
Meeting: Executive
Date: 15 September 2009
Subject: Playbuilder Project
Report of: Portfolio Holder for Culture and Skills
Summary: The report requests Executive to appoint a Contractor to carry out the design and building of play areas identified for development under the Playbuilder project funded by a £1,006,884 grant from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and approve the additional annual revenue budget of £10,000 anticipated from 2010/11.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children, Families and Learning

Contact Officer: Roy Waterfield, Assistant Director Community and Cultural Learning

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Executive

Key Decision Yes

Reason for urgency/ N/A

exemption from call-in (if appropriate)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.
 - (a) that the Executive agree to appoint Proludic to Design and Build year 1 Playbuilder sites for Central Bedfordshire Council with an option to extend their appointment to deliver year 2 of the project subject to (b);
 - (b) that the decision to extend the appointment to deliver year 2 of the project be delegated to Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children Families and Learning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Skills following satisfactory performance of the contractor in year 1.
- 2 Approve an additional annual revenue contribution of up to £10,000 from 2010/11 for play site inspection, maintenance and repair.

Reason for Recommendations: So that year 1 of the DCSF Playbuilder Programme can meet the grant criteria of building up to 13 play sites by 31 March 2010.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) is making its biggest ever investment of £235 million in play over the three years 2008-2011. The department expects innovative and exciting new public play areas to be developed with this investment, transforming local play opportunities across the country. The investment is aimed at developing unsupervised play areas that are open access and free of charge, and the refurbishment of play areas using natural materials which encourage children to explore the natural environment.
- 1.2 Under this initiative, the DCSF have granted Central Bedfordshire Council the sum of £1,006,884 capital and £43,784 revenue to develop or improve a minimum of 22 play spaces in areas of greatest need before the 31 March 2011. Up to 13 of these must be delivered by 31 March 2010.
- 1.3. Grant conditions for the capital sum specify that the grant can only be used for capital expenditure to develop new and existing public play areas. The grant can not be used to develop or refurbish play areas in schools or children's centres. Implementation and delivery of the Playbuilder capital programme must be through a Play Partnership and display the DCSF logo. The grant can not be used to substitute existing or planned expenditure on play. Failure to comply with any of the conditions may require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant.
- 1.4 Grant conditions for the revenue sum specify that the grant is to be used to support the delivery of the Playbuilder project in accordance with the project plan as approved by the DCSF and Play England. There is no carry over of the grant into 2010/11. Any grant issued but which remains unexpended on 31 March 2010 shall be repaid to the DCSF. Failure to comply with any of the conditions may require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant. It can provide for interim support for any new and additional maintenance costs whilst longer term sustainable funding routes are put in place, however, the stipulation that there is no carry over of the grant into 2010/11 means that it cannot realistically be used for on going maintenance implications after this year.
- 1.5 During April 2009, a Playbuilder project plan was submitted to and approved by the DCSF and Play England. This plan provided clear links between the development of Play areas and the following Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) priorities;
 - Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people
 - Creating safer communities
 - Promoting healthier lifestyles

Play is also an important part of the CBC Children and Young People's Plan, and the developing Cultural Strategy. A project initiation document is attached at Appendix A.

- 1.6 Using the criteria agreed with DCSF, including evidence identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis and data included in the draft Children's and Young People's Plan, CBC Play Partnership identified sites to be included within the first year of the Playbuilder project at its meeting on 16 July 2009. The CBC Play Partnership includes representatives from the voluntary sector, Town and Parish Councils and Play England and is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Skills.

2.0 Capital and Revenue issues for CBC

- 2.1 As no capital budget exists for the replacement of play area equipment, the DCSF grant represents an unprecedented opportunity to improve play facilities across the authority area, and limits the long term need for capital funding for the sites managed by CBC.
- 2.2 A list of sites identified for year 1 is attached at Appendix B. Of those sites, 5 are owned by CBC for which the authority is responsible for maintenance, repair and inspection. The other sites are the responsibility of Town or Parish Councils, or The Forest of Marston Vale and will continue to be their responsibility when funded by the DCSF. At this stage sites for year 2 have not been identified but these may include other CBC sites.
- 2.4 Leisure Services are responsible for 19 sites and have a revenue budget of £16,500 for 6 of those for routine inspection maintenance and repair. The remainder are funded via commuted sums.
- 2.5 Following an assessment of the 5 sites being prioritised for Year I Playbuilder grant, there are two sites at Dunstable Downs and Chambers Way in Biggleswade which are brand new sites that at present do not have a revenue budget for play site inspection, maintenance and repair. Exact maintenance implications will not be available until the design for these play areas have been agreed, however, it is possible to calculate anticipated costs for these 2 new sites by looking at the current budget available.
- 2.6 Leisure services have £16,500 for the inspection, maintenance and repair of 6 sites. It is therefore estimated that there will be an additional annual revenue requirement of £2,750 for each of these 2 new sites. Any additional maintenance implications from the refurbishment of the 3 other CBC sites that are currently budgeted for will be determined when the designs are agreed, which will be required to limit any additional costs. However, a total budget of £1500 per site has been estimated. Therefore, in total an additional annual revenue budget of £10,000 is estimated to be required for these 5 sites which will receive up to £250,000 of capital funding from the DCSF.

3.0 Consultation

- 3.1. As this funding has been awarded to 120 top tier authorities and at least half of the play sites have to be delivered by 31 March 2010, there is some urgency in identifying and engaging a suitable contractor to carry out the work.

- 3.2. Consultation is underway to ensure that the grant criteria are met and that the project can meet the timetable agreed with the DCSF. Consultation is being undertaken with the Town and Parish Councils where sites have been prioritised for being developed in their areas in the first year, and the Portfolio Holder will consult with all affected Ward members in the autumn of 2009.
- 3.3 Consultation with young people has been held at a variety of summer activities and events, and a competition for play area design is underway with all Middle Schools. The play spaces will be designed using the 10 design principles advocated within the DCSF Design for Play Guide, to develop innovative and fully inclusive playground designs. The project manager has consulted with Head of Children with Disabilities, and consultation will be undertaken with children and parents of the Ridgeway School, Kempston where children from Central Bedfordshire attend.
- 3.4 Following advice from the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality and Diversity) an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and identified no further significant requirements in the project plan. The project manager will ensure consultation is carried out with children in a range of formal and informal settings, and with children with disabilities. Appendix C lists the consultees and events attended or planned for year 1 sites.

4.0 Procurement

- 4.1 In order to meet the project timetable, a procurement exercise is underway to identify and appoint a contactor to design and build the year 1 play sites. The next stage is to appoint a contractor to interpret the consultation results and design and build up to 13 play areas by 31 March 2010. The value of the contract is above the European Union (EU) threshold and the Procurement Team were contacted for advice.
- 4.2 Two options were available:
- 1) Undertake a publicly advertised competitive EU tender process seeking a minimum of five tenders, or;
 - 2) Select a contractor from an existing EU compliant framework agreement.
- 4.3 With agreement from the Procurement Team, option 2 was undertaken and a procurement exercise has been conducted which followed the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation procurement framework (ESPO) to carry out the design and building of up to 13 play areas identified for development. ESPO acts as a purchasing agent for its member authorities and other customers and provides a professional cost effective procurement and supply service.
- 4.4 In order to allow this project to continue to the next stage Executive are recommended to appoint Proludic as the main contactor to design and build up to 13 sites for year 1 of the Playbuilder project with an option to extend to year 2 subject to satisfactory year 1 performance evaluation.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 Key milestones for this project to be completed by March 2010:

September 2009

- Appointment of contractor by Executive

October 2009 to March 2010

- Continue consultation with young people, Town and Parish Councils, schools, and ward members.
- Complete the design and build of up to 13 Playbuilder Play Areas
- Hold celebratory opening events at each of the Play Areas
- Undertaken a full evaluation of the year one Playbuilder delivery programme.

5.2 In order to meet the DCSF Play Builder project plan Executive are asked to approve appointment of the preferred contractor to undertake the design and build of up to 13 play areas in Central Bedfordshire, and approve the additional anticipated annual revenue implications from 2010/11.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Playbuilder provides clear links between the development of Play areas and the following Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) priorities;

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people
- Creating safer communities
- Promoting healthier lifestyles

Play is also an important part of the CBC Children and Young People's Plan, and the developing Cultural Strategy.

Financial:

Under this initiative, the DCSF have granted Central Bedfordshire Council the sum of £1,006,884 capital and £43,784 of revenue funding to develop, or improve a minimum of 22 play spaces in areas of greatest need before the 31 March 2011. Up to 13 of these must be delivered by 31 March 2010.

Grant conditions for the capital sum specify that the grant can only be used for capital expenditure to develop new and existing public play areas. Failure to comply with any of the conditions may require the repayment of the whole or any part of the Grant.

Grant conditions for the revenue sum specify that the grant is to be used to support the delivery of the Playbuilder project in accordance with the project plan as approved by the DCSF and Play England. There is no carry over of the grant into 2010/11. Any grant issued but which remains unexpended on 31 March 2010 shall be repaid to the DCSF. Failure to comply with any of the conditions may require the repayment of the whole or any part of the Grant.

Should this project not be taken forward, and the DCSF grant is returned, then project management costs for the first 6 months of the project totalling £13,135 may need to be met by CBC, and several sites owned by the Council will need to be refurbished from direct council funds to ensure they meet safety requirements.

Under the terms of the agreement, Central Bedfordshire Council will be responsible for ensuring that Play Areas are both sustained and maintained throughout their full life cycle. Following an assessment of these sites being prioritised for Year I Playbuilder grant, additional revenue requirements will largely result from the provision of 2 new play sites. The design of the other sites will aim to limit any additional maintenance implications for CBC. This scheme was considered and supported by CAMG at its meeting of 27th September 2009.

Additional annual maintenance costs resulting from Playbuilder are estimated to be £10,000. These costs will need to be budgeted for in the Leisure Services 2010/11 service plan but it is the view of the CAMG and the Section 151 officer that recommendation 2 of this report (for the Council to provide an increased budget) cannot be supported. Given the Council's financial challenges and the relatively minor sum involved, this sum is capable of being contained within the Directorate's existing budgetary envelope.

Legal:

A formal acceptance of the grant has already been signed by the authority and failure to deliver the project within the grant conditions may result in the removal of funding.

Risk Management:

The project plan shows a risk management mechanism which is under continued review by the project team. The project follows Prince2 guidelines.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

Following advice from the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality and Diversity) an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and identified no further significant requirements in the project plan, and the project manager will ensure consultation is carried out with children in a range of formal and informal settings, and with children with disabilities.

Community Safety:

The redevelopment of play sites will provide opportunities for the community to participate in positive activities.

Sustainability:

The grant encourages the design and development of the play spaces to use natural play products and sustainable play materials wherever possible. Where possible local skills and resources will be used.

Appendices:

- Appendix A Playbuilder Project Initiation Document
- Appendix B Proposed sites for 2009/10
- Appendix C List of Consultees and Events for 2009/10

Background Papers (open to public inspection):

- DCSF Grant Acceptance letter and Conditions
- Playbuilder Project Plan
- Minutes of Play Partnership Meetings (16.08.09)
- Equality Impact Assessment

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands