

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

22 May 2007

Report of the Chief Leisure Officer

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 LOCAL PLAY STRATEGY

Summary

This report brings forward comments received as part of the consultation exercise on the draft Local Play Strategy (LPS) and, subject to Member comment at the meeting, recommends the final document be referred to the Policy Overview Committee for consideration.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Following the March 2007 meeting of the Leisure Facilities, Culture and Youth Advisory Board the Cabinet Member resolved (Decision No D070072MEM) to approve the draft LPS, that it be circulated for public consultation, and that a final copy of the Strategy be brought to this meeting for approval prior to submission to the Policy Overview Committee.

1.1.2 It was also agreed that, following Member approval of the Strategy, an application be submitted to the Big Lottery Fund in July 2007, to secure the funding allocated to this borough under the Children's Play Initiative.

1.1.3 Members are requested to bring their copy of the draft LPS with the papers to the March meeting of this Board. Spare copies of the document will be available at the meeting for new Members of the Council, and the draft Strategy is available on the Council's website.

1.2 Big Lottery Fund (BLF) – Children's Play Initiative

1.2.1 At previous meetings of the Leisure Facilities, Culture and Youth Advisory Board, Members were advised of a new Children's Play Initiative from the BLF, and an allocation of £223,180 to the Tonbridge and Malling area. In order to access the funding, each local authority is required to develop a LPS, working with local partners in a Play Partnership (PP).

1.2.2 A PP has been established for the area in liaison with the Tonbridge & Malling Children's Consortia and is chaired by the Chief Leisure Officer. The PP includes

representation from Kent County Council (KCC) Youth Service, KCC Education, Pre-School Learning Alliance, KCC Children with Disabilities Team, KCC Social Services, Primary Care Trust and local playgroups. The PP has met on a number of occasions and has been fully involved in the preparation of the LPS. The PP will also determine projects to be included in the bid to the BLF, which will be made in July 2007.

1.3 Local Play Strategy

1.3.1 The LPS shows how the Borough Council and the PP will deliver its commitment to develop local services to meet the needs of children and young people to play. The final LPS will be a colour document. The LPS has a number of purposes which can be summarised as follows:

- It will help deliver corporate priorities of the Council.
- It will help to achieve the outcomes of "Every Child Matters".
- It provides a basis for optimising play provision through partnership.
- It identifies gaps in provision and provides evidence for seeking and distributing resources.
- It will inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework and provide a firm basis for assessing the play requirements arising from planning proposals.
- It ensures a strategic approach to play provision.
- It promotes healthy lifestyles.
- It helps to divert anti-social behaviour.
- It helps to engender respect for the physical and natural environment.

1.3.2 The draft LPS, prepared with the assistance of external consultant Dr Joy Standeven, has been written in accordance with guidance provided by the BLF, and is made up of the following sections:

- 1) Introduction.
- 2) Scope and Purpose – this section provides a definition of play; confirms the purpose of the LPS and emphasises the importance of play.
- 3) Policy Context – this section considers the legal, planning, national and local contexts regarding play, and also provides a profile of the local area.

- 4) Consultation – this section provides background research and looks at consultation undertaken as part of the development of the draft LPS. A summary of key issues arising from the research undertaken is provided.
- 5) Play Provision – this section looks at when and where children and young people play, and looks at provision for both casual led play and adult led organised play. This section considers local provision of dedicated play areas and also young people’s services within the borough.
- 6) Local Play Policies – this section considers policy statements, local standards and gaps in existing provision.
- 7) Action Plan – this section of the draft LPS considers implementation, actions, criteria for identifying priorities, and ways in which the LPS will be both delivered and monitored.

1.4 Consultation

- 1.4.1 The draft LPS was circulated/made available for comment from 1 April to 1 May 2007. Copies of the draft Strategy were sent to all key stakeholders identified in the document, including Members of the PP and all parish/town councils. A copy of the draft Strategy was made available to view on the Council’s website.
- 1.4.2 At the same time as stakeholders and parish/town councils were requested to comment on the draft Strategy, they were also requested to bring forward proposed projects for inclusion within the bid to the BLF. A special meeting of the PP will be arranged to consider the applications received, which will be attended by the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts.
- 1.4.3 All comments returned have been carefully considered and a number of amendments to the draft LPS are proposed. A summary of the comments received and proposed amendments can be found at **[Annex 1]**. In overview, the consultation highlighted no significant issues with the Strategy, reflecting the level of consultation undertaken in the preparation of the draft. A number of Parish Councils have sought a short extension of time to make comments, and this has been granted.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 The LPS is one of the plans and strategies which together comprise the Development Plan and, as a result, must be considered and, if appropriate, adopted in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of the Council’s Constitution. The Executive’s initial proposals shall be referred to the Policy Overview Committee for further advice and consideration. The Policy Overview Committee shall canvass the views of local stakeholders if it considers it appropriate in accordance with the matter under consideration, and having particular regard not to duplicate any consultation previously carried out by the Executive. The Policy Overview Committee shall

have six weeks to respond to the initial proposals of the Executive unless the Executive considers that there are special factors that make this timescale inappropriate. Having considered the report of the Policy Overview Committee, the Executive, if it considers it appropriate, may amend its proposals before submitting them to the Council meeting for consideration. It will also report to Council on how it has taken into account any recommendations from the Policy Overview Committee.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The Children's Play Initiative represents an opportunity to secure a significant sum of external funding to develop play opportunities within the Borough. Due to this Council's geographical location and socio-economic make up it has been extremely difficult to attract Lottery funding over recent years, and it is encouraging that on this occasion the Borough will be able to benefit. It is also helpful that the Borough Council is able to take a lead role in the submission of the bid for funding.
- 1.6.2 Taking into account the level of work involved in the preparation of the LPS, an external consultant was appointed to assist the Council, with a one-off cost to the Council of £5,000. Due to the need to integrate the LPS with the Open Space Strategy, the cost of this work was provided for in the LDF budget for 2006/07, which in turn was funded in part by the Planning Delivery Grant.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 It is essential that the LPS be developed and implemented in line with the formal guidance, otherwise there is a risk that the funding available from the Children's Play Initiative will not be received.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that, subject to Member comment at the meeting, the Cabinet Member be recommended to confirm the proposed amendments highlighted at **[Annex 1]** and to refer the amended Local Play Strategy to the Policy Overview Committee for consideration.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

Robert Styles
Chief Leisure Officer