

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director - Children & Young People  
**SUBJECT:** Play Builder Project  
**WARDS:** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update members on progress to develop the Playbuilder programme and to consider proposals for its delivery.
- 1.2 To consider the opportunity and implications of a bid for Wave 2 Play Pathfinder Status.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 2.1 progress to date be noted;
- 2.2 the project approval process be considered and an agreed process confirmed; and
- 2.3 Wave 2 Play Pathfinder status application be progressed.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Members received a report on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008 informing them of the success of the authority in achieving Playbuilder status.
- 3.2 Halton received formal confirmation of this status on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2008 and confirmation of the funding awarded:

Capital	2008/09	299,092
	2009/10	411,252
	2010/11	411,252
	Total	1,121,596
Revenue	2008/09	12,593
	2009/10	16,191
	2010/11	16,191
	Total	44,974

3.3 Guidance received indicated that Halton must deliver a minimum of 6 new/transformed playgrounds in 2008/09 and a further 18 in 2009/10 and 2010/11 making a total of 24 over the 3 years.

3.4 Further guidance indicated 5 key themes authorities must include in developing their play builder project;

- **Embedding play in local authority planning**

- Working effectively across departments
  - Strategic approach to and strategic fit with BLF projects
  - Sustainability
  - Gate way to offer services

- **Community Engagement**

- Selection of sites
  - Consulting with communities
  - Encouraging and funding third sector projects. Particularly Social Housing projects.

- **Access/Inclusivity**

- Ensuring sites attractive to 8 – 13 yr olds
  - Open/free
  - Better disabled access
  - Ensuring sites attractive to all

- **Safety**

- Ensuring parental confidence
  - Delivery play work training
  - Employing skilled staff
  - Traffic calming

- **Creativity**

- Delivering innovative and stimulating 'play' environments
  - Sustainable refurbishment using natural materials
  - Linking to other capital assets

3.5 SMT of the 21<sup>st</sup> May agreed that Halton Play Partnership be asked to consider appropriate models for the consideration, commissioning and management of play area development proposals. At its meeting in May the Play Partnership agreed the formation of a Playbuilder Implementation Project team to be led by John Hatton (Divisional Manager, Leisure and Community Services) and serviced by the Play Services Manager (Children & Young People Directorate) (see appendix 1 for Project Team Membership Details).

- 3.6 The Project Team has met twice to date. Progress has been made to develop a 'Playbuilder Project Plan' (see Appendix 2) and a 'draft Plan' will be tabled for consideration at the Play Partnership meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> September. The draft plan includes proposals for the identification of and timetable for year 1 2008/09 projects. (See appendix 3.)
- 3.7 The draft plan also considers the formal approval process for all projects. (See appendix 4.)
- 3.8 As a result of the challenging timeframe (all yr1 capital allocation must be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009) the project team has, based on the consultation carried out to develop the Halton Play Plan 2007-2011 and the Big Lottery Funded Children's Play Initiative, identified a number of projects which could meet the challenge of delivering within this timeframe (see appendix 5) and meet the criteria proposed for yr 1 projects (see appendix 5a):
- Own or have authority to build on land
  - Have considered planning implications
  - Can guarantee sustainable maintenance funding
  - Have the capacity to design and build within timeframe
  - Have carried out a needs analysis
  - Have carried out local consultation

**It must be noted that only £15,000 of the year one allocation can be carried over into the following year. Year one projects must therefore be deliverable by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2009. Projects have therefore been selected on this basis to ensure that resources are not lost to the borough.**

- 3.9 Projects in years two and three will be invited for submission to the Council. This will afford time for a formal application process to be developed where projects will be subject to strict eligibility criteria developed by the Play Partnership. This will ensure the sustainability and equitable distribution of investment according to need.
- 3.10 Wave 2 Play Pathfinder Status
- Existing Playbuilders have been asked if they would like to be considered for play pathfinder status in Wave two. **They have until 19<sup>th</sup> September (12 noon)** to advise DCSF that they wish to be considered.
  - On Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October those of our current Playbuilders who have informed us that they wish to be included in the final bidding stage will be sent full invitation to bid documentation which will give explicit detail of what your pathfinder bids should include and the criteria that will be for evaluation.
  - The final date for the submission of full pathfinder bids is **12 noon on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October**. The expectation is that these bids will be no longer than 3,000 words.
  - There will be 10 Play Pathfinders awarded funding from all applications.

- 3.10 In addition to the £1.1 million capital already approved for playbuilder the 10 Pathfinders will each deliver at least one large adventure playground or play park, costing around £800k. Sites should be open-access, with children generally free to come and go as they please and free of charge.

Pathfinders will also receive revenue funding to cover activity such as generating learning on innovative ways of improving local play offers; appointing a senior project manager to link to high-level decision-making; and any other required infrastructure to ensure the Pathfinder programme runs effectively.

- 3.11 It is important to note that there is no long term revenue budget attached to this additional capital investment and if a bid was submitted the authority would need to consider the additional revenue implications of maintaining and staffing such a facility.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 To embed play in local policy. The successful delivery of the Playbuilder project will make a significant contribution to this process.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Financial Implications.

The Playbuilder funding is a capital grant only and the investment of £1.1 million in new playspaces could have a long-term revenue implication in ensuring the necessary and appropriate maintenance and management regime of this investment.

This has been a key consideration in identifying year 1 projects. All have been selected to operate with no new revenue consequences. They are all either existing playgrounds for which revenue provision already exists or are being developed with Social Housing providers who will fund the maintenance/management regime.

The process for identification and agreement of possible year 2 (2009-2010) and year 3 (2010-2011) developments will also have as a key criteria that revenue streams should be in place (for a minimum of 10 years).

Proposed projects for years 2 & 3 will be subject to a robust and rigorous approval process. No project will be progressed unless revenue support (for a minimum of 10 years) is secured and confirmed.

To support this capital investment, steps are being taken to identify appropriate sources of funding for maintenance and management of playgrounds. (More and better play opportunities being identified as a positive contributor in the NICE Guidance, 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives'.)

The (current) review of the 'Play Services' will also seek to support this process through workforce development opportunities for staff to equip/qualify them to contribute to the process.

## 5.2 National Indicator Set

*Fair Play: a consultation on the play strategy* announced the government's intention to introduce an indicator into the National Indicator Set which assess the satisfaction of children and young people with the parks and play areas where they live and go to school. This indicator is to be introduced in 2009 and every top tier local authority will have to report on their success in supporting children's enjoyment through play. (See appendix 7.)

The successful implementation of the Playbuilder project will significantly enhance the authorities ability to achieve its targets.

5.3 The timeframe for delivery of the yr 1 2008/09 capital projects is demanding if full spend is to be achieved.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

### 6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

#### **Meeting the five outcomes**

Play is a fundamental part of a healthy and happy childhood and its enjoyment is recognised by government as equally important to other outcomes for children. Because it is so fundamental it also contributes to each of the five outcomes for children specified in Every Child Matters.

#### **Enjoying and achieving**

The essence of play is enjoyment. When playing, children define their own goals and interests, decide what is success or failure and pursue those goals in their own way. Children's enjoyment through play is linked to the control and choice they are able to exercise. Giving children the chance for free, uninhibited play allows them a psychologically safe space in which to try out new roles and experiences and enhances their enjoyment of life.

### 6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The continuous quality improvement of play workers and opportunities for development of skills across play and youth qualifications will be explored fully through Halton's Workforce Development Plan.

### 6.3 A Healthy Halton

Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development. The physical activity involved in energetic play provides children and young people with a significant amount of their regular exercise and is a key element in tackling obesity.

#### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

One of the main reasons children give for not playing outdoors more is that they and their parents are afraid for their safety. Fear of strangers, traffic and bullying by other children combine to keep children in their own homes. Good play provision protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger, while allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and use their initiative. At the same time, play enables children to take risks, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and greater resilience.

#### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Halton Play Builder proposals will be consistent with Halton's Policies for Urban Renewal and are designed to enhance current play provision.

### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The Play Builder programme is a three-year capital build programme with single year capital allocations/spend targets. Individual project 'risk analysis' will be carried out by project deliverer (see appendix 6 – Risk Analysis Template).

### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 A major criteria of the Play Builder programme is the requirement to 'ensure' that access and Inclusivity are a key consideration at the design stage.

### **9.0 REASON (S) FOR DECISION**

9.1 To agree (6) projects to be progressed in Playbuilder Project year 1.

9.2 To agree methodology to develop/approve year 2/year 3 projects.

### **10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

N/A

### **11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

3-year capital programme with annual capital allowance. Implementation of year 1 project immediate (to be completed by 31.3.08) Playbuilder project to be promoted Oct/Nov with a view to soliciting expressions of interest/proposals for year 2/year 3 projects.

## 12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Play Pathfinder/Builder Application	Children & Young People Directorate	S. M. Duncan Play Services Manager
Fair Play, DCFS/DCMS	Children & Young People Directorate	S. M. Duncan Play Services Manager
Halton Play Plan 2007-2011	Children & Young People Directorate	S. M. Duncan Play Services Manager