



Report of the Director of Children's Services

Executive Board

Date: 13th March 2007

Subject: The Leeds Play Strategy and Big Lottery Play bid

Electoral Wards Affected:

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)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report presents the Leeds Play Strategy for approval, and explains how the strategy will be implemented through local action and supported through the bid for 'Big Lottery' play funds.
2. The Play Strategy has been developed by a wide partnership of local organisations with extensive consultation with children, young people, families and communities. The Strategy sets out a five-year agenda for improving the provision of 'free play', i.e. freely chosen by children and young people without direction by adults.
3. The strategy includes a wide range of aspirations, objectives and actions that aim to transform the way the city considers, supports and provides for play. The strategy is organised into three main sections: the first is broader and is focused on cultural change to create a 'Play Friendly City'; the second section provides some more immediate and focused strategies to deliver improvements; and the last section concerns implementation.
4. The development of the Play Strategy began prior to the emergence of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, and the development of children's trust arrangements in Leeds. However, since 2005, the Play Strategy has been considered under the

auspices of Children Leeds and the Director of Children's Services, with Leeds Play Network leading development of the strategy on behalf of the partnership. The draft Strategy has been considered and endorsed by the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board (ISCB), and will also be considered by the Safer Leeds Board. All partners at the ISCB committed to delivering the Strategy, and this body will continue to oversee the development of joint action and commissioning plans to implement the strategy once it has been endorsed by Executive Board.

5. The prime focus of the Play Strategy must be to guide and drive more integrated and effective local action to improve play. However, the development and approval of a local play strategy is also an essential requirement of the bidding process to access 'Big Lottery' play funding. Leeds has been invited to bid for up to £1.6 million. At the time of writing this report there are two bidding rounds – March and September 2007. The Leeds bid is currently being finalised for the March submission, which will allow time for possible amendment and resubmission in September if this is required. To be successful the bid must show how Big Lottery funding will help to deliver the local strategy.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Executive Board to approve and endorse the Leeds Play Strategy.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Developing a citywide, cross-service strategy to improve the way local services and communities support play for children and young people in Leeds has been under consideration for several years. Over the past two years more progress has been made due to the higher profile of play nationally and locally, the emergence of more effective local partnerships and through the incentives of additional Lottery funding streams.
- 2.2 The Leeds Play Strategy, in common with that in other authorities, is primarily concerned with 'free play'. Free play is defined as play that is freely chosen and accessed by children and young people, without hindrance or direction from adults. Free play is thus best seen as an end in itself and distinct from more focused and directed activities that are sometimes described as play.
- 2.3 The Leeds Play Strategy has been developed under the auspices of the local children's partnership (and latterly through the emerging children's trust arrangements) by a wide group of local services, coordinated by the Leeds Play Network.
- 2.4 The development of the Strategy has been informed by extensive consultation with children, young people, families and communities through existing routes such as the Parks and Countryside survey but also through focus groups and other events.
- 2.5 The Leeds Play Strategy is an essential component in accessing the city's allocation of 'Big Lottery' play funding. The Big Lottery require that all local authorities need to have an approved and effective local strategy in place to qualify for funding, and expect that the local strategy should clearly underpin and inform the specific bids for funding. Local authorities are the lead agency but must include all relevant local partners in the development and implementation of their local strategy.
- 2.6 The Big Lottery play programme is a £155 million fund with indicative allocations for each local authority to bid against. Leeds has an indicative allocation of £1.6 million. Leeds must be successful between now and September 2007 to secured our allocation rounds or the funds will be reallocated to other areas and other programmes.

3.0 The Leeds Play Strategy

- 3.1 The strategy includes a wide range of aspirations, objectives and actions that aim to transform the way the city considers, supports and provides for play. The strategy is organised into four main sections: the first is concerned with the overall vision and approach and reviews the context, consultations and audit that have informed the Strategy, the second is broadly focused on the cultural change needed to create a 'Play Friendly City'; the third section provides some more immediate and focused strategies to deliver improvements; and the last section concerns implementation.
- 3.2 The Play Strategy is summarised below. A copy of the abridged version of the Play Strategy is attached as an appendix to this document. The full version (including

technical annexes and additional material) is available from the clerk named on the front sheet of the agenda.

3.3 The following section sets out the key elements within the document.

- *Introduction and context:* This section lists the partners who have developed and endorsed the Strategy, sets out the local commitment and definition of free play and defines the scope of the Strategy. This section continues to consider the factors that have shaped the Strategy, including: links to wider local and national priorities and plans; key data; key messages from consultation and the review of current provision for play in Leeds.
- *Creating the Play Friendly City:* This section is focused on the cultural and organisational changes needed to develop a more 'Play Friendly City'. The objectives are broad and aspirational and include: promoting change in local partners and urban planning; improving the participation of children and young people; developing a more inclusive approach to play; better targeting resources and developing safer and more accessible play spaces.
- *Building the Play Friendly City.* This section is focused on developing new models of play provision and building the capacity needed to deliver this. Key objectives include: promoting high quality design in neighbourhoods and play spaces; enhancing the network of small local play spaces, youth zones and community playgrounds; developing community adventure playgrounds; improving provision for play in schools and hospitals and lastly developing a range of support for playworkers.
- *Delivering the Strategy.* This section deals with how the strategy will be implemented and managed. Key objectives in this section include: developing new partnership arrangements; appointing a 'play champion' and 'play coordinator'; and lastly developing clear outcomes targets and associated arrangements for planning and performance management.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 There are no direct implications for Council policy and governance arising from this report.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 The Play Strategy includes a new policy statement regarding risk and play. This is based on national policy and legal advice and has been approved by the Council's Legal Services.

5.2 It is a requirement of the lottery bidding process that Leeds City Council endorses the Play Strategy.

5.3 There are no direct resource implications of the Leeds Play Strategy at this point. The Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board has agreed to oversee any resource and commissioning issues in implementing the plan and asked that it also be referred to the Safer Leeds Board.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The Leeds Play Strategy is the product of considerable and sustained work by local partners to agree a common way forward to improving play for the children and young people of Leeds. Completing and agreeing the strategy will form a sound basis for driving local action, considering new integrated ways of commissioning and delivering services and accessing considerable external funding.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Executive Board is recommended to:

- Approve and endorse the Leeds Play Strategy