

**Agenda Item No:** 6

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 3 March 2014

**Report Title:** Hastings and St Leonards Play Strategy 2014 - 2019

**Report By:** Virginia Gilbert  
Head of Amenities, Resorts and Leisure

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### **Purpose of Report**

To advise that the Hastings and St Leonards Play Strategy has been refreshed and updated.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

- 1. That the updated Hastings and St Leonards Play Strategy 2014-2019 be considered and agreed.**
- 2. To agree the development of an action plan in partnership with the local Play Forum to enable the delivery of the strategy.**

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

The Strategy will continue to support a framework for our local authority and its partners to develop and sustain quality play opportunities for Hastings. It will enable a strategic approach to the delivery of our vision, which is for all local children and young people to be able to enjoy their right to play.

A planned strategic approach to play development is likely to allow for enhanced funding opportunities.

A greater understanding of the importance of play and recognition that play as a theme cuts across a range of policy areas, will help to ensure that children's needs are taken into account within the wider community and are considered in strategic planning.

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## Introduction

1. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the right of the child to participate freely in play and recreational activities. This proposed Hastings and St Leonards Play Strategy (Appendix 1) sets out a vision for Hastings and St Leonards to be a place where all children and young people enjoy the right to play.
2. Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and 'is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities'. (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, 2005)
3. Hastings Borough Council has a long commitment to and a proud tradition of supporting children's play. The Strategy reflects the coming together of a range of partners to establish an innovative and coordinated approach to make a difference through play. It provides the opportunity to build on the foundations already in place to create a long lasting legacy of improvements to children's play opportunities across the Town.
4. The successes and outcomes of the previous play strategy (2007-2012) includes:
  - A regular programme of free neighbourhood 'Street Play' sessions in areas of deprivation, supported predominately by external funding.
  - 2-3 large scale summer Play Day events each year, attracting an average of approximately 4,000 local people per event.
  - A young volunteers program, including those not in education, employment or training, to volunteer their time and build skills by attending training and helping at community events.
  - Additional support for families who had difficulty accessing our events including those with disabled children and children from different cultural backgrounds. This included partnership work with Play Sense and the Links Project.
  - Facilitating community involvement in the refurbishment of 7 playgrounds and creation of 4 new playgrounds, enabled by external funding.
  - Coordination of the quarterly local Play Forum enabling community involvement and multi-agency working.
  - Support for events including; St. Leonards Festival, Sea Food and Wine, Olympic Torch, Pirate Day, International Children's Day, Big Local events.
  - The development and support of the innovative Hastings Adventure Playground initiated by funding through Pathfinder funding.
  - Provision of a new crèche service to help local parents overcome childcare barriers and access the Active Hastings programme. Running over 5 crèches a week in community venues for the last 3 years.

- The provision of extra curricular play sessions at various local primary schools to support the FAST project (Family and Schools Together).
  - 2 Play on the Beach events, attracting over 3000 children each year from the local schools, nurseries and children's social groups enabled by Big Lottery funding and the delivery of the Toddle waddle each year in Alexandra park.
  - Development of a new school holiday play scheme, to increase accessible play opportunities and to provide affordable holiday childcare for working parents.
5. The new Strategy development has been driven by local need and informed by a range of community consultation over a 6 month period. It reflects existing knowledge of play need from a range of partners including the Hastings and St Leonards Play Forum, Play England and from recent play audits.
  6. The Strategy highlights key priorities which will form the basis of annual Play Development action plans.

## Overview of the Strategy

7. The Strategy is written for statutory, voluntary and community sector partners; for partners whose traditional role already involves play development and for those partners for whom play development can enable them to deliver their own objectives.
8. The strategy promotes the importance of play. Play is an essential, natural element of life and the way children and young people come to understand themselves and the world around them. Opportunities to test out life through play ensure children can grow into resilient, confident, wiser, successful learners and responsible citizens.
9. The Strategy sets the mission to improve the local play experience for every young person and child in the Town by working in partnership to improve and sustain play opportunities. The Strategy emphasises that 'play' is everyone's responsibility and aims to ensure that a consideration of children's need to play becomes part of wider strategic policy.
10. The strategy includes an overview of the positive impacts of play, such as helping to foster resilience to aspects of child poverty and enhancing community cohesion and wellbeing. It highlights barriers to play, such as perceptions of intolerant attitudes and lack of safe places to play and illustrates evidence based good practise.
11. The strategy has 2 main priorities:
  - Ensure children's needs and wishes about play are heard and promote the importance of play for all children and young people.
  - Improve and extend the range, quality and accessibility of free play opportunities Borough wide by working in collaboration with partners, sharing resources and maximising opportunities to attract external funding.

## Future actions

12. An annual action plan will be agreed with SMART targets, involving a range of partners including Hastings Borough Council. A sub group will be formed with Lead Member involvement to lead on the action plan development and ongoing monitoring of progress. Regular updates will be submitted to the Hastings and St Leonards Play Forum.
13. The Strategy reflects local need and community involvement, but further consultation throughout the life span of the strategy will be required to keep the document relevant and 'live'.
14. The annual action plan will take into account changes to local need, partnership work and financial implications.

## Financial implications

15. There are no new financial implications for the council. The 14/15 action plan will be developed inline with available resources from the Council's Play Development budget and external funding sourced. Partners will resource their own actions.
16. In future years the level of impact will be dependant on available funding, therefore the action plan will be subject to an annual review.

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## Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

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## Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

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## Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	Yes
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	Yes

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## Background Information

Right to Play - Hastings and St Leonards Play Strategy 2014 to 2019

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