

PLAY STRATEGY FOR WOKING 2007-2012

'Can you remember digging in the mud for worms? Or making perfume from rose petals? Or just hanging out with friends talking about things, listening to music? Or walking with your eyes closed to see what it felt like? Climbing Trees? Playing Pranks on Grown Ups? Doing things you knew you shouldn't? Making things reading, dreaming, hanging out, running, jumping, making yourself dizzy, pretending to be someone else?'

Gloucestershire Play Strategy 2005.

'People sometimes give us grief for hanging around the streets. They think that we are going to cause trouble. But there is nowhere to go. Things would be better if there was somewhere to go, easy to get to, and where you can chill out or something, depending on how you feel.'

'Somewhere to go? Something to do? DfES Consultation 2006

'Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter'

Children's Play Council (2001)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this play strategy is to examine current play provision within the Borough of Woking, identify gaps in provision based on an assessment of need and determine priorities for dealing with these gaps against the likely resources available. It is intended that the strategy should be a working document which will assist statutory bodies and voluntary organisations in planning future provision and the allocation of resources. The document is also intended to assist planners and developers in understanding local needs and expectations, particularly where new developments are planned, and it therefore reflects and links to existing Local Plan policies and the Local Development Framework.
- 1.2 The strategy will also assist in making the case for funding and other resources. In this regard it should be noted that the Borough of Woking has been allocated £200,000 from the Big Lottery as part of its Children's Play Initiative. In order to draw down this funding, the Council has to demonstrate that it has developed a portfolio of projects which have been identified through a play strategy which has been adopted by the Council and that the projects are those for which there is the greatest need.
- 1.3 The strategy has been developed in line with the guidance contained in the publication 'Planning for Play' published by the National Children's Bureau/Big Lottery Fund in 2006.
- 1.4 The strategy is set out as suggested within this document and is also consistent with the format adopted in the Cultural Strategy Development Plans produced by Woking

Borough Council. (Green Spaces, Health and Well Being, Arts and Events and Sports Development Plans published in 2007.).

- 1.5 The strategy has been prepared by Woking Borough Council in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations including Surrey County Council Early Years, Surrey County Council's Children's Service, Surrey County Council's Youth Service, Surrey Police and Woking YMCA. Together these organisations make up Woking's Play Partnership.

2.0 Vision and Scope of the Strategy

- 2.1 The Play Partnership has determined the following vision for play in Woking as follows

'To provide a range of opportunities for play for all children and young people across the Borough through facilities and programmes which are welcoming, stimulating, safe, attractive, and accessible.'

- 2.2 The scope of the strategy has also been determined following discussion by the Woking Play Partnership and includes-

Supervised and unsupervised play areas and play provision which is either free or available at minimal cost for children and young people from 0 to 18. i.e. provision which is freely available and where users are free to do what they want.

- Equipped children's play areas
- Youth play facilities such as multi use games areas, youth shelters, skate parks, fitness equipment, bmx tracks
- Kick-about areas and recreation grounds

However, it is recognised that there are a number of supervised venues and activities which support play and also that unsupervised play activities take place spontaneously in a range of locations.

The following supervised provisions have been identified, but a determination as to whether they are sufficient to meet demand is outside the scope of the strategy, because most of them involve some form of tuition or adult lead activity and/or have to be paid for.

- After school clubs
- Breakfast clubs
- Holiday play scheme provision
- Programmes for children with special needs
- Programmes provided by voluntary groups such as churches
- Youth clubs
- Commercially Run Indoor Play Centres e.g. Play Store
- Leisure (Swimming) Lagoon.

This approach will avoid duplication with the Surrey Children and Young People's Plan which examines such provision in more detail.

3.0 Definition of Play

- 3.1 The definition of play used throughout this strategy document is taken from the document 'Getting Serious about Play' A Review of Children's Play. London: DCMS (2004)

'What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons'

Although this is a concise definition, this strategy recognises the richness, diversity and complexity of play. Play arises from an innate need for children and young people to explore, make sense of and learn about their world and their relationships with one another. The value of being able to choose what to do and how to do it freely and spontaneously in the development of children and young people should not be underestimated. The role of coaching, teaching and structured activities which increasingly fill the lives of children is recognised but is not within the scope of this strategy.

4.0 Guiding Principles

- 4.1 A number of guiding principles were established by the play partnership in preparing this strategy and these are-

- The importance and value of play is recognised and there is a commitment to ensuring that all children have access to play opportunities within their local environment.
- There is a commitment to ensuring that play facilities and programmes of activity are attractive, accessible, and welcoming to all children and offer safe, challenging and stimulating environments to assist in physical, mental and social development.

There is a commitment to improving play provision and to identifying and reducing barriers to access by those with special needs, disabilities, social or economic disadvantage. It is recognised that all mainstream play services should, wherever possible, be inclusive, accessible and welcoming to all children.

- 4.2 It is recognised that

- Children and young people play in and socialise in a variety of public spaces, not just those designated as play areas or recreational areas
- Children and young people need to encounter and learn to manage an acceptable level of risk in their play and other activities; but need to feel safe and be safe in their play environment
- The views of children and young people should be sought and listened to
- Children and young people should have access to the widest possible range of play experiences, opportunities and environments both indoors and outside

5.0 The Case for Play : National and Regional Perspective.

- 5.1 The importance of providing children and young people with opportunities for play has become increasingly recognised at a national level as not only key to the development of healthy, confident individuals, but also as being necessary to achieve healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. The document 'Best Play-What play provision should do for children' published jointly by NPFA/PLAYLINK/Children's Play Council in 2001 is widely regarded as the benchmark document which sets out the outcome objectives for play provision. The seven key objectives are-
- Extending the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
 - Recognising the child's need to test boundaries and responding positively to that need
 - Managing the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm
 - Maximising the range of play opportunities
 - Fostering independence and healthy self esteem
 - Fostering respect for others and offering opportunities for social interaction
 - Fostering the child's well being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.
- 5.2 The National Play Review for the Department for Culture Media and Sport 'Getting Serious about Play' published in 2004 identified the need to raise the value and status of play and this has been placed at the heart of the Children's Play Initiative launched by the Big Lottery in 2006. This initiative is aimed at creating, improving and developing inclusive play across England in a way which responds to the needs of the community and reflects the interests and wishes of children and young people. The stated vision of the initiative is that every child and young person should be able to access play provision that offers the opportunity to develop important social and life skills.
- 5.3 In 2004 the Government published a document entitled 'Every Child Matters; Change for Children'. This document identified five outcomes for children and young people: Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Attaining Economic Well-Being. It has been recognised that through involvement in active play in safe environments within the heart of the communities, by being involved in decisions about the type of play provision and by working with others, children and young people can achieve against all five of these outcomes.
- 5.4 The Children's Act passed in 2004 provides the legislative framework for Every Child Matters and requires Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation and take part in joint working between agencies in order to improve children's health and well being.
- 5.5 Youth Matters, the Youth Green Paper, was published on 18 July 2005 and the subsequent consultation ended on 4 November 2005. With over 19,000 responses from young people, this was one of the largest responses to a Government consultation from any one group.

- 5.6 The Government response, Youth Matters: Next Steps was published on 8 March 2006 and sets out the vision for empowering young people, giving them 'somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to'.
- 5.7 Proposals set out in Youth Matters include a new duty on local authorities in the form of Children's Trusts to secure positive activities for young people. New national standards are planned which aim to encompass exciting, and enriching activities. The standards will also include 'less structured activity that nonetheless contributes to a rich and varied life outside school or work, such as somewhere safe to hang out with friends'.
- 5.8 The Government's Department for Communities and Local Government has also developed policy initiatives to improve urban areas, including the Cleaner, Safer, and Greener initiative. Within this policy, areas for children and young people are identified as one of the types of open space which contribute towards the public open space realm and which are key to achieving the aims of the initiative.
- 5.9 National planning guidance explicitly recognises the need for dedicated outdoor space for play and recreation. Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 requires local authorities to assess the needs and opportunities for different types of open space and recreational facilities, including play space for children and young people.
- 5.10 The Play Council is currently working on a set of indicators for play provision for children and young people. These indicators are based around access to, experience of and quality of facilities and will be very useful for Councils and others in assessing whether play provision is meeting the needs of the community.
- 5.11 The Play Council has also published a policy on risk and challenge in children's and young people's play which has two underlying principles-
- Safety in play provision is not absolute and cannot be addressed in isolation
 - If play provision is not exciting and attractive to children and young people it will fail, no matter how safe it is.
- 5.12 The policy is based on the principle that children and young people should have the opportunity to assess risks for themselves, in a range of situations, so that they can develop the skills to determine acceptable levels of risk in the wider world. It is also recognised by the Play Council that if play provision becomes 'too safe' children and young people will look elsewhere for challenge and excitement, leaving facilities unused.

6.0 Regional and County Policy Framework

- 6.1 The Children and Young People's Plan for Surrey has been developed by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This partnership represents the agencies and services which work with children and young people across Surrey. The plan, created to meet the requirements of the Children's Act 2004 and the Children's National Service Framework demonstrates how services including those involved in play provision will work together in Surrey to improve the lives of children and young people.
- 6.2 The Surrey Early Years and Childcare Implementation Plan sets out the key priorities and strategic goals of the Early Years and Childcare Service. The plan considers the

development of Children's Centres, Early Education, Special Needs and Training and Recruitment, with childcare and play acknowledged as part of the service provision.

- 6.3 A strategy for tackling obesity in west Surrey has been developed which recognises that effective prevention and intervention at an early stage are key to dealing with the impending crisis in healthcare which will result from an increasingly overweight population. The strategy recognises the importance of encouraging physical activity in children and that providing more opportunities for play is one way of encouraging such increased activity. Free and recreational play is identified as one of the most effective ways that children and young people can achieve the recommended one hour a day of moderate intensity activity

7.0 Local Policy Framework

- 7.1 The strategies which influence provision for play at a local level are Woking Borough Council's Green Spaces Development Plan, The Woking Borough Local Plan, the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, The Community Strategy for Woking and the Woking Cultural Strategy.

- 7.2 There are a number of consistent themes running through these key documents which are relevant to play which can be summarised as follows-

- At a strategic level, the need to be able to **cope with existing and future demands** for play
- The need to ensure that there is **good access to locally based play areas and activities**
- The need to **provide opportunities for children and young people to take part in activities which promote physical and mental health , social cohesion, and community spirit**
- The **need for quality standards** which provide for a clean, healthy and safe facilities and they meet the standards expected by the community

- 7.3 The Council's current Local Plan 1999 contains a number of policies which relate to children's and young people's outdoor play provision. Local Plan Policy REC 1 seeks to maintain existing open space provision and requires developers of sites of over 15 dwellings to provide open space on site or make a contribution towards planned off site provision. This policy covers all forms of formal recreational provision including informal kick about areas and play areas for children and young people. The policy states that the Council will apply the standards set out in National Playing Fields Association Publication 'The Six Acre Standard' when negotiating open space provision.

- 7.4 The Local Development Framework Core Strategy has identified that there is a slight shortage of children's and young people's play space within the Borough against National Playing Fields Association standards. This statement is derived from the Council's PPG 17 Study which found that there was 47.9 Hectares of play space against the NPFA recommendation in the 'Six Acre Standard' of 53.9 Hectares. In order to address this shortfall of 6 Hectares, policy LC3 of the Core Strategy states 'improved children's and young people's play provision will be made to serve local areas where there is an identified shortfall or in order to meet increased demands as a

result of new development.' The target in the strategy is to provide 0.8 Ha of additional play space per additional 1000 population.

- 7.5 A report to the Council's Executive in September 2003 set out an outline strategy for children's play areas in that it identified gaps in provision of equipped children's play based on comparison with the National Playing Fields Association's Six Acre Standard. This report identified 6 areas within the Borough where play provision was thought to be deficient and set out the means for tackling these deficiencies. The report also identified play areas where qualitative improvements should be carried out and determined priorities for a programme of improvements. Tackling these deficiencies in provision and carrying out the improvements are included as priorities for action in the Council's approved Green Spaces Development Plan which is linked to the Council's Cultural Strategy.
- 7.6 The Council's Leisure Strategy 1998-2003 set out a programme for tackling perceived deficiencies in play provision for young people including the construction of multi use games areas, kick about spaces, basketball goals, teenage shelters, skate areas and '10 plus' equipment. Most of this provision identified at that time was achieved with over 22 new facilities provided in consultation with young people.

8.0 Borough Profile

- 8.1 The Borough of Woking lies approximately 40km to the South West of London with Guildford to the South and Surrey Heath to the North. It covers an area of approximately 6359 Hectares of which 60 % is Green Belt.
- 8.2 The main population centre extends in a belt from Byfleet in the east through to West Byfleet Sheerwater, Horsell and the town of Woking, then west to Goldsworth Park, St Johns and Knaphill taking in Old Woking and Kingfield to the South. There are a number of smaller villages outside this built up area including Mayford, Sutton Green and Brookwood. It has a growing population of around 90,000.
- 8.3 Although Woking is a relatively affluent Borough (Woking is in the top 10% of the least deprived areas in the Country) there are pockets of social disadvantage and exclusion. Using 2004 indices of Deprivation, the areas in Woking which fall below the 60th percentile nationally are-
- Dartmouth Ave area of Sheerwater (Maybury and Sheerwater)
 - Lakeview (Goldsworth East)
 - Walton Rd and Maybury Rd (Maybury and Sheerwater)
 - Boundary Rd and Board School Rd. (Maybury and Sheerwater)
 - Westfield Ave and Barnsbury Farm Estate (Kingfield and Westfield)
 - Stream Close Byfleet (Byfleet)
- 8.4 According to the 2001 census from the Office of National Statistics, Woking has more young people under 16 than in any other age range, with 20.6% of its respective population in this category. The ward of Sheerwater and Maybury has the highest number of young people between 11 and 19 (1227) followed by Knaphill (909), Goldsworth West (750), Horsell West (717) and Goldsworth East (715). With regard to children under the age of 5, the five wards with the highest number are Maybury and Sheerwater (688), Knaphill (632), Goldsworth East (568), Byfleet (436) and Horsell West (443). Overall the number of households in Woking with dependant children is 8033.

8.5 Ethnic Minorities represent about 9.7 % of the total population in Woking, with 3% of Pakistani origin, 1% Indian and 1% Chinese.

9.0 Existing Play Provision

9.1 The most recent and comprehensive audit of open space, sports and recreation facilities was completed in 2005 in line with the requirements of Government Policy detailed in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17). In addition to identifying all significant open spaces and play areas across the Borough, the audit assessed the quality of each site and included a needs assessment based on a survey of the Woking Citizen's Panel. The audit, undertaken in preparation for the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, also provides part of the evidence base for this play strategy.

9.2 A stock take of all leisure and recreational provision in the Borough, including local authority and private facilities, was undertaken in 2005 and this also provided valuable information towards the PPG 17 Audit.

10.0 Unsupervised Children's Play Provision: Outdoor Play Areas (Children from 3-10 years old.)

10.1 Within the Borough of Woking there are currently 36 play areas managed by the Borough Council. These are identified in Appendix A to this report. The designations of LAP, LEAP and NEAP for each play area included in this table are those used by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) in its publication 'The Six Acre Standard'. The definitions of each of these types of play areas are set out in Appendix B. Appendix C shows the distribution of the play areas with their catchment zones.

10.2 A further 3 play areas are within the ownership of developers awaiting adoption by the Council, and there is 1 play area in private ownership which is freely accessible. (Goldsworth Park shopping area).

10.3 With regard to the distribution of play areas, the Council's PPG 17 Audit used a threshold of 400m as a reasonable distance for children to walk to their nearest play area, providing that there were no physical barriers such as busy roads to cross. This threshold is the catchment area used by the NPFA for a Local Area for Play (LEAP) and is equivalent to 5 minutes walking distance or 240 metres straight line distance. The audit shows that the urban area is generally well served against this standard.

10.4 The report to the Council's Executive in September 2003 identified 19 areas not covered by play areas against the National Playing Field Association's Six Acre Standard. These are listed at Appendix D. Of these areas 6 were identified as having a need for play provision which was not being met. The current policy which is expressed in the Council's adopted Green Spaces Development plan is to concentrate efforts on meeting the shortfall in those six parts of the Borough where the need for play provision is not being met.

10.5 These areas are - Barnsbury, part of Goldsworth East, Brookwood, Maybury Estate, Byfleet (north of Parvis Road,) and Pyrford Village.

10.6 The remaining 13 areas not being covered by the standard were excluded as the nature of the areas and anecdotal evidence suggested that demand for play provision

was either low or non-existent in these locations. However it is recognised that there may be a need to test this conclusion again at a future date.

10.7 The September 2003 report identified the need for a programme of playground refurbishment and improvement based on an audit of condition and provision. This programme commenced in 2004, with 16 play areas refurbished and or improved since that time. Works have included new equipment, safe fall surfacing, fencing and better access and provision for those with special needs. The total expenditure on refurbishment of these sixteen play areas is approximately £600,000.

10.8 A further 13 play areas are due for refurbishment from 2007/08. These sites are indicated at Appendix C and are as follows-

- Byfleet Recreation Ground-Toddler play area and paddling pool
- Byfleet Recreation Ground Junior play area
- Bonsey Lane-originally part of first phase of refurbishment
- Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground
- Horsell Moor
- Lakeside
- Loop Road-originally part of first phase of refurbishment
- Oakfield
- Queen Elizabeth Gardens
- Sutton Green
- West Byfleet Recreation Ground
- Westfield
- Woking Park

10.9 The remaining 7 play areas not yet included in the current or previous refurbishment programme are less than 10 years old and are not likely to require refurbishment until at least 2012.

11.0 Unsupervised Youth Play Provision: Including Skate Parks, Multi Use Games Areas, Youth Shelters, Fitness Equipment (for young people 10 -16 years old.)

11.1 The provisions for young people are shown at Appendix E. There are 17 sites across the Borough with some formal outdoor recreational play provision; most of these are within parks and recreation grounds which also provide scope for informal activities for young people such as meeting friends, listening to music, playing ball games etc.

11.2 Most of this formal provision is less than ten years old and is in good condition. However there are some items older than this which require refurbishment, these are

- Boundary Rd Skate Area-ramps need replacement/refurbishment and tarmac area needs improved drainage
- Goldsworth Park Multi Use Games Area-needs resurfacing
- Goldsworth Park Skate Area-ramp needs resurfacing/replacement
- Sheerwater Youth Shelter/Fitness equipment-needs replacement.
- Sussex Rd Tennis/ Basketball Area-needs resurfacing
- Waterers Park Tennis Area-needs resurfacing
- West Byfleet Basketball/ Tennis Area-needs resurfacing

11.3 It should be noted that in addition to the formal unsupervised provision identified above many children and young people use other areas such as recreation grounds, greens and amenity areas in housing estates, semi-natural open spaces such as woodland

and heathland, hard landscaped areas in the town centre, and streets and roads in residential areas where traffic is light. Of particular note in this regard are those areas where young people have constructed makeshift bmx or trial bike courses such as at St Johns Lye, Brookwood Country Park and in Woking Park. The Council is monitoring use of those areas to ensure that safety is not compromised to an unacceptable level. Some of the young people involved in those activities in Woking Park have indicated that they would like the Council to construct a trial bike course.

12.0 Supervised Play: Including After School Clubs, Breakfast Clubs, Holiday Schemes, Disabled/Special Needs Provision (children and young people 0-19 years old)

- 12.1 Appendix F shows current provision for supervised play activities across the Borough. Currently there are 5 after school/breakfast clubs, 21 registered play groups, 11 day nurseries, 16 toddler groups, 4 crèches and 12 venues for holiday play schemes. The Borough Council is the largest provider of holiday schemes and runs a programme of play schemes where children can attend a supervised area at a school or recreation ground site and take part in organised games and activities. The Council also provides activity based summer day camps at The Leisure Centre and Pool in the Park under the supervision of a coach or tutor.
- 12.2 Generally provision at these venues requires payment and therefore these activities are outside the scope of this strategy which is concerned with free play. The exceptions are those activities and programmes provided by Ypod, a YMCA centre which is situated in Woking Town Centre. Here activities are available for young people on a drop in basis and include homework clubs, pool tables, meeting area and a sound studio.
- 12.3 Surrey Youth Service currently provides for youth activities at 3 venues across the Borough including Sheerwater, Maybury and Goldsworth Park. Lakers at Woking Park has a floodlit multi use games area which is available to Young People and also provides drop in facilities for young people, including young parents and their children. A youth music activity programme at Knaphill Youth Arts Centre is supported by the Borough Council and provided through Surrey County Council.

13.0 Consultation

- 13.1 This strategy has been developed using a range of existing consultation information as well as additional consultation undertaken specifically for the purpose of preparing this strategy.

Consultation on Children's Play Facilities

- 13.2 A questionnaire put to the citizen's panel as part of the Council's PPG 17 Audit in 2005 asked a series of questions in relation to the provision and quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities within the Borough. Just under 1400 questionnaires were sent out of which 948 responses were received representing a return of 68%. For the purpose of analysis the results were weighted by age, ethnicity and location with Borough wards being grouped into 3 general areas:

Area 1 includes Byfleet, Horsell East and Woodham, Horsell West, Pyrford and West Byfleet.

Area 2 includes Goldsworth East, Kingfield and Westfield, Maybury and Sheerwater, Mount Hermon East, Mount Hermon West and Old Woking.

Area 3 includes Brookwood, Goldsworth West, Hermitage and Knaphill South, Knaphill, Mayford and Sutton Green and St John's and Hook Heath

- 13.3 Of the people questioned 47% considered that somebody in their household needed play facilities. Of this figure 82% considered that current facilities either meets or exceeds their household's needs. Only 18% considered that their household's needs were not met. Of the 18% who consider their needs to be unmet 50% stated that this was because equipment provided in play areas was not appropriate whilst 41% attributed this to facilities being too far away. The concerns in relation to equipment not being appropriate were evenly spread across area 1, 2 and 3. Approximately half of those who raised concerns about facilities being too far away were located in area 3.
- 13.4 The audit also indicated that the majority of play areas are of both high or medium quality and value.
- 13.5 Consultation on the details of provision is at the heart of the Council's play area refurbishment programme. The Council has established a process in partnership with its children's play area provider, Russell Leisure Ltd. which gives children and adults the opportunity to comment on detailed proposals which can be viewed on a website, at on-site workshops, in leaflets and posters displayed at sites and community notice boards. A similar process has been established with Husson UK in the design of new facilities for young people and has been used in the design of skate parks and in the choice of equipment for teenagers.

Consultation on Play Facilities for Young People

- 13.6 The Council, in developing a strategy for play recognised that the needs of teenagers would not be addressed through filling gaps in children's play provision or through refurbishment of existing play areas.
- 13.7 In order to gain a better understanding of the needs of young people consultation was undertaken at five secondary schools across the Borough during March and April 2007. A manned road show vehicle visited each school during the lunch break and young people were invited to fill in questionnaires to identify their current use of facilities and programmes of activity and to indicate on a map their preferred choice of location for new facilities. This methodology and the questionnaire were developed following a focus group meeting of youth councillors at YPod.
- 13.8 Over 750 questionnaires were returned and approximately 8 locations across the Borough identified for additional or improved provision. An analysis of the returns was undertaken and the main findings were as follows.
- a.) One of the most popular activities for young people is hanging around with friends in the local neighbourhood or park (39%), this is followed by attending youth clubs (including Ypod) (26%) or using a kick about/multi use games areas (10%). Playing sport, shopping, visiting cinema, using computer and other activities made up the remaining responses.

b.) Of the existing outdoor facilities respondents indicated that multi use games areas (42%) skateparks (27%) and youth shelters (11%) are the most used facilities.

c.) The most requested new facilities in order of preference were –

- § Climbing Walls/Boulders (37%) (purpose built climbing structures up to 3 m high with safe fall surfacing)
- § Multi Use Games Areas (31%) (suitable for basketball, five a side football, netball etc.)
- § Tennis (26%) (casual use areas)
- § Fitness Equipment (24%)
- § Cricket Nets (21%) (permanent artificial wickets with weld mesh cages)
- § Skate Parks (20%) (for use by in line skaters, skateboarders and bmx cyclists)
- § Youth Shelters (16%) (covered gathering areas with seats)

13.9 The number of respondents who identified sites for their preferred choice of equipment in the questionnaire was very low with most sites being mentioned by less than 10 young people. The exceptions were Knaphill, (where a strong preference for climbing walls, tennis and multi use games area was expressed) and Goldsworth Park, where a strong preference for a skate park was indicated. The Town Centre was also indicated by many respondents as the preferred location for their choice of equipment with climbing walls and skate parks receiving the most mention.

13.10 An exercise in which respondents were asked to indicate on a map the place where they would like to see more outdoor facilities showed strong preferences for

- Maybury and Sheerwater (with Sheerwater Recreation Ground, New Monument School Playing Field and Boundary Rd indicated as preferred sites) -81 Hits
- Knaphill (with Waterers Park and the Vyne Field indicated as preferred sites), -61 Hits
- Goldsworth East (including Town Centre, Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground and Lakeview Recreation Ground indicated as preferred sites) – 41 Hits
- Kingfield and Westfield (with Woking Park indicated as a preferred site) -36 Hits

13.11 Mount Hermon East (26 hits), Knaphill and Hermitage South (38 Hits), Horsell West (29 hits) and Horsell East and Woodham (23 hits) all recorded significant numbers of hits but clusters were ill defined and tended to relate to residential areas where it is thought respondents lived or in the vicinity of schools used for the consultation exercise. Suitable sites for provision within easy reach of these areas might include Woking Park, Winston Churchill School or St Johns Lye, Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Horsell, and Boundary Road Recreation Ground.

13.12 Other areas with a significant number of 'hits' were Byfleet (with Byfleet Recreation Ground and Sanway Rd indicated as preferred sites); (21 Hits), Old Woking (with St Peter's Recreation Ground indicated as a preferred site); (19 Hits), West Byfleet (with West Byfleet Recreation Ground as a preferred site); (18 hits) and Goldsworth West (with Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground indicated as a preferred site); (21 Hits).

13.13 It should also be noted that in some cases respondents were asking for provision of facilities which already exist.e.g. Skate Park at Goldsworth Park. This may indicate

that the facilities are not felt to meet the need in terms of quality or scale of provision or that there is a lack of awareness as a result of insufficient marketing.

- 13.14 In terms of activities, the three most mentioned new activities are sports teams (46%), music events (29%) and dance/drama (30%). The opportunity to participate in more extreme sports (such as motorcross, skiing, snowboarding, paintball, climbing etc) was mentioned by 11%.
- 13.15 Comments from young people suggested that there was a need to provide activities based at existing or proposed outdoor facilities e.g. skills coaching, setting up of street football and basketball leagues based at multi-use games areas. This would give young people confidence and skills to maximise use of the facilities unsupervised and free from adult intervention in future.
- 13.16 Transport was mentioned as a problem for some young people. The need for some form of shuttle bus or dial a ride service was mentioned by those who live away from the town centre and in particular those at Mayford. There is also a suggestion that there needs to be an investment in some facilities for young people in these less populated areas, despite the small numbers involved. This could take the form of low key provision such as single basketball goals and youth shelters. A request for such provision was made in respect of Mayford at the focus group session.
- 13.17 It should be noted that these results are broadly consistent with national surveys of young people ('somewhere to go something to') and that the Youth Council has endorsed the findings and proposals.

14.0 Management and maintenance arrangements for play and young people's provision

- 14.1 Management of play facilities provided by the Council in Woking rests with the Council's Cultural and Community Development Team. Day to day maintenance is undertaken by the Council's Environmental Maintenance Partner, Serco, with Neighbourhood Officers from the Council undertaking a community engagement role and resolving issues at a local level. Safety inspections are undertaken in accordance with Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) guidelines. An annual safety audit and risk assessment of all of the children's and young peoples play facilities provided by the Borough Council is undertaken by RoSPA and this inspection also included an access audit in 2007.
- 14.2 The impact on play areas of dog fouling, vandalism, graffiti and litter including broken glass are often cited by users of public parks and play areas as the areas of greatest concern. These issues are tackled in Woking using a range of methods. Clear signs are displayed at all play areas advising users that dogs are not allowed within play areas. Recreation grounds are covered by poop scoop bye laws which make it an offence for owners not to pick up dog faeces. Additional measures including raising public awareness and regular patrols by the Council's animal warden are also available.
- 14.3 Vandalism, litter and graffiti are tackled by the Council's environmental maintenance partner, Serco. However it is acknowledged that greater public involvement in monitoring and confidence that reporting such instances will lead to prompt action is important in maintaining high standards.
- 14.4 Delivery of new provisions and refurbishments is through the Council's Children's Play Partner, Russell Leisure Ltd or in the case of Youth Play Provision through Husson UK

Ltd. Both partners have been appointed on long term arrangements (8 years minimum). Partners undertake consultation on behalf of the Council and Russell Leisure provides training to Serco maintenance operatives.

14.5 The importance of training is recognised by the Council and its partners and there are arrangements in place to ensure that technical staff are kept abreast of new legislation and provisions through personal training plans. Operatives undertaking maintenance and inspections have received appropriate training through accredited organisations.

15.0 Key Issues and Priorities for Action

15.1 The Play Partnership has determined the following vision for play in Woking -

'To provide a range of opportunities for play for all children and young people across the Borough through facilities and programmes which are welcoming, stimulating, safe, attractive, and accessible.'

15.2 The following objectives have been set as steps towards achieving this vision

- **support national, regional and local policy objectives** i.e. strategic planning- to ensure that play provision in Woking meets locally determined standards and contributes towards policy wider objectives including health and well being and community safety. To address identified shortfalls in provision and ensure that future needs are identified and met, including training needs.
- **Improve accessibility and provide links between play area and other activities and facilities** in order to raise levels of participation and ensure that play contributes towards the quality of life for residents and visitors. To include identifying and removing barriers to access to free play provision, particularly for those groups with the greatest needs.
- **Ensure that the quality of play provision is in line with community needs** and expectations and meets recognised standards where these exist. To include the development of innovative provision to stimulate and excite the imagination, maximise opportunities for social, and physical development within existing and future refurbishment and new build programmes
- Promote play areas and programmes of activity - i.e. **marketing and communication**, in order to promote better understanding of the value of play, to promote play opportunities across the Borough and understand the needs of users and residents.

The audits of provision and the consultation exercises have established a range of issues which can be related to the objectives identified above. These are

16.0 Supporting National Regional and Local Policies/Strategic Planning

16.1 There is a shortfall in provision against locally determined standards which needs to be addressed, both for children's play and outdoor facilities for young people.

16.2 For children's play the locally identified standard identified within the PPG 17 Report is to provide play areas within 400m (240 metres straight line distance or 5 minutes

walking distance) of all significant centres of population across the Borough in areas of expressed need. It is proposed that this standard is adopted as part of the Play strategy.

16.3 There are six areas within the Borough are identified as having an unmet demand for children's play against this standard. These are Brookwood, Barnsbury, part of Goldsworth Park East, Pyrford, part of Byfleet and part of Maybury.

16.4 There is a need to continue to consult on provision of facilities through the Council's neighbourhood engagement processes in order to test validity of earlier consultation exercises. In particular would be useful to test whether there is any demand for play facilities in those 13 parts of the Borough not covered by the 400m threshold for play provision and not included in the future provision programme. Consultation methods should be in line with the latest advice from Play England.

16.5 It is recommended that a range of options be explored for meeting gaps in play provision including, where appropriate, the use of school sites.

16.6 For young people aged 10 and upwards there are a number of sites across the Borough identified through the 2007 consultation as preferred options for additional outdoor provision. A strategic approach is required which takes into account the consultation results alongside the audit of existing provision and which would provide a network of facilities distributed across the Borough in a way which maximises the opportunities for young people. The following network of provision is proposed, listed in the order of preference for facilities expressed through the consultation exercise.

- Establish climbing boulders/walls at Woking Park, Byfleet and Goldsworth Park (town centre provision may be achieved at Ypod) in order to give a spread of these provisions across the Borough.
- Establish multi use games areas in line with Green Spaces Development plan proposals at Knaphill (Waterers Park), Old Woking (St Peters Recreation Ground), West Byfleet and Byfleet as priorities. Upgrade existing multi use games area at Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground.
- Further explore needs for multi use games areas at St Johns, Westfield (Bonsey Lane), Sussex Road(Knaphill) and Horsell (Queen Elizabeth Gardens). The need for these provisions was identified as part of the Green Spaces Development Plan but did appear to be a priority with young people during the consultation processes for the play strategy.
- Refurbish casual use tennis courts at Knaphill (Sussex Road and Waterers Park), West Byfleet and Byfleet. Refurbish and promote use of existing courts in Woking Park.
- Provide fitness facilities at Woking Town Centre (possibly through Ypod), and at Woking Park as nearest suitable site. Explore opportunities to link the provision of equipment which improves fitness in children and young people with provision for adults-e.g. establishing green gyms.
- Provide new Cricket Nets at Woking Park and at Goldsworth Park.
- Provide new Skate Park based around existing facilities at Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground and Boundary Road (in the absence of an alternative suitable

site close to the town centre). Provide new skate park at Sheerwater Recreation Ground.

- Upgrade existing Youth Shelter at Goldsworth Park and Knaphill-and keep need for additional provision under review.

16.7 The existing Local Plan policies on provision of areas for recreation including play will be replaced in the emerging Local Development Framework. It is suggested that the threshold distance for children's play identified in the Council's PPG 17 Audit of 400m or 5 minutes walking distance be applied to new developments in appropriate cases. Where such provision is not appropriate or possible on new development sites (for example because of the small scale or type of development), a tariff based system of seeking contributions towards upgrading or providing children's play areas off site is likely to be applied based on costs of provision. This approach is to be reviewed as part of a PPG 17 review.

16.8 A guiding principle in developing this strategy is the recognition that children and young people play in and socialise in a variety of public spaces, not just those designated as play areas. The importance of streets, parks, recreation grounds, the town centre, natural and semi-natural locations has been acknowledged. Actions should be included in the strategy which will enable the continued use of such spaces for play and which will create a mechanism for such areas to be provided in new developments through the Local Development Framework.

16.9 It is proposed that those indicators currently being developed by the Children's Play Council for children and young people's play offer be used once they are confirmed; where it is appropriate to do so, with reference to other agencies. These will measure access to and levels of use of provision, experience (i.e. satisfaction) of the provision and quality of provision.

17.0 Improving Accessibility and Linking Activities (i.e. Participation)

17.1 Programmes of refurbishment and new provision need to continue to recognise the importance of ensuring that those with special needs are catered for and that play facilities can provide opportunities for the stimulation of a range of senses including sight, hearing, touch and smell. Audits of access should continue to be undertaken and key sites identified for the inclusion of equipment suitable for those with special needs.

17.2 Where possible barriers to access should be removed or alternatives provided. This includes consideration of how to overcome physical barriers such as busy roads as well as social and economic barriers. Regular access audits should be undertaken and results kept under review.

17.3 There is a need to investigate options for improving transport for young people in order that they can access play facilities and programmes. This is particularly important for those who are remote from the town centre.

17.4 In addition to providing improved transport there may be a need to provide some low key facilities for young people in outlying areas of the Borough such as Sutton Green, Mayford, Brookwood and Pyrford. Such provision could take the form of youth shelters and combined five a side/basketball goals.

17.5 Programmes of activity which encourage young people and children to develop skills and confidence to progress towards taking ownership of activities around facilities

should be put in place. This could take the form of establishing street basketball/football leagues at multi use games areas and coaching/taster days at skate parks.

- 17.6 Future programmes of activity for young people should concentrate on team sports, music, drama and dance in line with consultation results.
- 17.7 The construction of makeshift BMX and trials bike courses in semi natural areas by young people for BMX and trials bike activities has been mentioned in the audit of existing provision. There is a case for supporting these young people to ensure that the facilities are constructed in a safe manner and that further opportunities are provided to develop skills. Monies (up to £200k) may be available through the Big Lottery's 'playful ideas' programme to support such a programme. Such a programme, involving the use of semi natural areas and more adventurous activities could lead to the further development of young people through volunteering. Both Surrey County Council and YPod have indicated a willingness to support such a programme.

18.0 Ensuring quality of provision is in line with community needs. (i.e. Quality)

- 18.1 The current refurbishment programme for children's play provision and the consultation methodology which is already established appears to be successful and should be continued. Satisfaction surveys before and after refurbishment should be undertaken in order to measure the degree of success of refurbishments and should be part of the process. Continued emphasis needs to be placed on the choice of equipment, particularly in regard to longevity and appropriate choices of robust equipment be made where the incidence of vandalism is high.
- 18.2 Maintenance programmes need to be robust and kept under review and adequate training provided for those responsible for maintenance. This is currently achieved through a close working arrangement between the Council's environmental maintenance contractor, Serco, and Russell Leisure who are responsible for the current refurbishment programme. It is recommended that opportunities for greater community involvement and participation in monitoring be explored. A range of measures to tackle dog fouling should also be considered including encouraging a more responsible attitude towards this problem by dog owners.
- 18.3 It is important that the current programme of annual maintenance inspections and risk assessments is undertaken. Risk needs to be managed at an acceptable level to remove threats of death or serious injury but facilities need to be challenging and exciting enough to encourage use
- 18.4 A programme to improve and refurbish existing youth play facilities should be put in place and arrangements made to manage future investment in youth and children's play facilities.

19.0 Marketing and Communication

- 19.1 There is a need to undertake regular user surveys to determine whether play areas are meeting the needs of the community is key to monitoring success.
- 19.2 The promotion of facilities and programmes of activity should continue, using a variety of methods including web sites, brochures and leaflets, but other means should be explored as there still appears to be a particular problem in communicating what is available to young people aged between 10 and 18.

- 19.3 The current methods of consultation on the refurbishment programme for children's play areas appear to be successful and should be continued and kept under review. Similar methods of consultation should be applied where new facilities for young people are planned in order to ensure that the views of end users and residents can influence the details of provision where necessary.
- 19.4 Many young people use alternative means of communication and gain information from others using mobile phones, text. web sites and by word of mouth. The opportunities to use such methods in order to provide or seek information more effectively and to keep in touch with young people should be explored

