

## Cheshire West and Chester Play Strategy Tier One Annual Review (covering period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017)

### 1. Introduction and background

The Cheshire West and Chester Play Strategy (2016 – 2020) is comprised of two "tiers" of documents:

**Tier One Play Strategy** - A borough-wide strategy that provides guidance on policy and best practice in outdoor public play and youth facility provision. The Tier One strategy makes the case for play and demonstrates the Play Strategy's alignment with corporate strategic policy such as the Council Plan; and the Health and Wellbeing and Growth agendas. It also embeds the principle of inclusive play throughout.

**Tier Two Play Strategy** – comprised of four Locality Play Improvement frameworks. These supply detailed analysis of play spaces and outdoor youth facilities at the Locality level.

The Play Strategy highlighted the importance of holding a regular review of the Play Strategy and its Action Plans. It proposed that this should be done annually. This document provides an analysis of the Year 1 Action Plan and how it has delivered against the actions set for the first year. That is, it considers work undertaken from April 2016 to April 2017.

The group directly overlooking both aspects of the review process is the Borough Council Play Strategy Officers Working Group that has representatives from the Borough Council departments with an interest in play:

- Total Environment
- Environmental Commissioning
- Public Health
- Education
- Communications and Marketing Team
- Regulatory Service
- Section 106 and CIL
- Highways
- Spatial Planning
- Locality Teams

This group in turn reports to the **Eat Well Be Active Group** which in addition to Borough Council officers across service areas, has representation from the following external partners:

- Brio Leisure
- NHS/Clinical Commissioning
- Mersey Forest
- Active Cheshire
- Chester University

### **The Tier One Play Strategy Action Plan – annual review**

The Tier One Play Strategy Action Plan covers broad strategic actions relating to the Tier One Play Strategy.

The action plan is structured within the framework of the Council Plan and is focussed on two of its main themes - Thriving Residents and Thriving Communities. It shows how each action point links to specific priority objectives within those two themes.

The plan highlights specific tasks relating to each individual Policy Statement in the Play strategy. For each Action Point a lead role was assigned thereby identifying responsibility for delivery. The review considers each action point in turn and assesses progress made for each specific action.

### **The Tier Two Locality Play Improvement Frameworks – annual review**

This review involves identifying all new, refurbished, substantially changed and decommissioned outdoor play and youth facilities in the four locality areas. This includes sites managed by the Borough Council and partners such as town/parish councils, housing associations, recreation trusts etc. All such sites are then reassessed in terms of quality. Following this the four Locality Frameworks are updated to reflect the changes and to reassess priority ratings.

## **2. The Tier One Play Strategy Action Plan – annual review – process**

The Year One Action Plan was initially distributed to relevant officers and partners as part of the original suite of Play Strategy documents so that those responsible for actions over that period were aware of actions itemised and who were to be involved in delivery from the outset.

In May 2017 a pro-forma was produced that enabled members of the Play Strategy Officers Group to note progress in relation to individual actions detailed in the Tier One Action Plan document. This was provided to members of the first Play Strategy Officers Group held on 29 June 2016. In addition, the Borough Council Locality Teams distributed copies of the pro-forma to stakeholders by email. Returns were logged by the Borough Council and comments incorporated as part of the Tier 2 Locality Framework Annual Review 2017.

### 3. The Tier One Play Strategy – strategic actions planned and progress

A summary of tasks relating to strategic actions proposed for year one is provided below, along with evidence of progress supplied by the Borough Council's Play Strategy Officers Group. The table is based on tasks identified as short-term, immediate or ongoing. The Play Strategy Policy Statement numbers referred to in the second column from the left are noted below:

**P1.** The Strategy recognises that Play has a key role in improving the health and well-being of children and young people through the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles.

**P2.** Strategy partners will work towards ensuring that that all play provision is fully inclusive and accessible.

**P3.** Strategy partners will protect and enhance Play and Youth Facilities in the Borough, following good practice in relation to design quality, inclusion and risk/benefit procedures.

**P4.** Strategy partners will invest in new provision/improvements to play spaces and youth facilities only if the sustainability of the spaces/facilities can be demonstrated.

**P5.** The Strategy recognises the role that play and youth facilities have in enriching the lives of young people, in offering them stimulating and rewarding alternatives to anti-social behaviour

**P6.** Strategy partners will aim to make appropriate public spaces as child friendly as possible, ensuring that parks, housing estates, shopping areas and other public spaces within the Borough, are as safe and conducive as possible to children's play.

**P7.** The Strategy recognises the important role played by Town/Parish Councils, schools, Housing Associations and the Voluntary and Community sector in relation to the provision of play spaces.

**P8.** Play spaces and youth facilities will be provided/improved on the basis of a strategic analysis of local need with the aim of providing an equitable distribution of facilities and services across the Borough; with priority being given to provision where it is most needed.

**P9.** Children, young people and their families will be positively engaged in the planning of play spaces and youth facilities through appropriate consultation and active involvement.

**P10.** Strategy partners will seek to maximise returns from external funding opportunities and the potential of planning obligations and agreements with developers in order to facilitate the improvement and enhancement of Play and Youth Facility provision and to support its future maintenance.

The Action Plan is structured in relation to the Council Plan Themes.

The success rating key is:

<b>Green</b>	Task achieved as planned
<b>Orange</b>	Task partially achieved and on the way to completion – ongoing
<b>Red</b>	Task not achieved or commenced by September 2017

### Thriving Residents

Policy	Summary of Task	Evidence of work achieved towards action	Success Rating
<b>All of our families, children and young people are supported to get the best start in life</b>			
<b>P1</b>	Work with public health to promote play and youth facilities re health benefits.	Calvin Stockton (CWAW) had initial meeting with Helen Bromley 27/07/17 – to explore joint working opportunities with Public Health Team and aligned stakeholders. Attended meetings of Eat Well Be Active Group in September, October, November 2017 – Progress of Play Strategy actions now forms part of group action plan.	<b>Green</b>
	Promote the Play Strategy to the relevant Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) – develop initiative/s	See comments in P1 above - via Public Health Team and Eat Well Be Active Group.	<b>Green</b>
<b>P2</b>	New play areas designed in line with recommended Inclusion guidance.	All play improvements schemes are designed to be all – inclusive as practically as possible. With support from CWAC Senior Access Officer.	<b>Green</b>
	Explore the potential to input into the CWAC Local Travel Plan (LTP) eg identify safe routes to key play and recreation facilities	To commence dialogue with Council’s Highways Team once play strategy summary and aligned documents are online – before end 2017.	<b>Orange</b>

## Thriving Communities

Policy	Summary of Task	Evidence of work achieved towards action	Success Rating
<b>Cleanest, safest and most sustainable neighbourhoods in the country</b>			
<b>P3</b>	New play areas designed in line with Design for Play	CWAC in-house Landscape Design Team (Total Environment) works with Public Realm and Play Commissioning Team in delivering good design, all scheme proposals to be signed off by respective service areas before progressing to contract procurement. Total Environment Team providing support to external play practitioners ie Town and Parish Councils.	<b>Green</b>
	Adopt <b>Managing Risk in play provision</b> as a guide – provide more challenging play opportunities.	Play Stakeholders are undertaking programmes to look at bespoke equipment where possible to provide more challenge. As part of the Year 1/2 Borough Council play improvement plan the Council has installed bespoke challenging, climbing equipment at two sites (Alexandra Park, Chester and Water Tower Gardens, Chester).  Natural Play Equipment is installed at the new Natural Play area at Cheyney Road, Chester in partnership with Mersey Forest – Looking at other potential sites in 2017/18 for Natural Play options.	<b>Green</b>
	Review of Borough Council decommissioning guidance	CWAC currently conducting a review of current Decommissioning Approach taking account of Tier 2 Strategy – to be completed Spring Autumn 2018 –and to share best practice with Play Stakeholders.	<b>Orange</b>
<b>P4</b>	Sustainability established prior to refurbishment and new provision. External funding sought.	CWAC and play stakeholders ensure that all Health, Safety and Maintenance Procedures are in place and in line with ROSPA standards. The Borough Council commissions independent Annual ROSPA health and safety inspections at all of its outdoor play and youth spaces. Annual maintenance programmes at all spaces take place.	<b>Green</b>
<b>P5</b>	Additional youth facilities aimed for in line with identified need for more youth facilities.	Open Space guidance for new development now includes this typology and has applied since 1 April 2017. So additional youth provision to help address the known shortfalls is being sought or developer contributions requested to enhance existing play provision.  Any new play improvement schemes has due regard where appropriate, to improving or including additional provision to enhance youth provision.	<b>Green</b>

		Examples in 2017 - Blacon, Alexandra Park, Chester CWAC currently conducting a review to seek provision of a central Chester Skate Facility	
P6	Playable/child friendly public open space within all relevant planning proposals	New standards adopted 1 April 2017.  Play space within public realm at Blacon Arcade redevelopment. Wrexham Road development Chester.  Council's Total Environment Team provides commentary on play, open space and Playing Pitch requirements –and ensures dialogue with the Localities Teams and Environmental Commissioning Team and external play stakeholders practitioners, eg Town and Parish Councils.	Green
	Work with partners to ensure litter/dog fouling hotspots are targeted in relation to enforcement activity	To commence dialogue with CWAC Regulatory Services, External Stakeholders, Highways Team and Play Inspectors – Regulatory Services currently undertaking a review of dog control and play/youth spaces.	Orange
<b>Vibrant and healthy communities with inclusive leisure, heritage and culture opportunities</b>			
P7	Engagement with Friends of/Community organisations re play	CWAC are establishing Friends of Groups with the support of Community Infrastructure Organisations  For Chester and east Borough – via Chester Voluntary Action  West Borough (Neston, Ellesmere Port)- via EPNAVCO (Ellesmere Port and Neston Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations).	Orange
	CWAC advice to local partners re play	New guidance produced for housing developers to assist with implementing new open space requirements within new development in line with the latest CWAC Open Space Assessment.  CWAC Locality Teams, Total Environmental Team and Environment Commissioning Team provide examples of advice and support to external stakeholders.	Green
	Pilot project re play/youth facility development on school site (public access)	CWAC to consider a pilot project with an educational establishment to look at community use scheme of school infrastructure.	Orange
<b>Our resources are well managed and reflect the priorities of residents</b>			
P8	Locality Frameworks used to review annual action plans (Borough Council and partners)	Next phase of the CWAC Play improvement plan (2018- 2020) to take account of Locality Frameworks and Strategy policy in the identification of	Green

		priority sites for play improvement and resultant Capital Programme setting.	
	Locality Frameworks used by CWAC to allocate staff resource to support play priority needs/projects	Locality Teams, Total Environment Team, Environmental Commissioning Teams provide ongoing support to internal and external play stakeholders on request.	<b>Green</b>
<b>P9</b>	Consultation/engagement with local children, young people, families, community re specific play projects	For CWAC and other play practitioners - all major play improvement schemes involve comprehensive programmes of community consultation, ie schools, councillors, community groups, housing associations etc. Consultation plans and timetables drawn up to support funding bids.  Examples of recent schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxons Lane, Northwich (CWAC)</li> <li>• Ropewalk Play Area, Parkgate (CWAC)</li> <li>• Pulford Play Area (CWAC and Poulton and Pulford Parish Council)</li> <li>• Danefields (Northwich Town Council)</li> <li>• Sytchcroft, Neston (CWAC and Neston Town Council)</li> <li>• Tattenhall Play and Community Open Space– Tattenhall Parish Council</li> </ul>	
	Schools engagement re play consultation	Work with school councils Examples of School Consultation (CWAC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxons Lane (Northwich)</li> <li>• Ropewalk (Parkgate)</li> <li>• Knights Grange, Winsford and Townshend Road, Lostock Gralam</li> <li>• Sytchcroft, Neston (CWAC and Neston Town Council)</li> </ul>	<b>Green</b>
<b>P10</b>	Partnership re funding applications	For CWAC: Saxons Lane, Greenbank, Northwich - Phase 1 supported by Locality teams, Total Environment, Play team, Weaver Vale Housing Councillors, Network Rail. Successful joint funding WREN, Veolia Landfill Tax, Tesco Bags of Help Funding.  Joint Initiative (CWAC And Poulton and Pulford Parish Council) –new Pulford Play Area - Extensive community consultation culminating in successful WREN Landfill Tax Bid.	<b>Green</b>
	Securement and use of S106 and commuted sums re play provision.	CWAC and Parish and Town Council's regularly access Section 106 Funds for play schemes, examples of sites:	<b>Green</b>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saxons Lane, Greenbank, Northwich</li> <li>• Sytchroft, Neston</li> </ul>	
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**Other Actions:**

<b>Task Summary</b>	<b>Evidence and comments</b>	<b>Success rating</b>
Development of play partnership – monitoring and review	<p>Internal CWAC Officer Play Working Group established - Meeting no.1 1 June 2017, Meeting No2. 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017.</p> <p>The options to seek external play stakeholder engagement for Play Strategy progression discussed at meeting of CWAC Eat Well Be Active Group – September 2017.</p>	<b>Orange</b>
Play strategy – public promotion and public summaries	<p>Play Strategy Tier 1 and Tier 2 Documents together with Action Plan and Year 1 Update to be released January 2018 via web page located on CWAC Website with web links to supporting technical Strategy Documents and Locality Frameworks.</p> <p>CWAC Communications and Marketing Team and E Communications Team developing Play Strategy Web Page to provide access to technical documents and to promote strategy summary and updated locality frameworks via Stakeholder feedback. Online application to be in place to provide all play stakeholders with opportunities to provided updated data on new play provision and any improvements to existing sites as part of the Annual Review Process.</p>	<b>Orange</b>
Update Council interactive mapping re play with new PS GIS information. Planning represented on play partnership	<p>Spatial Planning Team/Total Environment, CWAC GIS Team via Local Plan Process to update data sets and CWAC website.</p> <p>New site data to inform updating of CWAC Interactive Mapping GIS –via Spatial Planning Team and Total Environment Team – ongoing.</p>	<b>Orange</b>



#### 4. Analysis

The Play Strategy and Commitment to the undertaking of Annual Reviews for the period 2016 to 2020 was formally adopted by the Borough Council in May 2017.

- Of the 23 tasks in the Tier 1 action plan of relevance to year one, no tasks fall into the **RED category** - task not achieved or commenced by September 2017. This means that all the tasks have been considered and some progress has been made in all actions within the plan.
- 15 of the 23 (65%) of tasks in the Tier 1 action plan of relevance to year one fall into the **GREEN category** - task achieved as planned. This indicates that broadly speaking progress has been good in most tasks identified for completion in year 1.
- 8 of the 23 (35%) of tasks in the Tier 1 action plan of relevance to year one fall into the **ORANGE category** - task partially achieved and on the way to completion. This indicates that although attention has been taken with the task, progress has not been made as intended in relation to the originally proposed timeframe.

It is useful to look in particular at the **ORANGE category** ie tasks partially achieved and on the way to completion - and how to proceed in the future.

The **ORANGE category** tasks are noted in the table below alongside comments:

	Task	Comments and observations
1	Explore the potential to input into the CWAC Local Travel Plan (LTP) eg identify safe routes to key play and recreation facilities.	This aim currently is to commence dialogue with the Council's Highways Team once all documents are online which is anticipated to be early 2018 (see task 7 below). The task is not time critical and can be followed through into an objective for year two.
2	Review of Borough Council decommissioning guidance	CWAC is currently conducting a review of the existing decommissioning approach, taking account of the Tier 2 Play Strategy Improvement Frameworks. The aim is to share best practice with Play Stakeholders once it is completed. The planned timeframe is to complete this by early 2018. This is an important task and should be a priority to complete within year two.
3	Work with partners to ensure litter/dog fouling hotspots are targeted in relation to enforcement activity	Regulatory Services are currently undertaking a review of dog control and play/youth spaces. Once complete dialogue can commence with CWAC Regulatory Services, External Stakeholders, Highways Team and Play Inspectors in relation to targeting of enforcement activity. The management of dogs in the vicinity of play and youth facilities is an important task in relation to both safety of children and in relation to health risks (toxocara). Enforcement needs to be combined with a public awareness campaign if it is to be effective. This task should be a priority for years two and three.
4	Engagement with Friends of/Community organisations re play	CWAC are establishing Friends of Groups with the support of Community Infrastructure Organisations. For Chester and East Borough – via Chester Voluntary Action; and West

		<p>Borough (Neston, Ellesmere Port)- via EPNAVCO (Ellesmere Port and Neston Association of Voluntary and Community Organisations).</p> <p>Clearly progress has been made here and this should be continued throughout the timeframe of the Play Strategy. It is important to monitor the extent of this work and ensure the approach is maintained. It would be useful to seek best practice from external play stakeholders and report back to the CWAC Officer Play Working Group and the Eat Well Be Active Group.</p>
5	Pilot project re play/youth facility development on school site (public access)	<p>CWAC have confirmed their intention to commence work on providing a pilot project with an educational establishment to look at a community use scheme of school infrastructure. The play strategy consultation revealed that many stakeholders believed that suitable school play/youth facilities should be opened for more community use, in particular for MUGAs on school sites. A pilot project to demonstrate the benefits and practicality of this approach would be very helpful in establishing a precedent for wider adoption by additional schools. This should remain a priority task for years two and three.</p>
6	Development of play partnership – monitoring and review	<p>An Internal CWAC Officer Play Working Group was established in June 2017. In addition the option for external play stakeholder engagement in relation to Play Strategy progression was discussed at a meeting of CWAC Eat Well Be Active Group in September 2017. It is important to maintain these arrangements for the duration of the Play Strategy implementation period.</p>
7	Play strategy – public promotion and public summaries	<p>The Play Strategy Documents and summary are planned to be formally launched early 2018 via a standalone web page located on CWAC Website with web links to supporting technical Strategy Documents and Locality Frameworks. The benefits of taking this approach will provide a better and more user friendly product.</p> <p>The CWAC Communications and Marketing Team and E Communications Team will promote the strategy summary and updated locality frameworks via Stakeholder feedback.</p>
8	Update Council interactive mapping re play with new PS GIS information.	<p>Spatial Planning Team/Total Environment, CWAC GIS Team (via Local Plan Process) will update data sets and the CWAC website. New site data is to be updated on CWAC Interactive Mapping GIS –via Spatial Planning Team and Total Environment Team. Completion of this task will be very useful for the general public and it should remain a priority for year two/three.</p>

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall the Borough Council and its partners can be satisfied that there has been significant progress in relation to the implementation of the Play Strategy and its proposed outcomes as stated in the Tier One Action Plan. Most importantly its implementation in year one has resulted in practical on the ground improvements to play spaces and outdoor youth facilities across the Borough, contributing to the improved health and wellbeing of local children, young people and their families.

It is recommended that the review be taken forward as noted below:

1. The Year One review should be circulated to the CWAC Officer Play Working Group along with the original Tier 1 Action Plan.
2. At the next CWAC Officer Play Working Group the group should review the original Action Plan in the light of progress to date.
3. Following discussion at the Officer Play Working Group the Play Strategy Officers Working Group Convenor should produce a Year Three Action Plan ie for 2018/19<sup>1</sup>.
4. Following approval from the Officer Play Working Group and the Eat Well Be Active Group the Year Three Action Plan will provide the basis for the Year Three Play Strategy review.
5. A review of progress in Year Three should be undertaken in May/June 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> One item already proposed for inclusion in the Year 3 Action Plan is a pilot procedure to record new play and open space provision arising from housing development. This would involve creating a template to be issued by the spatial planning team to request confirmation of any on site open space that has been provided at a new residential development through S106 and CIL. This will cover all open space typologies including play and youth provision ie play (provision up to 12 years.) and Youth (12 years.+).