

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/026/2007-8.

Date of meeting: 3 September 2007.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Leisure and Young People.

Subject: Epping Forest District Play Strategy 2007 – 2017.

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Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Epping Forest District Play Strategy 2007 – 2017 be ratified; and**
- (2) That, as a result of the Audit and Consultation process undertaken as part of the Strategy Development, the 3 areas of Limes Farm, Nazeing and Lambourne, be prioritized for investment on the basis of the success of the Funding Application.**

Background Information:

1. Leisure Services has developed a 10-year District Play Strategy, which sets out requirements for improvement to play provision throughout the District, in line with identified need in community localities.

2. This work has been undertaken in line with a Government initiative following recommendations identified in the Play Review of 2003, which will see an investment of £155 million through the Big Lottery Fund towards the improvement of play provision across England.

3. A part of this initiative the Council has been allocated a total of £243,871 to improve and develop new facilities for play in the area, which is accessed through an application process that requires several key undertakings:

- (a) Establishment of a District Play Partnership involving play service providers from statutory, voluntary and charitable agencies;**
- (b) Development of a Play Strategy document;**
- (c) Establishment of a Play Policy for the District; and**
- (d) Identification of a portfolio of priority play projects for the area.**

4. The Strategy has to cover a period of 3 years from receipt of funding and must also provide evidence of planned play development outside of this. All projects included as part of the portfolio are required to be a minimum of £50,000 each and the guidance given on 'types' of project, range from play equipment and youth facilities to outdoor adventure play.

District Play Partnership:

5. An Epping Forest District Play Partnership (EFPP) was set up in December 2006, which consists of representatives from a wide range of organisations concerned with the well being of children and young people (see Appendix 1).

6. The play partnership has met on a regular basis over the last six months to develop ideas and collate information needed for the production of the Epping Forest Strategy.

Play Strategy:

7. Information required for development of the Play Strategy has included: a thorough and detailed audit of play spaces and facilities; undertaking of a district-wide consultation exercise with local children, young people and parents/carers of all abilities and a high level of collaborative working internally within the Council and with a respective partner agencies.

8. The District play audit considered a wide range of local issues, including:

- (a) Quantity, quality, safety and accessibility of existing play facilities;
- (b) Quantity, location and accessibility of 'open play spaces';
- (c) Other opportunities and appropriate spaces to play;
- (d) Assessment of built facilities in rural localities (Village/Church Halls);
- (e) Appropriateness of 'facilities' according to demographic profile;
- (f) Future play needs in areas of planned development;
- (g) Locally provided and supervised play provision; and
- (h) Opportunities for the establishment of new places to play.

9. This information has been mapped on the Council's Planning GIS system and will be an excellent resource for Leisure and Planning Services and the Council as a whole.

10. A wide range of consultation was undertaken across the District over a period of 9 months, utilising a variety of methods as detailed as attached in Appendix 2.

11. The main and generic issues arising from the audit identified that there is a lack of facilities in the district that meet the nationally recognised standards for play. Whilst some Parishes have reasonable to good facilities, but others have extremely poor and inadequate facilities and some play facilities were unsafe for use. A general lack of facilities for young people was highlighted both through the audit and consultation.

12. The issues facing Epping Forest District reflect many of the recommendations in the Government's play review and also reflect national trends. Key issues highlighted through the consultation identified that many children feel intimidated by older youths and that children desired provision of stimulating and innovative play equipment in a clean, well-kept and safe environment. Many parents and carers indicated that they feared for their children's safety when they were out playing unsupervised.

Play Policy:

13. The District Play Policy was agreed through the Play Partnership and sets out a standard to which all partner agencies and practitioners have agreed to sign up to. The agreed aim is to deliver:

“high quality, diverse, inclusive and sustainable play opportunities for all children and young people living in the Epping Forest District within an environment which is stimulating, accessible and safe.”

14. The Play Partnership will strive to achieve these aims through the adoption and implementation of the following strategic themes:

- (a) ***To raise awareness of the value and importance of play;***
- (b) ***To provide high quality, safe, challenging and sustainable play facilities and opportunities; and***
- (c) ***To ensure equitable and accessible play opportunities are available to all children and young people across the District.***

Summary:

15. The Strategy is required to cover a period of 3 years from receipt of funding and must also provide evidence of planned play development outside of this. All projects included as part of the portfolio are required to be a minimum of £50,000 each and the guidance given on 'types' of project, range from play equipment and youth facilities to adventure play. All facilities and physical resources that are provided through the Big Lottery funding, are required to be free of charge to participants and the Play Partnership must demonstrate a commitment to extending availability of free opportunities to play

16. Whilst the District has invested in outdoor fixed play equipment for children and young people (albeit many facilities have been transferred to Town and Parish Councils) and in particular £300,000 over the last 3 years as part of the Youth Initiatives Fund, the findings of the strategy highlighted that there are still three distinct areas of priority need in the District and these have been put forward as the proposed Portfolio for the District. These are as follows;

- (i) Limes Farm – provision of a new playground for infants and juniors and installation of a completely new youth 'play' facility;
- (ii) Nazeing - provision of two new playgrounds in the main areas of population, plus establishment of one multi activity youth facility and an improved 'kick about' area; and
- (iii) Lambourne – provision of new and refurbished playground at Pancroft Ring and establishment of a multi-activity youth area.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

17. The Council has already invested significant funding to improve play and youth provision throughout the area via the Youth Initiatives Fund however, more funding and resources are clearly needed. The Epping Forest Play Strategy, therefore, identifies a coordinated and collaborative approach to future investment in play provision and how this will be delivered, in an equitable way that will benefit all children and young people across the District.

Other Options for Action:

18. If Cabinet declined to support the Play Strategy opportunities, the District could be denied a significant investment in improved play provision.

Consultation Undertaken:

19. See Appendix 2.

Resource Implications:

Budget Provision: £243,871 External Funding Opportunity.

Personnel: Officer time to support development of the Play Strategy in the District.

Land: Limes Farm & Pancroft sites are owned by EFDC Housing. Nazeing - Hoe Lane site is

owned by Nazeing Parish Council and Elizabeth Close site is entrusted to Nazeing Parish Council under a 99-year agreement. If any new facilities require planning consent the normal procedures would apply.

Council Plan 2006-10/BVPP Reference: None.

Relevant Statutory Powers: None.

Background Papers: None.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A.

Key Decision Reference (if required): Will advise when key decisions have ref nos.

Appendix 1 – Epping Forest District Play Partnership

Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder	Epping Forest District Council
Member representative from LSP	Epping Forest District Council
Children's Services Locality Manager	Essex County Council
Extended Schools Co-ordinator (South)	Essex County Council
Extended Schools Co-ordinator (Rural)	Essex County Council
Social Care Officer	Essex County Council
Locality Youth Service Manager	Essex County Council
Local Strategic Partnership Manager	Epping Forest LSP
Development Officer	4Children
Facilities Development Officer	Corporation of London Epping Forest
Head of Centre - Epping Forest Field Centre	Field Studies Council
Assistant Director	Voluntary Action EF
Club Development Officer	Essex Assoc. of Boys` Clubs
Early Years and Childcare Officer	Essex County Council
Development Officer	Pre-school Learning Alliance
Community & Cultural Services Manager	Leisure Services (EFDC)
Community Development Team	Leisure Services (EFDC)
Young Person's Officer	Leisure Services (EFDC)
Grounds Maintenance Manager	Leisure Services (EFDC)
Principle Planning Officer	Planning (Conservation & Environment) (EFDC)
Planning Assistant	Planning Services (EFDC)
Housing Officers	Housing Services (EFDC)

Appendix 2 – Consultation Exercises undertaken throughout the Epping Forest District.

- Children's Play Survey involving 3-11 year olds
(Via pictorial submissions)
- Play 4 Play Consultation involving 5-11 year olds from 4 primary schools in the District.
(Via Children's Fund Essex commissioned consultation exercise)
- Children's Play Survey involving 5-11 year olds
(Via a consultation questionnaire.)
- Youth-Plus consultation involving young people with disabilities
(Via a face-to-face consultation exercise.)
- Youth Surveys involving 11-16 year olds
(Via detached youth work.)
- Loughton Youth Project outreach consultation
(Via detached youth work.)
- Limes Farm Youth Consultation Project
(Via detached youth work and also the commissioning of a video produced by young people living on the Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell.)
- Parents and Carers Survey
(Via a consultation questionnaire.)
- Consultation with the Epping Forest Play Partnership
(Via regular Partnership meetings and partner outreach consultation)