:

- a) grants support activities that are self-directed, creative and fun in the areas of greatest need.
- b) they consult with local stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector to draw up a local Play Strategy. In doing so, a range of projects can be identified that address the needs highlighted in the Strategy, some to be delivered by the local authority and others that may be contracted to voluntary and community organisations. These will form the basis of the application to the BLF.
- c) applications include a summary of all projects proposed, how they will be managed, and the estimates of costs. They must also show clear evidence that they fit the local Play Strategy and are a response to the needs and wishes of local children and young people.

- d) the portfolio of projects takes full account of the needs of disabled children and other young people that have significantly worse access to good play opportunities.
- e) the Lottery funding is additional and must not be used to replace funding from national or local taxation.

1.3 It is clear from discussions with other Councils that whilst there is no obligation to apply for this grant, all Councils are doing so as it provides funding for an area of work to which local authorities are already committed. As long as the Council's bid does not involve it in an ongoing revenue commitment once the external funding ends in three years time, then there are clear benefits to obtaining external funding to cover the totality of the costs of initiatives that the Council would like to undertake in any case, were the funding to be available to it internally.

2. MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Between 2003 and 2004, the Council adopted three separate strategies dealing with different aspects of play and facilities for young people:

- a) Play Development Strategy for Guildford Borough
- b) Guildford Borough Council Fixed Equipment Playground Strategy
- c) Guildford Borough Youth Facilities Strategy

2.2 Whilst these strategies could be used separately and still achieve their aims, this would not necessarily ensure that:

- a) appropriate priority was given to each action;
- b) projects were integrated where appropriate to save resources;
- c) a full, clear, cross-cutting agenda was produced and followed; and
- d) enabling partnerships, both within and externally to the Council, were fully considered.

2.3 It is, therefore, necessary both for the BLF and for the reasons given above to amalgamate these strategies to produce one coherent document and action plan. This will provide a framework for the development of play and youth facilities within the Borough for children and young people aged 3-18 years. It will also provide:

- a) a definition of play;
- b) a case for play;
- c) evidence of consultation;
- d) details of current provision; and
- e) an action and evaluation plan.

2.4 A copy of the new comprehensive Play Strategy is attached as **Annexe 1**.

- 2.5 This further development of Guildford's Play Strategy (see background papers) has determined the reasoning behind the recommendation for the adoption of the portfolio of schemes to be put forward for funding, namely:-
- a) the installation of a teenage play site at Stoughton Recreation Ground to include an area for children's cycling (£52,000);
 - b) the installation of a teenage Multi-sports facility at Waterside Road, Slyfield. (£54,012);
 - c) the provision of play opportunities in communities, in partnership with the Children's Centre in Belfields, by using the Children's Centre's Play Bus to take play out to children within the Borough, overcoming transport barriers (£57,464 for a 3 year period);
 - d) improving the health of young people by providing a trim trail (exercise equipment) in Stoke Park (£17,000); and
 - e) allocating financial resources to deliver the management, administration and publicity for the projects a) to d) above (£18,000).
- 2.6 Each of these projects requires detailed information to be provided to BLF as part of the application. This detail is provided in **Annexe 2**.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Council has made significant investment in play provision in its parks and open spaces in recent years, notably in relation to providing new and replacement children's playgrounds. It has also improved the facilities for the older age range, including basketball hoops, youth shelters and skateboarding areas. The Council has also provided financial support for Play Development and Holiday Playschemes, such as FISH, with additional grant support to other providers such as Disability Challengers and CHIPS Guildford. This investment in play is demonstrated in the Play Strategy to identify that this Council has supported play to a high level prior to the allocation of the Children's Play Programme Grant.
- 3.2 The BLF funding allocations are intended to develop play provision by enabling all local authorities to create, improve and develop their local play spaces. To receive the grants, local authorities are required to take the lead role in applying for funds, whilst working with their local partners in the play sector.
- 3.3 With a September 2007 submission, decisions on the application are not anticipated until January 2008. BLF has stated that projects must commence within six months of the application being deemed to include acceptable portfolios. The funding of ongoing projects is for three years.

4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The portfolio of projects has been selected with the intention of minimising staffing implications. Identified in Paragraph **2.5**, portfolio (e) is a portion of the total grant allocation that has been incorporated to cover additional administrative and management elements. Additionally, one of the projects proposed has limited staffing implications but only in relation to the partnership project where the Council is not the employer.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The risk to be addressed in relation to this item is the sustainability of the portfolios or projects included in the Play Strategy at the end of the three year external funding period. The Council should ensure that it does not enter into projects which attract funding from external agencies if that funding has an impact on the Council's subsequent revenue budget once the funding programme finishes (in this case in 3 years). The Officers have, therefore, worked to minimise potential sustainability issues through partnership arrangements and the installation of play equipment, as indicated in the portfolio (project) summary in paragraph 2.5 above.
- 5.2 The above recommendations need to be agreed by the Executive at this meeting to enable the Council to apply for its £210,425 funding allocation before the deadline of 10 September 2007.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Through the amalgamation of the three current strategies associated with play/youth facilities and the consultation involved, it is evident that Guildford provides extensive play opportunities. However, the application to the BLF carefully targets investment into projects that increase opportunities and deal with gaps in provision that include teenage facilities, taking play into the community to deal with transport issues, tackling barriers to physical activity in young people and providing further inclusive play and working in partnership with other providers. This targeting of projects has been developed in a way that they will not increase expectations and demands on revenue budgets beyond the three year period in which the BLF provides the funding and is a positive move forward for the Borough in its provision of play opportunities.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Executive is asked to:
- a) approve the amalgamated Guildford Borough Play Strategy '*A Time and Place For Play – A Play Strategy for Guildford*' which combines the three existing strategies associated with play/youth facilities, namely:
 - (i) Play Development Strategy for Guildford Borough;
 - (ii) Guildford Borough Council Fixed Equipment Playground Strategy; and
 - (iii) Guildford Borough Youth Facilities Strategy;
 - b) authorise the Head of Cultural Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communications and Human Resources, to make such further changes to the draft Guildford Borough Play Strategy as may be necessary prior to its submission to the Big Lottery Fund; and
 - c) approve the portfolio of projects proposed for grant funding set out in paragraph 2.5 to allow an application to the Big Lottery Fund to be made prior to the deadline of 10 September 2007.

Reason for Recommendations:

To ensure that the Council can invest the £210,425 of BLF grant allocation into a number of selected play projects that meet its own policies and the criteria of the BLF.

Background Papers:

Play Development Strategy for Guildford Borough
Guildford Borough Council Fixed Equipment Playground Strategy
Guildford Borough Youth Facilities Strategy

Originators:

Chris Bunting, Cultural Services
Tel: (01483) 444719
E-Mail: chris.bunting@guildford.gov.uk

Mike Beckwith, Cultural Services
Tel: (01483) 444703
E-Mail: mike.beckwith@guildford.gov.uk