

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

REVIEW OF PLAY, PLAYGROUNDS AND OPEN SPACES IN NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the conclusions and recommendations of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel in relation to a review of Play, Playgrounds and Open Spaces in North Lincolnshire.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting held on 8 July 2009, council considered a report of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel in relation to a review of play, playgrounds and open spaces in North Lincolnshire.
- 2.2 The report was approved by council and referred to cabinet for consideration of the recommendations with a view to the preparation of an action plan.
- 2.3 The panel completed its review in April 2009. It was carried out with a brief -
 - To examine North Lincolnshire's Play Strategy
 - To investigate what progress had been made in implementing the strategy and in ensuring that the needs of North Lincolnshire's children are being met.
 - To examine play areas including parks and open spaces across North Lincolnshire.
 - To consider the co provision of play areas, play activities across the area.
 - To look at how play is funded.
 - To carry out consultation exercises with users, stakeholders, partners, voluntary sector etc who may be involved in play.

- To make recommendations if necessary to improve the provision of play/play areas and publicise the existing ones to maximise their use.

2.4 Following its review the panel made 12 detailed recommendations. A copy of the conclusions and the recommendations are attached as an appendix to this report.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 There are no options associated with this report.

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

4.1 There may be some resource implications associated with the recommendations when they are implemented.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME & DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

5.1 There may be other implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations which will be highlighted in any action plan.

6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

6.1 The panel consulted widely with other scrutiny members and officers and other relevant organisations in relation to the preparation of the original report.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the report and recommendations be approved and adopted.

7.2 That the Service Director Neighbourhood and Environment, the Service Director Asset Management and Culture and the Service Director Highways and Planning; together with appropriate Cabinet Members prepare an action plan in response to the recommendations of the report for submission to cabinet.

SERVICE DIRECTOR LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report - Report of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel - Review of Play, Playgrounds and Open Spaces in North Lincolnshire.

THE PANEL'S CONCLUSIONS

Arising from the evidence presented during the panel's findings and considerations, its conclusions are as follows:-

The panel thoroughly investigated the progress made towards the aims of the councils 'Play Alert' Strategy for North Lincolnshire with particular focus on playgrounds and open spaces. Whilst carrying out their investigations it was highlighted that there was a need to maximise the impact of play provision across North Lincolnshire by all service departments within the council, and by working closer with our strategic partners. The council has the responsibility to determine the provision of recreational activities within the new play strategy and should determine it as a priority, whilst ensuring appropriate resources are made available to ensure quality provision.

It was apparent that there is a good level of recreation activity already provided in North Lincolnshire for children and young people, but it was disappointing to find that the latest audit of provision was carried out in 2004. Evidence showed that some of the playgrounds were of a poor standard lacking in variation and excitement particularly for the teenagers with need for improvements. There is need for a more innovative approach to the provision of recreation facilities, such as youth shelters and skate parks, together with the possible introduction of Park Wardens to alleviate some of the fears expressed by young people during the review.

The panel appreciate that parents and carers are understandably protective and that certain types of recreation provision include an element of risk. However, there is a balance to be struck to allow young people to develop and explore their boundaries. Ways of improving the marketing of facilities provided and activities to young people and their families are also required.

It was evident to the panel that the involvement of children and young people in the decision making process for the provision of recreation activities is essential, and where appropriate they should be involved in supporting the submission of applications to the Planning Committee, and take part in any discussions regarding Section 106 agreements on play. Paying particular attention to Section 106 agreements the panel felt that more should be done to negotiate and enforce these in any future developments.

As part of the Building Schools for the Future programme the panel see great potential for the future, taking advantage of play facilities/activities provided through BSF and the extended schools in North Lincolnshire. There is going to be a huge range of opportunities available and could lead to exciting prospects to develop a new model of provision to address needs of local communities.

It was disappointing that the National Performance Indicator 199 -children's satisfaction with parks was not more accurate and available to the Panel and the time of the review. They look forward to receiving a more comprehensive reflection of children's satisfaction with parks in North Lincolnshire next time the survey is carried out.

Members welcomed the Playbuilder funding that was recently made available to the council, however, they did feel that it was vital that Neighbourhood Services should be allocated an annual budget specifically for the provision and maintenance of playgrounds and open spaces in North Lincolnshire.

Play is high on the Government's agenda and their commitment to making improvements is evident within this report. The panel would like to see the same commitment from North Lincolnshire Council across the authority in particular within the new play strategy due to be implemented in April 2010.

THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the evidence presented and evaluated during the review, as detailed in the panel's findings/considerations and the panel's conclusions, the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel are as follows:-

- 5.1 That a process be implemented to ensure that children and young people are fully supported to participate in the future development and provision of recreation activities in North Lincolnshire;
- 5.2 That a more up to date and comprehensive audit of playgrounds and open spaces provision be carried out across North Lincolnshire;
- 5.3 That an action plan be produced to explore ways of addressing the barriers to children and young people to access recreation activities, including fears of bullying and gangs, lack of transport, cost, lack of localised provision and lack of supervised provision;
- 5.4 That as part of any new planned playgrounds or activities, consideration be given to the various age groups, and more challenging adventure play equipment. With the close involvement of young people, and other stake holders, throughout the process from location/selection of structure to planning application;
- 5.5 That more work be undertaken to increase the marketing of play and activities to target all young people, and their families across North Lincolnshire;
- 5.6 That the council increases the levels of maintenance in parks and open spaces investigating the increase of Park Wardens, concentrating on anti-social behaviour, graffiti, broken glass and damaged equipment.
- 5.7 That consideration be given to the allocation of a specific budget to Neighbourhood Services for the provision and maintenance of parks and open spaces in North Lincolnshire;
- 5.8 That within the council's new play strategy for 2010 it is vital that there are clear lines of communication between council services and external agencies involved with the provision of play;
- 5.9 That Section 106 Agreements be closely monitored and enforced where necessary;

- 5.10 That as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme the council takes full advantage of the play facilities and opportunities available for all children and young people in North Lincolnshire;
- 5.11 That the panel be kept fully up to date on the Playbuilder project at all times;
- 5.12 That everyone involved throughout this review be thanked for their participation and contributions.