

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2009

### REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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#### PLAYBUILDER PROGRAMME REPORT

##### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the recently awarded Government Playbuilder funding, and to seek approval for the allocation of funding in accordance with the project plan.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Play Pathfinder and Playbuilder Programme flows from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) consultation on the national play strategy, and is a key commitment in the Governments "Children's Plan", launched in December 2007.
- 1.2 This programme invests £235m nationally in children's play for three years from 2008 to 2011. A variety of freely accessible play facilities are 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.
- 1.3 Promoting an increase in active, imaginative and adventurous play are important elements of the programme, as is the participation of children, their parents, and community members. Local MPs and elected members are also expected to be involved in the development process.
- 1.4 Playbuilder play areas will need to meet criteria set out by the DCSF in five key areas:
  - 1) **More places to play:** responding to children's demands for high quality play spaces in every area;
  - 2) **Supporting play throughout childhood:** improving provision through a range of settings for children of all ages;
  - 3) **Playing safely:** providing safe, accessible and stimulating places for children to play;
  - 4) **Child-friendly communities:** engaging communities and involving children in decisions; and
  - 5) **Embedding play in local priorities:** ensuring leadership and effective delivery in every local area.
- 1.5 A new national indicator for play NI 199 Children's and Young People's satisfaction with parks and play areas will be rolled out from April 2009, which will run alongside the PlayBuilder programme.

- 1.6 There is an expectation that various sites/elements of sites will provide "Natural Play". This entails the use of natural materials such as timber, stone, and encouraging children to play/interact with the general landscape (trees, rocks, mounds and planting etc).
- 1.7 Wirral Council applied to DCSF in 2008, to be a Play Pathfinder, and was awarded Playbuilder status. The funding allocation offered to Wirral Council under Playbuilder status is £1,129,445 capital and £45,648 revenue. No match funding is required.
- 1.8 Over the two-year programme period 2009-2011, this funding is expected to support the development (or redevelopment) of a minimum of 22 play areas across Wirral. Revenue funding can be used at the discretion of the local authority for relevant activities to support the development of the scheme.
- 1.9 The initial Play Pathfinder application had been prepared by Officers from Youth and Play Service and the Parks & Countryside Service, (Regeneration Department). This has led to further joint working on the development of the Project Plan required by DCSF. An initial Draft Plan has already been submitted to DCSF for approval, and Officers are currently developing the project Plan for submission in April. The Plan will explain how it is intended to comply with the key criteria and list the 22 proposed sites to be developed.
- 1.10 Play England has been appointed by DCSF to help deliver the Government's vision for the future of play. Play England will support and challenge local authorities receiving funding under the Government's new play Pathfinder and Playbuilder programmes.

## **2.0 Project Management**

- 2.1 A Project Manager will be appointed to manage the delivery of the PlayBuilder programme reporting to the Wirral Play Partnership and PlayBuilder Management Board. The Head of Branch, Participation and Inclusion Branch will chair this group and oversee the project.
- 2.2 The delivery of the PlayBuilder programme will be commissioned to the Parks & Countryside Service, and managed by Project manager who will provide quarterly reports to the Strategic Lead for Play in the Youth & Play Service. This will be reported to the Wirral Play Partnership and the Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee (YAPSAC), and when appropriate Cabinet update reports will be submitted. The Project manager will also have to report to the monthly Departmental Capital Monitoring Group.
- 2.3 Wirral Play Partnership is the key mechanism for cross-service and departmental working in the development and promotion of play in Wirral. The Play Partnership includes Councillor representation; the membership is drawn from a wide range of departments within the authority, and also includes local voluntary and community organisations. A Councillor has been appointed as the Play Champion and chairs the Wirral Play Partnership.
- 2.4 Due to the timescales involved and the grant conditions, year 1 projects have been selected based on previous consultation, existing community driven projects, match funding opportunities and also sites where there are strong user/Friends groups.
- 2.5 Initial, year 2 sites have been proposed as part of the requirement of the PlayBuilder project plan to be submitted to DCSF before the deadline on 30 March 2009. However

these sites will be subject to further consultation and negotiation to ensure a strategic approach to the location of play areas.

- 2.6 The identified Year 2 play sites complement the previously chosen Year 1 play sites and ensure that there are improved play facilities across the borough.

### **3.0 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Wirral has been allocated a Playbuilder capital and revenue grant from DCSF as follows:-

Playbuilder capital			Minimum Number of play areas/year		
09/10	10/11	total	09/10	10-11	total
£530,952	£598,493	£1,129,445	11	11	22
Playbuilder revenue					
2009-10		2010-11		Total	
£27,389		£18,259		£45,648	

- 3.2 Each grant will be paid in two equal instalments in 2009-10, the first instalment on or before 30 April 2009 and the second instalment on or before 28 February 2010.
- 3.2 Children & Young Peoples department will receive the grant payment from DCSF. Parks & Countryside Service will then place an internal order to the Regeneration Department for the work required. The total cost of the PlayBuilder programme must be funded through the DCSF grant. There is no additional capital or revenue funding available and all costs, fees, contingency, retentions and any other internal costs must be contained within the DCSF allocations.
- 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 The Council is only permitted to carry forward a maximum of 5% of the capital grant for 2009/10 into 2010/11 to meet imminent expenditure payable at the beginning of 2010/11. Any sums remaining after this period will become repayable to the DCSF.
- 3.5 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 DCSF.
- 3.6 Revenue funding can be used at the discretion of the local authority for relevant activities to support the development of the scheme, such as – project management costs, required consultancy, additional design costs, community action/consultation, and social marketing.
- 3.7 No new play areas are currently being proposed, the sites are existing facilities 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 program).

#### **4.0 Staffing Implications**

A Project Manager (part-time) will be appointed and funded through the allocated revenue budget of the Playbuilder programme.

#### **5.0 Equal Opportunities Implications**

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

#### **6.0 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.

#### **7.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications**

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

#### **8.0 Planning Implications**

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

#### **9.0 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.

#### **10.0 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.

#### **11.0 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.

#### **12.0 Background Papers**

12.1 Draft PlayBuilder action plan  
Play areas map  
Local Governance Arrangements for Play

#### **Recommendations**

1. That the funding of £1,129,445 Playbuilder capital and £45,648 revenue from the DCSF to improve 22 play areas over the course of the next two years, be allocated in accordance with the project plan, and be included in the Children & Young Peoples department Capital Programme for 2009/2010 & 2010/2011.
2. That approval be given for the sites identified for year one expenditure (2009/10).

3. That subject to further consultation with the Play Partnership the proposed year 2 sites be considered as projects for year two (2010/11).

**Howard Cooper**  
**Director of Children's Services**