



Environment and Services
Scrutiny Committee

22 June 2015

2.00 pm

Item

Public

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON 30 MARCH 2015
2.00PM - 3.45 PM**

Responsible Officer: Jane Palmer
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Present

Councillor Vince Hunt (Chairman)
Councillors Ted Clarke, Nigel Hartin, Christian Lea, Vivienne Parry and Arthur Walpole

41 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Adams, R Hughes, P Moseley [Substitute: K Pardy] and K Roberts.

42 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

43 Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 December 2014

In answer to a Member's query on Minute 39 [Future Commissioning and Provision of Library Services and Community Hubs], the Chairman stated that a further update on the library redesign and co-location model would be made to the next meeting of the Committee on 22 June 2015.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44 Public Question Time

The following statement and question was received from Mr David Kilby, MA Sport, Policy and Community Development and Secretary to the Shropshire Playing Fields Association:

'The report put before you today by your own officers indicates that: Shropshire council does not currently have a play strategy in place.

It also indicates that: since the introduction of CIL monies in 2012, there has been no CIL funding specifically allocated toward developing new play areas, **even though all** the Place Plans reference play as a 'priority' requirement and that there is an identified need for new and improved play facilities.

It is also says that since the introduction of CIL in 2012, there have **been no new** S106 agreement monies made available for the development of play.

Your report continues to rightfully point out that: Paragraph 73 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'Planning policies **should be** based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision'.

Can members explain to me why Shropshire council **do not** currently have robust up-to-date assessment of needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision in place, despite repeated requests from my-self to your members and officers at various planning and community meetings for these assessments to be done.

In deed can members explain the process as to how CIL funds are allocated for the specific purpose of play provision – who decides, based on what?

Can members explain why on the point of needs assessments I have been repeatedly ignored yet new development planning applications continue to be passed without NPPF paragraph 73 being adhered to.

On a more positive note can I report to you that Shropshire Playing Fields Association in recent months have been pro-actively running workshops free of charge, open to anyone who wishes to attend looking specifically at the 'value and benefits of play' for our local communities.

Can I also report to your members that the Shropshire Playing Fields Association have started working with local communities to help provide the required robust up-to-date assessments of need necessary in order to protect, provide and enhance our local communities sport, play and recreation facilities.

I should point out to you that the Shropshire Playing Fields Association is a very small voluntary charitable organisation offering an independent voice with very limited resources so the extent of our endeavours will undoubtedly be somewhat limited, but hopefully help highlight the need and demonstrate the benefits that can be gained by taking these actions.

Any help and support that Shropshire Council are able to offer SPFA in helping us achieve what I believe should be shared objectives would be much welcomed'

Please note:

Where possible we [Shropshire Playing Fields Association] apply the term 'play' in the following manner:

Play should be available to everyone, young, old, able, disabled, male or female.
 Play is not a separate activity but an integral part of existing activities.
 Play should be understood and applied in partnership with each activity rather than in isolation.
 The quality of experience rather than the activity itself is fundamental to the success of applying play to sport and physical activities.

The following response to the main issues was provided as detailed below:

David Kilby Query / Issue	Planning Policy Response
<p>It also indicates that: since the introduction of CIL monies in 2012, there has been no CIL funding specifically allocated toward developing new play areas, even though all the Place Plans reference play as a 'priority' requirement and that there is an identified need for new and improved play facilities.</p>	<p>CIL is not payable until the planning consent is implemented and development starts and is payable in instalments which mean that most funding is not received until later. The impact of the recession means that only a small proportion of the anticipated CIL revenue has so far been received and very little has been spent to date, although in Clive, a CIL funded project has formalised local open space provision through the acquisition of Renshaw's Field.</p>
<p>It is also says that since the introduction of CIL in 2012, there have been no new S106 agreement monies made available for the development of play.</p>	<p>Whilst this is correct (and will be accentuated in future due to the introduction of a national policy change regarding the 'pooling' of S106 contributions on 1 April 2015), significant additional open space is proposed as a design requirement in many of the SAMDev site allocations, e.g. St Martins (4Ha), Whitchurch (5Ha) and Shawbury (5Ha), although the S106's for these applications are yet to be completed.</p>
<p>Your report continues to rightfully point out that: Paragraph 73 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision'.</p>	<p>See below</p>
<p>Can members explain to me why Shropshire council do not currently have robust up-to-date assessment of needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision in place, despite repeated requests from my-self to your members and officers at various planning and community meetings for these</p>	<p>The recent Examination has established that the role of the SAMDev Plan is to implement the strategic requirements identified in the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2011 and was informed by the assessments completed in 2008-9 as described in the report. We recognise this information will need to be updated to inform the forthcoming Plan Review process.</p>

David Kilby Query / Issue	Planning Policy Response
assessments to be done.	
Indeed can members explain the process as to how CIL funds are allocated for the specific purpose of play provision – who decides, based on what?	The allocation of CIL funds to play provision is a function of the annual Place Plan process, described here: http://shropshire.gov.uk/place-plans/annual-review-cycle/ and will be a product of discussion between the relevant Parish Council, Shropshire Council staff and local Shropshire Councillors about the best use for the limited funding available in the context of identified priorities.
Can members explain why on the point of needs assessments I have been repeatedly ignored yet new development planning applications continue to be passed without NPPF paragraph 73 being adhered to.	Planning policy has not previously received correspondence from Mr Kilby on this matter, so this is for the relevant service (POS / Planning DM) to address.
On a more positive note can I report to you that Shropshire Playing Fields Association in recent months have been pro-actively running workshops free of charge, open to anyone who wishes to attend looking specifically at the 'value and benefits of play' for our local communities.	This is very welcome
Can I also report to your members that the Shropshire Playing Fields Association have started working with local communities to help provide the required robust up-to-date assessments of need necessary in order to protect, provide and enhance our local communities sport, play and recreation facilities.	This is very welcome and will help to inform the appropriate prioritisation of further investment through the annual 'Place Plan' process.

45 Member Question Time

There were no questions from Members.

46 Shropshire Council's Play Area Provision

The Outdoor Partnership Manager presented the report detailing Shropshire Council's play provision and explained that Town and Parish Councils and schools also provided play opportunities in the area.

The Committee noted that 52 play areas were managed by Shropshire Council and the equipment in these areas was checked every two weeks to ensure that it was safe to be used. Members noted that efficiencies within the service area had led to

challenges in balancing play area maintenance against the wider focus on other parks and public open space maintenance.

The Outdoor Partnership Manager drew specific attention to the challenges that had been presented by moving from Section 106 funds [generally with specific provision to provide play areas within new housing developments over a certain size] to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that widened the range of community infrastructure needs as detailed in the 18 Place Plans in the county; this competing demand on the use of CIL had so far resulted in no funds being allocated towards any new play facilities. It was recognised that local communities could potentially use some of their CIL funds to facilitate new or updated play area provision.

Members noted the budget constraints of the Ringway grounds maintenance contract and a repairs and infrastructure budget that was used for the maintenance of 18 countryside heritage sites and 103 local parks and green spaces with one third of the latter budget being used for tree safety works. The reducing amount of Section 106 maintenance money was being used to cover maintenance works and, as this diminished, additional pressure would be put on the Service infrastructure and maintenance budgets to meet the current checks and maintenance standards.

The Director of Commissioning stressed that, although the report focussed on Shropshire Council's own direct provision of play area, the Council was not the only provider. He explained that discussions were ongoing with local Parish and Town Councils to establish whether they may be interested in taking on any sites in their area and their ongoing maintenance. He added that discussions with Ringway were also ongoing but any changes to the contract that may be pursued would have an impact on the contract price.

The Team Leader Planning and Economic Policy explained the use of Place Plans as a mechanism for infrastructure priority planning and investment. Members noted that CIL funding was normally used for capital investment in infrastructure but queried whether its use as revenue funding could be tested. The application and use of CIL funding was noted.

Some debate ensued regarding the ownership and ongoing maintenance of play areas in the county and Members agreed that a full list of all the play areas would be useful whether or not they were maintained by Shropshire Council. The input of Members with their local knowledge would constitute a valuable part of this process of identification of need and an audit of provision in their local areas.

A Member commented that local need and local provision needed to be considered in tandem. It was agreed that capturing local priorities in the development of Place Plans was essential. It was recognised new sites developed in future needed to accommodate the needs of all, be innovative in design and be designed with the community using it in mind i.e. to meet the local need.

On the invitation of the Chairman, Mr David Kilby commented that the interpretation of 'play' was vital and he stressed the importance of designing play into new development not solely into play areas but as part of the whole design process. The merits of 'designing in' from the start was of great interest to public health which considered the benefits of play in its wider sense and links in tackling obesity. The Chairman re-iterated the benefits of play in tackling childhood obesity.

Members agreed that the development of a Play Strategy should be pursued but recognised the constraints within the service area to undertake the necessary work. The Director of Commissioning commented that ‘collaboration’ was key in the development of a Strategy and resources would need to be pulled in to help collate the information for inclusion in the Strategy. It was understood that the input of Members at a local level would add valuable support to its development.

RESOLVED

- i) That the value of play areas and public open space provision and the benefits they afford local communities be recognised;
- ii) That consideration be given to how Shropshire Council can best support local communities to use CIL monies to support investment in new play facilities identified within the 18 area Place Plans;
- iii) That an update be provided to a future meeting of the Committee on the development of a Play Strategy and how this can be achieved.

47 Date/Time of next meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to be held at 2.00pm on Monday 22 June 2015.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: