

Executive – 22 August 2007

Present: Councillor Henley (Chairman).
Councillors Brooks, Coles, Horsley, Mullins, Prior-Sankey and Mrs Smith.

Officers: Mrs P James (Chief Executive), Ms S Adam (Strategic Director), Ms J Wishlade (Strategic Director), Mrs K Hughes (Leisure Development Manager), Mr A Priest (Asset Holdings Manager), Mr A Highton (Scrutiny Officer) and Mr R Bryant (Democratic Support Manager).

Also Present: Councillors Bishop, Critchard, Hall, House, Mrs Stock-Williams, Stuart-Thorn, Miss Wood and Williams. Mr I Atkins from Project Taunton and Mr J Ridsdale and Mr C Haworth from the Property Consultants Alder King.

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm).

83. Apologies

Councillors R Lees and A Wedderkopp.

84. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 and 19 July 2007, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

85. Public Question Time

Councillor Leighton reminded the Chairman of the Executive, Councillor Henley, of the question she had asked at the Council meeting on 17 July 2007 about the need for Somerset County Council to fully consult with local residents over the proposed Park and Ride site to the east of Taunton. She was still awaiting a reply to this question and to her suggestion of a site visit.

Councillor Henley confirmed that arrangements for a visit to the site would be made shortly. However, in terms of the question asked at Council, Councillor Henley was aware that Somerset County Council would be submitting a planning application quite soon for the park and ride site. Full consultation would therefore take place with the local residents, the Parish Council and Taunton Deane through the planning process.

86. Declarations of Interests

Councillors Henley, Brooks and Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as Members of Somerset County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey also declared a prejudicial interest in relation to the item concerning charges to charities for hiring public open spaces for events and left the meeting during its consideration.

87. A Play Strategy for Taunton Deane

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the development of a Play Strategy for Taunton Deane.

The purpose of this Strategy was to guide the Council's actions in areas impacting on children's play and to provide a framework for decisions about "play" for children from 0-19 years for the next five years. In the short term, it would also enable the Council to apply for an allocated sum of money from the BIG Lottery Fund for the delivery of play for children up to 16 years of age.

Development of the Strategy had included a review of relevant policy, a comprehensive audit of play opportunities, a review of existing consultation, new consultation with play providers, parish and town councils, children and young people and with agencies and Council Members. From this, the key issues had been identified and an Action Plan developed.

A Play Partnership comprising representatives from a variety of organisations had been established which had met regularly over the past 12 months to monitor and consider progress with the Strategy.

The Strategy consisted of the following five documents under the title "Play in Taunton Deane":-

Document 1: The Play Policy – this set out the vision for play and expressly adopted a position on the approach on risk;

Document 2: A Strategy Development Document – this set out the policy context, the current position of play provision in the District and set out the five priorities identified;

Document 3: The Needs Assessment – which gave full findings of the research undertaken;

Document 4: The Issues Analysis – this document identified the key issues arising from the research; and

Document 5: The Action Plan – this proposed actions to be taken by the partners to address the issues.

Noted that all the actions identified in the Strategy would be delivered within existing resources or with the funding allocation from the BIG Lottery.

Reported that the priorities identified for play in Taunton Deane were:-

Priority 1: Ensuring all children and young people had access to play opportunities in their local area;

Priority 2: Making play more exciting and challenging;

Priority 3: Making play inclusive;

Priority 4: Funding; and

Priority 5: Raising the profile of play and its value.

Submitted details of the consultations that had been undertaken on the draft Strategy. The responses received to the consultation exercise were set out for the information of Members together with recommended action or amendments to the Strategy.

Further reported that an involvement exercise with children and young people to prioritise the Action Plan was held at the French Weir Fun Day on 12 August 2007. This had helped to confirm the priority of the items in the Action Plan which would form the play project portfolio to be submitted to the BIG Lottery for funding. The top priorities for the children at the fun day were:-

- EC4 – Involving children and young people in designing play areas;
- LP4 – Filling the gaps in play provision;
- EC3 – Build a destination playground;
- EC1 – Let children play in wild/natural places;
- LP1 – Play Rangers;
- EC2 – Include natural features in play areas; and
- I2 – Play Days around the district.

The Health and Leisure Review Panel had considered and endorsed the draft Strategy at its meeting on 26 July 2007. Noted that the top priority actions for the Review Panel Members were:-

- LP4 – Filling the gaps in provision;
- LP1 – Play Rangers;
- F1 – Supporting organisations to access funding; and
- P4 – Play Development Co-ordinator.

The application to the BIG Lottery would be made by the end of August 2007 with the outcome expected in early January 2008. The application would be for £208,000 over three years to fund direct play provision.

The Play Partnership had identified two key projects in the Action Plan which fulfilled the BIG Lottery criteria. These were Play Rangers and Play Days.

The work of a Play Ranger included enabling children to play freely and to feel safe within the play environment, empowering children through free choice and open activities, increasing usage levels in play and open space areas and helping to increase local community cohesion.

There was also a possibility in the future of Play Rangers bringing into use school play areas during the holiday times in areas of the district where play space was limited.

It was estimated that the Play Ranger service would cost £170,000 over three years.

The proposed Play Days would be focused on giving children new experiences of play in natural environments in their local parks or by taking them to a wild/natural space for play. It was likely that £18,000 over three years would be applied for to fund the Play Days project.

Reported that if the Council was not awarded its allocation, the above two projects would not go ahead. All other actions in the Strategy were fundable within existing budgets or were officer time.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The Play Strategy, including the Taunton Deane Play Policy, be adopted;
- (b) The Executive Councillor for Community Leadership be delegated to approve the final alterations to the Play Strategy documents resulting from the consultation and the outcomes for the Action Plan as they were developed; and
- (c) The submission of a bid to the BIG Lottery for £208,000 to fund Play Rangers and Play Days in the district over three years from 2008/2009 be approved.

88. Review of the charges to charities for hiring public open spaces for events

Reference Minute No 70/2007, reported that the Executive's decision on the subject of waiving charges to charities for the hire of Taunton Deane's Open Spaces and Parks for events had been called in by Councillors Edwards and Brockwell.

Reported that the call in had been considered by the Review Board at its meeting on 2 August 2007 where it had been decided to refer the decision back to the Executive with the request that it:-

- (1) Gave proper consideration to the effect its decision would have on Council resources and how the shortfall would be resourced;
- (2) Retained a charging structure which could be applied consistently and which was equitable to all charities;
- (3) Retained a system where a charity was required to demonstrate need before charges were waived; and
- (4) Considered deferring any decision on abolishing the charging structure for a further year – it was far too early to assess whether the charging structure was having any effect on charities.

The Chairman reported that the respective positions of the two main political groups was well known on this issue and nothing had changed since the meeting of the Executive on 18 July 2007.

RESOLVED that the previous decision of the Executive in relation to the waiving of charges to charities for hiring public open spaces for events be endorsed.

89. Exclusion of the press and public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business covered by Minute 90, 91 and 92 below because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to clauses 7 and 9 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

90. Firepool, Taunton – Procurement of Development Partner

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the process undertaken to date towards the procurement of a development partner for the Firepool area of Taunton.

Following the receipt of expressions of interest, a number of candidates had been invited to participate in a dialogue with the Council culminating with the submission of written proposals during July 2007.

Reported on the evaluation of the proposals which had led to a shortlist of companies being drawn up.

If this recommended list was approved, further discussions would take place and the companies involved would be required to make a presentation to Councillors towards the end of September, prior to formal tenders being invited.

It was anticipated that a development partner would be selected towards the end of the year.

During the discussion of this item, the Strategic Director, Joy Wishlade, reported that a visit to the Harbourside at Bristol was being arranged to enable Councillors to obtain an appreciation of the kind of scale and massing that could work in a riverside location.

She also sought and obtained confirmation as to the design criteria for Phase One of the Firepool development in connection with affordable housing, the height of buildings and the need for a high level of design and sustainability.

RESOLVED that the proposed shortlist of companies be invited to continue the dialogue with the Council and submit final tenders in due course.

91. **Proposed disposal of land in Wellington**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the disposal of an area of Council owned land in Wellington in connection with a proposed redevelopment.

Submitted details of the main terms and conditions that had been negotiated between the parties.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) The proposed transaction involving an area of land in Wellington be approved, subject to the main terms and conditions negotiated by the Asset Holdings Manager; and
- (2) The fair net receipt attributable to the loss of a Council owned dwelling within the overall transaction be set aside for affordable housing purposes.

92. **Wellington Cemetery**

Reference Minute No 85/2006, reported in detail the likely financial implications of carrying out the recommendations of the Wellington Cemetery Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group be endorsed; and
- (2) The financial element of the project be considered further by the Executive during the budget setting process for the 2008/2009 financial year.

(The meeting ended at 7.26 pm).