

Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee

28 January 2020

Present: Councillor C Davis (Chair)
Councillors J Allan, L Bell, K A Clark, J Cruddas, J Kirwin,
M Madden, P McIntyre, A Newman, P Oliver and S Phillips

Apologies: Councillor K Lee

C&L12/20 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members reported.

C&L13/20 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

C&L14/20 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 October 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

C&L15/20 North Tyneside Council Play Site Strategy 2020-2030

The Sub-Committee received a report which introduced the North Tyneside Council Draft Play Site Strategy 2020-2030, was presented by officers from the Local Environment and Horticultural and Parks Services.

Play was an essential part of every child's life and contributed to their development, mental and physical health, wellbeing and fitness. The purpose of the Play Site Strategy was to set out the approach for the management and investment of play sites.

The Play Site Strategy supported the Authority's 'Our North Tyneside Plan' priorities, providing a great place to live, work and visit, and the 'Green Space Strategy 2015'. Importantly, the strategy sets out priorities for ongoing play site investment and provision, with the purpose of providing communities in North Tyneside with a network of high-quality play areas. North Tyneside Council currently provided 57 outdoor play facilities across the borough. Included within the play facilities were traditional play areas, wheeled sports areas, multi-use games areas, teen shelters, water play sites and the Adventure Playground located in Shiremoor. Play site categories and standards were based on nationally recognised guidelines with five objectives; Quantity, Quality, Accessibility, Safety and inspections of play sites, and Management, as set out in the strategy.

In 2007, North Tyneside Council received £5.5m of funding to improve play equipment across the borough bringing it up to national standards. The then Play Partnership which consisted of the voluntary and community sector, and North Tyneside Council, had undertaken extensive participation and consultation activities throughout 2005 and 2006. Local provision was examined in detail and a variety of initiatives were undertaken with children and young people across the Borough. The initiatives included mapping and a quality audit of local provision, along with the hosting of focus groups including children, carers and young people. Since the study there had been significant improvements in play sites.

The previous Play Strategy 'Things to do, places to hang out' ensured that North Tyneside Council, and its partners through the Play Partnership, worked toward the Authority's key priority reflected in the Council Plan and the then Children and Young People's Plan. This included providing a whole range of opportunities for personal and social development, recreational and cultural activity, creative self-expression and independent play. The outcomes that were achieved relevant to play sites were described in the 2020-2030 draft strategy.

Since the initial strategy was adopted by the Authority, many improvements and other changes had taken place. The main changes to occur were:

- Many sites had been improved raising standards and increasing accessibility and quality;
- Previous investments had enabled the Authority to deliver many of the 2007 Strategy actions points, resulting in larger and better equipped play sites;
- Capital funding opportunities had changed: S106 residential sites, as other funding reduced; and
- In 2015, the Authority adopted the Green Space Strategy, which underlined the importance of play in a child's development. The strategy also stated the current approach in setting standards for the provision of equipped play based on quality, quantity and accessibility.

The Authority's current play site provision included 56 outdoor play facilities and 1 staffed Adventure Playground located in Shiremoor. Included within outdoor facilities were traditional play areas; 7 wheeled sports areas (skate parks and a BMX pump track); 18 multi use games areas; 7 teen shelters and 3 water play sites. Shiremoor Adventure Playground was unique in its play offer and was the only staffed Adventure Playground in the North-East of England. It was built with Play Pathfinder funding in 2010 and its aim was to attract visitors from across the whole borough.

North Tyneside had developed categories for its play facilities based on the nationally recognised guidelines of the 6 Acre Standard which was created by Fields in Trust (FIT), formerly the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) as detailed in Appendix 1 of the draft strategy. Each category gives a catchment area for individual play sites, which was illustrated in the North Tyneside Play Site Coverage map at Appendix 2. The catchment area increases based on the facilities offered, recognising that people would travel further to use larger better equipped sites. A detailed breakdown of individual play sites and their designation was provided in the North Tyneside Play Area Categories table at Appendix 3. North Tyneside's coverage was now regarded as good with only a few gaps in play provision remaining.

In order to meet the high standards of play site provision across the borough an Action Plan was included in the draft play site strategy to achieve those standards.

The sub-committee was invited to put forward comments on the draft Strategy as part of the engagement and consultation process. These included the following comments with responses (*italics*) from officers, as appropriate: -

- Play sites across the borough that were currently in poor repair and plans for their maintenance: *A five-year plan had been developed by the play site service, which identified those sites which require investment. It was proposed that sites would receive investment through a combination of the play site maintenance budget, as part of any future funding opportunities and through section 106 agreements, where appropriate.*

- Anti-social behaviour in terms of teens to mitigate issues arising: *Youth shelters were provided in some play areas and parks across the borough. The Authority worked closely with the Police to tackle any ASB.*
- Developers contributions to locate land for future use and to ensure that quality standards were met: *The Authority's Play Site Team worked closely with Planning in relation to any new play site provision identified as part of a new development. The team influenced as much as possible, the standard and specification of the play sites to be developed.*
- Sites on the map awaiting development e.g. Merlin Place, Longbenton: *The Authority was currently involved in consultation with the community in this area and other sites across the borough.*
- Determining which play sites were needed in an area in relation to young children e.g. Newcastle Wall in Killingworth when parking at the lakes as well as anti-social behaviour from those kids from the area: *The Play Site Strategy identified gaps in provision across the borough. In relation to this area, Killingworth Lakeside play site was the nearest site.*
- The option to use school sites rather than community play sites: Ofsted had produced guidelines on evening use of school sites to protect the schools interests e.g. dog walkers/anti-social behaviour: *The Authority had explored this in the past but there had been some reluctance from schools, due to the potential to attract anti-social behaviour issues on their site. However, the Authority would continue to look at any future opportunities for accessing play sites in school grounds, where appropriate.*
- Funding for open space use e.g. Castle Park which was a topic for building houses and the play site strategy: *S106 agreement funding had been requested for this area and other areas across the borough.*
- 'Friends of Groups' support in fund raising and awareness in terms of community requirements: *The Authority worked with a number of friends of groups across the borough and welcomed their positive involvement, contributions and support.*
- Asset transfers in relation to community play park facilities: *It was explained that there hadn't been much interest from communities to take on responsibility for play sites, due to the health and safety requirements associated with inspecting and managing the sites.*
- Funding opportunities for additional smaller play sites in the borough e.g. St Mary's: *The Play Site Strategy had identified gaps in provision along the coast particularly where there were high levels of footfall, which included the area next to St Mary's Lighthouse. This location would be considered as part of any future funding opportunities for play site provision.*
- Sport England funding opportunities e.g. Churchill Playing Fields: *Officers were in discussions with Sport England regarding potential funding opportunities for appropriate locations across the borough.*
- The Play Site Strategy for North Tyneside Council should be integral to the needs of its users and the Authority needed to be creative in securing future funding for play site development.

The Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, thanked officers for their presentation and welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft North Tyneside Council Play Site Strategy.

Agreed that the report and presentation on the draft North Tyneside Council Play Site Strategy 2020-2030 be noted; and the comments from the sub-committee on the approach to the management and investment of play sites be received.

C&L16/20 Chair's announcement

In response to a member's request for further information regarding the Sub-Committee's work programme, the Chair commented that further to the recent Scrutiny Chairs and Deputies meeting and pre-agenda discussions, Members were encouraged to put forward additional items not already identified and, if appropriate, a particular topic for investigation (study group) for her attention via the Democratic Services Officer.