

CABINET

17th July 2007

WINCHESTER DISTRICT PLAY STRATEGY

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (POLICY)

Contact Officer: Lorraine Mansfield Tel No: 01962 848369

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Winchester District has provisionally been allocated the sum of £200,000 as part of the Big Lottery Children's Play Programme. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the work that is being undertaken to support the development of a Winchester District Play Strategy and the submission of a funding application to the Big Lottery in September. Due to the timescales set down by the lottery and the Council's committee timetable, it will not be possible to bring another report to Cabinet prior to the submission of our bid on 10th September. Cabinet is therefore asked to delegate the required decision making authority to the relevant Corporate Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That Cabinet approves the submission of an application to the Big Lottery Children's Play Programme to meet the September 10th deadline.
- 2 That the City Council will act as the accountable body for the programme.
- 3 In authority is delegated to the Corporate Director (Policy) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities to endorse the Winchester District Play Strategy and agree the portfolio of projects which will form the basis of a Winchester District bid to the Big Lottery in September.

CABINET17th July 2007WINCHESTER DISTRICT PLAY STRATEGYREPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (POLICY)DETAIL:1 Introduction

1.1 Under the Children's Play programme the Big Lottery Fund will make available £124 million to second tier and unitary local authority areas in England for portfolios of projects that will improve or develop local play provision. The City Council is able to bid for up to £200,000 to create, improve and develop play opportunities for children and young people in areas of identified need.

1.2 Play is defined in its broadest sense as:

"What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own time."

Play opportunities must meet the 'three Fs' test:

1. Free of charge
2. Freedom of choice
3. Free to come and go

1.3 One of the essential prerequisites for an application to the Big Lottery is to have in place a Play Strategy for the district. The purpose of the strategy is to establish a clear vision for play with policies that will improve access for children and young people to quality play provision and informal play opportunities.

1.4 Local authorities have been charged with taking the lead in planning for play across their areas to ensure that the funding is used to tackle needs strategically. The Big Lottery has adopted this approach rather than a competitive bidding process, to enable Council's to use their expertise, contacts and local knowledge to compile a portfolio of individual projects that complement one another and take into account existing provision and overall needs. An area portfolio should be made up of significant projects that will make a lasting impact – guidance suggests that individual projects should be between £50,000 - £200,000.

1.5 Although responsibility for submitting an application and drawing down the money rests with the City Council as gatekeeper, the Big Lottery has been very clear from the outset that the allocated funding is for local authority **areas** in England, not local authorities – partnership working and developing child centred play strategies are absolutely central to the programme. Many bids submitted in earlier rounds have been unsuccessful for either being too local authority or too adult driven. However, local authorities are ideally placed to engage with children and young people and

draw together a range of partners to develop play strategies on behalf of their respective areas.

- 1.6 An additional Big Lottery funding strand entitled 'Playful Ideas' will support innovation, with grants of £10,000 -250,000 being available for original ideas and new ways of working that do not replicate anything that happens elsewhere in the district. These awards will be available to charities, voluntary and community groups, town and parish councils, and social enterprises who can demonstrate clear alignment to the District Play Strategy.

2 Progress to date

- 2.1 The City Council has already registered its interest in the Children's Play programme and reserved an application slot for the final funding round with a deadline of September 10th.
- 2.2 Officers are currently drawing together the results of consultations with stakeholders and children and young people carried out to date, gathering evidence of any shortfalls in play provision identified in the PPG17 Audit, and drawing together qualitative, quantitative and anecdotal information held by the City Council, other partners and stakeholders to inform the 1st draft strategy. In addition, an in depth consultation exercise with 11 – 16 year olds from Kings, Westgate and Perins schools has been carried out in partnership with Hampshire County Youth Service, the Forestry Commission and Play England.
- 2.3 A play steering group has been instigated and key stakeholders identified for participation in a play partnership, essentially a dedicated sub-group of the Winchester District Children and Young People 0 – 19 Partnership. This work is ongoing and it is intended that the partnership will take a key role in developing the portfolio of supporting actions to enable the delivery of the strategic aims.

3 Proposed Timetable

- 3.1 A further consultation exercise will have been launched via the City Council's website by the time this report is considered by Cabinet and a first draft of the Play Strategy will be available online by the end of July. The consultation period will run until Friday 17th August. In order to meet the challenging timescale, the strategy will be refined as information and evidence emerges from consultations, and potential projects to address identified shortfalls will be developed - these processes will run concurrently. Discussions to agree the portfolio of projects for the Big Lottery bid will take place during the period 20th – 31st August. By adopting this parallel approach the City Council should be able to meet the application deadline of 10th September.
- 3.2 It will not be possible to bring another report to Cabinet prior to the submission of the funding bid. Cabinet is therefore asked to delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Policy) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities to endorse the area Play Strategy and agree the funding bid to the Big Lottery.
- 3.3 The programme will be managed in line with the financial and legal requirements of the Council. Once approval has been secured officers will work with the relevant divisions to ensure that appropriate systems are in place to manage risk and to support financial monitoring and reporting.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 Although challenging it is still possible to complete the work to enable a funding application to be submitted to the Big Lottery to meet the September deadline.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 5.1 Locally, the Play Strategy will provide positive links with the following plans: the Community Strategy, the Open Spaces Strategy, the Children and Young Peoples Plan, the Sport and Recreation Strategy, the Arts Strategy and the Cultural Strategy as it is a key mechanism for the delivery of many objectives included in them. It is also important for the Council to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wider benefits of play in relation to health, sustainable communities, community safety, community cohesion and ensure that this opportunity is passed on to the communities within the District, enabling them to secure external funding to deliver a wide range of beneficial child-centric outcomes.
- 5.2 This work helps meet many of the Council's corporate aims particularly promoting safe and strong communities and a high quality environment. By championing this work the Council is also demonstrating its community leadership role.
- 5.3 The development of a Play Strategy will also work towards the achievement of the key outcomes enshrined in Every Child Matters, the national framework for change which hails from the Children Act 2004 and aims to provide better co-ordinated services for children and young people, particularly 'stay safe', 'be healthy', and 'enjoy and achieve'.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 There are no resource implications for the City Council other than a significant input of officer time to develop the play strategy and funding bid. Subject to the bid being successful the Council, as gatekeepers for the funding, will also be responsible for project management and evaluation.
- 6.2 The £200,000 grant is not subject to any specific match funding requirements although the programme encourages local authorities to seek opportunities for match funding to increase the scale and scope of the portfolio. However, for capital projects the Big Lottery will expect local authorities to undertake a commitment to pay for maintenance costs for the expected life of the facilities.
- 6.3 The Play Strategy will inform the bid to draw down the Winchester District's allocation of £200,000 from the Big Lottery Fund. Additionally it would also be available to inform bids for other grants and other sources of funding in the future.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Papers and consultation documents held in the Partnership and Communication Division files

APPENDICES: None