

## **PLAY STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT**

### **Executive Summary**

- 1.0 This report briefs the Committee on the development of the Wirral Play Strategy and progress on Wirral's bid for it's allocation of Children's Play Lottery funding. The Committee is asked to note the report.

### **Background**

- 2.0 At the end of 2005, the Government announced that £155 million would be made available by the *Big Lottery Children's Play Fund* in England. It stated that successful access to this new money is dependent on local authorities demonstrating a strategic approach and partnership working. In terms of play services this should be demonstrated with the adoption of a local Play Strategy and the development of a cross-cutting action plan. The completion of a Play Strategy for Wirral, therefore, is key to the local authority receiving its fair share of available Big Lottery funding for children's play. Wirral's allocation of Big Lottery Children's Play funding is £881,208.66 for 3 years.

### **Progress**

- 3.0 In October 2006, Play Strategy seminars entitled 'Developing a Play Policy and Strategy for Wirral' were held in different locations across the Wirral, attended by over 50 representatives from a cross-cutting section of statutory and voluntary agencies. This enabled participants to explore the ethos and under pinning values of play, identify barriers which limit children's access to play and raise issues which determine the provision of play. The discussion at the seminars resulted in a series of themes forming the basis of the Play Strategy Seminar Discussion Document. The seminars also provided the basis for the membership of the Wirral Play Partnership.
- 3.2 The Wirral Play Partnership has met three times since November. The terms of reference have been agreed and composition of the partnership includes representation from the local authority, the voluntary and community sector and the private sector. The brief of the Play Partnership is to support the development of the children's

play strategy and action plan, which will provide a basis for the portfolio of projects and Wirral's Big Lottery Fund bid. This also includes a comprehensive audit of provision, consultation with children and young people and identifying a Play Champion.

- 3.3 To progress the appointment of a Play Champion, a sub-group has met to investigate the different options available to the Partnership, in particular, how children and young people can be fully involved in the appointment process. The sub-group has drawn up a job specification and an advertisement has been placed in the Wirral Globe and the closing date for applications is Friday 9 March 2007. The Play Champion will work alongside Playwork Partnership to promote play friendly environments, raise the profile of play and be an advocate for children's play across Wirral. The post is voluntary with a minimum commitment of one year and will be subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.
- 3.4 It has been agreed by the Play Partnership and confirmed with Big Lottery to aim to bid for Wirral's allocation of Big Lottery funding by the final deadline of September 2007.
- 3.5 The Play Partnership reports to Youth Services Advisory Committee and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.

### **Play Strategy Consultation**

- 3.6 A number of issues generated from the October seminar discussions formed the basis of the *Play Strategy Seminar Discussion Document* which was distributed amongst agencies for consultation. This will develop into a number of thematic ideas and a draft set of actions to be outlined in a Play Strategy Discussion Report.
- 3.7 In February, a play value impact audit was undertaken at fixed play spaces and surrounding areas to evaluate children's use of outdoor play facilities and spaces. The areas audited were West Kirby/Newton, Eastham, Bidston & St.James/Claughton and New Brighton/Wallasey. A full report will be presented by the Play Consultants, Play People, at the next Wirral Play Partnership meeting. This information will form the basis of the mapping exercise of existing provision including supervised/unsupervised, open access/structured, indoor/outdoor, local authority/voluntary/private play provision, and help identify any gaps in provision.

## **What next?**

- 4.0 In March, there will be a series of neighbourhood snapshots focusing on schools. Children will be consulted to find out where they play, ascertain their knowledge of local play facilities, barriers to play and distances travelled to them. This study will be undertaken at the following schools: Portland Primary, Millfields Primary, West Kirby Primary, New Brighton, Barnston Primary and Bebington High School.
- 4.2 A general questionnaire will be distributed to a minimum of twenty schools and each Head will be asked to complete a schools questionnaire.
- 4.3 A community questionnaire for adults will be distributed to agencies, local community groups, and resident groups. There will also be community road shows to present a draft of the Play Strategy and this will offer an opportunity for broad consultation with the wider community.
- 4.4 A review of existing consultation and information on play provision within Wirral; to gather together existing policy, strategy and other initiatives currently being undertaken which could eventually be coordinated and refined into a single *Play Strategy*.
- 4.5 The production of a *Draft Play Strategy* and an *Action Plan* for eventual adoption by the local authority.
- 4.6 The robustness of the Play strategy will be dependant on the quality of the audit of the current provision and participation of children and young people in the consultation process. The availability of government funding for children's play has been the catalyst for the development of the Play Strategy. However, it must be developed in partnership and linked with other relevant long-term strategies and plans, in order to ensure sustainability of future projects and the embedding of Play within services.

## **Financial and Staffing Implications**

- 5.0 Officer time has been identified to co-ordinate the development and production of play strategy.

## **Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 6.0 The development of Play Strategy will be an inclusive process which promotes equal opportunities.

### **Human Rights Implications**

7.0 There are none arising from this report.

### **Community Safety Implications**

8.0 There are none arising from this report

### **Planning Implications**

9.0 There are none arising from this report.

### **Local Member Support Implications**

10.0 There are none arising from this report.

### **Background papers**

11.0 Children's Play Champion specification.

### **Recommendations**

12.0 The Committee notes this report.

