

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 9 DECEMBER 2010

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PLAYBUILDER PROGRAMME REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current Play Builder programme and the recently revised Government play capital allocations and to seek approval for expenditure on the sites identified in the Year 2 programme.

1. Background

- 1.1 In January 2009, Wirral Council successfully applied to DCSF to be a Play Pathfinder and was awarded Wave 2 Playbuilder status from April 2009. The funding allocation offered to Wirral Council under Playbuilder status was £1,129,445 capital and £45,648 revenue.
- 1.2 Over the two-year programme period, 2009-2011, the funding is to support the development (or redevelopment) of a minimum of 22 play areas across Wirral. This programme invested £235m nationally in children's play for three years from 2008 to 2011. A variety of freely accessible play facilities to be developed targeting the 8 - 13 year age range specifically. The programme is intended to develop public play spaces close to where children live, make them safe, but also interesting, exciting and stimulating, whilst available to all.

Year 1 Programme

- 1.3 The first year programme was completed in March 2010, 11 play areas have been built or improved. Due to the timescales involved and the grant conditions, Year 1 sites were selected based on the Play Strategy audit and consultation, areas of identified need, geographical locations, maintenance cost, match funding opportunities and also sites where there were strong community groups and Friends of Parks involvement. These sites were approved at Cabinet on 23rd April 2009 and subject to further consultation with the Play Partnership the proposed Year 2 sites were to be considered as projects for Year 2 (2010/2011).

No. Year 1 sites Completed

1. Meols Rec. Play Area
2. Harrison Park, New Brighton
3. Ashton Park, West Kirby
4. New Ferry Park
5. Moreton Linear Park
6. Woodlands play area, Birkenhead
7. Irby Park,
8. Newton Park,
9. Tower Grounds, New Brighton
10. Victoria Park, Tranmere
11. Bromborough Recreation Ground

- 1.4 Consultation was conducted by Play Rangers and Play Practitioners on all 11 play areas allocated for improvements. Children and young people have been involved in the decision making process - through local feeder schools, youth clubs, play centres, Play Day and the Wirral Youth Conference. This included identifying their play needs, any barriers to playing outdoors and what they liked to experience through playing. The children worked in small focus groups which generated ideas and drawings. These were interpreted and included in the final designs. This has led to the inclusion of more risky and challenging play equipment being incorporated into the final play area plans.
- 1.5 The programme has been complimented by the support of local Friends of parks groups and community groups who have generated extra funding to support further improvements. A focus group was held with parents of disabled children at Stanley School to discuss access issues from their perspective. This led to the securing of an additional grant of £25k from Aiming Higher to provide more inclusive play equipment. Specific consultation work with girls was also undertaken through a local secondary school.
- 1.6 The improvements to the Year 1 play sites have proved to be very successful and monitoring supports this. Children are playing out more, engaging with the wider community and gaining greater independence and resilience which leads to the development of healthy adults. This early intervention strategy has enabled children to have access to safe outdoor play space which supports the fight against child obesity by improving and maintaining children's physical and mental health. The provision of local recreational play facilities also helps to tackle anti-social behaviour issues, whilst providing opportunities for developing social skills and learning.

Year 2 Revised Programme

- 1.7 In June 2010, the ring fence on play capital grants and the play revenue funding was withdrawn with immediate effect. The Department for Education also removed any expectation on how many play facilities Councils were expected to deliver with the capital grant.
- 1.8 A further announcement in July 2010 put the programme on hold pending a review with the directive any new contractual liabilities were not to be incurred.
- 1.9 At this stage, three Year 2 play areas had been committed for improvements. These were Warwick Park where the contract had been awarded. Port Causeway and Whitfield Common, were also committed sites as these were predominately funded by the BIG Lottery Children's Play Fund. In addition to these sites expenditure had already been incurred on the purchase of play equipment in preparation for the Year 2 programme.
- 1.10 In October, the Department for Education announced Wirral's revised allocation of £373,990.63 to cover expenditure already incurred, contractual commitments and as affordable, to support some other valued projects already identified in Wirral's Year 2 programme.
- 1.11 The Year 2 sites were finalised through consultation and negotiation to ensure a strategic approach to the location of improved play areas with the Wirral Play Partnership across the Borough. The revised allocation of Play Builder capital grant means 4 play areas will receive major improvements as well as the 3 sites already committed. The remaining sites will have play equipment installed determined by the

revised budget allocation and the priority ranking list, and any other additional match funding available.

| Play Builder Schemes Programme Plan | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| No. | Play Area | Budget | Match Funding | Priority /Rank Score |
| 1 | Whitfield Common, Heswall | Nil | 50,000 BIG Lottery | Committed Build - 75 |
| 2 | Port Causeway, Bromborough | 10,000 | 50,000 BIG Lottery + 5,000 | Committed Build - 85 |
| 3 | Warwick Park, Upton | 50,000 | 9,869 Parks & Countryside | Committed Build - 80 |
| 4 | Higher Bebington Recreation | 70,000 | | 85 |
| 5 | Whiteheath Park, Leasowe | 70,000 | | 85 |
| 6 | Tor Park, Eastham | 60,000 | | 65 |
| 7 | Arrowe Park | 16,000 | | 65 |
| 8 | Birkenhead Park | 50,000 | 5,000 from Birkenhead Park awaiting decision on additional funding | 65 |
| 9 | Central Park, Seacombe | 16,000 | | 60 |
| 10 | Ilchester Square, B,head | 16,000 | | 55 |
| 11 | Duck Pond Lane, Oxtan | 16,000 | Possible Funding from Friends | 50 |
| | | | | |
| | Total | 374,000 | | |

- 1.12 The removal of the ring-fence means the Department for Education will not set expectations about how many play areas must be delivered with the revised 2010-11 capital allocations. The funding has to be used for capital purposes by 31 March 2011.

2. Risk Assessment

- 2.1 The possibility of insufficient time to complete the programme by 31st March 2011. This shorter time period has transpired due to the national review. Every effort will be made to meet the revised timescale. Some equipment is already held in store.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Wirral has been allocated a revised Playbuilder capital allocation from the Department of Education:

| Playbuilder Capital | | | Minimum Number of play areas/year | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| 09/10 | 10/11 | total | 09/10 | 10-11 | Total |
| | | | | | |
| £530,952 | £373,990.63 | £904,942.63 | 11 | 11 | 22 |
| Playbuilder revenue | | | | | |
| 2009-10 | 2010-11 | Total | | | |
| £27,389 | Nil | £27,389 | | | |

- 3.2 A new Grant Determination Letter from the Department for Education sets the new grant criteria and the revised allocation. The grant will be paid in two equal instalments on 30th November 2010 and 28th February 2011.

- 3.3 The Parks and Countryside Services, Landscape team will be permitted to charge fees for professional services to the capital amount, which are estimated to be 15%. This includes design development, tender and contract management of the sites selected.
- 3.4 Playbuilder authorities have to comply with HM Treasury guidelines in the procurement of goods and services for which it receives grant, so as to secure best value for money. In particular, contracts of work, equipment, stores and services etc. awarded shall be placed on a competitive basis, unless there are good reasons to the contrary. Tendering procedures shall be in accordance with the EU Procurement Directive and UK Procurement Regulations, where applicable and any additional guidance issued by the Department For Education.
- 3.5 No new play areas are currently being proposed, the sites are existing facilities to be developed and improved which are currently maintained by the Parks and Countryside service, and will continue to be covered under their maintenance resources, (there is no additional funding available for maintenance in this programme).

4. Staffing Implications

- 4.1 The project will be managed by the Children and Young People's Department.

5. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Wirral's PlayBuilder programme reflects inclusiveness and promotes equal opportunities and access.

6. Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 Community safety issues may arise through the site selection process, specifically regarding safe routes to play and road safety issues.

7. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific Local Agenda issues arising from this report.

8. Planning Implications

- 8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9. Anti-poverty Implications

- 9.1 The improved play facilities will be freely accessible and free of charge to children and families and will target those areas of most need, as identified in the play audit.

10. Social Inclusion Implications

- 10.1 The projects reflects Wirral's commitment in ensuring children have equal access to play and be able to participate in local play opportunities.

11. Local Member Support Implications

- 11.1 The programme specifically requires the involvement of locally elected members, and they will be part of the decision making process through their involvement in Wirral's Play Partnership.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Play Builder Projects Year 2
Play areas map

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

(1) the revised Play Builder capital funding of £373,990.63 from the Department for Education to improve 11 play areas in 2010-2011 be allocated in accordance with the project plan and be included in the Children and Young People's Capital Programme for 2010/2011

(2) approval be given for the sites identified for Year 2 expenditure (2010/11)

David Armstrong
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