

SUBJECT:	PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	13 April 2016
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To approve the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 16/17 as submitted in draft to Welsh Government by the statutory deadline of 31 March 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To approve the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 16/17
- 2.2 To mandate the Play Strategy Group to seek to progress the key actions identified in the Action Plan

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Background

The first statutory Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) was completed in 2013 and requires review after three years. The new PSA had to be submitted to Welsh Government by 31 March 2016, having either been approved by cabinet or in a final version timetabled to be so approved. The PSA and action plan was submitted as a final draft subject to cabinet approval which is now sought.

3.2 Statutory Requirements

“Wales: A Play Friendly Country” is Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It was published by Welsh Ministers to give detail to the duty on Local Authorities under section 11, Play opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. This section of the Measure fully came into effect on 1st July 2014.

In summary the statutory requirements are:

- A local authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area
- A local authority must secure sufficient play opportunities in its area for children, so far as reasonably practicable, having regard to its assessment

3.3 Definition of Play

The following internationally recognised definition of play is noted in the guidance:
“Play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live”.

Play is defined for the purposes of the measure as including (but not limited to) “any recreational activity”. This recognises that children enjoy and benefit from taking part in a wide range of activities that are, in the main, organised by adults for children. These can include junior and youth clubs; leisure centre and sporting activities; cultural and arts activities; indoor play centres and events organised for children and their families. These recreational activities may offer a combination of adult led organised activities, and opportunities for freely chosen and child led play.

Welsh Government see the range of play opportunities for children that are covered under the measure as being:

- Freely chosen Play – With or without adult supervision/facilitation.
- Structured recreational activities – in the main led by adults, with predefined rules.

These opportunities can be available in a range of spaces and settings and any setting may afford both opportunities for freely chosen play and structured recreational activities.

3.4 Scope of the Measure

The matters needing to be taken into account in the PSA, each of which are assessed against fixed criteria, are set out in the guidance and are broad in their scope, impacting widely across the authority’s activities:

Matter A: Population

Matter B: Providing for diverse needs

Matter C: Space Available for Children to Play

- Open Spaces; Outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces; Playing fields

Matter D: Supervised provision

- Play work provision; Structured recreational activities

Matter E: Charges for play provision

Matter F: Access to space/provision & Information; publicity; events

Matter G: Securing & Developing the Play Workforce

Matter H: Community engagement and participation

Matter I: Play within all relevant policy and implementation agendas

- Education/schools; Town & country planning; Traffic & transport; Health & wellbeing; Child poverty; Early years/childcare and family policy and initiatives; Inter-generational policy and initiatives; Community development; Community Safety; Health and safety

3.5 Policy Context

The Monmouthshire Single Integrated Plan contains the following statement and action:

“We also recognise 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.”

“To ensure children and young people have access to flexible and appropriate Play opportunities.”

3.6 Progress

The 2013 PSA / Action Plan contained a large number (20+) actions and progress has been mixed in their delivery; in some areas e.g. improving the provision of fixed play equipment in the main towns, good progress is being made, in others much less so. This reflects both the breadth of the actions proposed and the limitations on delivery.

There is no dedicated play budget or dedicated play coordinator / staff and until 2015 there was no single identified lead officer for play (now part of Tourism Leisure and Culture’s portfolio). Play Opportunities Grant has been made available on occasions by Welsh Government but not consistently and often at the last minute (six weeks prior to year-end in 2014/15). Whilst the grant has supported improved play opportunities in the County the timing of the grant has tended to mean that physical provision, rather than play programmes have been supported. There was no Play Opportunities Grant in 2015/16.

Despite these constraints there is commitment to delivering improved play opportunities and wide engagement within the relevant partnership group, the Play Strategy Group. The SIP Performance Group assisted the Play Strategy Group in reviewing its terms of reference and it provides the basis for co-operative work to deliver future plans.

Children and Young People’s Select Committee on 17 March 2015 considered the draft PSA. The Committee recognised the resource challenge and suggested a focus on a smaller number of achievable objectives as a way forward. The role of Town and Community Councils in understanding local play requirements and the breadth of existing community, youth and school based activity already in place were highlighted and these opportunities have been incorporated into the final action plan.

3.7 Proposed themes / key actions

One of the changes made to the toolkit is a simplification of the approach to identifying actions – based on an assessment of the 2013 PSAs and advice shared across the Regional Play Sufficiency Assessment Network, supported by Play Wales, the view is that fewer, focussed and more integrated themes / actions are more likely to achieve progress especially in times of limited resources. This approach also better reflects the Sustainable Development principles and well-being goals.

The proposed themes / key actions for the 2016/17 action plan are as follows:

Space for play - The desirability of reviewing our overall approach to fixed play provision and the opportunities for play within open spaces; including fully assessing the condition of and demand for existing provision and identifying new opportunities; the application of play space standards / developer contributions; the potential for multi-use spaces / natural play etc. through integration of a wider “green infrastructure” approach.

Supervised provision – Working with partners to develop the recently approved community play framework for open access play provision; including assessing the impact of the changes in staffed play provision in Summer 2016; seeking to develop the model and engage new partner e.g. the environmental sector and “wild play”; and exploring the potential for further inclusive community based provision including at other times of the year.

Providing for diverse needs – Adopting a more integrated approach across the authority to join up provision and ensure the needs of children with disabilities and/or families with diverse needs are better supported to access play opportunities.

Policy Integration – Supporting the Play Strategy Group, which now has new terms of reference to develop into the implementation group for the play action plan, involving a wide range of internal and external partners; including identifying better links and integration with other programmes and partnerships e.g. the Creating an Active and Healthy Monmouthshire strategy; the potential synergies with the alternative delivery model planned for leisure, cultural and youth services e.g. relating to culture and arts. The SIP Performance Group will continue to oversee links and clarity around the PSA and action plan delivery.

Engagement and Information – Recognising that the existing information base is not adequate to fully understand the demand for, and sufficiency of, play opportunities and that the level of work required to remedy this has proved beyond the current PSA process. Tasking the Play Strategy Group to identify a practical and economic way forward to remedy this; including working with Town and Community Councils; sharing existing data, building a fuller picture of existing provision; and utilising existing mechanisms to engage with children and young people. The limited additional consultation that has been possible to support the PSA review suggests that attitudes to play, both of parents and other adults

are identified by children as one of the limiting factors to their play opportunities and broader engagement with children and young people can explore this further.

This last action is central to the foregoing actions - whilst there is significant goodwill about making links to other policy areas the lack of a full understanding of local demand and opportunities is constraining making these real.

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 are no direct resource implications associated with the PSA. Having an up to date PSA and Action Plan is a pre-requisite for accessing any Play Opportunities Grant, should this be rerun by Welsh Government and positions the authority and its partners to seek external funding for specific initiatives / actions in the plan.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The statutory matters meant 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.
- 6.2 The significant equality impacts identified in the Future Generations evaluation (Appendix 2) 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 for diverse needs.
 - The challenges of better understand demand, existing provision and opportunities including for disabled children and Welsh language play.
 - The need to prioritise actions in the Play Action Plan to better understand demand, existing provision and opportunities as set out in 3.7 above.
- 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.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8. CONSULTEES:

- Children & Young People's Select (17 March 2016)
- Cabinet
- SLT

Play Strategy Group and relevant services across the authority; external consultees including children and young people (using standard Play Wales questionnaire).

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan March 2016 [Final Draft as submitted to Welsh Government]

Appendix 2: Future Generations Evaluation March 2016

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

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