

Playspace Sub-Committee - 8 April 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Playspace Sub-Committee** held on **8 April 2004**
when there were present:-

Cllr D G Stansby (Chairman)

Cllr T Livings
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

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

5 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 D G Stansby declared a personal interest by virtue of living in the vicinity of a playspace.

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.

6 OUTCOMES FROM PLAYSPEC SITE VISITS

Note: Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in discussions relating to the playspace at Warwick Drive, Rochford by virtue of Rochford Parish Council having a potential interest in any locations that may be suited to a youth facility.

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) on the outcome of playspace site visits.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- Some local councils resourced and managed their own playspaces.

- The majority of costs associated with playspace provision are fixed. Taking all costs into account, District Council expenditure on the maintenance of open spaces and playspaces for 2003/04 was £787,000 gross, £774,000 net. The playspace element was £130,000 (£80,000 maintenance, £50,000 capital).
- The next stage of any activity associated with identifying an alternative site for one of the playspaces would be an approach to the appropriate landowner. The outcome of this would indicate whether matters should proceed to public consultation.
- Canewdon Parish Council had asked that expenditure be applied to Althorne Way rather than Rowan Way.
- Based on the latest risk assessment, the condition of the play equipment at Boston Avenue remained satisfactory as long as it remained in situ.
- Government assistance for playspace expenditure was contained within the Revenue Support Grant.
- Given their respective sizes, the impact of a set level of expenditure on playspaces would vary from Parish to Parish.
- An increase in the usage of playspaces can lead to a reduction in vandalism problems.
- There was already an ice-cream franchise arrangement for Hockley Woods. The possibilities for catering franchise opportunities there and at open space locations could be explored.

There was agreement that it would be preferable to proceed on the basis that all playspace provision should be retained. There was no pressing financial need to dispose of any of the associated land and land values were continuing to rise.

During discussion around the possibilities for financial assistance from the Parishes it was observed that, whilst open spaces are probably used by persons from around and outside the District, playspaces are more likely to be Parish specific and used at certain times (predominantly during summer months/school holiday periods, etc.).

Members agreed that, given the high overall District expenditure, it would be reasonable to ask Parishes to contribute towards the maintenance elements of playspace provision. Such an approach could assist partnership working and stimulate the promotion of playspaces by the Parishes. It was recognised that the means of each Parish varied and that it would be appropriate to give detailed consideration to the identification of a contribution formula based on cost/number of playspaces in each Parish and the provision of an allowance

for local councils already providing their own facility. Parishes without playspaces would be excluded. The formula could be introduced over a two year period with a view to meeting the annual maintenance costs.

The Sub-Committee concurred with the Chairman that it would be appropriate to consider whether trust status could be achieved for the various open spaces and play areas in line with that already in place for Hawkwell. Officers confirmed that reports could be produced on this aspect. Members agreed a motion moved by Councillor D G Stansby and seconded by Councillor P F A Webster in this regard.

In terms of timeframe for the playspace review, it was agreed that final conclusions should be reached prior to the August recess. At the close of the meeting officers circulated examples of the high specification submissions received from play product manufacturers in response to set price specifications.

The Sub-Committee extended thanks to the officers for an effective programme of playspace visits.

Resolved

That officers report back to the Sub-Committee with:-

- (1) Details of a formula that could be used to engage with Parish/Town Councils to enable funding of the maintenance costs associated with playspaces. The formula (which would be introduced over a two year period) to be based on cost/number of playspaces in each Parish and the provision of an allowance for councils that already provided their own facility. Parishes without a playspace to be excluded.
- (2) The outcome of any landowner discussions associated with one of the playspaces. (CD(F&ES))

It was further **Recommended** to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee that officers produce reports on:-

- (1) The possibilities for catering franchise arrangements at Hockley Woods and open space locations.
- (2) The possibilities for the District Council registering to obtain trust status to protect all its open spaces and play areas from development. (CD(F&ES))

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The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 11.40am..

Chairman

Date