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## Report of the Director of Children's Services

### Executive Board

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009

Subject: Playbuilder Initiative

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In   
(Details contained in the report)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report briefs Executive Board on the details of, and criteria for, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Playbuilder Project and the £1,145,914 capital and £45,871 revenue allocation made to Leeds from the programme to build or significantly refurbish twenty two playgrounds or informal play spaces across the city by March 2011 with a focus on provision for children aged 8 -13. The timescales and the monitoring arrangements are tight and delivery of the project will be challenging.

This report outlines and seeks approval for the proposed delivery of the Playbuilder Initiative in Leeds against the clear criteria laid down by the DCSF

This report seeks approval to inject the £1,145,914 allocation into the Children's Services Capital Programme (cap scheme no:15390) and give authority to spend on the refurbishment and development of the first sixteen sites identified in the report.

### 1.0 Purpose Of This Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Brief Executive Board on the Playbuilder Project and the criteria for the development of projects
- Seek approval for the proposed delivery of this initiative in Leeds as recommended by the Play Partnership and Children's Trust

- Approve the injection £1,145,914 into the capital programme
- Seek authority to spend on 16 sites already identified by the Play Partnership and Parks and Countryside Service
- Identify the process for the development of the remaining 6 sites to meet the criteria laid down by the DCSF for the delivery of the project

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 The DCSF Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures published in December 2007 pledged a significant investment in improving play provision for all children and young people, aiming to increase the availability of safe, exciting and inclusive play facilities and putting the needs of the local community at the centre of delivery. The DCSF is keen to see play services and the play agenda included and reflected at a strategic level within all Local Authority Children and Young People's Plans and Sustainable Community Strategies, including the development of new and refurbished playgrounds and informal play spaces.
- 2.2 The Playbuilder Programme will provide £235m for implementing the plan involving the development of 3500 play areas across England by March 2011. This initiative will be closely monitored by Play England and DCSF with monthly RAG ratings and fortnightly reports to the Secretary of State.
- 2.3 The Playbuilder allocation for Leeds is £1,145,914 capital and £45,871 revenue to develop or significantly refurbish 22 play areas across the authority, an average of £52k for each play area, with a focus on provision for children aged 8 to 13. The initiative is a two-year programme and clear criteria have been given for the design and delivery of the playgrounds. No on going revenue funding has been included for their long term maintenance and sustainability.
- 2.4 The criteria for developing the Playbuilder sites are specific. Sites must include innovative projects in areas of 'play need' and have community engagement, especially with children and young people, throughout the process. The play areas are to be significant refurbishments or new developments providing physically active play opportunities through stimulating equipment and landscaping on sites and be particularly attractive to 8-13 year olds. All sites must be open access, with children free to come, free of charge. They should offer improved access to disabled children, ensuring compliance with disability discrimination legislation, be inclusive for girls and minority ethnic groups and consider the ways in which access can be improved making links with other projects aimed at safer travel for children. The Capital Grant may not be used for such purposes as traffic-calming.
- 2.5 A Strategic Play Partnership was established in Leeds in October 2008 to oversee the implementation of the Play Strategy approved by Executive Board in March 2007. It has strong representation across the statutory, Higher Education and voluntary sector and is chaired by the Assistant Dean at Leeds Metropolitan University. Partnership members have considerable expertise in the field of play. The Play Partnership is well placed to advise on location, drive the implementation of the Playbuilder initiative and develop a consultation and participation toolkit specific for the project.
- 2.6 Significant work has been undertaken on mapping play provision and analysing provision gaps as part of the implementation of the Play Strategy. The mapping information used has highlighted play areas across the city against actual populations of children and young people living in those localities. This identifies where children and young people have good access to play opportunities, areas that have limited access to play areas and localities that

are 'play poor'. Developing new provision in areas that are play poor is a priority for the Playbuilder initiative as noted in 2.4.

- 2.7 An Executive Board report of September 2002, jointly written by the Director of Planning and Environment and the Director of Leisure Services, outlined a revised strategy for the provision of children's playgrounds in Leeds. This report proposed a rationalisation of equipped playgrounds to secure improvements to safety, quality and access. It vested the management and delivery of children's playgrounds in the Parks and Countryside Service, then within Leisure Services. However, the report does acknowledge the need to seek partnership opportunities with the private and voluntary sector and to increase levels of participation for children and young people in the development and maintenance of playgrounds.
- 2.8 The Parks and Countryside Service, now within City Development, has developed plans for sixteen Playbuilder sites that clearly meet the criteria laid down by the DCSF and are highlighted currently as localities providing limited or poor play provision. The Parks and Countryside service are continuing to develop plans for a further six sites. However, a number of localities deemed to be 'play poor' do not appear to have sufficient opportunities for the development of a children's playground or informal play space on land currently managed by Parks and Countryside. Consequently, to ensure that the project delivers the best outcome for Leeds, it is considered appropriate to work with other partners within the council and Play Partnership in order to meet the criteria laid down and the conditions of the Playbuilder grant. This will be done as a parallel process. Revisiting the strategy approved by Executive Board in September 2002 to enable other partners to develop Playbuilder sites may be necessary. The decision on the location and development of the remaining six sites will be taken by Executive Board in August 2009.
- 2.9 An indicative project plan approved by the Children's Trust Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board (ISCB) was submitted to the DCSF on March 30th 2009 indicating how Leeds could deliver the Playbuilder programme. This plan identified the first sixteen sites, all within Parks and Countryside management, to be developed against the criteria laid down by the DCSF. It proposes that further work will be undertaken, and expressions of interest sought, across the Play Partnership for the development of play spaces in the six localities where there may not be sufficient opportunities to develop or significantly refurbish sites currently under the management of Parks and Countryside.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 The identification of the twenty two Playbuilder sites has been considered carefully. Parks and Countryside can deliver 16 sites and maintain these sites through existing mechanisms using their experience and expertise over the two years of the programme. They can demonstrate fit with the DCSF design guide using informal play spaces and landscaping with much more natural spaces. They have existing mechanisms to deliver this project starting in April 2009. The Parks and Countryside service has secured £525k match funding from a range of funding streams including the Big Lottery, Heritage Lottery, Renaissance Grant and Area Committees to support a number of the sixteen playgrounds. The service is seeking a further £248k match funding as yet unconfirmed. Individual playbuilder schemes are not dependent upon match funding to proceed. However, match funding will enhance and increase the scope and scale of individual projects where it can be secured. The sixteen sites and funding proposals, including the status match funding, are attached as appendix 1.
- 3.2 It is apparent from the analysis of the mapping work that there are potential gaps in play provision available to children and young people in the city that are less easily provided by the Parks and Countryside Service. A further six priority areas that are play poor have been identified:
- North West : West Park/Ireland Wood and Tinshill/Cookridge (Adel and Wharfedale and Weetwood Wards)

- East : Beechwood/Seacroft (Seacroft and Killingbeck ward)
- South: Beeston (Beeston and Holbeck ward)

Work will continue with Parks and Countryside to seek solutions to this issue. A number of partners within the council and Play Partnership have expressed an interest in delivering the remaining six play sites and so work is also being undertaken with them as a parallel exercise. All schemes, including revised proposals from Parks and Countryside, will then be appraised by the Play Partnership using the criteria of grant and giving due weight to the need to secure the long term sustainability and safety of the sites in areas that are deemed 'play poor'. The Play Partnership recommendations will be brought back to Executive Board for decision on the remaining six sites in summer 2009. Scheme appraisal documentation is attached as appendix 2.

- 3.3 Development on land not currently held within Parks and Countryside has revenue implications for the sustainability and maintenance of the sites once completed. Any contracts awarded for the remaining sites will need to be clear where the responsibility lies for sustaining and maintaining, the play areas, including all health and safety issues, and that there is sufficient budget and expertise to do so. The Council would need to be comfortable with the long-term sustainability and safety of any proposals being brought forward.
- 3.4 A consultation toolkit will be developed by the Strategic Play Officer and members of the Play Partnership ensuring consistent and effective engagement throughout development of all the projects. Events on each proposed play area site will take place engaging children and young people and the wider community. Consultation sessions will take place in local schools, community groups, Children Leeds Partnerships and Area Committees to establish views and input for the design, delivery and evaluation of all the projects. From initial consultation, designs will be drawn up and taken back to children and young people and the community demonstrating the results of their input and if any changes are needed. The launch and opening of the play areas will be published and promoted and all those involved and using the sites will be asked to evaluate the value of the play area. This will then be followed up six months later to assess the value and usage.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 4.1 The governance of the play agenda in Leeds is complex with an accountability hosting arrangement with a voluntary sector provider, the responsibility for the project in Children's Services and key delivery partners within City Development and Environments and Neighbourhoods. The delivery of this initiative needs to be 'one city' with cross council departmental accountability and close working with the Play Partnership.
- 4.2 Timescales are tight and the project will run from April 2009 to March 2011 and all sites must be completed by that time and all budget spent. The current programme of works shows that this is achievable. At this stage there are no known issues relating to design, site conditions, planning and refurbishment.
- 4.3 A number of risks to the programme have been noted in this report. Parks and Countryside are focused on delivering the Playground Strategy that rationalises current provision and promotes high levels of safety and quality on a reduced number of sites, as approved by Executive Board in September 2002. The Play Strategy, approved by Executive Board in October 2007, advocates the development of additional play provision in the city, especially of the informal and adventurous kind. The criteria for developing the twenty two sites in the Playbuilder Programme requires a focus on sites in localities that are currently deemed 'play poor'. The Parks and Countryside service may not be able to develop schemes in all of the localities that most fit the Playbuilder 'play poor' criteria and secure the best outcome for the city. There is no revenue allocation with this programme and therefore all sites must be able

to be sustained with current resources within Leeds City Council. A programme risk log is maintained.

## 5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

5.1 A copy of the Grant Confirmation letter details the allocation for Leeds City Council for both capital and revenue and is attached as appendix 3

## 5.2 Capital Funding and cash flow

Previous total Authority to Spend on this scheme	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2008 £000's	FORECAST				
			2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's	2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012 on £000's
LAND (1)	0.0						
CONSTRUCTION (3)	0.0						
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0						
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0						
OTHER COSTS (7)	0.0						
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2008 £000's	FORECAST				
			2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's	2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012 on £000's
LAND (1)	0.0						
CONSTRUCTION (3)	974.0			457.9	516.1		
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0						
DESIGN FEES (6)	171.9			80.8	91.1		
OTHER COSTS (7)	0.0						
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1145.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>538.7</b>	<b>607.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2008 £000's	FORECAST				
			2008/09 £000's	2009/10 £000's	2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012 on £000's
Playbuilder Capital Grant(15390)	1145.9			538.7	607.2		
Total Funding	1145.9	0.0	0.0	538.7	607.2	0.0	0.0
<b>Balance / Shortfall =</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Parent Scheme Number:** 15390  
**Title:** Playbuilder Initiative 2009-11

## 5.3 Revenue Effects

The sustainability of these developments is a resource pressure. It is essential that the deliverers of this initiative can maintain the play areas that are built or refurbished as a result of the Playbuilder. It is assumed that delivering this initiative through existing services within Leeds City Council ensures that the long term maintenance costs and implications can be met through existing resources and that the sites will be sustainable. However, the DCSF have made £45,871 of Playbuilder revenue grant available in 2009-2011 to support the delivery, consultation and events of the capital program and to alleviate any short term problems that may arise.

The following table illustrates the alterations that will be necessary to the Service's revenue budget for the Playbuilder scheme:

REVENUE EFFECTS	2009/10 £000's	2010/11 AND SUBSEQUENT YEARS £000'S
EMPLOYEES		
PREMISES COSTS		
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	27.5	18.3
PLAYBUILDER REVENUE GRANT	-27.5	-18.3

#### 5.4 Programme of works

The programme of works will be delivered through Parks and Countryside delivering for 16 of the 22 sites as identified in appendix 2. Children's Services working with key partners in the Play Partnership, including Parks and Countryside, will work to establish viable schemes in the remaining six localities identified in 3.2. Individual design and cost reports will request funding from the parent scheme as detailed plans for each site are finalised. As a condition of the grant all year 1 schemes need to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, the remainder need to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. Any unspent funds will be reclaimed by DCF

#### 6.0 Conclusions

6.1 This is a new and exciting initiative, with a large amount of work to be carried out in a short period of time. Delivering this project will meet the actions within the:

- Revised CYPP priorities for creating 'more places to go and things to do'
- Leeds Play Strategy
- National Play Strategy
- Endorsed strategic approach for playgrounds

This initiative will become the focus for strengthening partnership working in the play agenda.

6.2 The Parks and Countryside Service can deliver sixteen sites that meet the criteria identified by the DCSF. This report seeks authority to proceed to develop these sites.

6.3 The Strategic Play Partnership and the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board will continue to work with Parks and Countryside on a further six schemes. As a parallel exercise work will be undertaken with other partners within the council and Play Partnership for the development of Playbuilder sites in the six localities deemed to be play poor that do not have play spaces currently managed by Parks and Countryside. A full appraisal of all schemes will be undertaken against the criteria for the Playbuilder Programme but giving due weight to the long term sustainability of the sites. A further report to Executive Board will recommend the location and development partners for the remaining six sites.

#### 7.0 Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- Inject £1,145,914 into the Capital Programme (cap scheme no:15390) fully funded by DCSF grant
- Give Authority to Spend on the sixteen play sites identified in appendix 2
- Approve the Play Partnership recommendation to seek working solutions for the development of the remaining six sites with partners in the council.

- Seek a further report recommending the location and provider of the remaining six sites

## **8.0 Background Papers**

- The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures – published by DCSF December 07 – [www.dcsf.gov.uk/childrensplan](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/childrensplan)
- The Play Strategy: published by DCSF December 08 – [www.dcsf.gov.uk/play](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/play)
- Design For Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces: published by DCSF April 08 – [www.dcsf.gov.uk/play](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/play)
- Report of Director of Planning & Environment and Director of Leisure Services, report to Executive Board – Children's Playgrounds – 11 September 2002