

WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1 APRIL 2009

WASHINGTON WHEELED SPORTS PARK

1.0 PURPOSE

To outline the findings of the technical assessment for the nominated sites for the proposed wheeled sports park and seek endorsement on the proposed options for further development.

2.0 BACKGROUND

In 2008, the City was successfully awarded £2.5m Play Pathfinder Funding to invest in the future of play within the city.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) selected 30 Play Pathfinder authorities throughout the country, to receive capital and revenue funding to invest in their play infrastructure. The Government's aim was to invest in 3,500 play areas as part of £235m Government commitment to children's play.

In Sunderland, the funding will facilitate the development of 28 new or upgraded play spaces plus one City Adventure Centre. All the projects must be completed by 31 March 2010 or Central Government have stated that the funding will be "clawed back".

3.0 PREVIOUS POSITION

Members will recall at the Washington Area Committee on the 4 February 2009, officers presented an eight step revised consultation process for the development of the Area Wheeled Sports Park provision. This is attached for information in Appendix 1.

Elected members endorsed the revised process which aimed to ensure that young people and families across Washington were fully consulted on the options and preferred design of the new provision. The Area Committee process was fully embedded into the revised process.

DCFS have supported our request to defer the project to year two Pathfinder but it must be delivered by March 2010, or the Pathfinder funding will be forfeited.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

Since the Area Committee meeting on 4 February 2009, officers have followed elected member feedback and issued a "Residents Update 2" to clarify positive and negative issues raised by those consulted during the first process.

In addition, a variety of communication methods have been used to launch the revised eight step process to residents of all ages across Washington. A new wheeledsportsark@sunderland.gov.uk e-mail address has been created to facilitate the new communication process, and elected members have recommended distribution channels for leaflets and posters. All of these suggestions have been adopted, despite the extremely tight budget position.

An electronic leaflet has been placed on the website and a media release issued focusing on step one of the new process calling for residents across Washington to recommend potential sites for the new provision. As a result, articles have now appeared in both the Sunderland Echo and the Evening Chronicle. A radio interview has also taken place and has been aired on a number of occasions by Sun FM.

The printed leaflet has been distributed to 60+ locations.

5.0 FINDINGS

We received 16 different site nominations from residents before the close of play on the 12 March 2009. This list includes all the previous sites selected by young people.

A technical assessment has been completed on the nominated sites under the following broad headings: Strategic Fit, Land Issues, Accessibility and Safety. An “additional comments section” has also been included to help guide the “next steps” particularly around cost implications of the various sites, or known site specific issues which are not easy to categorise or compare.

Whilst such an assessment is not an exact science, and some elements are qualitative, the idea is to provide enough visual and desk top information on the sites and how they compare against the criteria. This will guide elected members to the most appropriate shortlist for development of detailed designs, on which residents will be able to vote in the next main stage.

As the development of detailed designs incur professional fees, it is important that the list is not too extensive for the scale of the project.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Members are requested to consider options (to be presented at the meeting) and endorse a group of sites (shortlist) which should go to the next stage of the process. Members will need to consider improvement opportunities and funding implications of the proposal they endorse.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Play Pathfinder Cabinet Report 30 July 2008
Residents' Update 2