

Playspace Sub-Committee – 20 November 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Playspace Sub-Committee** held on **20 November 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr T Livings
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr P F A Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts	–	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
D Timson	–	Property Maintenance and Highways Manager
J Bostock	–	Principal Committee Administrator

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor D G Stansby was appointed Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Sub-Committee noted its terms of reference.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T Livings declared a personal interest by virtue of having a grandchild that made use of play equipment and being a Rayleigh Town Councillor.

Councillor Mrs J R Lumley declared a personal interest by virtue of being a Rayleigh Town Councillor.

Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest by virtue of living in the vicinity of a playspace and being a Rochford Parish Councillor.

4 POLICY REVIEW OF PUBLIC PLAYSPACES

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which sought to establish the methodology for Members to carry out the review of public playspaces. The Corporate Director tabled a letter received from Hawkwell Parish Council setting out that Council's views on playspace provision and cost sharing.

In presenting his report, the Corporate Director detailed the rationale behind formulation of the scoping document. Account needed to be taken of potential values which could be associated with sites and the possibility that there may

be alternative uses. Reference was made to the difficulties of identifying average usage levels given that usage was likely to vary across the year. Consultation with the Parish Councils was important.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:

- In terms of site visits, locations were easily accessible on foot and tended to be close to the highway. The time of year should not be a significant factor, although more could perhaps be seen in winter as leaves would have fallen. Appropriate information, such as site plans/acreage, could be provided in advance of any visits. Visits could inform the decision making process. For example, it may be that some sites are seen as strategically placed.
- The Authority had a separate revenue budget for routine playspace maintenance. Grove Road, Rayleigh was the only location where significant vandalism had been experienced. Equipment replacement was held in abeyance pending the end of any vandalism problems. One or two individuals could cause relatively significant damage. The use of fencing to cut down escape routes can help resolve problems.
- Working in partnership with Parish/Town Councils could assist the development of an understanding of what playspace sites could deliver to the community.

During debate, it was recognised that site visits were an important aspect of the decision-making process. It was concluded that it would be preferable for visits to be undertaken during the January/February period. The Sub-Committee agreed a motion, moved by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor Mrs M S Vince, in this regard.

Members endorsed the view of the Corporate Director that the Sub-Committee should undertake consultation with representatives of each Town/Parish Council. Meetings could be at the Civic Suite with, perhaps, individual sessions for Councils that had significant playspace provision within their area and combined sessions for those with fewer facilities. It was recognised that the Sub-Committee was unlikely to be able to reach final conclusions until May 2004.

In discussing budgetary aspects the Sub-Committee agreed a motion, moved by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor T Livings, relating to 2003/04 and 2004/05. With regard to site visits, it was agreed that it would be of value if officers could provide relevant information in advance, including:-

- The number of inhabitants and playspaces within each Parish.
- An estimate of capital and revenue expenditure by the District on playspaces over the past two years.
- If possible, an indication of the type of costs currently faced by Parish Councils in running playspaces.

The value of working in partnership with the Town/Parish Councils was endorsed.

Resolved

- (1) That arrangements be made for Members of the Sub-Committee to visit the various playspace sites within the District during January/February 2004, appropriate statistical information to be provided in advance of visits.
- (2) That arrangements be made for Members of the Sub-Committee to consult directly with representatives of the Town/Parish Councils.
(CD(F&ES))

It was further:-

Recommended to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee that:-

- (a) The existing 2003/04 budgeted programme be carried out.
- (b) The programme for 2004/05 be on the same financial basis as the 2003/04 programme. i.e. the total capital and revenue expenditure should not exceed expenditure during 2003/04.
- (c) The time scale for the completion of the review be extended to the end of May 2004. (CD(F&ES))

The meeting commenced at 9.30am and closed at 10.29am.

Chairman

Date