

ANNEXE NO. 1

REPORT TO:	Community Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM:
DATE OF MEETING:	10 October 2002	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Head of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Stuart Batchelor (5820)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Playscheme Review	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS07

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That playscheme provision is subject to a review with a report being brought to this Committee early in the New Year identifying a revised service to be delivered in 2003.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To inform members of how the school summer holiday playscheme currently operates and how this has become dated in recent times and consequently requires review and revision.

3.0 Executive Summary

3.1 Over recent years the Council has provided a free playscheme for the three urban parks in Swadlincote and a mobile scheme that parishes book and pay for to visit their recreation grounds during the summer holidays. Attitudes and circumstances have changed and now, if playschemes are to be continued, they should be adapted to ensure a safe and enjoyable service is provided for the local community.

4.0 Detail

4.1 The original purpose of playschemes was that in the absence of any other activities for young people during school holidays there should be opportunities for recreation and play for as many youngsters as possible. This would ensure that youngsters energies were focussed on positive activity and parents would know that the children would be supervised in a safe environment.

4.2 A free playscheme service is provided for 8 – 14 year olds on Maurice Lea Memorial Park, Eureka Park and Newhall Park for the first five weeks of the summer holidays. In addition, a sportsmobile travels to recreation grounds at the request and payment of local parish councils.

4.3 The schemes operate Monday to Friday, 10.00am–12.00noon and 2.00pm–4.00pm. A variety of sports equipment is provided at each location and the sessions are

outdoor sport oriented, as there is very limited indoor provision. There is no form of formal registration.

- 4.4 Normally there is one leader and one assistant at each venue with the exception of the mobile scheme that has an additional member of staff. Staff are recruited for their qualifications and experience of working with children in this age
- 4.5 Also In recent years Officers have been working with other partners to deliver a co-ordinated summer holiday programme for young people of all ages. This partnership is called the Youth Activity Providers Group and includes Green Bank Leisure Centre, Etwall Leisure Centre, Derbyshire Youth Service, Sport 2000, Rosliston Forestry Centre, People Express and Derbyshire Constabulary. This year additional resources were given to these partners by the South Derbyshire Crime and Disorder Partnership. These resources were only made available in April and the criteria were to provide activities for older children in Melbourne and Linton plus a programme of trips accessible for all.
- 4.6 To publicise this programme of opportunities the Council co-ordinates, produces and distributes over 10,000 Summer Holiday leaflets.
- 4.7 The attendance's at Playschemes over the past two years are as follows:

	2001	2002
Newhall Park	844	783
Eureka Park	481	515
Maurice Lea Park	617	530
Sportsmobile	1512	1461
Melbourne	34	231
Linton		113
Trips (without snooker)		202
Youth Activities (Maurice Lea, twilight)		90
TOTAL	3488	3825

ISSUES

- 4.8 The age of the children attending sessions on the urban parks has increased with the majority of participants now aged 11 to 16 year olds rather than 8 to 11 years as in the past. This is probably due to parents sending younger children to provision such as day camps at Green Bank Leisure Centre and Rascals at Rosliston Forestry Centre. However, this change of age means that staff who are recruited to work with younger children now have to work with older children and teenagers for whom this type of informal activity is not always suitable. Many of the older children do not respond to the organisation of activities and either do not want to participate or disrupt the activities for younger children.
- 4.9 These problems are generally found on the urban parks where as on the Sportsmobile sites the children tend to be younger and welcome the activities as nothing else is generally provided during the summer.
- 4.10 Recruitment of staff has become progressively more difficult over recent years and is due in part to the problems identified above. This year only 11 people applied for the 11 vacancies available with many of the candidates being at the minimum age of

eighteen years. Consequently this has resulted in a less experienced team of staff who find it difficult to supervise teenagers who are only a few years younger than themselves.

- 4.11 Playscheme staff and officers also recognise that the informal basis of the playschemes is not in keeping with modern thinking on child protection and play development. Other Playschemes generally have more formal registration procedures, are subject to inspection by OFSTED and have a higher ratios of staff to children. Although outdoor playschemes are currently not subject to OFSTED's authority it is expected that that will change in the next two years.
- 4.12 One problem with outdoor sessions is that staff have to ensure that other users of the Parks do not have access to playscheme activities or users. This is particularly important from a child protection point of view.
- 4.13 In recent years the management of the playscheme has been the responsibility of the Council's Sports Development Officer but until the last two years had the support of a bigger Leisure Development Unit, administrative support and the assistance of the Arts Development Officer, who helped in the operation of playscheme activities. This support has been lost and coupled with increased Sports Development work resulting from the Council's involvement in the Derbyshire and Peak Park Sports Forum and involvement in the Youth Activity Providers Group, means that the Sports Development Officer alone cannot maintain this service without a reduction in service or increased support.

Other Authorities

- 4.14 The following summary provides information on how other authorities currently provide playscheme activities;
- 4.15 East Staffordshire Borough Council only operates free playschemes in their most deprived wards and accommodates 40 children with four staff at each site. At the moment they do not register children but have said, in light of recent events in Cambridgeshire, they will be changing this scheme. They have a large Sports Development Team and dedicated administrative support, which could accommodate pre-registration.
- 4.16 Derby City has 1 full time designated officer, 2 part-time officers and administrative support to co-ordinate all the city's playschemes. Derby operate their scheme for seven years upwards so are governed by Early Learning Skills Partnership guidelines and are inspected by Ofsted. These schemes are predominantly free but still involve lengthy registration procedures for all participants and systems to deal with incidents.
- 4.17 Other large city authorities including Sheffield, Leicester and Nottingham do not directly deliver playschemes but grant aid other agencies to deliver them.
- 4.18 North West Leicestershire only assist established playschemes that are operated by schools or parishes. They have a leisure officer who co-ordinates and liaises with the relevant organisers. The council's contribution is to supply trained sports coaches and equipment to the sites. The sports coaches are there solely to organise the sports sessions and promote other local sports activities. The day to day control is down to the actual playscheme organisers not the sports coaches.

- 4.19 Derbyshire Dales District Council works in conjunction with their leisure centres to promote activities. They operate 4 multi-sport sessions on local playing fields for 1 week at a time but only for 2 hours in the morning. There is a fee charged on three of the sites but all require pre-booking.

OPTIONS

The following are a number of suggestions of how playscheme provision could be revised:

- 4.20 Research has shown that "quick fixes" in communities do not solve underpinning problems and more long-term development work has more beneficial results. To achieve this consideration could be given to developing a partnership project, which would provide activities for young people during all school holidays and also link the work of the Youth Service, Schools, Parish Councils, clubs and other providers throughout the year. This project could include the co-ordination of youth facility provision such as Youth Shelters, basketball courts and skateboard facilities. This project could work in the local community to co-ordinate resources and find other funding opportunities. As a result, playschemes could be used more strategically.
- 4.21 Melbourne Parish Council has worked very closely with the District Council to provide a successful playscheme which they have funded themselves and are looking to expand next year. This type of approach is used as good practice to work with other parishes. Therefore the existing budget could be used to grant aid parishes to operate their own schemes.
- 4.22 Rather than open sites such as the parks being used a safe and enclosed environment could be used, particular in the urban areas. The only enclosed venues are schools and they will make a hire charge. This will increase the overall cost of the playschemes and could restrict the length of time sessions could operate due to maintenance requirements
- 4.23 Current playscheme activities could be maintained with staffing increased to levels, which are adequate to ensure safe and enjoyable activities. Consideration would also be required for the establishment of pre-registration for playschemes. This would require increased administrative support.
- 4.24 These are suggestions which would form the basis of an options appraisal for a proposed mini Best Value Review of Playscheme provision to inform future provision from 2003/4.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications at this stage arising from this report.

6.0 Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Playscheme provision contributes to the Councils aim of 'promoting the health and welfare of all sections of the community, including access to leisure and cultural activities'.

8.0 Community Implications

- 8.1 Playscheme provision has traditionally been a very important service provided by the Council but requires a major review if it is to continue to meet the safety and welfare requirements of staff and young people.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 This report is an ideal opportunity to review and evaluate the provision of playschemes with a desired aim of providing a more effective service and to meet future legislative requirements.

Background Papers

- 10.1 None.

