

Review of Casual Play Opportunities - Scoping Report

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents information in support of a proposed review on the available provision of casual play opportunities across the city, and asks Members to agree how they wish to progress this review.

Background

2. At the last meeting of this Committee in October 2009, Members considered a possible scrutiny topic submitted by Cllr Looker (see Annex A) in relation to casual play opportunities for young children, with a focus on the city centre. In deciding to proceed with the review, Members agreed that it should include a comparison between a city centre area and a village location, and should focus on play opportunities (for children within the age range of 5-11 years) rather than just play equipment.
3. In order to gather some relevant background information for the review, the Committee met on 30 November 2009 to receive a presentation by the Head of Parks & Open Spaces on the Government's 'Playbuilder' Initiative and relevant data results for York, and the council's policy on play.

Opportunities for 'Play' in York

4. City of York Council has its own policy on play, called 'Taking Play Forward' – see copy at Annex B. Although this is currently being revised, it makes clear recommendations for developing play in the City and includes measures to monitor the impact and development of play through its 9 Better Play Objectives, which are:
 - extending choice and control
 - need to test boundaries
 - need to offer risk and keep children safe
 - maximise the range of play opportunities
 - fosters independence and self esteem
 - respect for others and opportunity for social interaction
 - fosters wellbeing, healthy growth and a capacity to learn
 - meets the necessary legislative requirements
 - involves children and young people in decision making

5. 'Playbuilder' – A Government Initiative
The Playbuilder programme is investing £235 million nationally as part of the Government's commitment to the play agenda, along with the launch of the recent national Play Strategy and Children's Plan. The initiative is intended to develop public, open access, outdoor play spaces close to where children live that are safe, exciting, stimulating and accessible to all, as well as promoting active, imaginative and adventurous play and targeting predominately the 8 - 13 year age range. This will directly link into York's play strategy and will assist in raising the standard of play provision across the city.
6. York has been allocated £1,165,391 from the Government Playbuilder Project, consisting of £1,120,453 capital and £44,938 revenue. The grant comes with a stringent monitoring regime from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), which is being undertaken by the regional office of Play England. It is overseen by a multi agency steering group in York representing Play, Parks, Young Peoples Service, Extended Schools, City Development, Transport Safety, Grants and Partnership and Neighbourhood Management, North Yorkshire Police, PACT and CVS and the Executive Member for Children and Young People's services.
7. The plan for York, is to build 22 new and upgraded play sites across the city, each to be developed in consultation, and with the participation of local children and young people, families, communities and representatives as appropriate.
8. The primary tool for the selection of the recommended sites was the PPG17 Planning for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation audit, undertaken as part of the Local Development Framework process. It was supported by feedback from the consultation carried out in preparation for the new Children and Young People's Plan, local representation and information from Ward Committees.
9. The selection process identified where equipped play areas and teenaged facilities existed in the city and then identified the gaps in provision. Where existing facilities were identified, they were assessed looking at both quality and accessibility issues. From those areas with gaps in provision, suitable sites were selected based on the following criteria:
 - a) those areas of the city where there was no or under provision for 8 - 13 year olds
 - b) those sites which scored lower in quality
 - c) where there was community support to help design and possibly deliver the scheme
 - d) where a suitable site was available to deliver the scheme within the DCSF timetable.
10. As a result of the selection process 11 new play areas, and 11 refurbished or expanded play areas were identified – see full list shown at Annex C. The first two of these new play sites have now been completed and are in use (Elvington & Naburn) and the site at Bishopthorpe has been completed and will be officially

opened for use in the new year. Outside of those 22 areas selected, there remains a number of areas with gaps in provision.

Analysis

11. The data gathered in support of the 'Playbuilder' Initiative focuses on children aged 8-13 years. As the Committee have previously agreed to focus this review on play provision for children aged 5-11 years, they should bear in mind that the data may not provide all of the necessary evidence to support this review. In addition the Committee may wish to consider extending the age range covered by this review, to children aged 5-13years.
12. The Committee have also previously agreed to focus on three specific areas of the city - one urban, one suburban and one village (yet to be identified). As the data gathered in support of the 'Playbuilder' Initiative has already identified where there are gaps in provision across the city, it is suggested that the Committee consider those which fall outside of the 22 sites chosen (as shown in Annex D – to follow), in order to identify the areas to be focused on as part of this review.

Remit & Timetable For Review

13. Having considered the information contained within the presentation and the information gathered to date by individual Committee members, the Committee now need to agree a firm remit for the review with a number of objectives – see suggestion below

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 setting
 - 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
14. Once the remit has been agreed, Members will need to decide:
 - a) a timeframe for completion of the review
 - b) which areas of the city the review will focus on (through consideration of the data gathered in support of the Playbuilder Initiative)
 - c) methods for progressing the review - below are a number of suggestions:
 - Identify whether it would be beneficial to co-opt anyone on to the Committee, for the life of the review

- How long the review should take and whether any additional meetings are required to progress the review, outside of those already in the diary
- the Committee as a whole to carry out a number of visits in the identified wards/areas
- Identify any further consultation required and how that consultation should take place i.e. via a survey, by holding a consultation event(s) or by inviting specific individuals to attend future meetings e.g. voluntary organisations who provide play activities etc
- Gather information on imaginative examples of play opportunities in place elsewhere, both nationally and from outside the UK

Options

15. Having considered all of the information provided as part of the presentation received on 30 November 2009 and within this report, Members may choose to:
- a) amend and/or agree the remit suggested in paragraph 12 above
 - b) agree and/or identify alternative methods for progressing the review, outside of those listed in paragraph 13 above
 - c) if necessary, agree any additional formal (or informal) meeting dates required

Implications

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

Corporate Strategy

17. 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.'

18. A successful review of this topic could also support the Council's aim to make York a 'Healthy City' i.e.

'We want to be a city where residents enjoy long, healthy and independent lives. For this to happen we will make sure that people are supported to make healthier lifestyle choices and that health and social care services are quick to respond to those that need them.'

Risk Management

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

Recommendations

20. It is recommended that the committee:

- i. Agree a firm remit and timeframe for completion of the review

Reason: To ensure compliance with this committee's workplan and with scrutiny procedures and protocols

- ii. Agree methods for carrying out the review and allocate a number of tasks to individual members of the Committee, where suitable

Reason: To progress the work of the review between meetings

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel. 01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Alison Lowton
Head of Civic, Democratic & Legal Services

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) N/A

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes

Annex A – Topic Registration Form

Annex B – Copy of CYC Policy – 'Taking play Forward'

Annex C – List of development sites in York included in 'Playbuilder' initiative

Annex D – List of areas with gaps in provision not included in Playbuilder Initiative (to follow)