

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE PLAY STRATEGY
(Report by Head of Environmental & Community Health Services)**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to allow Members to consider both a Play Strategy for Huntingdonshire and the related spending plan prior to submission of a bid to the Big Lottery for funding.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 26 April 2007 Cabinet members received a report that outlined the reasons behind the development of a Huntingdonshire Play Strategy and agreed that a Big Lottery bid should be prepared. Members requested a further report be presented to allow members to consider both the Play Strategy and spending plan for the monies allocated by the national Lottery for play development in Huntingdonshire, should the bid be successful.

- 2.2 The Big Lottery Fund announced details of its new £155 Million Children's play initiative in March 2006. The aim of the fund is to create, improve and develop children and young peoples local play spaces.

- 2.2 The Play Strategy, Annex 'A' attached, outlines the District Council's plan for the development of both play facilities and activities, over the next five years. The document sets out both the Council's vision for and definition of play. It acknowledges that play is an entitlement for children and young people who live in Huntingdonshire. The text complements the District Council's developing Culture Strategy [that includes plans for open spaces, arts and culture, leisure development and recreation services]. It also gives regard to: regional and national strategies; the Cambridgeshire Play Strategy; 'Every Child Matters' and the 2004 Health White Paper. Specifically it reflects current guidance from 'Play England' and the Big Lottery Fund in order to maximise the opportunity to attract external funding to support the delivery of the strategy. That guidance is still developing and it may be necessary to update the strategy before it is finally submitted as part of the grant application.

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Play Strategy document identifies those areas within Huntingdonshire where additional investment and support for play facilities are required. It also provides a framework for future investment to ensure play initiatives are developed in line with the growth in the District and other plans and strategies.

- 3.3 The strategy acknowledges that the provision of play facilities and play activities is not something the Council can do alone. Therefore it is proposed to establish a play partnership which will include representation from both the statutory and voluntary/community sectors. The aim of the partnership will be to ensure that play developments planned by all agencies are co-ordinated to ensure optimum provision and value from investment.
- 3.4 Presently there is no single lead officer within Huntingdonshire District Council for 'play'. Also there is no capacity within the organisation to take on additional work to deliver the strategy. The associated action plan therefore includes a proposal to establish a post of Play Co-ordinator. Should the bid or other attempts to attract funding be unsuccessful it may prove impossible to establish this post. In the absence of necessary external funding it is intended the strategy should provide a vision and strategic approach will then serve as a guide to the development of play that can still be delivered as part of the Council's or our partners normal business, e.g. allocation of capital, via s.106 funding, or through grant aid.
- 3.5 The bid must be submitted to the National Lottery Board by the end of August 2007 and must include the Play Strategy and action plan setting out how the allocated lottery funds are proposed to be spent.

4. RECOMMENDATION'S

- 4.1 Members are requested to approve the Play Strategy for Huntingdonshire and associated action plan (Appendices A & B attached) and to authorise the Director of Operational Services to update the strategy and action plan prior to submission of the application for funding to the Big Lottery Fund.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cabinet Report, 26 April 2007: Play Strategy Report
Consultation documents set out in Appendix 1 of strategy document.

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