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SCRUTINY REPORT

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY — SCRUTINY REPORT

Task Group Report –
Scrutiny Steering Board
May 2006

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY TASK GROUP

MAY 2006

MEMBERS

Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), Mrs. S. J. Baxter, A. N. Blagg, Mrs. K. M. Gall, D. McGrath and S. P. Shannon.

SUMMARY

The role of the Culture and Community Task Group was to investigate whether Culture and Community Services provides value for money to residents living in the District.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ **Evaluation of Vacant Posts**

Recommendation 1: To assist the Council to continually improve, it is recommended that evaluation of vacant posts is included in the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures so that when a position becomes vacant, the opportunity is taken to ensure the following: the existing post is still required; and if it is, any necessary changes are made to the position so that it is “fit for purpose”. (Cost: Nil)

➤ **Equality of Opportunity – Recruitment and Selection**

Recommendation 2: It appears the current approach to recruitment and selection fails to promote equality of opportunity; therefore, it is recommended that this be improved by requesting Human Resources and Organisational Development to ensure it thoroughly investigates how advertising could assist the Council in attracting applicants with the right skills regardless of their race, age and disability etc. (Cost: Approx. £3000 – already agreed by CMT to be met via existing budgets)

➤ **Replacement of Play Area Equipment**

Recommendation 3: A further bid for funding for the next financial year 2007/08 be submitted by Culture and Community Services together with a report explaining the consequences of not having funding available each year for a rolling replacement programme of play area equipment. (Cost: Nil – However, if future bids are approved by Executive Cabinet there would be a cost – please see pages 7-8 for further information)

➤ **Training**

Recommendation 4: Training be given to all relevant officers when new policies and procedures come into force (such as European Union Procurement) as well as training on how to maintain priorities and be flexible in order to meet the needs of the residents of the District. (Cost: Any costs which arise can be met through existing budgets)

➤ Reports of Vandalism to the Council – Communication

Recommendation 5: When someone reports an incident (such as vandalism in a play area) to Culture and Community Service, once the issue has been dealt with, a member of staff contacts that person to inform them of the outcome. (Cost: Nil)

Recommendation 6: The Head of Culture and Community Services be requested to investigate further the suggestion of putting up signs in play areas stating contact details, to enable the public to easily report faulty or damaged play area equipment. (Cost: Costs and options to be investigated by Head of Culture and Community Services)

➤ Internal Working Partnerships – Communication

Recommendation 7: The procedures relating to reporting incidences of vandalism etc be strengthened and it is ensured these are followed. This means that communication between sections within Culture and Community Services and with Street Scene and Waste Management should improve. (Cost: Nil)

Recommendation 8: Due to the lack of communication, officers be made aware of and encouraged to attend training sessions relating to communication and internal partnership working. (Cost: Any costs which arise can be met through existing budgets – please see pages 11-13 for further information)

➤ Information Supplied – Communication

Recommendation 9: Targets in relation to good, honest and consistent communication (internally and externally) are implemented in order for officers to demonstrate improvement. (Cost: Nil)

➤ Parish Councils – External Partnerships

Recommendation 10: Officers be requested to consider resources required for enforcing conditions of grant in relation to future partnership working; specifically, officers need to consider the capacity of staff involved with play areas (of which there are two). Officers need to ensure enforcing conditions of grant will still be feasible if and when partnership working increases in the near future (which is expected).

(Cost: Nil, however, if it is decided there is a need to increase staff that can enforce conditions of grant, allocation of resources within the Service as a whole be investigated further as a whole cost – please see page 15 for further information)

➤ Woodrush Sports Centre

Recommendation 11: The dispute procedure set out in the legal agreement under point 21 relating to Woodrush Sports Centre be followed immediately in order to resolve the issue. (Cost: Possible cost if arbitrator appointed)

➤ Needs Analysis and Risk Management

Recommendation 12: No funding to be made available unless officers have carried out a full needs analysis. Risks and other implications should also be considered by officers and included in their reports to the Executive Cabinet. (Cost: Nil)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

At the Meeting of the former Policy and Strategy Scrutiny Committee on 31st January 2006, it was decided a Task Group would be formed to consider whether or not Culture and Community Services provided value for money.

At the first meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board on 8th March 2006, the appointed Chairman, Councillor McDonald, submitted the Task Group's terms of reference which stated that the Task Group also aimed to "identify any barriers, obstacles and waste that may impair on the delivery of the service" (please see Appendix I). The Board approved the terms of reference and they were also later approved by the Task Group.

A list of those consulted is attached as Appendix II.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

14th March 2006

The first meeting of the Culture and Community Task Group took place on the 14th March 2006 where the terms of reference for the Task Group were agreed. Information the Task Group required along with who needed to be invited to future meetings was also discussed.

27th March 2006

Task Group members met again on the 27th March 2006 and the Corporate Director (Services), Head of Financial Services and Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development were in attendance.

The following items were discussed:

- Recruitment and selection
 - evaluation of positions when vacant to ensure they are "fit for purpose"
 - promoting equality of opportunity
- Culture and Community Services staff structure (including grades)
- Workforce plans proposal
- Employee costs
- Financial cost versus services provided (e.g. Bonfire Display)
- Replacement programme for play area equipment
- Tendering process
- Parish Council maintained parks and open spaces
- Evaluation and monitoring procedures
- Haybridge and Woodrush Sports Centres

11th April 2006

The Corporate Director (Services), Head of Culture and Community Services and Operations Manager attended the third meeting of the Task Group where the following was discussed:

- Bonfire display
- Assistance to Parish Councils maintaining parks
- Play area maintenance
- Callowbrook (Brook Road) Recreation Ground
- Vandalism
- Condition of play areas across the district
- Sports Hall at Hunter Hill School in Blackwell
- Monitoring and evaluating
- European Procurement
- Dolphin Centre
 - staffing (minority groups)
 - consultation
 - disabled (Blue Badge)

9th May 2006

At the final meeting of the Task Group the Corporate Director (Services), Head of Culture and Community Services, Parks and Recreational Development Manager and the Procurement Manager were present.

The following was discussed:

- EU Procurement Rules
- Gender mix in Sports Services
- Recruitment – Equal Opportunities
- Conditions of play areas across the District and work carried out
- Comments by RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)
- Communication issues
- Joint working across Culture and Community Services
- Partnership working (e.g. with Parish Councils) – Enforcing conditions of grant
- Draft Task Group Report

The minutes of these meetings are attached as Appendix III.

FINDINGS INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation of Vacant Posts

There is a concern that when positions within Culture and Community Services become vacant, the positions are not evaluated to ensure they are still “fit for purpose”.

Currently, evaluating a position once it becomes vacant is not covered in the recruitment and selection process; however, it is believed that perhaps some managers within the Council do evaluate a position once it becomes vacant. Evaluating jobs once vacant

undoubtedly assists the Council to continually improve and therefore those managers should be congratulated but it was agreed by both members and officers that there was a need for consistency across the Council.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development informed the Task Group that the Recruitment and Selection Policy is due to be reviewed. She agreed with the following recommendation and also stated that this issue could be corrected quickly and easily.

Recommendation 1	In order to assist the Council to continually improve, it is recommended that evaluation of vacant posts is included in the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures so that when a position becomes vacant, the opportunity is taken to ensure the following: the existing post is still required; and if it is, any necessary changes are made to the position so that it is “fit for purpose”.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications directly relating to this recommendation.
Other Implications	Policy Implications – This would mean a change to the Recruitment and Selection Policy which is due to be reviewed shortly in any case.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the Corporate Objective to be an efficient and effective Council.
Risk Management	By not evaluating vacant posts, the Council runs the risk of having positions within departments which do not best serve the public. By evaluating the positions as they become vacant, it will assist the Council in ensuring each position is still required and gives managers the opportunity to make changes to the position/duties (if necessary) to help improve the Service.

Equality of Opportunity – Recruitment and Selection

The Task Group has a concern that although there is an equality of opportunities statement contained within the Recruitment and Selection Policy, there does not appear to be any evidence that the Council, including Culture and Community Services, is adhering to this statement.

For example, although it is understood that there is only a small percentage of people from ethnic minorities who reside in the District, it is not reflected in the work force at the Dolphin Centre for instance. It was felt that there was a need for improving the recruitment and selection process in relation to trying to encourage those from minority groups to apply for vacant positions across the Council.

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stated at a Task Group meeting that it was up to the Council to improve its reputation as an employer and try to work towards changing the negative perception many members of the public have about working for a Council. The Task Group was informed that advertising is one area

the HR department will be looking into to try and assist the Council in attracting applicants with the right skills regardless of their race, age, disability and so on.

Since meeting with the Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the Corporate Management Team considered a report in May 2006 on advertising and branding in relation to equal opportunities and recruitment and it was agreed that: a branding exercise is carried out and proposals brought back to CMT (Corporate Management Team) to consider; and in reviewing the recruitment procedures as part of the HR Strategy, HR will also consider any existing barriers to appointments.

Recommendation 2	Although an “Equality of Opportunity” statement is included in the Recruitment and Selection Policy, it appears the current approach to recruitment and selection fails to promote equality of opportunity; therefore, it is recommended that this be improved by requesting Human Resources and Organisational Development to ensure it thoroughly investigates how advertising could assist the Council in attracting applicants with the right skills regardless of their race, age and disability etc.
Financial Implications	The cost of the branding exercise is expected to cost approximately £3000 and will be split between the services and therefore will be met through existing budgets.
Other Implications	Legal and Equalities Implications – There is a critical need to ensure there is equality of opportunity in relation to recruitment and selection and that this Council adheres to its Equalities Policy. This Council needs to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by our actions, inactions, words or service because of their culture, ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, religion, sexuality etc. Policy Implications – This would mean a change to the Recruitment and Selection Policy, however as previously stated, this policy is due to be reviewed shortly in any case.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	There is a major risk that the Council could be seen as discriminating against minority groups if it does not ensure that there is equality of opportunity and not simply a statement. It is the Council’s duty to provide fair employment opportunities and to ensure it is doing everything it can to combat discrimination within the District. This is obviously a major feature of any inspection, including CPA.

Replacement of Play Area Equipment

In areas such as Charford, Hagley and Rubery, residents have been waiting for 4 years for equipment to be replaced. There is a concern that there has not been any future planning, monitoring or evaluation.

Although there are instances where Culture and Community Services do provide value for money such as the Bonfire Display and Street Theatre, it is felt that in relation to play areas, Culture and Community Services are not delivering, especially considering employee costs. It is believed that at least some local residents seem to believe they do not receive value for money from Culture and Community Services, particularly in relation to play areas.

Both officers and members of the Task Group are in agreement that some play areas are in appalling condition. A brief description of the general condition of all play areas is attached as appendix IV, which includes comments from RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents).

There is also a fear, shared by both officers and the Task Group, that when the Section 106 monies (which are currently being used on the play areas) has been spent, the Council will return to the same situation of having no funding for a replacement programme for play area equipment which is so important to local residents.

It is understood that there is a budget of £23,000 to spend on day-to-day general wear and tear but for the past 2 years there has been no funding available for a rolling replacement programme. Although the Head of Culture and Community Services submitted bids which were unsuccessful, it was questioned why there have been no officer reports to the Executive Cabinet explaining the situation and the consequences of not having the funding available to replace and refurbish play areas.

It is the Task Group's opinion that it is important for the Executive Cabinet to be given all the necessary information from officers in order to assist the Executive Cabinet in making their decisions and not be misled. It appears that Culture and Community Services have not supplied this information in relation to play areas.

It is believed that if equipment is properly maintained, members of the public (including youths) are more likely to respect the equipment. By providing decent play area equipment means there is something youths can use to entertain themselves instead of turning to vandalism. It is very possible that the cause of such vandalism is the lack of activities for youths. If this Council does not respect the play areas by ensuring they are properly refurbished and kept to a "decent" standard, it is perhaps unreasonable to expect youths to respect the play areas.

The Task Group agrees with officers that a focused approach is needed to ensure the areas which require most attention are dealt with first.

As current funding is coming from Section 106 agreements which will soon be spent, the Task Group feel it is extremely important that officers ensure that they properly inform the Executive Cabinet of the consequences of not having funding from the Capital Budget in the future.

Recommendation 3	To ensure that a further bid for funding for the next financial year 2007/08 is submitted by Culture and Community Services together with a report explaining the consequences of not having funding available from the Capital Budget each year for rolling replacement programme of play area equipment. The report should include consequences the Council face once Section 106 monies have been spent. This will further assist the Executive Cabinet and links into the Council's key priority of having healthy and safe communities.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications directly relating to this recommendation, however, if the Executive Cabinet came to the decision that the need for funding for a rolling replacement programme of play area equipment was an important one, then funding would need to be allocated from the Capital Budget 2007/08. This should be reviewed as part of the whole allocation of resources for the Service area.
Other Implications	Legal Implications & Community Safety Considerations – Section 17 is a legal duty on every authority. Ensuring a rolling replacement programme can be funded will have an impact on the environment in relation to helping to reduce crime and disorder. It is hoped that having play area equipment will give youths some entertainment so that it is less likely they will resort to vandalism such as graffiti. This recommendation is therefore in line with the Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008 and Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to provide a sustainable culture and leisure opportunities; to protect and improve our environment and promote sustainable communities; to provide a clean, safe and attractive environment; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	The risk of not having a budget for a rolling replacement programme for play area equipment is that it is likely to impact on crime and disorder. As Section 17 is a legal duty, apart from the adverse effects for the community, legal action can be taken against councils that do not comply with Section 17. The risk of approving this recommendation is the impact it will have on the capital programme. However, as this recommendation has an impact on crime and disorder in relation, it should be noted that the cost of dealing with the effect of crime and disorder is likely to be more than the cost of preventing it.

Training - Callowbrook Play Area (Brook Road) and European Procurement Process

It is understood that £35,000 has been available for Callowbrook play area for a number of years and it was questioned why the funding has not been spent on the play area. The Task Group was informed that Callowbrook play area will finally be refurbished (by the end of the summer 2006) and is part of a contract recently advertised in the European Journal.

As members may be aware, the EU Procurement Directives apply when public authorities and utilities seek to acquire goods, services, civil engineering or building works. They set out procedures which must be followed before awarding a contract when its value exceeds set thresholds (unless it qualifies for a specific exemption).

There are three categories for public sector contracting which are: Supplies; Services; and Works. The threshold for both Supplies and Services is £144,371 whereas the threshold for Works is £3,611,319 (See appendix V for the EU Procurement Thresholds which came into force on 31st January 2006.)

It is understood that the contract which includes the refurbishment of Callowbrook play area, is a mixture of works and supplies. As it is predominately supplies, it falls into the supplies category. Due to the Council spending over the £144,371 threshold, it is understood that the Open Journal European Union (OJEU) competition is mandatory, causing the work at the park in Rubery will not be complete until after the summer this year. There is disappointment that local residents will have to suffer another summer without the play area equipment in place due to delays which could have been foreseen.

The Head of Culture and Community Services has admitted that officers initially assumed the contract would fall under the "Works" category. As the cost would have been under the works category threshold of £3,611,319, EU procurement rules would not have applied and therefore the works could have been completed sooner. However, Culture and Community Services were advised by the Procurement Team that as the contract was predominately supplies it could not be classed as a works contract.

Consequently, as the contract is a Supplies Contract, and the cost is over the threshold for a supplies contract of £144,371, it means the Open Journal European Union (OJEU) advertising requirement has to be followed.

The Task Group agree that officers being able to obtain advice from the new Procurement Team in place at the Council is an excellent move forward, however, it is disappointing that this specific issue was not addressed earlier by officers in Culture and Community Services.

The Task Group questioned whether delays could have been avoided through better organisation and training for officers as there seemed to be some confusion relating to the European Procurement process. For example, the Task Group was originally given incorrect information by Culture and Community Service. The Council's Procurement Manager and Advisor were asked to clarify information and the Procurement Manager attended the last meeting of the Task Group which was extremely helpful.

Members also discovered, through questioning the Procurement Team, that it was possible for one priority play area to be refurbished separately, however it seemed that

officers in Culture and Community Services had failed to inform the Task Group that they did in fact have that option. This brings into question the ability of Culture and Community Services officers to prioritise and be flexible to ensure they meet the needs of the residents of Bromsgrove District.

Recommendation 4	Training be given to all relevant officers when new policies and procedures, either Corporate or Service Specific, come into force (such as European Union Procurement) as well as training on how to maintain priorities and be flexible in order to meet the needs of the residents of the District.
Financial Implications	It should be possible for the cost of any training to be met via existing training budgets. There is a Corporate Training Budget for corporate policies however if a policy was service specific then the training costs would have to be met through the Service Training Budget (e.g. Culture and Community Services Training Budget). As the type of training will vary (e.g. external or internal; afternoon session or 1 weeks training course) and the number of officers requiring specific training would vary depending on the type of any new policy and procedure, the cost of the training will also vary.
Other Implications	Legal Implications – It is vital that officers adhere to relevant legislation which they are more likely to be able to do if they have the appropriate training and advice is available to them.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to provide a sustainable culture and leisure opportunities.
Risk Management	The risk is the Council not adhering to relevant legislation due to officers having a lack of knowledge. This can lead to several problems and one example is the delay to refurbishing Callowbrook play area in Rubery affecting 3,500 residents. Another serious consequence is that this Council could be prosecuted if it is in breach of the Regulations and other enforceable EU law which could lead to further financial implications for this Council.

Reports of vandalism to the Council - Communication

The Task Group had a number of examples when reports of vandalism had been made by members but no feedback had been received regarding how the issue had been dealt with. It is felt that it is important that staff report back to anyone who has reported an incident, if they have the person's contact details, whether it be a Councillor or a member of the public.

Recommendation 5	When a member of the public or Councillor reports an incident (such as vandalism in a park or play area) once the issue has been dealt with, a member of staff from Culture and Community Services contacts that person to inform
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	them of the outcome (assuming they have the person's contact details).
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications relating to this recommendation.
Other Implications	This links into the Communications Strategy approved by the Executive Cabinet in March 2006.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	There are no major risks either negative or positive except that it could be said that it is more likely that members of the public will report incidences of vandalism etc if they know that there reports are being acted upon.

To try and ensure vandalism incidents are dealt with promptly, a suggestion was made at our last meeting that signs be put up on play equipment or in play area vicinity requesting members of the public report faulty play area equipment to Culture and Community Services. It is believed that a similar idea is used in other areas such as Evesham.

Recommendation 6	The Head of Culture and Community Services be requested to investigate further the suggestion of putting up signs in play areas stating contact details, to enable the public to easily report faulty or damaged play area equipment.
Financial Implications	Any financial implications should be looked into by the Head of Culture and Community Services. There are various options that could be considered e.g. having one sign in the play area would have less financial implications than having a sign on each piece of equipment.
Other Implications	N/A
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	There are no major risks either negative or positive.

Internal Working Partnerships - Communication

Continuing on with the "Communication" theme, there is also a major concern relating to the lack of communication and cross working between sections within Culture and Community Services and with Street Scene and Waste Management staff.

It was explained that play area minders inspected play areas on a daily basis and staff from Street Scene and Waste Management carried out monthly inspections as well as carrying out repairs. However, it was questioned if there had been a communication breakdown. For example, a member of the Task Group reported that a dog fouling bin

had been vandalised and 2 weeks later, nothing had been done to rectify the problem. As play area minders inspect the sites daily, it would be reasonable to assume they would have also noticed the vandalism and reported it which did not appear to be the case.

Although CCTV staff monitor the 96 cameras located in areas across the District, we understand that it would be impossible for them to monitor all of them, all of the time. However, if someone telephones to report an incident either to a member of staff within the CCTV section or to another member of staff within Culture and Community Services, the tape can be checked and the incident can be further investigated by the Police (with the tape as evidence). The incident of the vandalism to the dog fouling bin stated in the previous paragraph was also reported to CCTV staff meaning, once again, there does not seem to be a strong procedure in place to ensure there is good communication between sections within Culture and Community Services and staff within Street Scene and Waste Management.

Lack of communication can cause serious problems and it appears this can easily be avoided if staff ensure details of any reported incidents are given to relevant colleagues so that matters can be dealt with quickly and effectively.

We, the task group, were informed that the process relating to maintaining play areas (in terms of minor works) had recently been reviewed and Street Scene and Waste Management had been given delegated powers to carry out minor repairs up to the cost of £250 per site per visit. We agree this is certainly a positive step forward.

Recommendation 7	The procedures relating to reporting incidences of vandalism etc be strengthened and it is ensured these are followed. This means that communication between sections within Culture and Community Services and with Street Scene and Waste Management should improve.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications directly relating to this recommendation.
Other Implications	This links into the Communications Strategy (approved by the Executive Cabinet in March 2006).
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	The main risk of not improving communication in this area is that reports of vandalism are not dealt with which therefore impacts on the public's perception on the quality of service they receive from the Council and specifically, Culture and Community Services.

To improve communication both internally and externally, the Task Group considered training for staff. As stated earlier, lack of communication can cause serious problems and it is highly unlikely a Council could be classed as efficient and effective with communication breakdown in any area. This also gives a bad impression of the Council externally and the public will obviously continue to believe that they are not getting value for money if there is a communication breakdown no matter what services are provided.

It must be said that internal communication is just as important and from the evidence we have seen in relation to Culture and Community Services, as outlined on pages 11 and 12 of this report, there is a definite lack of good and consistent communication. What must be considered is if the Council cannot communicate with its internal customers, what hope is there to ensure there is good communication between this Council and the residents of Bromsgrove District. It is hoped that the recent Customer Service Training for all staff will assist with this issue.

Recommendation 8	Due to the lack of communication, officers to be made aware of and encouraged to attend training sessions relating to communication and internal partnership working.
Financial Implications	It should be possible for the cost of any training to be met via existing training budgets. There is a Corporate Training Budget for corporate policies however if a policy was service specific then the training costs would have to be met through the Service Training Budget (e.g. Culture and Community Services Training Budget). As the type of training will vary (e.g. external or internal; afternoon session or 1 weeks training course) the cost of the training will also vary.
Other Implications	This links into the Communications Strategy (approved by the Executive Cabinet in March 2006).
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	A risk of not improving communication (which it should be pointed out is connected to the Recovery Plan – “Development of effective communications”) is that it makes it more difficult for this Council to fulfil its corporate objective “to be an efficient and effective Council”. Good, honest and consistent communication means this Council will make the right decisions for its local residents which will therefore improve the public’s perception of the quality of services provided.

Information Supplied - Communication

We were surprised and disappointed by the information submitted to the Task Group by Culture and Community Services officers as reports were often incorrect, defensive, misleading, included out of date material and disinformation.

Examples of this were:

- The Head of Culture and Community Services explained that the contract recently advertised in the European Journal relating to refurbishing play areas was a “services” contract with a threshold of £142,000 when the Procurement Team informed the Chairman that it was in fact a “supplies” contract with a threshold of £144,371

- The attached report giving a description of the play areas (appendix IV) is incorrect and very misleading, for example, the Council officer states there is a “set of swings” in Brook Road Park when in fact there has only ever been one swing which was burnt out and then replaced in a dangerous state as it is crooked.
- Regarding the same report (attached as appendix IV) it gives “Play Value Scores” which appear useless as there is no benchmark given to say what the play value score for each play area should be and when officers were asked, they too could not supply this information.
- Information supplied to the Task Group at the meeting held on the 9th May 2006 included a summary of works carried out at particular play areas. One example which was incorrect was it stated that on the 12th August 2005 the following work was due to be carried out at Callowbrook play area: “Replace dangerous missing floor on tower/slide multi play unit...” As two members of the Task Group reside in Rubery and on a regularly basis walk through the park, we were fully aware that this statement was in fact false as the slide floor was never replaced and instead the whole slide has been completely removed.

If members had not checked the information supplied, then the Task Group would have assumed the information provided was accurate and not uncovered the major communication problems which exist in and around Culture and Community Services.

We certainly feel that procedures need to be in place and training given to improve communication but another vital factor is that officers realise the importance of honest communication. We as members were left doubting all information supplied by Culture and Community Services, even though it is probable that some of it was correct. This caused us to question further the quality of service provided by Culture and Community Services and the impact these types of communication problems have on the public’s perception in relation to Culture and Community Services.

It is therefore hoped that the recommendations relating to communication (recommendations 5, 6 7 & 8) as detailed in this report are approved and that some form of measure or target is put in place in order to monitor improvement.

Recommendation 9	Targets in relation to good, honest and consistent communication (internally and externally) are implemented in order for officers to demonstrate improvement.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications directly relating to this recommendation.
Other Implications	This links into the Communications Strategy (approved by the Executive Cabinet in March 2006).
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the Corporate Objectives to be an efficient and effective Council.
Risk Management	A risk of not implementing some kind of measure is that it will be difficult for officers to prove when communication is improving both internally and externally. However, improved communication can also be demonstrated by increased efficiency and by the public’s perception of the Council, specifically Culture and Community Services, becoming more positive.

Parish Councils – Partnership Working

It is understood that some of the play areas owned by this Council are maintained by Parish Councils. We were happy to learn that several Parish Councils have recently been given assistance by this Council by either purchasing equipment on behalf of the Parish Council or by providing a grant to enable a Parish Council to refurbish its play area. We hope this partnership working continues.

However, there is a concern regarding policing play areas maintained by partners such as Parish Councils. Although officers stated that they could enforce conditions of grants at the current time, should the number of partnerships increase (which it is expected to) in relation to play areas, members were informed staff would be unable to cope. It is felt that the allocation of resources within Culture and Community Services needs to be looked at as any misallocation will prevent any further positive and constructive partnership working in relation to play areas in the future.

Recommendation 10	Officers be requested to consider resources required for enforcing conditions of grant in relation to future partnership working; specifically, officers need to consider the capacity of staff involved with play areas (of which there are two). Officers need to ensure enforcing conditions of grant will still be feasible if and when partnership working increases in the near future (which is expected).
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications directly relating to this recommendation, however, if it was decided that there is a need for increased staffing in the future to enforce conditions of grants (if and when partnership working increased) it is hoped this could be achieved by Culture and Community Services looking into the allocation of resources for the Service area as a whole. If reallocation is not feasible, then it is up to the officers to ensure a good and thorough business case is put forward and all implications are included in their report to the Executive Cabinet.
Other Implications	Legal Implications – If a partner is given a grant for a play area, it is a condition that that partner ensures the play area is properly maintained. If this is not and this Council is unable to enforce it, there are potential health and safety risks. This can be avoided if this Council ensures it is prepared and able to enforce future conditions of grant, linking to the Council key priority of healthy and safe communities.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to provide a sustainable culture and leisure opportunities; to protect and improve our environment and promote sustainable communities; to provide a clean, safe and attractive environment; and to make a major contribution towards achieving a healthy, caring and socially aware society.
Risk Management	The risk of not ensuring this Council has the resources of enforcing conditions of grant could mean that conditions are

	not able to be enforced if and when partnership working is increased (which it is expected to) or it will mean future partnership working will not be viable.
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Sponsorship

It was suggested that sponsorship could be an avenue used to help pay for events such as the Bonfire Display. We were pleased to hear that sponsorship is already actively sought for all the events promoted by Culture and Community Services and the Bonfire Event in 2005 did receive £1,000 sponsorship from Classic Hits Radio Station plus free publicity via the radio in the run up to the event. Classic Hits Radio Station also provided the compere for the event and some of the pre and post entertainment as well as a bus that was used as part of the hospitality provided to Members and invited guests.

Furthermore, Street Theatre and the Jubilee Bandstand Programme have received sponsorship funding in previous years totalling to several thousands of pounds.

The Task Group believe this is excellent work and would like to encourage officers from Culture and Community Services to continue to actively seek further sponsors for all events.

Woodrush Sports Centre

The Task Group found out that the maintenance of Woodrush Sports Centre was clearly the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council according to the legal agreement (please see appendix VI).

Although officers hoped to resolve the dispute relating to the maintenance of Woodrush Sports Centre, it was pointed out by the Task Group that there was a dispute procedure set out in the legal agreement under point 21 which had not yet been followed.

Recommendation 11	The dispute procedure set out in the legal agreement under point 21 relating to Woodrush Sports Centre be followed immediately in order to resolve the issue.
Financial Implications	If an arbitrator had to be appointed, there would be financial implications for one or all three parties involved. The actual cost and who would be asked to meet the costs is unknown as it would depend on the arbitrator's decision and the length of time it took the arbitrator to come to a decision. It is usual that this type of clause (point 21 of legal agreement) contains provision for the cost of the arbitrator to be payable as specified by the arbitrator e.g. the party who is at fault be requested to pay the arbitrator costs.
Other Implications	Legal Implications – Agreement between Bromsgrove District Council, Worcestershire County Council and Woodrush High School; Arbitration Act 1950.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to provide a sustainable culture and leisure

	opportunities; and to protect and improve our environment and promote sustainable communities.
Risk Management	The risk of not following the dispute procedure as set out in the legal agreement relating to Woodrush Sports Centre is it increases the possibility of the issue remaining unresolved. In the meantime, the maintenance problems at the Sports Centre are likely to worsen causing a potential Health and Safety risk in relation to the users, including pupils attending Woodrush High School. On the other side, there are possible financial implications in appointing an arbitrator.

Dolphin Centre

We investigated issues surrounding the Dolphin Centre and although there is a concern relating to equality of opportunity in recruitment and selection across the Council which includes the Dolphin Centre (which Human Resources and Organisational Development is currently addressing - see page 3 of this report), we are pleased that there does appear to be a reasonable gender mix.

The Task Group were also impressed by the amount of consultation carried out by the Dolphin Centre as there is a user satisfaction questionnaires which are available for any customer to complete at any time. We were also informed of a recent survey carried out between October and December 2005.

We were informed that performance indicators were discussed at the monthly management team meetings and any trends identified and discussed further. We hope this is continued and would like to congratulate members of staff at the Dolphin Centre.

Needs Analysis and Risk Management

During the work of the Task Group, it came to light that funding had been given by this District Council towards the building of a new sports hall at Hunters Hill School in Blackwell which is owned by Birmingham City Council.

Although we are aware that the sports hall is intended for local community use as well as the school, we were surprised to learn that officers had not carried out a needs analysis before submitting a report to the Executive Cabinet.

The task group questioned the need of such facilities for residents in Blackwell compared to the need of residents in less fortunate areas of the District. Without a needs analysis carried out and all risks taken into consideration, we believe there is a potential that funding could be misallocated.

If officers do not carry out a needs analysis and consider all the risks and implications as well as provide this vital information to the Executive Cabinet, the Executive Cabinet could be misled.

Recommendation 12	No funding to be made available unless officers have carried out a full needs analysis. Risks and other implications should also be considered by officers and included in their reports to the Executive Cabinet.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications directly relating to this recommendation, however, it could be said that if needs analysis for all projects and risks along with all other implications are taken into account, it makes it more likely that Culture and Community Services will appropriately allocate their resources to projects which have the most need.
Other Implications	Equalities Implications – It is the responsibility of every Councillor and member of staff to develop the Council's services in order that they are provided in a fair and equitable manner. Carrying out needs analysis will assist the Council in ensuring this happens and that no one is disadvantaged by our actions or inactions, words or service because of their ethnic origin, income etc.
Corporate Objectives	This recommendation is linked to the following Corporate Objectives: to be an efficient and effective Council; and to provide a sustainable culture and leisure opportunities.
Risk Management	A major risk of not ensuring needs analysis are carried out and all risks and other implications are considered is that it could mislead the Executive Cabinet and potentially cause inappropriate allocation of funds.

CONCLUSION

As a Task Group we see that Culture and Community Services have provided value for money in certain areas such as the Bonfire Display and Street Theatre. The Service area should also be congratulated on their work at the Dolphin Centre in relation to disabled customers, as it is known that many of them have said that the Dolphin Centre is “the best in the area.” However, it is believed that Culture and Community Services have failed in other areas to ensure residents of the District receive value for money, particularly in relation to the state of play areas and especially in light of employee costs.

Officers agree that some play areas are in an “appalling” state and it seems very unfair to local residents that there is not a rolling maintenance programme for simple play area equipment. As stated earlier in this report, the risk of not having a budget for a rolling replacement programme for play area equipment is that it is likely to impact on crime and disorder. As Section 17 is a legal duty, apart from the adverse effects for the community, legal action can be taken against councils that do not comply with Section 17. As the cost of dealing with the effect of crime and disorder is likely to be more than the cost of preventing it, it is surely in everyone’s best interest to see if we can provide well maintained play areas to all our residents.

It is the Task Group’s opinion that there is a need to improve the organisation of resources in Culture and Community Services and that officers also need to learn how to prioritise, maintain those priorities and be flexible in order to meet the needs of the residents of the District. This can be done by providing training as well as by officers

ensuring needs analysis are carried out for every project and all implications and risks are considered before making recommendations to Executive Cabinet.

By ensuring needs analysis and risks and all other implications are taken into account and these are made clear to members of the Executive Cabinet, it will mean that Culture and Community Services has a far better likelihood of making sure a focused approach is taken; work and projects are properly prioritised and organised; and that funding along with other resources is appropriately allocated.

We believe that the previous capital bids were not supported by sufficient evidence and information relating to the consequences of having no funding available for a rolling programme for replacing play area equipment. Luckily, with Section 106 monies, work can be carried out this year, albeit disappointingly late due to confusion regarding EU Procurement, but as stated earlier in this report, both officers and the Task Group are concerned about what happens after this funding has been spent and there is no capital funding provided in the future.

It was a disappointment to receive misleading and inaccurate reports from officers within Culture and Community Services (with the exception of officers at the Dolphin Centre). We also uncovered: communication problems; a lack of processes in place; no effective internal partnership working between sections within Culture and Community Services and across other service areas; lack of knowledge about EU Procurement which acted as a barrier; and the lack of capacity to enforce conditions of grant in relation to future partnership working (Parish Councils for example).

The Task Group feel that, unfortunately, overall there is little evidence to show value for money and therefore cannot justify the expenditure compared to the outcomes achieved by Culture and Community Services. It certainly appears that parts of the service are “run on a shoestring”.

We hope that some of the problems discovered can be at least be partially addressed by approving and implementing the recommendations contained within this report which are in line with the Council’s key priorities (Healthy and safe communities; Efficient and effective conduct of Council business); the Council’s objectives; the Communication Strategy; the Equalities Policy; the Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008; and Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

REVIEW

The Task Group has decided to reconvene in 12 months to review whether or not the recommendations set out in this report have been implemented and

- (i) if so, how effective/ineffective they have been; or
- (ii) if not, consider the reasons for that decision and the consequences on the residents in the District.

Councillor P. M. McDonald
Chairman of the Culture and Community Task Group

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APPENDICES

Appendix I – Task Group's Terms of Reference

Appendix II – A list of Individuals the Task Group Consulted

Appendix III (a) to (d) – Minutes of Task Group Meetings

Appendix IV – Condition of Play Areas Report

Appendix V – EU Procurement Thresholds

Appendix VI – Legal Agreement relating to Woodrush Sports Centre

Culture and Community Task Group

Aim:

- To assure that residents receive value for money and in doing so identify any barriers, obstacles, waste that may impair on the delivery of services, as well as identifying any opportunities and partnership working within the service area
- Make recommendations to Scrutiny Steering Board

Required for the Task Group

- Number of staff employed
- Employee costs
- Personal recruitment and replacement process
- Span of control and Decision-making process
- Tendering process (lead times etc)
- Replacement programme/Budget (Playing apparatus)
- Cross-functional operations and meetings
- Evaluation and monitoring procedures
- Operational costs of the Dolphin centre, Woodrush Sports Centre and Haybridge Sports Centre – Income/Expenditure
- The overall aims of the department

This will mean meeting with the heads of department and those managing the Dolphin Centre

Councillor P. M. McDonald

A List of Individuals the Task Group Consulted between March and May 2006

1. Mr. P. Street, Corporate Director (Services)
With the exception of the initial meeting, Mr. Street was invited and attended all Task Group Meetings.
2. Mr. R. Hazlehurst, Head of Culture and Community Services
Mr. Hazlehurst attended two of the four meetings of the Task Group.
3. Ms. J. Pickering, Head of Financial Services
Ms. Pickering attended the Meeting on 27th March 2006 and answered questions in relation to Culture and Community Services Budget.
4. Ms. C. Armour, Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Ms. Armour attended the Meeting on 27th March 2006 and answered questions in relation to recruitment and selection in Culture and Community Services.
5. Mr. R. Heard, Parks and Recreational Development Manager
Mr. Heard attended the meeting of the Task Group on 9th May 2006 to answer members' questions in relation to Parks.
6. Sports Services
Mr. Godwin (General Manager of Sports Services) provided the Task Group with information relating to the Dolphin Centre as the Task Group requested. Mr. Steed (Operations Manager) attended the Task Group meeting held on the 11th April 2006.
7. Procurement Team
Mr. Haslam (Procurement Advisor) provided information to the Chairman of the Task Group. Mr. Hogan (Procurement Manager) attended the Task Group Meeting held on the 9th May 2006.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY TASK GROUP

CONFERENCE ROOM, COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE

Tuesday, 14th March 2006 at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), A. N. Blagg, Mrs. K. M. Gall, D. McGrath and S. P. Shannon.

Mr. J. Wright, Democratic Services Manager
Miss D. McCarthy, Committee Services Officer

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Mrs. S. J. Baxter.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

3. **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TASK GROUP**

Members considered what the Chairman believed were the aims of the task group which the Scrutiny Steering Board approved at its last meeting held on 8th March 2006. The aims were as follows:

- To assure that residents receive value for money from Culture and Community Services and in doing so identify any barriers, obstacles, waste that may impair on the delivery of services, as well as identifying any opportunities and partnership working within the service area
- Make recommendations to the Scrutiny Steering Board

AGREED that the terms of reference be approved.

4. **INFORMATION REQUIRED**

It was believed that in order for the task group to investigate whether or not Culture and Community Services provided value for money, the task group would need certain information. A discussion took place on what information was required and who would need to be invited to future meetings of the task group for members to gain further information.

AGREED:

- (a) that the following information would be provided and if possible, sent to members of the task group before the next meeting:
- i. Number of staff employed in Culture and Community Services
 - ii. Staff structure of Culture and Community Services
 - iii. Employee costs of Culture and Community Services
 - iv. Recruitment and Replacement processes (e.g. when posts become vacant do they go through job evaluation first?)
 - v. Span of control and decision making (e.g. scheme of delegation)
 - vi. Tendering process and lead-in times (e.g. do staff wait for "economies of scale"? If so, what length of time do staff wait and why? When is the decision made to put something out to tender?)

- vii. Replacement programme, budget and life cycle for playing apparatus (e.g. do they exist? Is there a replacement budget for playing apparatus? If so, where does it go? If not, why not?)
 - viii. Cross functional operations and meetings (e.g. are there any?)
 - ix. Evaluation and monitoring procedures (e.g. how are processes evaluated and monitored? Are there any barriers?)
 - x. Operational costs of Woodrush Sports Centre and Haybridge Sports Centre – Income and Expenditure (e.g. what is the agreement of responsibilities and in particular the financial arrangement for the two sports centres? Who runs them? What lessons could be/have been learnt in relation to Haybridge Sports Centre?)
 - xi. The aims and objectives of Culture and Community Services and how those aims and objectives are achieved
- (b) that the Interim Head of Organisational Development and Human Resources be invited to attend the next meeting of the task group to provide further information, particularly on points i to iv under (a);
 - (c) that the Head of Culture and Community Services and the Parks and Recreational Development Manager be invited to attend the next meeting of the task group to provide further information on the list of points under (a);
 - (d) that the appropriate officer from Financial Services be invited to attend the next meeting of the task group to provide further information on points under (a) which relate to financial matters; and
 - (e) that issues relating to the Dolphin Centre would be considered at the third meeting of the task group.

5. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting be scheduled to be held on Monday 27th March 2006 at 5.30pm.

The Meeting closed at 6.00 pm

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY TASK GROUP

CONFERENCE ROOM, COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE

Monday, 27th March 2006 at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), Mrs. S. J. Baxter A. N. Blagg, Mrs. K. M. Gall, D. McGrath and S. P. Shannon.

Mr. P. Street, Corporate Director (Services)
Ms. C. Armour, Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Ms. J. Pickering, Head of Financial Services
Miss D. McCarthy, Committee Services Officer

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Task Group held on 14th March 2006 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

4. **HR ISSUES**

As requested at the last Task Group meeting, members received copies of: the Recruitment and Selection Policy; Culture and Community Services Staff Structure including grades; list of posts within Culture and Community Services; and an application form to fill a vacancy.

The Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Ms. Clare Armour, was introduced to the group and answered several questions such as what happened when a job became vacant.

Ms. Armour stated that the Council had adopted a Job Evaluation (JE) scheme in October 2005 which would be implemented in the near future. It was believed that some managers did evaluate a position once it became vacant even though it was not part of the recruitment and selection process. However, Ms. Armour believed this could be corrected quickly to make sure there was consistency across the Council.

Members were informed that there was a proposal for a Workforce Plan to be compiled which would contain information on plans for each service over the next 5 years, including workforce implications. This was expected to challenge managers and assist the Council to continually improve. Work on this holistic approach would be taking place over the summer.

Comments were made by members such as vacancies should be seen as an opportunity to look at the position to see if it was "fit for purpose". Ms. Armour went

further by stating that the Council should not only wait for vacancies but take a proactive and strategic approach which was the reason for introducing Workforce Plan.

The "Equality of Opportunity" statement in the Recruitment and Selection Policy was discussed. Members questioned whether there was any evidence that the Council was adhering to this statement. Ms. Armour commented that it was up to the Council to improve its reputation as an employer and try to work towards changing the negative perception many members of the public had about working for a Council. Advertising was one area the HR department was looking into to try and assist the Council in attracting applicants with the right skills regardless of their race, age, disability and so on.

Members were also informed that the Recruitment and Selection Policy was due to be reviewed in the near future and comments made by the Task Group would be taken on board.

AGREED that the following be included in the Task Group's final report as recommendations to the Scrutiny Steering Board, and if approved, recommended to the Executive Cabinet:

- (a) that job evaluation be included in the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure (Therefore, when a position becomes vacant, it is evaluated to ensure: the existing post is still required; and if it is, any necessary changes are made to the position so that it is "fit for purpose". This should assist the Council to continually improve.); and
- (b) although an "Equality of Opportunity" statement is included in the Recruitment and Selection Policy, the current approach to recruitment and selection fails to promote equality of opportunity and therefore should be improved.

5. **CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2006/07**

The employee costs of just under £2m were discussed. It was pointed out that this figure included vacant positions such as the Business Support Manager and therefore there would be a saving.

Mr. Street stated that it was his understanding that the newly created Business Support Manager post had been advertised and the closing date was the 6th March 2006.

Members were informed that Street Scene and Waste Management employee costs were almost £4m whilst Planning and Environment employee costs were £1.4m. It was believed that employee costs reflected the labour intensiveness of a particular service. Many employees in Culture and Community Services were part time seasonal staff.

It was commented that employee costs, contract costs and services provided needed to be looked at as a whole in order to decide whether residents were getting "value for money".

The Bonfire Display was used as an example of how the Task Group could measure the financial cost versus the service provided (numbers who attend). It was suggested that such events could be seen as a revenue generating opportunity and that sponsorship could also be looked into.

In response, Mr. Street commented that it was his understanding that the cost of the bonfire was approximately £25,000 and approximately 21,000 people attended. He also stated that sponsorship was an issue that was actively being pursued and it was

anticipated that by March/April 2007, the Council would have sponsors for some of their events.

When asked if there was a relationship between the replacement programme of play equipment in parks and the overall objectives of the Council in terms of "providing active and passive leisure opportunities, enhancing physical and mental health, improving lifestyle and community space, reducing crime and disorder", Mr. Street believed there was a connection.

A discussion ensued regarding partnerships with Parish Councils. It was stated that Parish Councils managed and maintained some parks and open spaces owned and leased out by the District Council. As residents in a parished area pay a Parish Council precept, it was questioned whether or not there was an increased expenditure on parks and open spaces owned by the District Council and maintained by Parish Councils.

AGREED that the following information be provided:

- (a) numbers of people who have attended the Bonfire Display at Sanders Park in previous years compared to the cost of the Bonfire Display (per head);
- (b) information relating to the issue of sponsorship of Council events and how this option would be actively pursued; and
- (c) information relating to partnerships with Parish Councils (to include whether or not there is double expenditure on parks maintained by Parish Councils, considering residents in parished areas pay a Parish Council precept).

6. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Tendering Process and Replacement Programme

Members asked what determined economies of scale. The example of providing a play area in Brook Road Recreation Ground was used. It was believed that the Council could have invested £35,000 from the sale of the old Callowbrook School site but instead the Council seemed to wait for economies of scale. Members enquired what the policy was and how long the Council had to wait before purchasing equipment.

Mr. Street stated that it seemed Section 106 monies had not been distributed as quickly as it might have been and went on to briefly explain the European Union Procurement Arrangements.

Members were informed that no arrangements had been made for depreciation of equipment. Mr. Street confirmed that there was no replacement programme or budget at present for play equipment. However, there was £23,000 in the Capital Budget for minor repairs.

It was pointed out that in areas such as Hagley, Rubery and Charford, residents had already been waiting for 4 years for equipment to be replaced. Members enquired why there had been no future planning, monitoring or evaluation. (A similarity was drawn between Culture and Community Services and ICT in relation to future planning). Members felt a replacement policy was required, a list of equipment should be gathered and a 5 year or 10 year rolling replacement programme be put in place.

A short discussion ensued relating to whether or not a parallel could be drawn between employee costs and a replacement programme of play area equipment. Members questioned whether Culture and Community Services was delivering. The Chairman was of the opinion that local residents might believe they did not receive value for money and

that Culture and Community Services was “failing” in relation to its Business Plan, particularly considering the employee costs.

Mr. Street stated that he accepted the points members made but also believed that there were instances of the Service providing value for money such as the Bonfire Display and Street Theatre. However, Mr. Street did state that he took on board the issues raised relating to the proportion of spending compared to service delivery.

Ms. Pickering informed members that Mr. Hogan, Procurement Manager, from Worcestershire County Council, worked at this Council two days per week and he tried to ensure Councils countywide purchased what they required together to ensure each Council received the best discount. It was also stated that no Council had to wait for other Councils when purchasing.

Cross functional Meetings

Members were informed that Culture and Community Services and Street Scene and Waste Management did work together.

A short discussion then ensued relating to replacement of equipment at Sanders Park compared to other parks in the District including those managed by the Parish Councils.

AGREED that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Task Group relating to the financial cost and amount of equipment replaced over the last 6 years at Sanders Park compared to all other parks in the District, including Parks managed by the Parish Councils.

Evaluation and Monitoring Procedures

It was asked whether there had been any action plans compiled in the past year. Mr. Street stated he was aware of a small number of action plans such as those put together when applications for funding had been made.

Members had several questions relating to evaluating and monitoring such as how it was carried out.

Therefore, it was **AGREED** that the following information be provided:

- (a) information relating to local performance indicators including the benchmark for monitoring;
- (b) examples of how monitoring and evaluation is carried out in Culture and Community Services; and
- (c) information on what happens with the results/recommendations of the monitoring and evaluation processes.

Haybridge and Woodrush Sports Centres

It was pointed out that the maintenance of Haybridge and Woodrush Sports Centres was clearly the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council according to the agreements and a lengthy discussion ensued relating to the condition of both Sports Centres.

It was pointed out that there was a procedure for disputes included in the Woodrush agreement but it was hoped it could be resolved before the need to pursue this avenue. Mr. Street also informed members that Woodrush Sports Centre did still meet the requirements of the Health and Safety legislation.

AGREED

- (a) that it be included in the final report of the Task Group that it be recommended that the Dispute Procedure under point 21 of the Agreement relating to Woodrush Sports Centre be followed immediately; and
- (b) it be reported back to members of the Task Group:
 - i. whether or not Councillors' complaints relating to Culture and Community Services were monitored; and
 - ii. time taken to resolve issues from when a complaint was received to resolution.

7. DATE AND INFORMATION REQUIRED AT NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED**:

- (a) that the next meeting be scheduled to be held on Tuesday 11th April 2006 at 5.00pm;
- (b) that Mr. Hazlehurst, Head of Culture and Community Services and/or Mr. Street, Corporate Director (Services) be invited to the next meeting of the Task Group;
- (c) that Mr. Godwin, General Manager (Sports Services) be invited to the next meeting of the Task Group; and
- (d) that the following information relating to the Dolphin Centre ONLY be provided:
 - i. number of staff employed;
 - ii. employee costs;
 - iii. staff structure and span of control;
 - iv. number of agency staff and cost;
 - v. information relating to risk management and risk assessments;
 - vi. number of people using the facilities;
 - vii. number of disabled people using the facilities and how this information is monitored;
 - viii. number of elderly using the facilities over the past 5 years and how this information is monitored;
 - ix. information relating to the needs of the disabled being met (e.g. disabled access; conforming to the DDA legislation etc);
 - x. update on "Phase II" of the refurbishment; and
 - xi. aims and objectives.

The Meeting closed at 7.05 pm

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY TASK GROUP

CONFERENCE ROOM, COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE

Tuesday, 11th April 2006 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), A. N. Blagg, Mrs. K. M. Gall, D. McGrath and S. P. Shannon.

Mr. P. Street, Corporate Director (Services)
Mr. R. Hazlehurst, Head of Culture and Community Services
Mr. D. Steed, Operations Manager – Sports Services
Miss D. McCarthy, Committee Services Officer

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Mrs. S. J. Baxter.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Task Group held on 27th March 2006 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

4. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Bonfire Display

Mr. Hazlehurst informed members that the estimated costs per head for the Bonfire in previous years were: £1.47 in 2003 (15,000 attended); £1.48 in 2004 (16,500 attended); and £1.36 in 2005 (20,500 attended).

Parish Councils

It was explained that several Parish Councils had been assisted recently by the District Council. The District Council had assisted in ways such as purchasing the equipment on behalf of the Parish Council or providing a grant to enable a Parish Council to refurbish its play areas.

It was explained to members that due to the amount of Section 106 monies being spent on refurbishing play areas, the District Council would be entering into what was known as a Framework Agreement for the next 3 years. It was stated that this had been advertised in the European Journal. Members were informed that this would mean that the Council would work and negotiate with three companies to provide play area equipment for both District Council and Parish Council play areas.

Play Area Maintenance

There was concern over the Charford area as the report stated that there had been no refurbishment or replacement of play equipment since 1999. Mr. Hazlehurst

stated that up until 2 years ago there had been a budget for replacement of play equipment. Play areas were inspected and assessed and funding was spent on those areas with the greatest need at that time. It was pointed out that if funding had still been available, the Houseman Close play area in Charford would have been the next one in line to be refurbished.

It was questioned why there was such a large staff budget of £1.9m but no funding for a replacement programme of play area equipment. Mr. Hazlehurst informed members that there were only two members of staff who managed the Council's parks, open spaces and recreational areas.

Mr. Hazlehurst stated that there was £23,000 which could be spent on day-to-day wear and tear (general maintenance) but although bids had been made, there was no funding available in the Capital Budget to cover the cost of major refurbishment in the current financial year and the previous year. It was explained that only recently, since Section 106 monies had become accessible, had there been funding available to spend on replacement and refurbishment of play areas.

There was a shared concern by both members and officers that when the Section 106 monies had been spent, the Council might return to the same situation of having no funding for the replacement of equipment.

Brook Road Recreation Ground

It was understood by the Chairman that £35,000 had been available for Brook Road play area for a number of years; therefore, it was questioned why the funding had not been spent on the play area. Mr. Hazlehurst stated that the money had only been available for the past 18 months and in that time work had taken place on other key projects.

There was concern over the lack of play equipment at Brook Road which was for 3,500 local residents. Mr. Hazlehurst explained that Brook Road was part of the Contract recently advertised in the European Journal and the various procurement rules had to be followed. Members were informed that it was anticipated that the refurbishment at Brook Road would be completed by the end of the summer 2006.

There was concern that this would be another summer without a refurbished play area but it was explained that as the Council would be spending over £142,000 on the Service Contract, it had to go through the European Procurement process which meant the work could not be completed before that time.

Service Provided

It was asked why there had been no reports to the Executive Cabinet explaining the situation and the consequences of not having funding available to replace and refurbish play areas.

It was questioned how the public could have confidence in Culture and Community Services when it was felt that it had not delivered. Mr. Hazlehurst responded that his Service area could only deliver with the resources available and Culture and Community Services had in fact delivered on a number of major projects over the past few years including the Arts Centre and the Dolphin Centre refurbishment. It was also stated that bids for funding for replacement of play equipment had been put forward to the Executive Cabinet; however, these had been unsuccessful during the past 2 years due to the pressures on the Council's Capital Programme.

Maintenance

It was explained that play area minders inspected sites on a daily basis and dealt with minor issues such as clearing debris. Officers from Street Scene and Waste Management carried out more detailed inspections of sites and any repairs required used to be reported back. However, the process had recently been reviewed and Street Scene and Waste Management had been given delegated powers to carry out minor repairs up to the cost of £250 per site per visit.

Members questioned the number of works carried out on various sites such as Callowbrook, Rubery and Villiers Road, Charford.

AGREED that the Head of Culture and Community would find out the details of the work that had been carried out on play area sites, and in particular, the play areas located at Callowbrook, Rubery (Brook Road) and Villiers Road, Charford.

Reports of Vandalism

There was concern over how reports of vandalism of play area equipment and litter bins were dealt with and why CCTV cameras were not picking up the vandals. Mr. Hazlehurst informed members that there were 96 cameras which were monitored by staff but it would be impossible for them to monitor all of them, all of the time. However, if someone telephoned and gave the date, approximate time and area an incident took place, staff would be able to review the tapes. If the incident had been caught on camera, the police would be notified and given a copy of the tape as evidence for them to investigate the matter further.

Questions were asked about vandal-resist bins in terms of quality and whether they were cost-effective. It was also pointed out that lack of play area equipment and other entertainment could be the reason why youths vandalised bins. If equipment was properly maintained, it was hoped that youths might respect it. There was concern that a report had not been submitted to the Executive Cabinet advising them of the consequences of such vandalism which were possibly caused by a lack of activities for youths. It was suggested that this could be included in the task group report.

Councillor McGrath stated that he had left messages for two members of staff in Culture and Community Services at the beginning of April 2006 reporting that a dog fouling bin had been vandalised but had not received a response.

AGREED that the Head of Culture and Community Services would investigate what had happened regarding the vandalism in Rubery (relating to a dog fouling bin) and report back.

Condition of Play Areas

It was suggested by Mr. Street that a report be compiled for task group members giving information on the general condition of all the play areas across the District, to assist in identifying areas which were in particularly poor condition. Mr. Street agreed that some of the play areas were in "appalling" condition and it was important that a focused approach was taken to ensure the areas which needed the most attention were dealt with first.

AGREED that the Corporate Director (Services) and the Head of Culture and Community Services compile a report giving information on the general condition of all the play areas across the District maintained by the Council.

Sports Hall at Hunters Hill School in Blackwell

A discussion ensued relating to funding given by the District Council towards the building of a new sports hall at Hunters Hill School in Blackwell which is owned by Birmingham City Council. There was concern that money was being spent on a school owned by another local authority when funding was needed for play areas within the District.

Mr. Hazlehurst stated that the sports hall was intended for dual use meaning the local community, as well as the school, could use the sports hall and benefit from the outdoor activity provision which would also be available. It was explained that members of the Executive Cabinet had been asked to consider whether or not this Council wanted to make a contribution to the building of the new sports hall and the Executive Cabinet decided to support this project. Furthermore, it was stated that residents in Blackwell had made it known to the Council for some time that, as there were few recreational facilities in that area, they required and would appreciate access to such facilities.

Mr. Hazlehurst informed members that a full needs analysis had not been carried out. Members questioned this and felt that other areas had a greater need compared to Blackwell. Therefore, it was suggested that a recommendation from the task group could be that no funding should be made available in future unless officers had carried out a full needs analysis.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The statement "...action taken to repair our play areas irrespective of the geographical location of the site" was questioned. The Chairman pointed out that it could be perceived by members of the public that that any issues relating to Sanders Park were dealt with quicker than other play areas in the District. However, Mr. Hazlehurst commented that Culture and Community Services tried to operate in a consistent manner across the District.

It was believed that there was no monitoring and evaluation carried out or actions plans in place. Mr. Hazlehurst disagreed and stated that Culture and Community Services regularly carried out assessments and consulted with members of the public. It was stated that for major projects such as the Arts Centre, a full needs assessment had been carried out.

Members commented on the lack of communication and that there was no feedback when members reported incidences of vandalism. The examples given were vandals burning the dog fouling bin in Rubery (mentioned earlier in the meeting) as well as graffiti.

AGREED that the Head of Culture and Community Services would communicate with staff on the vandalism occurring in Rubery to see what more could be done to deal with the issue.

European Procurement

A short discussion ensued relating to European Procurement Arrangements. It was explained that the new directives had caused a delay which had not been envisaged and that was the reason why the work on the Brook Road play area in Rubery would not be complete until after the summer. It was argued that officers must have known about the European Procurement Arrangements for some time.

It was questioned whether there was an issue relating to staff training which needed to be addressed, to ensure staff fully understood new directives and procedures. Mr. Hazlehurst stated that the Service was now obtaining professional advice from the new Procurement Team at the Council.

5. **DOLPHIN CENTRE ISSUES**

Staffing

It was stated that no disabled persons or anyone from an ethnic minority group were currently employed at the Dolphin Centre. In terms of disability, it was stated that most staff at the Dolphin Centre had to be physically fit, able to carry out their duties and be suitably qualified. If a disabled person could meet the criteria, then there would be no reason why they could not be employed at the Dolphin Centre.

It was estimated that there was approximately 1% of the population in Bromsgrove who were from an ethnic minority group. There was concern that this was not reflected in the work force at the Dolphin Centre. It was suggested that perhaps there were problems with the recruitment and selection process. Mr. Street commented that perhaps the Council as a whole needed to look at the Recruitment and Selection process in relation to trying to encourage those from minority groups to apply for vacant positions.

The gender mix of managerial posts was considered. It was stated that of the three Duty Managers at the Dolphin Centre, two were female. At present the three supervisors were male, however, it was pointed out that this was unusual. The last female supervisor had been promoted to Duty Manager.

AGREED that the gender mix of positions, particularly supervisor and above, be supplied to the next meeting of the task group.

Consultation

It was stated that refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre had been over and above the minimum standards and it was believed that disabled customers felt it was "the best in the area".

It was asked whether customers, including the disabled were ever given the opportunity to give their views. It was stated that a questionnaire was sent out between October and December 2005 and there were also user satisfaction questionnaires which anyone could complete at any time. It was pointed out that the Padstone Unit had not been sent any questionnaires and this was noted by officers.

It was stated that performance indicators (PIs) were discussed at management team meetings every month and any trends identified.

Disabled – Blue Badge

A discussion ensued relating to the Blue Badge Scheme for the disabled and specifically, how Blue Badges were obtained. It was reported that an incident had occurred recently which meant a disabled person could not be advised by a member of staff at the Dolphin Centre or at the Customer Service Centre regarding what they needed to do to obtain a Blue Badge. It was suggested that staff at the Dolphin Centre be made aware of the process to allow them to advise disabled visitors how to obtain a Blue Badge. Mr. Hazlehurst commented that the incident mentioned had been addressed.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was **AGREED**:

- (a) that the next meeting be scheduled to be held on Tuesday 9th May 2006 at 4.00pm;
- (b) that the Chairman would meet with the Committee Services Officer after the Easter Break to discuss the content of the Task Group Report;
- (c) that the Draft Task Group Report be submitted to the next meeting of the Task Group and once approved, be submitted to the Scrutiny Steering Board Meeting scheduled to be held on 31st May 2006.

The Meeting closed at 6.30 pm

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY TASK GROUP

CONFERENCE ROOM, COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE

Tuesday, 9th May 2006 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), Mrs. S. J. Baxter, A. N. Blagg, Mrs. K. M. Gall, D. McGrath and S. P. Shannon.

Mr. P. Street, Corporate Director (Services)
Mr. R. Hazlehurst, Head of Culture and Community Services
Mr. R. Heard, Parks and Recreational Development Manager
Mr. D. Hogan, Procurement Manager
Miss D. McCarthy, Committee Services Officer

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

3. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Task Group held on 11th April 2006 were submitted.

RESOLVED that, subject to the sentence "Councillor McDonald also stated that a swing had been burnt out" being added to the end of the sixth paragraph on page 3, the Minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

4. **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Procurement

The Procurement Manager confirmed that one park could have been refurbished separately and therefore would not have been subject to EU Procurement rules. It was stated that it was possible this option would not have given value for money; however, if a park did have an outstanding need, the work could have been carried out earlier.

Equal Opportunities

Members questioned why there was only 30% of staff at supervisor level and over employed within Sports Services who were female. It was explained that currently the three supervisors were male. Two previous supervisors had recently been promoted to Duty Manager and two males who were appointed as supervisors, as they happened to be the best candidates at that time.

It was pointed out that there was a 50/50 split between male and female in the structure overall. The Head of Culture and Community Services also mentioned that

there was a high turnover of staff in sports services due to the nature of the work and often female staff worked part time.

Members again voiced their concerns about the lack of equality of opportunity. Officers stated that although at present no members of staff were from ethnic minority groups (for example) they had in fact employed people from minority groups in the past that had since moved on.

Members questioned procedures in place such as exit interviews and asked where vacancies were advertised. The Head of Culture and Community Services responded that exit interviews were carried out and vacancies were advertised in the local media, job centres and specialised leisure press.

It was felt that a better mix of people from all groups was needed and that equality and diversity was a corporate issue and not solely a problem that Culture and Community Services were facing.

Play Area Condition Summary Report

Members carefully considered the report submitted. Officers informed members that it included independent remarks from The Royal Society of the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) including a play value score for each play area.

Many questions were asked about this report. The main point made by all members was that the play value scores were meaningless due to having no information to tell members or officers what the ideal score should be for each play area.

Various sites described in the report were discussed in detail. For example, for the play area on Houseman Close in Charford, RoSPA stated "Virtually all items have been removed, so no play value is given. The area looks neglected." Members questioned why it had been allowed to reach this state. Officers again stated that it was due to the capital bids for funding over the past 2 years being turned down. Houseman Close play area was the next in line to be refurbished but with no funding available, this could not be done and equipment was removed due to health and safety reasons.

Members again questioned why consequences of not having funding available for refurbishment of play areas had not been made clear in reports to the Executive Cabinet over the past 2 years.

Work carried out in particular play areas

One point made by members was their disappointment that information included in this report was incorrect and therefore misleading. For example, it stated that on the 12th August 2005 the following work was due to be carried out in Callowbrook play area, "Replace dangerous missing floor on tower/slide multi play unit..." Two members of the Task Group who live in the vicinity were able to inform the rest of the Task Group that this was not true. The slide floor had not been replaced and instead the whole slide had been completely removed.

Members requested that officers ensure they check that the information contained within their reports was factually correct.

5. **DRAFT TASK GROUP REPORT**

Members considered the draft report of the Task Group which was due to be considered at the Scrutiny Steering Board Meeting on 31st May 2006.

Amendments were made including adding in extra recommendations.

It was **AGREED**:

- (a) that the various amendments discussed by the Task Group be included in the final report;
- (b) that the amended report be sent to all Task Group members for further comments;
- (c) that members inform the Committee Services Officer of any further amendments or comments within 48 hours;
- (d) that the final Task Group report be submitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board.

The Meeting closed at 5.25 pm

Culture and Community Services Task Group

Play Area Condition Summary Report

This report includes all play areas that the Council owns and operates; it does not include play areas owned/managed by other organisations across the district.

As well as a brief description of the condition of the play areas officers have included the Play Value Score for each site as this is also taken into consideration when prioritising which sites are proposed for refurbishment. The play area score is attributed using a formula against a number of criteria largely focused upon the level and type of stimulation and child development that each item of equipment can give the children that use it. A more detailed explanation of how a Play Value Score is calculated can be provided verbally to Task Group members if required.

C&CS currently hold the play area condition reports, generated from daily, monthly and annual inspection records, in hard copy format, as inherited from Engineering Services, and officers are in the process of transferring this information on to an electronic database that shall bring together all the information associated with our play areas. The information on the database will help inform the priorities for asset replacement in the future. A more detailed explanation of what we aim to achieve in this regard can be provided verbally at the meeting if required.

The comments incorporated in this report regarding play value and condition of the play areas are largely provided by the independent RoSPA RPII (Register for Playground Inspectors International) Inspector as contained within the annual inspection report (last completed in August 2005).

However Officers have added supplementary information where necessary as indicated in *italics*

1. Name of Site Sanders Park, Kidderminster Road

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 116. Included in this total score are:
Toddler: 20 Junior: 29 Teenage: 14

The play value score includes the ball games and skateboard areas.
The play value score is high and there are a variety of opportunities for all ages.
The skateboard facility caters for the older age group and provides a natural separation for the different ages. Though in the middle of the park, other users will give good casual supervision.

This play area was installed in May 2005 and as should be expected the condition of the play area remains very good. No significant additional improvements are necessary in the near future.

2. Name of Site **Market Street Recreation**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 44. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 5 Junior: 7 Teenage: 0

The play value score is satisfactory for this play area. There is no obvious provision for seniors/teenagers, although there is plenty of flat grass for ballgames. The location means that the majority of use will be by children who are with their parents when visiting the adjacent supermarket and town centre shopping.

The playground was installed in 2003; the play area therefore remains in very good condition and no additional significant investment to the existing play equipment is anticipated for some years.

The central location, catchment, popularity and play value score lends itself to the possibility of extending the play area to provide additional teenage play equipment in future years.

3. Name of Site **Aston Fields Recreation, Stoke Road**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 34. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 3 Junior: 4 Teenage: 4

The addition of flat swings would increase play value for both juniors and teenagers.

The play area is rather hidden away, in one corner, and is some distance from the three new gates. Houses at the new gates probably house more children than houses along the main road, which is an effective barrier for unaccompanied children.

Consideration should be given to siting the play area at the far side of the field, nearer what appears to be family housing. If it is re-sited then there should be judicious thinning/pruning of trees/shrubs so that there is good casual supervision.

If re-sited local children and parents should be involved in order to build up a sense of ownership.

There is space for a good variety of opportunities for children of all ages.

The wooden logs around the bark pit are some years old and are progressively rotting and are replaced as necessary from time to time. The play equipment remains in satisfactory condition.

4. Name of Site **King George V Playing Fields, Sidemoor**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 41. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 6 Junior: 10 Teenage: 4

There are a good variety of opportunities for children of all ages.

The equipment is relatively new and therefore no developments are recommended at this time.

This is a playing field containing a football pitch, a good multi-sports area (*installed 2001*) and a play area (*installed 2002*) that provides a good variety of play opportunities.

The field appears to be well used, primarily by people living nearby. Though pleasant, its location does not appear to be attractive to visitors from other parts of the town.

The play equipment remains in good condition despite various attacks from vandals. Cleansing of the site is a regular necessity due to discarded and broken bottles frequently left on site.

Officers do not recommend any further significant investment necessary to the play area within the next few years however there is space to nominally increase the number of items of play equipment in the future to increase the play value score.

5. Name of Site Charford Recreation Ground

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 39. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 8 Teenage: 8

This is a satisfactory play value score. There is a range of opportunities for children of all ages. A rocker for toddlers and a seat for accompanying adults would improve the play value score for toddlers. A set of flat swings for juniors, or a cantilever swing for juniors and seniors would be valued. With a very busy road to one side the catchment is limited. The area enjoys good casual supervision.

The play area has been refurbished in the last few years (*in 1999*), so no significant developments are recommended at this time. *The existing equipment is in satisfactory condition but a greater variety of play equipment could be provided to increase the play value.*

6. Name of Site Lickey End Recreation, Alcester Road

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 43. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 4 Junior: 7 Teenage: 4

With the basketball area included this is a satisfactory play value score, giving a reasonable variety of opportunities to a good age range of children.

The play area is at the edge of the village and adjacent to a busy road which will limit the catchment.

It is also rather hidden away from nearby housing, which will make younger children feel vulnerable and make the equipment more vulnerable to vandalism.

The equipment appears satisfactory for the purpose and no significant development is recommended.

Routine maintenance work to replace rotten logs and improve accessibility to the bark pit areas was undertaken in recent times. Due to the proximity of other new play areas within the adjacent housing development no significant investment to the site is essential at this time.

7. Name of Site St Chad's Park, Rubery

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 62. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 4 Junior: 11 Teenage: 10

The play value score is good for juniors and seniors and reasonable for toddlers.

The basketball post remains adjacent the play area that gives opportunities for older children. *A new play area was installed in 2003. In addition a skate park and ball court facility is currently being constructed and scheduled for completion in May 2006.*

The play area and skateboard area do not enjoy good casual supervision from housing and are vulnerable in the evening, when passers-by will be more limited.

Officers recommend consideration is given to creating a further phase of improvements to extend the play area by use of remaining 'Liveability' monies.

8. Name of Site **Callowbrook POS, Brook Road, Rubery**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 31. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 2 Junior: 5 Teenage: 4

There is a reasonable range of opportunities for a wide age range of children.

The play area is hidden away with poor sightlines from nearby houses. Although adjacent to, it is also a good way from the houses. This and the poor casual supervision mean that children will feel vulnerable at this site. It also means that the site is more likely to be vulnerable to vandalism.

Consideration should be given to siting the play area in a position where it can be seen. (The football pitch is in that position). There should be a buffer zone between the play area and the nearest houses.

Officers agree with the RoSPA recommendations that consideration to moving the play area away from its current position is preferable due primarily to continual problems related to discarded litter/bottles and vandalism to the site. Due to vandalism attacks in recent times the play equipment has progressively been removed from the site which now only consists of only a set of swings and a climbing frame that are both in poor condition.

£35k has been allocated to refurbish the site; the contract being subject to the Council awarding the framework contract covered within the European procurement guidelines.

Officers consider that the nature of the site, a more informal park environment, lends itself to a different approach to the traditional style of a steel based play area and that a more innovative landscape play initiative should be considered in consultation with ward members and local residents/school.

9. Name of Site **Braces Lane Recreation, Marlbrook**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 29. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 2 Junior: 5 Teenage: 4

This is a small play area with limited play value.

Catchment is limited as there is a busy road to one side and open fields to the other side.

There are limited sightlines and therefore casual supervision from houses, even though they are quite close. Passers-by at the road are a good distance away from the play area.

The limited catchment and location suggest that any significant developments at this site could not be justified. When developed it should be situated further away from the stream.

The play area remains in reasonable condition some items are old but in satisfactory condition. Old play equipment in particular will continue to be monitored and selected for replacement as necessary. Consideration for refurbishment, inclusive of extending the range of equipment and considering an alternative position within the park, is preferable within the next 5 years.

10. Name of Site Bournheath Recreation, Claypit Lane

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 33. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 3 Junior: 8 Teenage: 4

The play value score includes the 'goal' in the adjacent area. There are a reasonable variety of opportunities for children of a wide age range.

No significant developments are suggested in the medium term. In the longer term an additional item for toddlers could be considered e.g. slide, roundabout and the current rocker, which does not work well, could be replaced by a springer.

There is sufficient space for a challenge item e.g. scale, maypole swing etc. for young teenagers.

The location at the road, with no footpath, and with limited numbers of houses close by will limit usage.

The play equipment remains in satisfactory condition.

11. Name of Site Swans Length Recreation, Alvechurch

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 26. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 6 Teenage: 4

The Play Value Score is reasonable for this type of facility. If desired there is sufficient space for a challenge item for older children.

The play area equipment are of different ages but generally remains in satisfactory condition although a number of improvements are recommended to improve

accessibility to the site, which are deemed unsatisfactory in DDA terms, and to improve the play value of the site.

£40k has been allocated from Section 106 funds to refurbish the site; the contract being subject to the Council awarding the framework contract covered within the European procurement guidelines.

12. Name of Site The Horsecourse POS, Catshill

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 35. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 3 Junior: 8 Teenage: 4

The play value includes the basketball area.

The play area has a fair play value. However there is sufficient space for additional toddler items and also challenge items for older children. These would increase the Play Value Score.

The play area appears uncared for and attention to painting and cleanliness would significantly improve the feel of the site.

The play area has received the effects of anti social activity requiring regular cleansing of discarded litter/bottles and replacement bins and log edging around the bark pit. The play equipment is in need of replacement. Officers recommend the removal of the bark pit in favour of a rubber surfaced facility with new play equipment.

£50k has been allocated to refurbish the site; the contract being subject to the Council awarding the framework contract covered within the European procurement guidelines.

13. Name of Site Broad Street Recreation Ground (2 play areas), Sidemoor

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 40. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 4 Junior: 11 Teenage: 6

This is quite a good Play Value Score, reflecting the new equipment at both ends of the site and the existing basketball area. The site enjoys good casual supervision from nearby housing and passers-by.

The site consists of two play areas; one for toddlers (new equipment installed 2002) and a junior play area (in 2004). The equipment remains in good condition. However site cleansing remains necessary at regular intervals.

14. Name of Site **Boleyn Road, Frankley**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 14. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 2 Junior: 3 Teenage: 0

The play value score does not include the playing field or trim trail. The aerial runway is not included as it is permanently out of action.

This site is isolated, with poor casual supervision from nearby housing, and it has a busy road to one side. This and the distance from housing mean that children are likely to feel vulnerable. Consequently this site has relatively low use. These factors also mean that it is vulnerable to vandalism, from which it suffers.

It is recommended that the play area equipment be removed and an alternative site be found for the play area that can cater for the children of this area.

The play equipment is old but remains in acceptable condition – it is recommended that the equipment is progressively removed following defects or vandalism and consideration given to the future of the play area in this location.

15. Name of Site **Shelley Close POS, Catshill**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 30. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 2 Junior: 7 Teenage: 0

The equipment is in good condition with a good life expectancy. There are a variety of opportunities for children, from toddlers to seniors.

The site enjoys good casual supervision from houses at the edge of the field. Hedging/fencing should be maintained so that sightlines are not lost

No significant developments are recommended at this time, except that the provision of a goal, with some filling in of the uneven surface at this area, will probably be desired by older children.

Local play area provision will also be extended following completion of the new play area currently under construction at the Meadow Trust ground, Meadow Road, Catshill which is being grant funded by the Council.

16. Name of Site **Upland Grove POS/Pennine Road**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 25. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 4 Teenage: 4

There are only three items of equipment but they give a range of opportunities, particularly for toddlers and young teenagers. There are limited opportunities for juniors.

The site is somewhat isolated. There are high fences and limited passers-by.

By night the site could become vulnerable. Graffiti indicates this may be the case.

The equipment is in reasonable condition and no further development is suggested at this site.

17. Name of Site **Fordhouse Road POS, Stoney Hill**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 22. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 2 Junior: 5 Teenage: 0

The play value score is satisfactory for a small local play area.

The area is close to houses, to give good casual supervision and a feeling of security, but with a sufficient buffer zone.

Equipment is in good condition and sufficient and no developments are suggested.

The play area is next to a very busy road, which reduces catchment.

18. Name of Site **Houseman Close POS, Charford**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

Virtually all items have been removed, so no play value is given. The area looks neglected.

The high hedges and fences at the backs of surrounding houses mean that casual supervision is severely limited at this site and houses have limited sense of ownership.

Cars travel very fast down Austin Road creating a significant hazard for children wishing to visit the play area. Traffic calming is recommended.

It is desirable that sightlines from adjacent houses are improved to increase casual supervision. A community development approach should be taken to any development.

£100,000 of Section 106 funds has been allocated to improve play/recreation facilities in Charford.

19. Name of Site **Arundel Road Public Open Space**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 30. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 6 Teenage: 0

The play value score is satisfactory for a small local play area.

There are reasonable sightlines from nearby housing and, except for the adjacent house, has a good buffer zone.

The equipment is in good condition generally and no significant developments are suggested at this time.

The adjacent road does have fast cars occasionally. Traffic calming at this playground would increase safe access for children living within close proximity.

20. Name of Site **Bracken Grove Play Area, Catshill**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 33. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 6 Junior: 5 Teenage: 0

The playground was refurbished in 2002 and remains in good condition. It has a range of equipment to cater for toddlers and young juniors, with limited opportunities for older juniors.

Its isolation, hidden behind houses, means that there is virtually no casual supervision and younger children may well feel vulnerable and the area may attract inappropriate activities.

21. Name of Site **Silverdale Play Area, Sidemoor**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 25. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 4 Junior: 6 Teenage: 0

This site was refurbished in 2002 and the equipment remains in good condition. The Play Value Score is reasonable for a small play area.

The close proximity of the play area to housing makes it suitable for younger children, although it is partially hidden away. The open style fencing has improved casual supervision.

The newness of the site means that no developments are currently recommended.

The type of equipment generally caters for toddlers and young juniors, although the turnstile roundabout will be enjoyed by older juniors.

22. Name of Site **Innage Play Area, Wythall**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

This is a small play area suitable for local play only.

There are good sightlines from nearby houses and passers-by. The buffer zone is slightly shorter than desirable.

The area is suitable for a small number of low-key items for younger children.

The adjacent road is not traffic-calmed, which will increase risk. Although not a busy road it is likely that the occasional car will travel fast.

Play equipment has been progressively removed from the site on health and safety grounds following periods of anti social activity and local objection to replacing items of play equipment. The bark pit therefore remains purely to reduce the effects of excessive use by local youths playing football. The site is insufficient in size to accommodate a play area without creating nuisance impact on local residents. Options are therefore being considered for future use of the site and £80k of section 106 funds has been allocated to create a facility for teenagers in the local area.

23. Name of Site **May Farm Close Play Area, Wythall**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 20. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 3 Teenage: 0

The Play Value Score is reasonable for a small site.

There is good casual supervision. The buffer zone to adjacent houses is rather small.

No additional development is recommended at this site.

The play area equipment is old but in good condition as the site is not as frequently used as most sites. The site is very small and is no scope for extending the play area to increase its play value.

24. Name of Site Forest Way Play Area, Wythall

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 18. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 2 Teenage: 0

The play value score is reasonable for this small area.

The buffer zone around the play area is too small and swings are too big for a doorstep play area.

Its design and equipment should reflect its doorstep status. A strategy of mediation is desirable with encouragement of development/use of facilities for older age group nearby.

£80k of section 106 funds has been allocated to create a facility for teenagers in the local area.

25. Name of Site Foxglove Way POS/Play Area, Lickey End

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 20. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 3 Teenage: 0

The Play Value score gives a good variety for a small area.

This is a pleasant small play area amongst houses.

The site enjoys good casual supervision but hedges will need to be kept pruned if this is to be maintained.

The buffer zone is rather small to two sides.

There is insufficient space and the area is too close to houses for any additional development.

The equipment is in good condition.

26. Name of Site **Hollywood Lane, Wythall**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 32. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 1 Junior: 5 Teenage: 0

The play value score is relatively low.

Some toddler items, with seating for accompanying adults, would improve the play value score.

The play area is adjacent to a road, along which cars travel fast. Children can only access the playground by walking along the busy road. The road will act as a significant barrier for children who live on the other side from the playground. Unless severe traffic calming is installed the development potential is low. A path/access from the side road would improve access, but there is a steep bank at this point. The play area appears to be relatively little used.

The equipment is in satisfactory condition and until recently was maintained by the Parish Council. No significant improvements to the site is recommended at this time but consideration for replacement items of equipment within the next five years is anticipated options considered for the future use of the site.

27. Name of Site **Penmanor PF, Finstall**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

The total Play Value Score is 30. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 4 Junior: 5 Teenage: 3

Whilst there has been a reduction in the number of play items in recent years, it is now of a higher quality than previously.

The equipment is on a village playing field, which is rather isolated up a path. Casual supervision is poor and, although parents/grandparents take their children, it is somewhat isolated for children to go on their own.

Items of play equipment were replaced in 2000 and remain in good condition.

28. Name of Site **George Road P.F. Alvechurch**

**Play Area
Condition/Development**

This is a play area on a square of grassed public open space - it is surrounded by houses.

The total Play Value Score is 41. Included in this total score are:

Toddler: 2 Junior: 6 Teenage: 5

The Play Value Score is generally satisfactory, however there is only swinging for toddlers. A rocking or other item suitable for toddlers would improve the play value score.

Judicious pruning/thinning of trees/bushes will help to increase sightlines and therefore discourage inappropriate activities/behaviour.

The equipment is generally in satisfactory condition and, apart from items for toddlers, no significant developments are suggested for this site in the short/medium term.

This site was on lease to the Parish Council until end March 2006 and now maintenance responsibility remains with the District Council.

29. Name of Site **Kinver Drive, Hagley**

A Play Value Score has not been calculated for this site.

The play area consists of a small range of equipment including seesaw, pirouette, springer and slide within a bow top fenced area.

The site was adopted following completion of the adjacent residential development.

The play equipment remains in good condition and no significant investment is anticipated as being necessary within the next 5 years.



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EC Procurement Thresholds from January 31, 2006

Details of the thresholds from 31 January 2006 are given below. Thresholds are net of VAT.

PUBLIC CONTRACTS REGULATIONS 2006- FROM 31 JANUARY 2006

	SUPPLIES	SERVICES	WORKS
Entities listed in Schedule 1 ¹	£93,738 (€137,000)	£93,738 ² (€137,000)	£3,611,319 ³ (€5,278,000)
Other public sector contracting authorities	£144,371 (€211,000)	£144,371 (€211,000)	£3,611,319 ³ (€5,278,000)
Indicative Notices	£513,166 (€750,000)	£513,166 (€750,000)	£3,611,319 ³ (€5,278,000)
Small lots	£54,738 (€ 80,000)	£54,738 (€ 80,000)	£684,221 (€1,000,000)

¹ Schedule 1 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 lists central government bodies subject to the WTO GPA. These thresholds will also apply to any successor bodies.

² With the exception of the following services, which have a threshold of £144,371 (€211,000)

- Part B (residual) services
- Research & Development Services (Category 8)
- The following Telecommunications services in Category 5
 - CPC 7524 - Television and Radio Broadcast services
 - CPC 7525 - Interconnection services
 - CPC 7526 - Integrated telecommunications services
- Subsidised services contracts under regulation 34.

³ Including subsidised services contracts under regulation 34

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UTILITIES CONTRACTS REGULATIONS 2006 - FROM 31 JANUARY 2006

	SUPPLIES	SERVICES	WORKS
All sectors	£288,741 (€422,000)	£288,741 (€422,000)	£3,611,319 (€5,278,000)
Indicative Notices	£513,166 (€750,000)	£513,166 (€750,000)	£3,611,319 (€5,278,000)
Small lots	£54,738 (€80,000)	£54,738 (€80,000)	£684,221 (€1,000,000)

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APPENDIX VI

DATED _____ 2001

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- and -

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

- and -

**THE GOVERNING BODY INCORPORATED OF THE
WOODRUSH HIGH SCHOOL (HOLLYWOOD)**

AGREEMENT

**relating to facilities at The Woodrush High School
Bromsgrove in the County of Worcester**

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COUNTY COUNCIL IF YOU REQUIRE SIGHT OF A COPY OF THE DOCUMENT**

**PL/JC
(23.1.2001)**

**Mr. S. Mallinson,
Head of Legal Services,
County Hall,
Spetchley Road,
Worcester**