

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CORPORATE SERVICES
CABINET MEMBER**

SCUNTHORPE SPECIAL EXPENSES – PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a request from the Charter Trustees to utilise unallocated funding from the 2009/10 Scunthorpe Special Expenses levy for the purpose of improving playgrounds.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Scunthorpe Special Expenses were introduced in April 2000. Facilities initially included were playgrounds and community centres, and the costs included repair and maintenance, grounds maintenance and central expenses including public liability insurance. Subsequently playing fields in Scunthorpe were added to the schedule with the exception of those deemed to be of use to all North Lincolnshire residents. Christmas lighting was added to the schedule in April 2006.
- 2.2 Whilst the Year 1 Playbuilder scheme has improved some of the play areas in Scunthorpe, there are many others where the play equipment is in a poor state. This is due to lack of investment coupled with the number of play areas in Scunthorpe resulting in the need for major renovations, replacements of items now obsolete, on-going repairs of many existing and antiquated pieces of equipment, spares becoming less available due to the age of current equipment and increasing incidents of vandalism in children's play areas and their surroundings. The Health and Safety issues arising from lack of repairs etc also extend to the need for many of the sites to have replacement/new safety surfacing also, which is extremely expensive. This situation will be exacerbated should the Year 2 Playbuilder funding be withdrawn. For example, one of the Year 2 Playbuilder sites is at Lilac Avenue and it is likely that the play area will soon be closed due to its state of dilapidation. The cost for Lilac Avenue alone has been estimated at £100,000.
- 2.3 The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel published a report in 2009 reviewing play, playgrounds and open spaces. One of the key recommendations was that the council increases the levels of maintenance in parks and open spaces, investigates the increase of Park Wardens, concentrating on anti-social behaviour, graffiti, broken glass and damaged equipment.

- 2.4 There is no formal agreement with the Charter Trustees that defines the level of service to be provided in terms of those that are deemed to be concurrent functions.
- 2.5 An annual levy is charged to the council tax payers within the former Borough of Scunthorpe to finance the activities.
- 2.6 Unallocated funding arising after charging the cost of activities in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 against the levy may be used to either reduce the levy in the subsequent financial year or may be used to further invest in those specific activities.
- 2.7 Unallocated funding currently stands at £40,030. This unallocated funding will not cover monies needed to undertake all works required, however it will be imperative to keep some play areas open with the required ongoing maintenance/refurbishment issues.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1 - To allow the unallocated funding to be used specifically for the provision and maintenance of playgrounds and open spaces within Scunthorpe.
- 3.2 Option 2 - To carry the unallocated funding forward to 2011/12.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 – This would go some way to addressing the wishes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel as it will contribute to the maintenance regime in Scunthorpe’s playgrounds and open spaces in the current financial year. This is the preferred option.
- 4.2 Option 2 - The unallocated funding could be used to reduce the levy in 2011/12 or in future years. This would allow time for an exercise to be carried out to prioritise those playgrounds and open spaces in Scunthorpe, which are in most need of attention.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Finance – There is funding available for allocation within the Scunthorpe Special Expenses levy.
- 5.2 There are no other resource implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 Investment in the council’s portfolio of playgrounds and open spaces in Scunthorpe will make a positive contribution to combatting the level of anti-social behaviour in North Lincolnshire. It will also contribute to the council’s health improvement priority areas.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Annual meetings are held with the Charter Trustees who have expressed a desire to see the unallocated funding invested as set out in Option 1.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the proposal to allow the unallocated funding to be used as set out in Paragraph 3.1.

SERVICE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

The Angel
Brigg
DN20 8LD
Author: Phil Hotchin
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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: Budget monitoring reports