

Report to: **Executive**  
Date: **26 February 2008**  
Report of: **Executive Member for Social Inclusion & Culture**  
Subject: **Children's Play Programme - Play Park in the Community**  
Ward: **All**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To advise Management Team that the application submitted to the Big Lottery Fund to improve play provision in the District has been approved. The allocation for the next three years commencing in 2008/2009 is £292,480.
- 1.2 To seek endorsement of a Play Strategy for the District.
- 1.3 The Executive Summary of the Play Strategy is attached as appendix A, and a copy of the full strategy is available from Lisa Jordan in Regeneration and Partnerships.

## **2. Consultation**

- 2.1 In preparing this report, consultation has taken place with the Director of Regeneration and Development, Head of Regeneration and Partnerships the Regeneration Initiatives Manager and the Head of Neighbourhood Initiatives.
- 2.2 A steering group made up of District Councillors, Officers, Town and Parish Councils, Groundwork East Durham Officers and representatives from the community sector worked together to establish the play strategy.
- 2.3 Consultation with stakeholders, particularly young people, was essential in the development of the strategy and the portfolio of projects.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 In November 2005 the Big Lottery allocated funding to local authorities to create, improve and develop their local play opportunities. The funding was part of a regional allocation of £7.6 million. The grant is targeted at benefiting young people under the age of 18. As a pre-requisite to the funding local authorities were required to develop a Play Strategy.
- 3.2 In December 2006, the Council commissioned Groundwork East Durham to produce a Play Strategy for the District. In order to assist in the development of the Strategy a Play Partnership was formed, consisting of a wide range of local representatives.
- 3.3 Organisations and groups along with Town and Parish Councils were asked to submit ideas of projects. These were presented to groups of children and young people who were asked to consider the projects and rate them in accordance to their own preference. The results of this consultation, and how the projects fit with the needs identified in the strategy were then assessed and five projects were chosen to form the portfolio submitted to the Big Lottery.

- 3.4 In August 2007 a presentation on the draft strategy was presented to Members. The application (entitled Play Park in the Community), the play strategy and the portfolio of projects were then submitted to the Big Lottery in September 2007. In December 2007 the Council received confirmation that the application was successful.
- 3.4 As part of this initiative that included all Councils in the County, a Cluster Group entitled Play Durham was established in February 2007. It is administered by Play England and looks at the strategic development of play across County Durham.
- 3.5 The Cluster Group has agreed that it would undertake a Countywide event in March 2008 to celebrate the allocation of Big Lottery funding and launch the individual play strategies.

#### **4. Position Statement and Options Appraisal**

- 4.1 The aim of the Play Strategy is to provide better play opportunities for all in all in the district and that the profile and importance of play is promoted. The Strategy has been developed within the current national, regional and local context and has been linked to a number of existing policies and agendas.
- 4.2 The Strategy's vision recognises the importance of play and confirms the Partnership's role to work together to ensure that all children and young people have access to good quality sustainable play opportunities, which should result in play becoming a celebrated activity, open for the enjoyment of the whole community. As well as the vision, the Strategy has five key objectives, which set out the principles and definitions, agreed on by the partnership.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that by having a comprehensive Play Strategy and a passionate Play Partnership additional resources can be unlocked over the next three years to improve the quality of play in the District, and provide a sustainable provision for our young people.
- 4.4 Although the Play Strategy was developed as a pre-requisite to the Big Lottery application process, the £292,480 awarded from the Big Lottery was allocated for a portfolio of projects. The portfolio is made up of the following five projects, however only the first three require financial input from the Council.
- Wingate Welfare Play Project - This project will provide fixed play equipment for children of all ages. It will add to the current facilities in the welfare park, and complement recent improvements made to the park's woodland and pond.
  - Seaham Town Park Inclusive Play Project - This project will involve a major refurbishment and improvement of the play area within the town park. It will include the development of strategically placed equipment, skatepark and wheeled sports area.
  - Play Ranger Project - This project will consist of two different teams of play rangers delivering sessions in the evenings, weekends and during the holidays facilitating children's free play. The project will initially work in Seaham and Wingate, however in the second year it will be expanded to additional adjacent areas.
  - Easington Colliery Improved Access and Play - The project will replace equipment in two areas in the Welfare Park. It will add new equipment, install safety surfacing and add natural materials such as logs and boulders. Access to one of the areas and an underused adjacent practice pitch will also be improved.
  - Reclaiming the Right to Play - The project will provide free play spaces for children and young people aged 4 to 14 years through a wide variety of activities including arts and crafts, sports, games and play for play sake. Delivery will be through

Tarka's existing network of organisations, which include two play schemes, five out of school clubs and holiday care activities. The project aims to open up these existing resources to children and young people who have previously been restricted from benefiting from them.

- 4.5 The Play Partnership will have responsibility for delivery of the portfolio of projects and it is anticipated the Play Partnership will become a sub group of the East Durham Children's Trust Board, which was established in September 2007.
- 4.6 The implementation of the Play Strategy will be undertaken through a newly created Play Development Officers post. Negotiations are currently underway with County Durham Primary Care Trust with regard to hosting this post, which will be funded through the Management and Administration element of the Big Lottery funding.
- 4.7 Since the confirmation of the funding from the Big Lottery, officers from the Regeneration Initiatives Team have met with the portfolio projects sponsors to ensure the projects are now being developed to enable them to commence in April 2008. Once the projects have been developed they will appraised on behalf of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership by the Strategic Funding Group.
- 4.8 The Council as the Accountable Body will issue grant offer letters to the individual projects and the project sponsors will be responsible for the day to day management of their projects, budgets and staff.
- 4.9 The Cluster Group continue to meet on a monthly basis to look at the strategic development of play across County Durham and plan and co-ordinate the launch event. The event will take place on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and will be held at the Greenhouse, Stanley, County Durham. The Council will be appropriately represented at this event.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial**

- 5.1.1 The total cost to the Council to deliver the portfolio of projects is £85,000 which has been agreed by Capital Programme Working Group and is made up of capital funding of £5,000 in 2008/09 and £80,000 in 2009/10. This contribution will enable the Council to access £292,480 over the next three years commencing 2008/2009.

### **5.2 Legal**

- 5.2.1 It is not considered that there are any legal implications.

### **5.3 Policy**

- 5.3.1 The position of any play strategy in relation to the corporate plan, service plans, Youth Strategy and potential open space strategy are outlined in the strategy.

### **5.4 Local Government Review**

- 5.4.1 This report seeks agreement to commit resources to a three year Lottery funded programme. Its preparation reflects the move over 2008/09 to the establishment of a successor single local authority for County Durham. The resources are committed in the Capital Programme, which has a framework for the Council to allocate sufficient resources to deliver the implementation of the planned schemes without placing any financial liability or implications for the new authority post 2009/10.
- 5.4.2 The Council's decision will be communicated to Durham County Council and to the joint working arrangements governing the preparations for the establishment of the new

authority.

## **5.5 Risk**

- 5.5.1 A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions required to manage the identified risks will be implemented.

## **5.6 Communications**

- 5.6.1 The Big Lottery award, the development and delivery of the projects will be publicised in the usual way through press releases, infopoint and various relevant websites. The launch event is an opportunity to publicise the importance of play and will also be publicised in a similar way. In addition the District Council will be recognised on any publications relating to the portfolio projects.

## **5.7 Corporate**

- 5.7.1 The proposals are consistent with corporate objectives to make the district safe; quality services for our people; clean, tidy communities; learning opportunities for all and building a healthy community.

## **5.8 Equality and Diversity**

- 5.8.1 An essential feature of the play strategy is that it promotes inclusion for disadvantaged, disabled children and young people. Inclusive principles and good practice are an integral part of the document, but also highlighted as distinct areas for action to ensure, as a minimum, compliance with the Disability and Discrimination Act and the Every Disabled Child Matters Charter.

## **5.9 E-Government**

- 5.9.1 It is not considered that there are any E-Government implications.

## **5.10 Procurement**

- 5.10.1 It is not considered that there are any procurement implications.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Executive endorses the District Play Strategy.
- 6.2 The Executive notes the approval of the Big Lottery grant of £292,480 and agrees the Council's funding contribution to the schemes identified in the report.

### **Background Papers/Documents Referred to in Preparing this Report:-**

Easington District Play Strategy  
District of Easington Risk Assessment