

NOTE FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY SERVICES) COMMITTEE MEETING ON 24 JULY 2007

PLAY POLICY FOR BABERGH

1. In spring 2006 the Government announced a new strand of lottery funding through the Big Lottery for children's play. Each borough and district council area in the country was allocated a sum of money (in Babergh's case £200,000) for the development of play. This money is for the District Council's area and not for the District Council itself.
2. To access this money local authorities have to prepare a play strategy and submit it with an application to the Big Lottery Fund for the money. The play strategy is intended to be much wider than merely a document to secure lottery funding. It is meant to represent the specific need of each local authority area. It should influence the local authority as a whole and the need for children's play.
3. The Children Act 2004 refers to education, training and recreation. Children's play is at the top of the agenda for integrated children's services.
4. Babergh has been developing a play strategy and also working with District and Borough colleagues and the County Council to develop an overarching countywide strategy. This has entailed considerable work against the tight deadline set for Big Lottery applications. There are four rounds of applications with the last one being 11 September 2007. The vast majority of lottery bids are being submitted in this final round including all Suffolk authorities.
5. In formulating the play strategy considerable consultation has had to be undertaken with young people and this was not completed until the beginning of July. Another pre-requisite of a successful lottery bid is the creation of a play partnership for the District which will drive the strategy forward and be heavily involved in its delivery.
6. The emerging themes for the Babergh play strategy and its accompanying action plan were not determined by the Babergh play partnership until its second meeting on Monday 16 July. However, there is broad support within the Babergh play partnership from the consultations undertaken that the Council's bid to Big Lottery should comprise the following three projects:-

- (a) A play worker – this would entail a dedicated officer working right across the District, particularly in rural areas offering play opportunities for young people. The Babergh play partnership suggested that Babergh’s own sports and arts development officers and the Be Active project could link into some of this work which is thought to be an excellent idea.
 - (b) The replacement of the existing play facility in Hawkins Road, Sudbury with new play equipment in partnership with local people.
 - (c) The provision of informal play areas, (possibly comprising seating and logs and any other appropriate small items) in three rural parishes where no play provision exists.
7. Given the extraordinary tight timetables the Chairman of the Committee agreed that the draft strategy could be submitted direct to the Strategy Committee on 16 August, which is the only opportunity for the document to be endorsed (a pre-requisite of the lottery application) prior to submission by 11 September 2007. However, he felt it important for members of this Committee to have the opportunity to hear the progress made to date and consider endorsing the above proposals. The proposals have had member involvement through the Children and Young People’s Member Champion, Rex Thake.
8. The Committee will be asked to consider endorsing the emerging themes, which will be reported to the meeting, and the proposals for the allocation of the lottery funding (paragraph 6). Any views of the Committee will be reflected in the report going to Strategy Committee on 16 August 2007.

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