

SUBJECT: PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2022 & PLAY ACTION PLAN

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 27 July 2022

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To approve the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan as submitted in draft to Welsh Government by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To approve the 2022 Play Sufficiency Assessment and the Action Plan for 2022/23

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

- 3.1 Statutory Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSA) were undertaken in 2013, 2016 and 2019. The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the PSA every three years. The new PSA had to be submitted to Welsh Government by 30 June 2022, having either been approved by cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved. The PSA and action plan were submitted as a final draft subject to cabinet approval, which is now sought.
- 3.2 **“Wales: A Play Friendly Country”** is statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It gives detail to the duty under Section 11 of the Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.
- 3.3 In summary, the statutory requirements are that a local authority
- must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area; and
 - must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment.
- 3.4 Cabinet has previously recognised the importance of play in children’s lives, for both its recreational value and for the important part that it plays in children’s physical and emotional health and well-being and in their personal development. Play provides a platform for children to learn, to have fun and to develop friendships with other children in a variety of settings from the school playground to formal open spaces and the wider physical environment. Play is a common denominator that should be capable of being enjoyed by all children irrespective of their social or cultural background or the ability of their parents to pay for the opportunity to participate.

- 3.5 The appended assessment (Appendix 1) sets out in more detail the background, policy context, progress against the 2019 PSA and the proposed areas for action in the next three-year period. In summary the 2022 review seeks to refine and reflect progress and ambition against the core actions set in 2019 rather than fundamentally change direction. Given that the authority is now providing increased direct play provision new actions have been added to reflect the importance of workforce development to support our aspirations.
- 3.6 The proposed action areas for the next three-year Play Sufficiency Assessment period are:
- **Space for Play** – maintaining improvement of fixed play provision, enabling community action, continuing to encourage and enable child friendly and playable environments
 - **Supervised Provision** – building on the open access community play model reviewing progress and considering future delivery options to widen its reach, extent and inclusiveness
 - **Providing for Diverse Needs** – recognising that there is still progress required to achieve full equality of access across service delivery and a need to further investigate the barriers to access for specific user groups.
 - **Workforce Development** - the development of a flexible and specialist workforce to play a pivotal role in our future play ambitions.
 - **Engagement and Information** – including rolling out the Young People’s Voices in Play toolkit and supporting young people’s engagement, improving the play information, and developing a localised marketing and play brand
 - **Partnership and Policy Integration** – maintaining and extending partnership work

Appended to the policy statement is the PSA toolkit (Appendix 2) RAG rating each criterion, and the 2022/23 play action plan setting out the proposed actions against the play measures, as required by guidance.

- 3.7 The creation and appointment of a new Play Development Lead post to contribute to the strategic direction and delivery of play right across Monmouthshire is an important development to support our future ambitions. This post based in MonLife’s Youth, Community and Sport and Community Teams, will coordinate the statutory play duties, and support the Play Strategy Group.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 The statutory matters mean that the PSA includes an assessment of the extent that play opportunities are inclusive and recognises the positive impact that securing sufficient and accessible play opportunities can have on children, families and communities. The provision of free open access play contributes to addressing issue identified in the Well-being Assessment and to corporate policy including the Social Justice Strategy. The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation is appended (Appendix 3).

4.2 The safeguarding responsibilities of the Authority and partners for children and young people are fully integrated into the identification of appropriate actions and reflected in the PSA and guidance.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Reviewing and considering the Play Sufficiency Assessment meets the statutory requirements, to have a Play Sufficiency Assessment and a Play Action Plan, so doing nothing is not an option. Approval of the sufficiency assessment and action plan provides direction and vision in delivery. It allows access to All Wales Play Opportunities Grant and associated funding and will support existing relationships / future partnership development.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 Assessment criteria for the PSA measures are set out in Statutory Guidance / the PSA Toolkit prepared by Play Wales on behalf of Welsh Government and the requirement to undertake an annual review of achievement against the action plan.

7. REASONS:

7.1 “Wales: A Play Friendly Country” is Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on assessing for and securing, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient play opportunities for children in their area by addressing the defined measures set out in legislation.

7.2 Accessible play opportunities contribute to children’s lives and to the well-being of their families and communities, thereby contributing to the well-being objective to provide children and young people with the best possible start in life and helps deliver the social justice strategy to address inequalities in our county by contributing to developing child friendly communities.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 The 2022/23 budget round identified the creation of a new Play Development Lead post to contribute to the strategic direction and delivery of play right across Monmouthshire. Beyond this there is no dedicated play budget, so provision depends on partnership working.

8.2 The last two years have seen substantially increased Welsh Government support through the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG) as a reaction to the impacts of the pandemic on children and young people which has been very welcome. The assessment identifies that play delivery and strategic planning would be best supported by a longer-term commitment to sustain AWPOG funding to avoid the previous uncertainty which mitigate against fully strategic spend.

8.3 In addition, financial support is received from Town and Community Councils and from the Welsh Government Families First Fund to support the delivery of inclusive summer play provisions, and via WLGA to support the Food and Fun programme. Open space / recreation contributions obtained as part of Section 106 agreements relating to new

developments (with the revised approach) are used to improve spaces for play, and access to these areas, together with integration with other grant sources including the Local Places for Nature and Active Travel programmes.

- 8.4 There are no other direct resource implications associated with the PSA. Having an up to date PSA and Action Plan is a pre-requisite for accessing any AWPOG support and positions the authority and its partners to seek external funding for specific initiatives and actions in the plan.

9. **CONSULTEES:**

Cabinet	Senior Leadership Team
Chief Operating Officer MonLife	Play Strategy Group

Minor amendments have been made to Appendix 2 the Toolkit to better reflect the current position.

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Appendix 1: Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan
Appendix 2: Play Sufficiency Toolkit
Appendix 3: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation

11. **AUTHORS & CONTACT DETAILS:**

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