

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY

5 JUNE 2007

EXECUTIVE

19 JUNE 2007

EXETER FREE PLAY CITY A PLAY STRATEGY FOR EXETER 2007 -10

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To recommend the Play Strategy for Exeter be adopted by the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Following the Dobson Report in 2003 a national funding scheme for play was set up through the Big Lottery Fund. The mechanism was via a population and needs based allocation to each local authority, and the allocation for Exeter was £231,000.

2.2 Access to this funding is based on three criteria;

- 1) There must be an adopted Play Strategy for the area
- 2) The existence of a structure in each area to ensure that the voice of play can be heard at all levels
- 3) A portfolio of innovative play projects as the object of the funding

2.3 In order to receive the allocation, each council has to provide evidence of meeting the criteria via a formal bid to the Big Lottery Fund. The issue was brought to this Committee last June, when a draft strategy and portfolio were presented. It was expected at that time that the formal bid would be presented in the autumn. However it transpired that many of the first tranche of bids, including that for Teignbridge Council, were turned down. Many of these refusals were on the basis of issues not included in the published guidance, notably the inclusion of play development activities (as opposed to face-to-face play services) and the need for planning permission to be obtained at a very early and risky stage. As a result the Exeter portfolio was reviewed and altered, and the submission date put back to March this year.

2.4 The strategy itself went out for consultation, following which a number of alterations were made, largely in presentation. It is available on the Council's website.

3. THE PLAY STRATEGY FOR EXETER

3.1 Two main changes were made to the Play Strategy after its presentation to Members in 2006. One was to restructure it to include the new portfolio of schemes which were to form the object of the formal bid to the Big Lottery Fund, and the other, following consultation, was to make it a more user-friendly document. Other than changes needed to reflect the portfolio, the strategy itself, in terms of its approach and outcomes, remains the same.

- 3.2 The Play Strategy is aimed at increasing and enhancing play opportunities for children and young people aged 0-19years within the six priority outcomes, which themselves reflect the Government's Every Child Matters agenda:
- Being healthy
 - Staying safe
 - Enjoying and achieving – and developing skills for adulthood
 - Inclusive – right to choose and equally welcomed
 - Making a positive contribution and not engaging in anti social behaviour
 - Economic wellbeing – not being prevented by economic disadvantage
- 3.3 The Play Strategy is a working document which includes an action plan and audit of City Council play facilities. All of these are available on the website. The Strategy recognises that the network of formal structured playgrounds is virtually complete in Exeter, and that there is a need to develop creative, environmental and more adventurous forms of play, in which young people learn how to assess and deal with risk, to deal with others, and to develop their own personalities and skills. The contents of the portfolio flow, as they must, from this ethos.
- 3.4 Consultation has been ongoing throughout the preparation of the Play Strategy including work with young people, local play practitioners and other statutory groups and organisations.

4. PLAY PARTNERSHIP & PLAY ASSOCIATION

- 4.1 A structure has been set up so that all young people and practitioners can have a voice for play. The Exeter Play Association has been reformed and now meets quarterly as an informative and networking group at various venues around the city. The Association has links to the Local Planning and Implementation Group of the Children's Trust.

5. PORTFOLIO OF SCHEMES

- 5.1 After lengthy consultation through the Exeter Play Association, a final portfolio of projects was submitted to the Big Lottery Fund in March 2007. A decision is expected by July 2007. Originally the portfolio contained provision for a worker to help local playgroups build capacity and for particular equipment. However evidence from earlier bids by other councils has demonstrated that the former would be rejected, and the latter would require planning permission in advance. The replacement portfolio, which covers a three-year period, has three strands:

Playing in the Environment - Play Rangers Project

One full time and two part time Play Rangers working throughout the year in the city on regular programmes of activity, plus holiday projects aiming to build trust and relationships with young people which hopefully will transfer from the attraction of freely chosen play to form a strong foundation for child and community development. This follows the successful pilot in Belmont Park in the summer of 2006. The Rangers will operate through the extended schools setup, in community centres, local parks and valley parks as well as assisting with the popular Playdays and SPLASH holiday scheme

£160,055 over the three years

Playing with the imagination - Community Artist project

A project using an artist to carry out pieces of work with three distinct age groups. This work would also tie into a number of city festivals eg Respect, Autumn etc, would act as a means for young people to access information and also encourage them to communicate their new skills and information to their peers.

£51,000 over the three years.

Playing for Real - Environmental Play Project

This would be working within a specific area of the Riverside Valley Park with children from the Countess Wear area. The project would be used as a pilot for a possible future Countryside Heritage Project to encourage people to go further into the Valley Parks including the development of trails, adventure 'equipment' etc

The work would cover 'Playful Consultations' run by trained practitioners, our artist and possibly including the Play Rangers where particular areas of the portfolio, and aims of The Play Association, are covered.

£20,000

6. RECOMMENDED

- 1) that the Play Strategy for Exeter be supported by Scrutiny Committee Community and adopted by Executive.

HEAD OF LEISURE AND MUSEUMS

S:LP/Committee/607SCC3
3.5.07

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:

Every Child Matters
Devon Children's Plan