

Opportunities for Play Scrutiny Review –Scoping Report

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents information in support of a proposed scrutiny review on developing high quality play opportunities for children, young people and families across the city through meaningful engagement and sharing of good practice, and asks Members whether they wish to proceed with the review.

Background to Scrutiny Topic

2. At a recent decision session the Executive Member for Economic Development & Community Engagement (inc. Play) agreed:
 - i. The play policy should be updated to provide a clear steer to direct resources for the development of future play opportunities
 - ii. Criteria for the release of the Council’s capital programme for playground improvement
 - iii. Allocation of £30k of the capital funding as match funding for the Rowntree Park scheme
 - iv. A new playground inspection regime to reflect best practice and local experience
3. Ahead of the Executive Member’s Decision Session (see report at Annex A), a discussion took place at a Scrutiny Committee pre decision call-in, at which councillors agreed with the general principles of the paper and expressed hope the policy would clearly support the different play needs of both children and young people, and provide effective play areas to support children’s natural inclination to play.
4. However, the discussion included a number of scenarios relating to the difficulties of developing play in community settings and the different perspectives that exist within communities. These may provide pointers to further discussion through the proposed scrutiny review.

5. The outcome of the conversations between officer and councillors at the pre-decision call-in indicated the need for this agenda to be taken up as a scrutiny topic, which in turn led to a request for this scoping report.

Play Policy 2016

6. The latest version of the policy recognises the importance of play within communities with a commitment to invest through the introduction of a capital programme. It provides a clear focus to respond in a targeted way and to direct funding to identified need. In addition, the policy outlines a strategic approach which recognises that play opportunities should be developed taking into consideration the importance of community involvement and reflecting best practice.
7. The policy reflects on a number of key messages from prominent strategies and includes feedback from children and young people from across the city gathered as part of the consultation process to develop the 2016–2019 Children and Young People’s plan. These key messages highlight the need for play and it’s far reaching impact.
8. By taking a more localised approach to the development of play the policy states that play in the city should be progressed based on 5 key principles which build on the priorities established in the 2013 policy.
9. **The 5 Key Principles:** Play opportunities will:
 - Meet a clearly identified need
 - Be developed through inclusive involvement and participation that empowers and encourages the community to take a lead
 - Be based on the right of the child to access inclusive, quality and locally based play opportunities
 - Promote and recognise the benefits of play and its impact on health and development of the child
 - Be reflective of best practice

Proposed Scope of Review

10. With the aim of developing improved play opportunities across the city and identifying ways of enabling communities to bring forward potential schemes
 - i. Examine national best practice and methodology and consider examples of recent good practice locally from engagement through to delivery of a project.

- ii. Identify future positive ways to engage with children, young people and families in order to evidence local need and inform the development of play opportunities at a neighbourhood level.
- iii. Examine how best to allay resident's concerns and improve buy in from the whole community, thereby improving community/ward cohesion
- iv. Identify best ways (methodology) to bring forward/ develop potential new schemes

Consultation

11. In support of objective (ii) & (iii) above it is suggested that the review include consideration of feedback from children and young people, and appropriate organisations to find out:
 - What are the barriers to play
 - What kind of opportunities do different cohorts of children and young people want
 - What kind of recent developments have worked best
 - How might wards most effectively use their funding to promote play opportunities
 - How community concerns around use of play areas might be allayed
 - How might the Council's capital funding be best prioritised
12. Work on this review would be supported by the Head of Communities & Equalities.

Timetable for Review

13. It is envisaged that this review would take 2-3 months to complete, with a start in September 2016.

Options

14. Members may choose to:
 - Proceed with this review based on the review aim and objectives suggested in paragraph 9 above.

- Revise the suggested aim and objectives and proceed with the review
- Agree not to proceed with the review at this time
- Agree this topic is not suitable for scrutiny review.

Implications & Risks

15. Play opportunities will remain limited across the city and developed without true community engagement and involvement, which in turn could result in limited community ownership and potential misuse.

Council Plan 2015-19

16. A review of this topic would support the following council priorities:
- All York's residents live and thrive in a city which allows them to contribute fully to their communities and neighbourhoods
 - Delivering frontline services for residents is the priority
 - All children and adults are listened to, and their opinions considered
 - Every child has the opportunity to get the best possible start in life
 - Residents are encouraged and supported to live healthily
 - Focus on the delivery of frontline services for residents and the protection of community facilities.
 - Focus on cost and efficiency to make the right decisions in a challenging financial environment.

Recommendations

17. Members are recommended to:
- i) Proceed with this review based on the proposed review remit detailed at paragraph 10 above.
 - ii) Set up a Task Group to carry out the review on the Committee's behalf.
 - iii) Agree a timeframe for completion of the review.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and workplans.

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Report Approved**Date** 4 July 2016**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** None**Wards Affected:** List wards or tick box to indicate all**All**

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None**Annexes:**

Annex A - Executive Member for Economic Development & Community Engagement Report dated 24 May 2016 - Development & Community Engagement Review of Play Policy, Playground Investment & Maintenance.