

**Cheltenham Borough Council**

**Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**10th June 2009**

**Play Builder Capital Funding Allocation**

**Report of the Healthy Communities Partnership Manager**

**1. Executive Summary and recommendation**

**1.1 The issue**

**1.1.1** In December 2008 Gloucestershire County Council was awarded £1.1million to fund improvements to a minimum of 22 creative and challenging play spaces between April 2009 and March 2011, with a particularly focus on areas of deprivation. Gloucestershire County Council has worked with district councils through the Gloucestershire Play Partnership to develop a two year approach to the allocation of funding and the selection of local sites for redevelopment.

**1.1.2** The aim of this report is to provide an update to members of the progress made in the countywide allocation of funding, and in identifying priority sites in Cheltenham.

**1.2 I therefore recommend that:**

**1.2.1** Committee note the progress made in delivering the Play Builder project across Gloucestershire, and endorse the selection of sites in Cheltenham.

**1.3 Summary of implications**

**1.3.1** Financial                      The Council will incur additional interest costs on its working capital as a result of any deferred contributions from Gloucestershire County Council; however the amounts involved are not significant.

**Contact officer: Paul Jones**  
**E-mail: paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk**  
**Tel no: 01242 775154**

**1.3.2** Legal

**1.3.3** Human Resources

**1.4 Implications on corporate and community plan priorities**

Supporting play activities for children and young people, reducing health inequalities and promoting healthy communities have all been identified as long term ambitions within the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Play Builder programme will make a positive contribution to each of these priorities.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1** In December 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families launched the first National Play Strategy for England, backed by a £235million of capital investment to redevelop high quality, open access play spaces.
- 2.2** Gloucestershire County Council was subsequently awarded £1.1m of capital funding through the Play Builder programme in order to fund improvements to a minimum of 22 local play spaces between April 2009 and March 2011, with a particular focus on areas of deprivation. National guidance states that the play spaces must offer opportunities for natural, creative and challenging opportunities that are attractive to children aged 8-13

## **3. Process Undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council**

- 3.1** Gloucestershire is a diverse county with significant differences between the densely populated urban districts of Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the remaining largely rural districts. This diversity has caused a number of challenges and tensions, in respect of allocating funding at a county level, as deprivation is viewed differently by the urban authorities and the more rurally isolated authorities.
- 3.2** Given the tight timescales to submit the portfolio bid, and in an attempt to appease the 6 district, Gloucestershire County Council has allocated equal funding for 2 sites in each of the 6 districts in Year One, with the remaining Year Two funding to be allocated against a criteria agreed by the GCC Cabinet. This criteria is to be based upon;
- Levels of need and deprivation
  - Number of children and young people who will be able to access the facility
  - Ensuring access for children and young people with disabilities
  - Creating opportunities to improve healthy living
  - Projects which have synergy and will maximise the impact of other programmes
  - Improved access to play in rural areas
- 3.3** An initial allocation of £84k is being made to Cheltenham Borough Council for Year One, to fund improvements to two sites. It is envisaged that the funding allocation for Year Two will be determined in June 2009. At that stage we will then know the additional level of funding to be awarded to Cheltenham, and the total number of sites that this funding is required to redevelop.

## **4. Process undertaken in Cheltenham**

- 4.1** An internal officer group consisting of representatives of the Wellbeing & Culture, Green Environment, and Policy and Partnerships divisions, identified a number of

possible sites which could meet the national criteria, and undertook a scoring process to develop a ranked list of priority sites. The locally developed criteria used to assess individual sites in Cheltenham was;

- Overview of local context and social issues (including commentary from the Children & Young Peoples Partnership)
- Current level of play provision in the area for children and young people aged 8-11
- Scope to enhance natural, creative, challenging play opportunities
- Scope for consultation with children, young people, families and local communities
- Feasibility and practically to deliver enhancements in accordance with national guidance

**4.2** As a result of the scoring process, the top two priority sites for investment and redevelopment were identified as Agg Gardner in St Pauls, and Springfield Park in Springbank. Initial plans for these two sites are now being developed. A further 5 sites were considered to have strong justification for receiving funding, however, the total number of funded sites will not be known until Gloucestershire County Council determines the allocation of funding for Year Two later in June. The completed scoring grid identifying the prioritised sites is attached (Appendix A).

## **5. Consultation**

**5.1** It is of critical importance to involve local children, young people and families in the design of the selected Play Spaces, and therefore a timetable of consultation exercises has been developed linked to fun days and Play Ranger activities.

**5.2** The two sites identified for Year One, are both already sites that accommodate significant levels of outreach activities, including Play Ranger activities throughout the year, supported by external funding received from the Big Lottery Fund. A series of activity sessions during May Half Term school holidays, and subsequent after school sessions during the summer term, will be used to enable draft designs to be considered and developed in close consultation with local children, young people and local partners.

---

### **Background Papers**

**Contact Officer** Craig Mortiboys, Healthy Communities Partnership Manager, 01242 775121, craig.mortiboys@cheltenham.gov.uk

**Accountability** Cllr Andrew McKinlay

**Scrutiny Function** Social & Community Overview & Scrutiny