

Casual Play Opportunities Scrutiny Review – Interim Report

Background

1. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Committee recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

Remit

To participate in the consultation on the revisions to CYC's Play Policy, and carry out a comparison of the play opportunities for 5-13yr olds, within a number of residential areas/wards (one city centre, one suburban and one village)

Objectives

- i. to understand the different types of provision suitable for each type of area
 - ii. to assess the potential space within the identified areas/wards that could be utilised for play
 - iii. to recommend a strategy for the provision of suitable play opportunities within the identified areas
 - iv. To be consulted on the revisions to the Council's play policy and if appropriate, the Local Development Framework (LDF)
2. At a meeting in January 2010, Members agreed to focus their review on St Pauls (central), Fishergate (suburban) and Deighton (village), and to carry out informal visits to those schools to gather the views of parents on the opportunities for casual play in their area.

Consultation

3. On 13 April 2010, the Committee held an informal meeting to consult with representatives from Playspace, and to consider the information gathered since their last formal meeting.

Information Gathered

4. Members received an information pack before the informal meeting on 13 April 2010, to inform their discussions. The pack contained the following:
 - York Playspace 'Mobile Playspace Report 2009'

- The results from the TellUs3 and TellUs4 survey
- Feedback from the completed parents questionnaires

Issues Arising

5. York Playspace

The representatives from Playspace discussed with Members their delivery of play opportunities for children throughout the city (in both urban and rural areas). Their Summer 2009 report (shown at Annex A) gives details on the mobile and venue-based playschemes they provided during summer 2009, together with information on how these were funded, attendance levels and a summary of the feedback received from parents/carers and children. Many of the locations used by Playspace have been used for 14-15 years. These are well known and well advertised and therefore the take up is always high. Playspace recognise that when introducing a playscheme in a new area, the take up is likely to be poor at first, and that they will need to persevere in order to build a relationship with families in the area based on mutual respect and confidence in the play opportunities they provide. That is why one-off visits to a site are often unsuccessful e.g. Cleveland Street / Danebury Drive.

6. In regard to Deighton, Playspace confirmed they had previously worked with individuals in the area to identify a suitable space for children to play. The local Hall was deemed to be unusable due to its size and the lack of appropriate toilet facilities, and there is no suitable public outdoor space available. Local Farmers had been approached to ascertain if they were prepared to make available any small piece of land close the village centre but this had proved unsuccessful. Playspace had therefore suggested the village work with another village in the area e.g. Wheldrake, to perhaps pool their resources and provide some space for play that way.
7. Chill Out Zones (aimed at children aged 8-13) – unlike the playschemes, these are provided 46-48 weeks of the year and are venue based in three specific areas of the city – Tanghall Community Centre; 68 Centre; and Moor Lane Youth Centre. They provide children with open access to child led activities, in a safe environment. As well as receiving funding from the Play Team (40k), the Tanghall and 68 Centre chill out zones are also well supported by ward committee funding. The Moor Lane zone is not as well supported by the relevant ward committees, and therefore it is partly funded by a play grant from City of York Council. Feedback from parents shows that they are at ease knowing adults are on site supervising the activities.
8. Training of staff and volunteers – Playspace currently have funding from North Yorkshire Learning Consortium to provide training for their volunteers over the next six months. They have already trained five volunteers who are now actively supporting the three Chill Out zones across the city, and are hoping to train a further twenty. They would also like to develop this further by offering training to volunteers working with other smaller play organisations in the city.

9. TellUs Survey Results
Members had intended comparing the survey results from 2008-09 (TellUs3) and 2009-10 (TellUs4), in order to identify and investigate the reasons for any changes in the views of children and young people over the two year period. Unfortunately, the number of questions relating to play and out of school activities had been seriously reduced in the TellUs4 survey making it difficult to carry out such a comparison – see Annex B.
10. Parents Questionnaires
The responses from parents with children at St Pauls School and Fishergate School are shown at Annex C. Members recognised that the perceived barriers to play would need to be addressed to achieve a marked increase in the take up of casual play opportunities.
11. In response to the ‘Barriers to play’ identified in the completed questionnaires, the Head of Play has provided information on a number of CYC initiatives currently ongoing and scheduled for 2010-11 which aim to address these issues of concern – see Annex D.
12. Evidence gathered nationally shows a marked decline in the extent of outdoor play for children as their freedom to roam has been curtailed compared with previous generations. 71% of adults used to play near their home every day when they were a child compared to only 21% of children today. A recent nationwide poll showed that 83% of British adults think the next government should have policies that ensure children can play outside more.
13. With this mind, Play England and its partners have produced a ‘Manifesto for Children’s Play’ calling for the next government to make play a priority (see copy at Annex E). It asks all political parties to make 3 simple pledges for all children and young people to have the freedom and space to play enjoyed by previous generations:
 - To make all residential neighbourhoods child-friendly places where children can play outside
 - To give all children the time and opportunity to play throughout childhood
 - To give all children somewhere to play - in freedom and safety - after school and in the holidays
14. The nationally developed Playshaper training event held in York in 2009 brought together multi agency representatives including Play, Police, Housing, Parks and Open Spaces, the voluntary sector, City Strategy, Transport and Planning, all of whom have an impact upon children’s quality of life.
15. The training focused on child-friendly design, planning and management of public space and enabled local authority colleagues and other stakeholders to consider how design, planning and management of public space can help deliver on a range of local priorities including community cohesion, health targets, regeneration aims and how addressing the needs of children, young people and their parents in the built environment can potentially reduce crime, fear of crime and accidents.

16. For York, there were a number of outcomes from the event which included:
- Identifying new partners who pledged to assist in the development of play opportunities in the city
 - The formation of a new strategic board to ensure the development and implementation of the 'Taking Play Forward' policy

The Way Forward

17. At the informal meeting on 13 April, Members recognised that in some areas there is a zero tolerance towards children playing in open spaces near homes. It was suggested that Ward Committees may be able to reach out to their local communities and work with them to encourage a more positive attitude. For example, the replacement of negative signage like 'No Ball Games' with positive signage like 'You Can Play Here'.
18. With this in mind and in order to recommend a strategy for the provision of suitable play opportunities within specific areas of the city (in line with objective (iii) of this review), it was suggested that one area be identified in which to carry out a pilot scheme involving all the relevant agencies (as listed in paragraph 13 above). For example, the pilot could include:
- Working with children and parents through schools in the area to identify what they perceive to be barriers to play
 - Holding a public meeting to gather the views of other residents, local businesses and other interested parties
 - Building on the school's travel plans to create a 'Safe Routes to Play' document for the area
 - Identify any improvements required to road crossings/markings to reduce the danger of traffic
19. Identifying the right pilot area and communication with residents in the area through the ward committee, were identified as being key to a successful pilot scheme.

Options

20. Having considered all of the information contained within this report and its associated annexes, Members may choose to:
- a. arrange an additional meeting in support of this review in order investigate further the idea of a pilot scheme, inviting representatives of the relevant CYC officers and representatives from outside agencies to attend
 - b. agree at this stage to recommend that a pilot scheme be undertaken, without further scrutiny
 - c. agree that a pilot scheme is not the right approach and instead draw up alternative recommendations based on the information gathered to date

Implications

21. There are no known Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal Crime & Disorder, Property or Other implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

Corporate Strategy

22. A review of this topic would support the Council's aims to make York a 'City of Culture' i.e.

'We want to inspire residents and visitors to free their creative talents and make York the most active city in the country. We will achieve this by providing high quality cultural and sporting activities for all.'

23. A successful review of this topic could also support the Council's aim to make York a 'Healthy City' by improving the provision of facilities for children and teenagers to participate in active play.

Risk Management

24. There are no known risks associated with the recommendation in this report.

Recommendation

25. It is recommended that the Committee:
- i. pursue the idea of carrying out a pilot scheme and arrange an additional meeting of this committee prior to the end of this municipal year, in line with option (a) in paragraph 20.
 - ii. receive a copy of the draft Play Policy (called 'Taking Play Forward') at their next meeting, in order to comment on any revisions (in line with objective (iv) of this review), as part of the planned consultation process for the policy

Reason: To progress the review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols and identify the optimum recommendations arising from this review

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Interim Report Approved



Date

16 April 2010

Specialist Implications Officer(s) N/A

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annex A – Playspace Summer 2009 Report

Annex B – TellUs Survey Results

Annex C – Parents Questionnaire Responses

Annex D – CYC Projects & Initiatives

Annex E – Play England's 'Manifesto for Children's Play'