

# ***Information/Discussion Paper***

## **Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny - 17th October 2005**

### **Play and Free Time Strategy**

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

#### **1. Why has this come to scrutiny?**

- 1.1. To formally consult Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft partnership action plan for the Play and Free Time Activities Strategy prior to submission to Cabinet for endorsement
- 1.2. To receive a presentation regarding the content of the draft strategy
- 1.3. To receive a verbal update on key stakeholders' consultation outcomes
- 1.4. To consider Overview and Scrutiny's further involvement in the implementation and delivery of the strategy

#### **2. Summary of the Issue**

- 2.1. Play is an essential element of an individual's childhood and development, crucial to the health and wellbeing of children, young people and subsequently the wider community
- 2.2. To effectively deliver the aspirations of the Gloucestershire Play Policy, the council's corporate priorities and Every Child Matters agenda, there needs to be a local Play and Free Time Strategy that addresses the complex social needs of children and young people. To be most effective this strategy needs to be created and delivered in partnership with key stakeholders in the local area.

#### **3. Summary of evidence/information**

##### **Strategic Links**

- 3.1. In February 2005 the Gloucestershire Play Policy was launched, the policy was developed by Ludemos Associates following a number of county wide consultation events and direction by a cross agency steering group. The policy aims to ensure

that children and young peoples' play opportunities form an integral part of an organisation's planning and establish a co-ordinated approach to the issues involved. Cheltenham Borough Council's Cabinet endorsed the policy in March including the commitment to producing a local play and free time strategy.

3.2. The county play policy was being developed at the same time as the Government released the green paper Every Child Matters. The 2004 Children Act "Every Child Matters" establishes a duty on Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies in order to improve children's wellbeing, defined by reference to the five outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve through learning
- Make a positive contribution to society
- Achieve economic well-being

3.3. Play and free time activities have been seen as a vital part of this as play is one of the fundamental ways in which children develop socially, physically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally. Exploring and learning through play helps prepare children for adult life as well as giving them the chance to relax and have fun.

#### **Development of local strategy**

3.4. Following the endorsement of the Gloucestershire Play Policy by cabinet, the Council's Play Development Unit launched the play policy in Cheltenham through the organisation of a play afternoon in April of this year. Delegates were invited from a wide variety of stakeholder organisations including those who work in areas such as health, crime and disorder, education, regeneration and childcare.

3.5. This event was used to inform stakeholders of the Gloucestershire Play policy and also begin consultation for the development of the local strategy. Children from the council's holiday playschemes and young people from the M.A.D. Youth Council had previously created an interactive map of places they enjoyed spending their free time or playing. Delegates were asked to add to the map by showing where in Cheltenham they provided services for children and young people and completing a brief questionnaire. This information was then later used to inform the play and free time strategy of existing provision and gaps. Representatives for the Cheltenham Play Steering group were also identified at this event.

3.6. The attached draft Action Plan has been developed through the Cheltenham Play Steering group, which includes representatives of Gloucestershire Neighbourhood projects, Sure Start, the Youth Service, the three regeneration areas, M.A.D Youth Council, Cheltenham Borough Homes, the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham Community Projects, CBC Community Rangers, Sports Development Community Services and Policy Division. This group examined the current local and national agendas that affect play and created a framework for the Strategy. This was then taken by the Play Development Unit and formed the basis for the Play and Free Time Strategy. The final action plan was approved by the steering group before it went to

wider consultation.

- 3.7. The draft action plan, as attached, has been distributed to all key stakeholders including attendees of the play afternoon, regeneration partnerships, voluntary and statutory agencies, third tier managers and heads of service CBC and play providers for comments and feedback.

**4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider eg potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.**

4.1. Presentation to be given at committee meeting

4.2. Consideration of Overview and Scrutiny's involvement in delivery of the strategy.

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<b>Background Papers</b>	Taking Play Seriously: A Play Policy for Gloucestershire  Cabinet Report: 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2005: Taking Play Seriously – a play policy for Gloucestershire  Every Child Matters: DfES:2005
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<b>Scrutiny Function</b>	Social and Community