

SUBJECT: PLAY OPPORTUNITIES REVIEW

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 2 March 2016

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To consider a future delivery model for staffed play provision.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To approve the proposed future delivery model for staffed play provision.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The LSB commissioned a review of current managed play provision (the summer play scheme) based on concerns that the current provision was unsustainable on several grounds:
- The changes in the regulatory framework from Welsh Government and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), including more rigorous staff qualifications and training requirements and changes to the National Minimum Standards (especially for 8 - 12 year olds, which will now take place from 1 April 2016)
 - The equality challenge of the differing treatment of children with disabilities in the current model
 - The pressures in place as a result of reduced delivery capacity, including the financial pressures to meet income targets at leisure centres.
- 3.2 The review report (Appendix 1) by Torfaen Play Service considered the potential benefits and risks associated with the current and alternative delivery models and the potential to deliver jointly on all or some aspects of the scheme. The current model of providing closed access play is regulated childcare and as such subject to CSSIW inspection and legislative restrictions – MCC is unusual in continuing to provide a closed access scheme. In light of the current delivery challenges, the future legislative changes and the equality challenge the review report proposes a shift to community based “open access” play provision utilising a model successfully deployed in other authorities and potentially allowing wider geographical provision across the County – option 4 in the report.

- 3.3 Childrens & Young People's Select has considered the proposed model, highlighting safeguarding as a significant and important issue and wished in due course to receive confirmation on the number and location of play schemes and a progress report / evaluation in Autumn 2016.
- 3.4 Whilst the purpose of staffed play provision is to offer play opportunities in a safe environment without parental supervision to enable children to play, learn and develop and mix with their peers, rather than provide childcare, in practice many parents have relied on the current model to provide inexpensive childcare. So the new delivery model will result in a potential reduction in childcare as community sites would provide provision below the 2 hour registration limit. To mitigate this impact the model will allow leisure services to offer sports camps in the leisure centres playing to the service's strengths and offer a wider and inclusive choice to children and young people. Add on session at the start and end of each day will allow parents flexibility.
- 3.5 Delivery of the new model will depend on the result of ongoing discussions with partners, most notably Town and Community Councils due to the reliance on their funding and other potential partners including the Registered Social Landlords. This makes it difficult to scope the full potential of new provision at this stage.
- 3.6 If sufficient funding is all secured, it will comprise:
- full day inclusive sports camps run by Leisure Services at the four leisure centres for up to 6 weeks of summer provision, utilising a well established model, integrating activities for children with disabilities, where their individual assessment of need allows
 - 8 inclusive play scheme sites in community venues across the County for the 4 weeks of summer provision run by Torfaen Play Service utilising the same model as current provision in Torfaen, integrating activities for children with disabilities, where their individual assessment of need allows
 - For the higher tier of children with disabilities with complex and challenging needs 4 weeks of summer provision provided by Torfaen Play Service at an inclusive venue, most likely Cwmbran Stadium
- 3.7 If funding is not secured from individual town and community councils the level of community play provision will vary. In addition there are already other opportunities available to Monmouthshire children including some schools in the county which also offer supervised play sessions in the summer holiday period. As part of the new model the opportunity to work with existing venues to deliver the inclusive play schemes is being explored along with signposting of overall provision.
- 3.8 A comprehensive and bespoke training programme is provided to both play care workers and volunteers in the necessary skills, including safeguarding risk, benefits of play, inclusion, risk assessment, disability awareness etc. Over 200 young people were trained in Torfaen in 2015 and the proposal is to extend this approach to staff and volunteers delivering the Monmouthshire part of the scheme.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 “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.
- 4.2 The provision of sufficient play opportunities for children contributes to the Single Integrated Plan themes that People are Confident, Capable and Involved and Our County Thrives; supporting families to benefit from positive environments to nurture their children to grow, develop and prosper; and access to flexible and appropriate play opportunities.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 There is currently no dedicated budget for play. Existing staffed play provision (excluding the Bulwark scheme which is funded by Chepstow Town Council) is funded via contributions from ten Town and Community Councils (in 15/16 contributing £30K), income from charges (in 15/16, £52K), and Families First access grant money (in 15/16, £20K and confirmed in principle for 16/17) to enable children with disabilities to access mainstream play schemes. However despite this funding and income generation the current provision has an unfunded element (in 15/16 of circa £40 -50K), principally staffing costs, which is being absorbed by leisure services and impacting negatively on their trading position.
- 5.2 Given the reliance on Town and Community Council funding and ongoing discussions with other potential partners it is not possible at this stage to present a budget for the future delivery model but the clear principle will be that the unfunded element is not sustainable and that the community based staffed play element will need to be self-supporting.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The significant equality impacts identified in the Future Generations evaluation (Appendix 1) are summarised below for members’ consideration:
- The positive impact that securing sufficient and accessible play opportunities can have on children, families and communities.
 - The positive impact in providing equality of the number of sessions available to children with disabilities.
 - The challenges of accommodating children with the highest tier of complex and challenging needs which will require consultation with the parents of disabled children to inform the detailed options.
 - The negative impact that changes to staffed play provision could impact on those parents using the current play provision as childcare, but potentially mitigated by the changes allowing the offer of a wider summer sports camp provision in the leisure centres.
- 6.2 Consultation with the parents of disabled children on the details of the new provision and how to utilise the Families First grant to improve access in the most effective way are currently underway.

6.3 The actual impacts from this report's recommendations will be reviewed annually and criteria for monitoring and review will include:

The impact of the delivered services to children and communities to ensure there is equality of access and opportunities in line with the assessed needs from the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The sports camps will comply with MCC Leisure Services well-established and audited safeguarding policy and procedures. These include appropriate recruitment, DBS checking, training (including safeguarding and child protection training at level 1 or 2 as appropriate), reporting procedures and management support for staff and any volunteers. Although not regulated child care (as such sports provision is exempted) children attending the sports camps are pre-booked / registered and in the unlikely event of them not wishing to complete a day's activities their parent/carer would be contacted to collect children.

7.2 The community play provision will utilise Torfaen CBC's Play Service who have long experience in the delivery of community based play opportunities. The provision is non regulated as it falls below the 2 hour limit and is "open access" play provision. Open access play is an opportunity for children and young people to play in a safe staffed environment in the absence of their parents/carers. With this in mind, all staff and volunteers are appropriately recruited and trained to work with children and young people and the provision will meet all policies and procedures linked to children and young people including safeguarding protocols.

7.3 In accordance with Children & Young People's Select's recommendations, and good practice, the details of provision when finalised will be reviewed with the safeguarding service to ensure appropriate accountability.

8. CONSULTEES:

- Children & Young People's Select (12 November 2015 & 14 January 2016)
- Cabinet
- SLT
- Head of Tourism & Leisure
- Policy & Partnerships Team
- Finance

The review carried out by Torfaen Play Services involved extensive internal and external consultation (see page 3 of Appendix 2); consultations with Town and Community Councils and Registered Social Landlords are ongoing.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Future Generations Evaluation

Appendix 2: Play Opportunity Review; including Monmouthshire Play Review – A Critical Assessment of Staffed Play Provision, Torfaen Play Service October 2015

Report to Children and Young People's Select Committee 12 November 2015:

Report to Children and Young People's Select Committee 14 January 2016.

[Wales – A Play Friendly Country. Statutory Guidance Welsh Government July 2014](#)

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