

Committee: Community Committee

Agenda Item

Date: 6 September 2007

9

Title: UTTLESFORD PLAY STRATEGY

Author: Gaynor Bradley, Leisure & Community
Development Manager, 01799 510348

Item for decision

Summary

- 1 This report advises members that a Play Strategy has been developed and endorsed by the Area Panels. The Community Committee is requested to approve submission of the Strategy to the Big Lottery.

Recommendations

- 2 Members are recommended to approve submission of the Play Strategy to the Big Lottery.

Background Papers

- 3 The full Strategy can be seen on the Uttlesford Intranet.

Impact

4

Communication/Consultation	Extensive consultation has been carried out with town & parish councils, school children, parents and guardians and partner agencies. Presentations have been made to the Area Panels.
Community Safety	All of the aims and projects contained in the strategy will contribute to provision of constructive opportunities for children and young people.
Equalities	Equalities and access for all run through the strategy aims.
Finance	There are no specific financial implications for the Council.
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Ward-specific impacts	Ashdon, Wenden Lofts, Felsted, Shire, Stansted South, All

Workforce/Workplace	Casual employment of externally funded Play Outreach Workers for a temporary period should funding be raised.
---------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

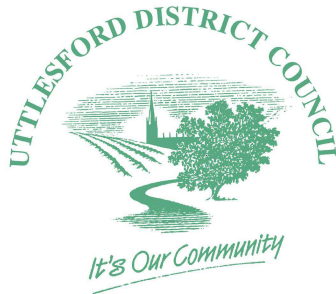
Situation

- 5 All districts have been encouraged to produce a Play Strategy for submission to the Big Lottery. If the strategy is deemed to be “sufficiently robust” then the Big Lottery may award £200,000 to Uttlesford for specific portfolio projects.
- 6 All districts in Essex have been working together with the Children’s Fund Essex to develop a comprehensive play policy to be incorporated into the strategies. Children’s Fund Essex also provided funds for consultants (Mapalim) to undertake and Play 4 Play consultation project in schools. In Uttlesford 8 schools participated which was the maximum number allowed.
- 7 A comprehensive audit of play facilities has been undertaken. Also extensive consultation has been carried out through various mechanisms principally to seek the views of children and young people.
- 8 As a result of consultation with children and young people and town and parish council’s seven portfolio projects have been devised to improve access to play facilities for children and young people. Should funding be awarded to the district then the Community Committee criteria for funding will be applied to apportion funding to the projects. However, if the Big Lottery does not award any funding to Uttlesford then all agencies will have to work together to identify external funding before any of the projects can be implemented. There will not be any financial implications for the District Council’s budget.
- 9 The development of a play strategy will provide direction for Uttlesford local authorities to plan for future play provision. The strategy approach is for the District Council to provide an advisory and guidance service to town and parish councils rather than to actually lead on play projects.
- 10 Presentations have been made to the Area Panels and they have all endorsed the approach to the development of the Strategy.
- 11 The Uttlesford Play Strategy has developed into quite a large document especially with the attachment of detailed information in the appendices. It would, therefore, be impractical to submit the entire Strategy to the Committee, instead attached at Appendix 1 is the Executive Summary which gives a brief overview of the contents of the strategy. The full set of documents can be found on the intranet.

Risk Analysis

12

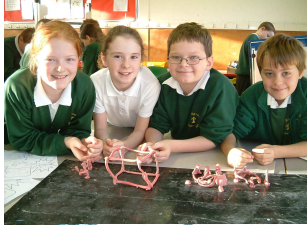
Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the Big Lottery does not award any funding to Uttlesford	Medium	High	All agencies will need to work together to identify external funding. However the development of an overarching play strategy for the district will continue to provide direction for the Uttlesford local authorities to address future play provision.



Uttlesford at Play



Uttlesford District Council's Play Strategy 2007 - 2011



CONTENTS

		Page
SECTION	FOREWORD – by the Leader of the Council	
SECTION	1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
SECTION	2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	
	2.1 Profile	
	2.2 Current Position	
SECTION	3 STATUS AND LIFESPAN OF STRATEGY	
	3.1 Strategic Context	
	3.2 Strategy Lifespan	
SECTION	4 PLAY POLICY	
SECTION	5 CURRENT PLAY PROVISION IN UTTLESFORD	
	5.1 General	
	5.2 Facilities Audit	
SECTION	6 CONSULTATION	
	6.1 Consultees and Methods	
	6.2 Other Recent Consultation	
	6.3 Research Findings	
SECTION	7 ACTION PLAN	
SECTION	8 PORTFOLIO PROJECTS	
	8.1 Ashdon Play Area	
	8.2 Buffy Bus	
	8.3 Chrishall Play Area	
	8.4 Felsted F.A.C.E.	
	8.5 Greenways Play Area	
	8.6 Mountfitchet Green Multi-use Games Area, Stansted Mountfitchet	
	8.7 Play Outreach Workers	
SECTION	9 FUNDING PROCESS	
SECTION	10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
	APPENDICES	
	10.1 Strategy Process Flowchart	
	10.2 Breakdown of Young People’s Age Ranges in Towns and Villages	
	10.3 Play Policy	
	10.4 Uttlesford Facilities Audit – Map and Provision	
	10.5 Play 4 Play Audit Detailed Findings	
	10.6 Research Detailed Findings	
	10.7 Child Protection Policy	
	10.8 Equalities Statement	
	10.9 Health & Safety Statement	

FOREWORD – By the Leader of the Council

Uttlesford is situated in north-west Essex and is a very attractive part of the county. The four market towns in the area all have a wealth of timber-framed historical buildings and medieval streets. The district also has a large number of villages with “chocolate box” cottages, fine churches and a scattering of windmills.

The area can claim to have been home to a variety of notable people such as Gustav Holst the composer, William Harvey, Chief Physician to Charles 1 and discoverer of circulation of the blood, William Harrison who wrote the “Description of England” an invaluable picture of social life and institutions in Elizabethan times and not forgetting that infamous highwayman, Dick Turpin!

A few years ago, according to a survey in the Sunday Times it was “the best place to live in England”. Saffron Walden the main town was recently described as the town with the slimmest number of people living in it.

The recent Sport England Active People survey results also supported the view that the people of Uttlesford are generally active and willing to volunteer to support local activities.

The District Council has always been very supportive of facilitating and enabling the local community to have access to a variety of services to enhance their quality of life. The Council participated in the first Leisure Private Finance Initiative to provide three Leisure Centres in the district. The Council also works with the town and parish councils to encourage the development of play and recreational areas and access to public open spaces. The Council ensures that consultation is undertaken with the local community to establish children and young people’s requirements and liaises with providers and funding organisations to enable play facilities and services to be adequately resourced.

Therefore, Uttlesford District Council is happy to endorse this Play Strategy in order to further commit to working in partnership to facilitate future development of good quality play provision for the children and young people of the area. I am pleased to be able to signify the Council’s support for the Uttlesford Play Strategy for the period 2007 – 2011.

Councillor Jim Ketteridge,
Leader,
Uttlesford District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why do we need a Play Strategy?

The district has produced a Leisure & Cultural Strategy as an overarching vision for the planning, delivery and implementation of services that enhance the quality of life. The development of sporting activities has been highlighted through national developments such as County Sports Partnerships and Community Sports Networks and the provision of 3 major Leisure Centres in the district. The Leisure & Cultural Strategy builds on the local developments in terms of future planning for sport and recreation. However, the district had not actually produced a co-ordinated strategy to specifically concentrate on developing play facilities and services.

Nationally, the need for such an emphasis on play has been highlighted during recent years with the increase in home technology and professionals working the field of children's development share concerns about the effects of possible social isolation on young people at an early age. Additionally, not all young people naturally gravitate towards leisure activities and it is important for a wide range of activities to be made available to them so that they can fulfil their potential in other ways. Uttlesford District Council has therefore identified the need for the production of a strategy to identify the way forward for play development.

What is play?

“Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child.... play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social material and imaginary worlds and their relationships with them elaborating all the while a flexible range of response to the challenges they encounter”.

“the intrinsic motivation of play, the fact that for children play does not involve the pursuit of any external goal or reward – raises challenges when defining objective for play provision, and especially when confronting the issues of assessment and evaluation.”
(Best Play, Children's Play Council 2001)

Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying rights. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 15)

All children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 31)



The Audit Commission acknowledged the importance of play following the government review. They define a quality play experience as being based on the degree to which children are provided with opportunities to directly experience the following:

- Natural elements
- Fabricated and natural materials and tools
- Challenge
- Free movement
- Emotions
- Variety
- Play with identity
- Varied social interaction

Therefore, this play strategy acknowledges the full range of opportunities that should be available to children and young people although it concentrates on free play facilities that are largely not organised or supervised and does not include formal sport or recreation. However, it is recognised that some supervision can be helpful to children to assist them in overcoming barriers to play, therefore, some level of supervised provision is incorporated especially in terms of the younger age range. The overall aim is to incorporate a wide range of opportunities for all children and young people by, enhancing the existing, and developing future, provision in accordance with local need. Throughout the strategy the aim for inclusion of all children and young people is taken into account. This will contribute towards achieving the values and benefits of play in terms of developing children's social, physical, imaginative, communication, cognitive and emotional skills, otherwise known as SPICCE.

Uttlesford District Council operates on a Committee, rather than Cabinet system, therefore, the Council does not have a dedicated Play Portfolio Member. The 57 town and parish councils in Uttlesford have responsibility for play areas, general open spaces and recreation grounds. An audit has been undertaken of all village play provision and open space.

The aim of this strategy is to highlight the overall need for comprehensive, good quality, play facilities that are accessible (in the broadest sense) to all. The role of the district council is to act as an advisor, enabler and facilitator to the town and parish councils to encourage the provision of play facilities. Also, to support such development by providing advice on a wide range of subjects i.e. funding, quantity, quality, consultation and planning methods as well as obtaining feedback from the young users of the facilities.

In order to assess the needs of local children and young people extensive consultation has been carried out as detailed in the main part of the strategy and comprised surveying through pre-school clubs and

groups primary and secondary schools, parents/guardians, multi-agency working groups, youth clubs and groups, holiday programme activities etc. The outcome of all of the consultation clearly demonstrated that the younger age ranges are reasonably well catered for either by local facilities or by parents/guardians ensuring that they are transported to facilities. Whilst the younger age ranges would like to participate in more exciting activities such as “swimming with sharks” there is a level of somewhat safer provision for them.

Summarising very briefly, the consultation identified, that we should be continuing to encourage the development of more play areas to be accessible to children and young people living in the more rural parts of the district, but, at the same time, we should also concentrate our efforts and resources on developing facilities for the older age range who state that they have nothing to do. They feel that more should be provided in the way of multi-use games areas, local shelters and coffee bars (unsupervised) for them to meet up and hang out with their friends. (There are three youth clubs containing coffee bars (supervised) and 5 teen shelters (unsupervised) in the district.) The Town & Parish Councils responses to the questionnaires are shown in Section 10.4. Four parish councils have specifically requested District Council officers to work with them on key projects that they are keen to progress following local consultation.

The Portfolio (Section 8) contains some specific projects that either have started to be progressed or are in the process of being developed as a result of local consultation and listening to what young people and their parents really want. They are designed to provide challenges and allow children and young people to take some degree of risk although in a reasonably safe environment. The portfolio projects have been selected for inclusion to cater for a wide range of ages. The projects are:

Ashdon Play Area (See Section 8.1)

Wide range of play facilities catering for 0 – 14 year olds within a new housing area.

Buffy Bus Mobile Play Provision (See Section 8.2)



This is a supervised play bus service to enable 0 – 5 year olds to access local provision and to encourage parents of young children to engage in play with the child.



Chrishall Play Area (See Section 8.3)

Wide range of play facilities catering for 5 – 14 year olds within walking distance of homes.

F.A.C.E (Felsted Action for Children's Equipment) (See Section 8.4)

This is an ambitious project on a fairly large recreation ground linking in with a new pavilion. The play element incorporates a multi-use games (aged 8 – 14) area, young children's fenced play area (aged 0 – 8), young people's facility, possibly a green gym (aged 13 – 19).

Greenways Play Area (See Section 8.5)

Redevelopment of a children's play area within a housing estate to encourage children under the age of 8 and of all abilities to have access to challenging play equipment within walking distance of their homes.

Mountfitchet Green, Stonyfield Drive, Stansted (See Section 8.6)

Multi-use Games Area – ages 10 – 19 to complement the nearby existing equipped play area for ages 4 – 8.

Local consultation with children and young people (and parents via the Area Panel Committee process) has been undertaken for the above projects in addition to the district wide consultation. Children and young people have or will also be re-consulted on the actual details of scheme options prior to work commencing on any of the developments.

Play Outreach Workers (Section 8.7)

The need for two Play Outreach Workers has been identified to complement the Sports Outreach Worker service. The Play Outreach Workers will ideally be qualified to level 2 as they will work in partnership in terms of front line service delivery as opposed to the more managerial or strategic functions in planning play provision which will continue to be undertaken by the District Council's Leisure & Community Development Team in conjunction with a wide range of partners. The Play Outreach Workers will engage with children and young people to maximise the benefits of play and monitor usage of play facilities to contribute towards effective evaluation.

These projects are included in the strategy as core projects and should Big Lottery funding be awarded to the Uttlesford district they will be apportioned funding in accordance with specific funding criteria. The criteria is designed to assess consultation, match funding, ownership and responsibility especially regarding future maintenance to ensure sustainability of these initiatives.

In addition, there are a number of developments currently being worked on to improve access to play provision for young people i.e. Hatfield Heath possible multi-use games area, Hempstead possible new youth club (although this will be supervised).

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAY STRATEGY

As initiatives are devised they will be incorporated into the play strategy approach of using multi-agency arrangements to support the development of play. The strategy also highlights the need, and to provide, for ongoing consultation to review and monitor the success of projects.

The aims of the strategy very briefly comprise

- Enabling play in formal, free, countryside and country park settings.
- Ensure play spaces are valued and protected.
- Highlight the importance of play.
- Encourage development of quality play provision.
- Encourage partnership working to maximise benefits of play for children.
- Promote inclusion and access to play facilities.

The Strategy Action Plan contains broad action to be undertaken during the life of the strategy to develop the aims above.

