



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17TH FEBRUARY 2015

SUBJECT: PLAY SUFFICIENCY

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the new Welsh Government statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children.
- 1.2 To update Members on the progress made since assessing sufficiency of play opportunities and the priorities identified in the attached plan.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides a brief overview of the requirement of the duty and updates members on progress made since assessing sufficiency of play opportunities and the priorities identified in the attached action plan.
- 2.2 The second part of the new legislation came into effect in July 2014 with the publication of “Wales, a Play Friendly Country”. This new duty requires Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities, so far as reasonably practicable.
- 2.3 There are many examples of how improved play opportunities have resulted from excellent partnership work, however, the biggest challenge remains the heavy reliance on external sources of funding to deliver many aspects of play provision.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Play is an important method in achieving many other strategies relating to children’s education, development and well-being. Play opportunities can contribute to mitigating the negative effects of poverty on children’s lives. Play contributes to the Child Poverty Strategy, Communities First, Families First, 21st Century Schools, the Single Integrated Plan, Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 and many more plans and strategies.
- 3.2 Due to the potential contribution play makes to wide ranging agendas and plans a partnership approach was adopted to ensure Caerphilly County Borough Council maximised existing resource to secure sufficient play opportunities for children.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In 2012 Welsh Government produced “Creating a Play Friendly Wales”, the statutory guidance to Local Authorities on assessing sufficient play opportunities. The play sufficiency assessments were produced through a multi partnership approach and were submitted to Welsh Government for approval.

- 4.2 The second part of the legislation came into effect in July 2014 with the publication of “Wales: A Play Friendly Country”, which is statutory guidance to local authorities on securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. The duty also required Local Authorities to publish and keep up-to-date information about play opportunities for children.
- 4.3 There are no precedents for this work as Wales is the first Country in the world to establish such a duty within its legislative framework. While this approach is to be applauded and there is positive partner engagement, the duty needs to be delivered within existing or indeed reduced resources. However, the duty does include the caveat that opportunities should be secured “so far as reasonably practicable” and that sufficiency should be “determined locally”.
- 4.4 Representations from all relevant stakeholder groups, both from within Caerphilly County Borough Council and partner organisations play an active role in a working group that developed the initial sufficiency assessment and are now contributing towards the delivery of the priorities within the attached action plan. The work of this group has been quoted as good practice by Welsh Government.
- 4.5 The accountability of delivering the actions in the plan are not the responsibility of any one department and are very reliant on effective partnership working. Many aspects are also reliant on external sources of grant funding that are short term in nature and may impact on the sustainability of some of the actions. Indeed, the funding for the current Play Development Officer (employed by GAVO) ends in March 2015. A large proportion of the play workforce is also externally funded through Community First, family First, Groundwork etc.
- 4.6 Groundwork, based in Pontllanfraith, has been given a leading role nationally and received funding to deliver sustainable play opportunities across Wales. Groundwork are included in the working group and will contribute to the delivery of the priorities within the Action Plan.
- 4.7 As part of the duty it is a requirement to review, update and submit plans annually to Welsh Government for assessment. The updated Action Plan has been submitted and the Authority is awaiting feedback from Welsh Government. It was not the intention of the working group to include all play activities but only actions where working in partnership could address gaps in provision and meet the needs identified in the sufficiency assessment.
- 4.8 Significant advancements have been made in the provision of resources and training for staff delivering play leading to the improved quality of play provision. This has also been used as an example of good practice by Welsh Government.
- 4.9 Some of the key priorities within the Action Plan include continued support of the workforce, support for the delivery of play in Schools, using School facilities for Community Groups and improved promotion and awareness of provision.
- 4.10 There are some examples of excellent work being delivered by all stakeholders in a very dynamic working group, however, the biggest challenge that remains is securing sufficient resources to deliver sustained play opportunities for children.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The play sufficiency assessment has considered the diverse needs of our communities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Some of the actions in the plan are dependent on successfully securing external sources of funding; the remainder of the actions will need to be delivered through existing resources, improved co-ordination and partnership working.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Externally funded posts are at risk if new funding is not secured (these employees are not employed by Caerphilly County Borough Council).

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 This report reflects the views of the listed consultees and the working group..

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the requirements of the new statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children, as far as reasonably practicable.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To update Members of the Committee on progress with the statutory play sufficiency duty.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Acts.
Children & Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

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Appendices:
Appendix 1 - Welsh Government Play Sufficiency Action Plan