



Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 6 July 2015

Five year plan for Crawley's adventure playgrounds

Report of the Head of Community Services and Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing
Report number DC&PS/ 013

1. Purpose

On Monday 10 November 2014, The Overview and Scrutiny Commission asked officers to provide a report, in six months' time, detailing further recommendations for the future development of the Council's adventure playgrounds.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission notes the report.

- a. It is recommended that the four adventure playgrounds are improved so that they become unique community hubs and focal points for families across the borough, detailed in section 5.2.
- b. To use trials and ongoing learning to ensure absolute value for money and that improvements are right for the current and potential customers.
- c. To initially focus on the development of Cherry Lane adventure playground and implement changes over a two year period (2015-2017), detailed in 5.3. The development of the remaining three adventure playgrounds to take place over the subsequent three years.
- d. To increase usage of the service by approximately 20% and to more than double income across all four sites, over five years.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendations respond to the findings from public consultation, as well as the need to replace outdoor play equipment within the four adventure playgrounds.

4. Background

- 4.1 The council manages four adventure playgrounds in the Borough and these are located in Broadfield, Bewbush, Langley Green and Furnace Green.
- 4.2 Visits to the adventure playgrounds have increased over the last five years with the introduction of additional services (for example childcare) and have more than doubled since 2010. In 2014/15 a total of 43,132 visits were recorded across all four

playgrounds.

- 4.3 The net annual cost of the adventure playground service is currently £430,000. With the recommendations for investment in the four adventure playgrounds, over the next five years, this allows the service to increase usage and more than double income by year 2020. This means the net subsidy for the service would decrease to £360,000.
- 4.4 A capital investment of £600,000 for three of the four adventure playgrounds has been agreed through Cabinet and the Budget Advisory Group. A further bid may come forward in future years for replacement of equipment at the fourth adventure playground, subject to the success of trials at the other sites.

5. Description of Issue to be resolved

- 5.1 To increase usage and income at the four adventure playground sites. To also increase awareness of the adventure playgrounds and their unique offering. The 2013 consultation highlighted that many non-users were not aware of the adventure playgrounds or the range of services offered.
- 5.2 The key recommendations across all four adventure playgrounds include:
- To keep the focus on the free open-access play offer and to supplement with improved income opportunities.
 - To sensitively maximise income opportunities through a mixture of hires and events as well as secondary spend.
 - To ensure the service offering is unique and different to the traditional, unsupervised, play areas and structured activities for children throughout the town.
 - To design the adventure playgrounds to ensure they are flexible and sustainable spaces and able to respond to the future needs of the community.
 - To allow each adventure playground to be individual and relevant to its specific customers. Including trialling different opening hours and weekend offers at each site.
 - To ensure the staff provide bespoke, free or affordable activities that are not available from other providers in the borough – to attract additional customers.
 - To develop cross-working opportunities with teams across the Council and external partners, to widen the offer to families.
 - To work beyond the boundaries of the playgrounds and create community hubs to aid cohesion.
 - To look into youth opportunities where relevant.
 - To support the investment in the playgrounds with ongoing marketing and promotions campaigns.
- 5.3 Based on the 2013 consultation report and customer feedback, the recommendations for investment in Cherry Lane adventure playground include:
- Flexible, moveable play equipment that can be kept easily in new storage cabins.
 - To separate out the playground into zones and install accessible pathways.
 - Zones to include: family area, separate toddlers' zone, den building and messy back-to basics play zone, sand and water area, sensory and inclusive play zone and a large flexible space in the centre that can be used for a variety of activities.
 - Treehouses and walkways as a unique feature.

- Shelter, seating and catering.
- Recycling the timber from the existing structures to build smaller items.
- Staff to put on a regular programme of bespoke, free and affordable activities
- Staff to encourage messy, adventurous and risky play that is not easily available elsewhere.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

6.1 The consultation report is available by following the hyperlink in Section 8.

7. Implications

7.1 There are no adverse revenue implications for the proposals, income should increase. Promotions and marketing will be contained within existing revenue budgets and any new play equipment will be inspected and maintained using existing in-house staff.

7.2 The adventure playgrounds are a town-wide resource and therefore the views of Ward Members have not been sought.

8. Background Papers

- a. Report to Cabinet, Wednesday 12 November 2014: The future of Crawley's adventure playgrounds.
http://pubintra/pub_live/groups/operational/@org/@readall/@dmcsrv/documents/committeereport/pub233608.pdf
- b. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, Monday 10 November 2014.
http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pub_livx/groups/operational/documents/minutes/pub235024.pdf
- c. Report to Cabinet, 4 December 2013: Play facilities investment proposals.
http://pubintra/pub_live/groups/operational/@org/@readall/@dmcsrv/documents/committeereport/pub206849.pdf
- d. Adventure playground service, consultation report 2013.
<http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pw/web/PUB233341>

Report author and contact officer:

Victoria Wise, Community Services Manager

T: 01293 438368

E: victoria.wise@crawley.gov.uk