

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 11th April 2011

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Cultural and Leisure – Councillor Chaudhry
Education and Children – Councillor Pantelic
Environment and Open Spaces – Councillor Parmar

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

PLAY AREA DEVELOPMENT

1 **Purpose of Report**

To inform Members of the Cabinet of progress on the development and improvement of Slough's play areas and achievements in play development work.

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve that the achievements over the last two years in the provision of play and in the improvements made to the Council's play areas across the borough be noted.

3 **Community Strategy Priorities**

Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion

The provision of new play opportunities for all children and young people in Slough will enable them to enjoy their younger years and to play in harmony.

Adding years to Life and Life to years

Children and young people who get the opportunity to be really active in their formative years will live longer.

Being Safe, Feeling Safe

All the new play areas enable children and young people to play in a safe environment whilst being able to explore and develop important skills vital to successful child development. All installations meet British Standards.

A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play

All the new play areas fully endorse the principles of a green environment with the majority of the facilities being laid to turf or surfacing which promotes grass growth. Areas surrounding new play developments have been fully landscaped or returned to grass.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

Both the play and parks and open spaces strategies are currently being re-written and they will identify ongoing revenue and capital investment required to maintain the play area stock in the borough. Both strategies will be taken to Cabinet in July for approval.

(b) Risk Management

All previously identified risks have been successfully managed throughout the programme, including all possible delays, which have resulted in our funder's terms and conditions and Cabinet's recommendations all being achieved to given timescales.

Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights or other legal implications in regard of this report

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

The current programme of play development and refurbishment is supported by a comprehensive equalities impact assessment. This highlighted a need to ensure all play areas were accessible for children and young people with disabilities. The new strategy will revise this EIA.

(d) Workforce

Funding for the co-ordination of play development has been secured through the recent re-structuring of the Culture & Sport team.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 Play Area Improvement Programme

There are 86 designated play area sites in the borough. Over the past two years, up to May 2011, the Council will have successfully developed and upgraded 36 of its play areas. This equates to 42%. 28 of these are complete replacements of older outdated play equipment with new creative designs offering children and young people a range of new play experiences such as safe area water features, trampolines, climbing and 'aerial runways'.

Slough has secured over £1,400,000 in capital funding, through the BIG Lottery and the Department for Education's 'Playbuilder Programme', since 2008 to contribute to these improvements. Achievements to date have been:

- 2 flag ship play areas in Salt Hill Park and Upton Court Park
- 22 re-developed play areas, distributed in all wards, delivered through the Playbuilder Programme
- 4 re-developed play areas using Section 106, HRA and partnership funding in excess of £100,000
- 8 upgraded play areas, 2 of these using volunteers from the local community to undertake basic refurbishment works and general clean-ups
- Over 30 formal consultation exercises undertaken in the community on new local play provision proposals and design.
- A comprehensive audit documenting all play provision in the town in place

- Over 3,500 children attending organised play ranger sessions
- Over 1,000 children attending National Play Day in Salt Hill Park with parents and carers

5.2 Play Development Programme

In May 2009 the play development team was established using revenue grant funding from the BIG Lottery and the Department for Education. The Play Co-ordinator and Play Ranger have been responsible for the delivery and project management of the capital programme alongside a community play programme, run at venues across the borough.

Since July 2009 over 3,500 children have used the play ranger service in indoor and outdoor venues including parks, libraries and schools. The play ranger service also delivered the very successful National Playday on the 4th August 2010 in Salt Hill Park, attracting over 1,000 children with their parents/carers.

5.3 Satisfaction

The Tellus national survey gathers the satisfaction levels and views of children and young people in Years 6, 8 and 10, on their life, their school and their local area. This includes satisfaction on play areas and parks. Tellus4 results were published in February 2010 and there was substantial progress on the NI 199 indicator, 'children's and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas' from the previous year, coinciding with the capital development programme. Slough results:

- Improved by 12.6% from 43.8% (Tellus3) to 56.4% (Tellus4).
- Improved at a faster rate than our comparators.
- The England average increased by 7.7% and the South East average by 7.2%.
- Slough's Tellus4 figure of 56.4% was 2.3% above the England average of 54.1%.

General feedback indicates that there is far greater use of the new play areas by children and young people. Parents and carers have also indicated that both Upton and Salt Hill Park have become places of destination for them, with them willing to travel to these new developments as they offer a better quality play experience.

5.4 Future Strategy

To ensure that we maintain the upgraded play areas and continue to improve provision across the borough the benefits of developing a new play strategy is recognised.

It is proposed that a new play strategy for the town is presented to Cabinet in July 2011, following consultation, and sets out the Council's strategic direction for future play provision. It will be a corporate strategy and will ensure that play provision is delivered in a way which integrates with other related functions of the Council; notably town planning, housing, parks and open spaces, sport and recreation provision and sports and arts development.

6 Comments of Other Committees

During the past two years a number of reports have been received by the Education and Children's Scrutiny Panel. Officer's recommendations have always received support.

7 **Conclusion**

Much work has been undertaken to improve the town's play provision using both external and Council funding. Over the last two years and up to May 2011, over thirty play areas, 42%, across all wards, will have received investment to improve the quality of play provision.

A new strategy is required in order to build upon this work and ensure that recent improvements and those agreed in the future are sustainable; particularly in the face of fiscal challenges facing the public sector, and provide play provision of quality to children and young people within a maximum ten minute walk of their home.

8 **Appendices Attached**

Appendix 1 - Play area improvement by ward.