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Executive Summary

Play forms an important part of all children's lives and has been recognised as a key activity by partner organisations, the Government, the Children’s Trusts and the Children’s Act. The value of Play is a significant part of every child’s development as it keeps children healthy and active, it develops learning and creativity, encourages communication, promotes interests, builds ability, improves mental health, gives a chance to let off steam, creates family cohesion, and it is fun.

The Big Lottery fund has set aside £155 million for the development of Play and £200,000 has been allocated to the Maldon District to develop and adopt a local Play Strategy to identify needs for the children. This Strategy defines 'children' as under the age of 19.

The Children’s Fund Essex has coordinated play across the County and has provided support for the 12 Districts in helping developing and delivering their play strategies. All 12 Districts come together as a countywide play partnership to exchange knowledge, and experience and ideas. The Play Partnership and Essex Play Officer Group was formed comprising of stakeholders from around the District and has steered the development of a Maldon District Play Strategy. This has enabled consistency across the County and the sharing of best practice.

To identify priorities, the following were undertaken:

- A play equipment audit using national standards.
- A play service audit.
- A comprehensive consultation exercise was completed involving the children and parents of the District.
- An open space review.

The priorities are identified according to the number of the children and location. However, there is limited external funding available and because of the rural nature of the District it is not possible to accommodate all the locations identified. There must be a programmed approach to implementation and completion of the action plan over the next 5 years.

The following Play Projects are identified for development:

- Play Ranger Service for the Parish Areas - (3 years)
- Ice Skating Rink
- New Southminster Play Area
- New West Maldon Play Area
- New Burnham Play Area
- New Mayland Play Area

In addition, Maldon District Council has already identified and implemented the following Play Projects:

- New Promenade Park under 5’s Play Area
- Skate Board Park at Promenade Park
- Additional play equipment in the Valley, Promenade Park.
New Crazy Golf and Petanque Terrain at Promenade Park.
Further enhancement to play site at Oak Tree Meadow.
BMX Track at Promenade Park and Riverside Park

The Children’s Fund Essex has also funded other projects for the Maldon District, (Theatre Resource, Mapalim’s play work and play therapy and an anti-bullying initiative).

The Strategy details an action plan for the implementation and the need to review the Play equipment on an annual basis to ensure the safety of equipment. However, frequent inspections will be carried out for items of maintenance and repair.

The annual inspection of all the Play equipment will be completed by the Leisure and Liveability Team to ensure they continue to meet the health and safety requirements. Day-to-day monitoring will be completed by the Park Rangers and members of the public.

The Strategy aligns with the Council's new Corporate and Sustainable Community Strategy, and it also impacts other Council strategies including the Youth Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Green Spaces Strategy, the Children and Young People Plan and the Community Safety Strategy.

The Play Strategy has been through a formal consultation exercise with partners and other key stakeholders to ensure that the findings are correct.

The open space audit discovered a deficiency in provision of green open space and any future building developments should take into account the current and future requirements.

The Play Partnership has shown that, by working together, more can be achieved and more can be provided for the children of the Maldon District. The Play Partnership will continue to provide management and monitoring of the Play Strategy to ensure that the needs of the children of the District are met.
1 Introduction

Play for children is important for their physical, creative, emotional, social and intellectual development. Children’s play is a biological drive and play can result in better development, creativity and confidence. Play provision for all children and young people should be built around the ‘Three Frees’:

- Freedom to choose.
- Free of charge.
- Freedom to come and go.

The Maldon District Council Play Strategy has been developed as a response to the increasing restrictions on children’s opportunity to play freely in a range of settings and to increasing recognition of the importance of play opportunities.

In consulting with children some interesting patterns emerged. Particularly, children want to have the freedom to play out with friends, but with the proviso of feeling safe from bullying by older children. Many parents also have a fear for their children’s safety when out playing alone. This, together with the increase in fear of litigation by providers, has resulted in the quality of play provision deteriorating across the UK. These factors contribute to the growing trend in the number of children and young people choosing to stay in to play with computers or watch TV.

The issues facing Maldon reflect many of the recommendations in the Government’s play review and reflect nationwide trends. The need for more exciting play provision was considered by all those consulted as key priorities: particularly creative, informal and natural play settings; and to have additional facilities which cater for very young children and those of the older age brackets.

The review of the current provision, through demographic profiling, shows opportunities to rationalise the more formal play areas now located in inappropriate areas and identifies new natural environment, informal spaces close to high populated areas. Maldon is rich in natural environment spaces and these offer Maldon opportunities to develop new innovative play spaces, often lacking in more urban areas.

Under the Children’s Play programme, Big Lottery Fund will support activities that are self-directed, creative and fun. They define children’s play as “what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons.”
1.1 Purpose & Scope

The Maldon District Council Play Strategy will specifically look at play provision and opportunities within the following criteria:

- Where play activity is freely chosen by the child or young person
- Where play is classed as informal, casual and not part of an organised sports activity or a special trip
- During the ‘free time’ of the child or young person
- Informal play spaces, purpose built facilities such as playgrounds and chosen participation opportunities
- Where the role of the adults involved is to support the playing child (eg within staffed provision by experienced, trained play workers)
- Where providers are providing play opportunities outside the categories of formal education or activity imposed on children and young people by adults.

It is important that ‘play’ is not confused with other provisions within the traditional education role, formal sports activities and the childcare sector. Children and young people may play in those settings but in the context of this Strategy, play is defined as ‘freely chosen, in their own time, in their own space’ and based on casual play activities.

It is often assumed that play relates only to fixed facilities provided in local communities. For example, this would include traditional swing parks and children’s play grounds. It is clear from the Government’s recent review and changes in thinking on play and youth activities that most children’s play does not revolve around fixed equipment facilities and is often more creative and personally driven. The importance of adult involvement is also recognised, not in directing children’s play but in a more supportive role. This may mean supervision from a distance as well as providing more direct opportunities based on children’s interests and needs.

This Strategy will look at current provision specifically for informal and casual play activities for children and young people aged 0-19 years. The method of establishing the priorities will also focus on what children would like to do with themselves rather than what adults would like them to do.

The activities need to have a clear focus on freely chosen play and not be adult driven. Therefore, it will not concentrate on activities such as youth training and diversionary activities or structured sports. The Strategy focuses on the areas of greatest need and takes into account the needs of disabled children and other young people who currently have less access to good play opportunities in a given area.
1.2 Outline of content

The Play Strategy has been developed in response to the increasing restrictions on children’s opportunities to play freely in a range of local settings and to increasing recognition of the importance of play in children’s lives. The Play Strategy will also enable Maldon to access funding opportunities for play to support the development of good quality play provision and enhanced play opportunities for children.

Play provision is met by the services provided by Maldon District Council, Essex County Council, local private businesses and the Voluntary Sector. The development of future opportunities for play requires these agencies to have a greater knowledge of the other providers’ work and to develop a more co-ordinated approach to service delivery.

The Play Strategy has been developed through consultations with adults and children. It also takes into consideration other relevant developments and strategies in Maldon.

The Crime, Disorder and Community Safety Strategy recognises the need for leisure activities. The Play Strategy offers solutions to providing appropriate activities and encourages dialogue between different members of local communities in line with peer mediation solutions offered by Community Safety Strategy.

The objectives in the Play Strategy reflect a commitment to the well being of children from birth to 19 through play - one of the most fundamental activities for children. It values play and recognises every child’s right to play. It recognises that adults are instrumental in ensuring that children have good quality play experiences.
1.3 Definitions of Play

Defining Play is crucial to this strategy. Understanding the nature of Play and what it means in different contexts must be clear before consultation and audit is undertaken.

This was recognised by the Essex Play Officer Group. A generic Essex wide definition was formulated, (see appendix 7). This was extensively consulted on with Officers and Councillors of the Maldon District and the Play Partnership.

The Essex Play Policy has been adopted by this Strategy and incorporates the nationally recognised definition of the “What play provision should do for children” from Best Play.

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


This means children are playing when they are doing what they want to do, in a way they want to and for their own reasons. Play may take place with or without other children or any adult involvement; although supportive, sympathetic adults can significantly improve the quality and range of opportunities for play.

Through play, children and young people learn what cannot be taught in more formal ways: self-confidence and self-esteem, the sense of themselves as individuals capable of making choices. Children feel valued and respected where and young people of all ages play. Through play, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community.

Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to the processes of human development. It provides a mechanism for children to explore the world around them and the medium through which skills are developed and practised. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, intellectual and educational development and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.
As well as being age related, children’s play needs are also influenced by their family situation and circumstances; by their physical, sensory and learning abilities; their ethnicity or culture; and by where they live and their individual interests and character. It is important for the development of the Play Strategy for the Maldon District that all these considerations are addressed and that provision of play facilities is considered for families and children that who visit the District during the summer season.

Play
Play is freely chosen, self-directed and intrinsically motivated behaviour, which engages the child, regardless of the context in which it takes place:

Play is an innate drive and is essential for human development. It is manifested as behaviour that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. The value of play derives from the play process itself, not from any extrinsic goal, reward or end product. Play is often spontaneous and unpredictable. Through play children experience their world and their relationship with it.

Charter for Play work Education and Qualification
Joint National Committee on Training for Play work

Play is different from organised sport, groups, clubs and classes which are clearly defined by external rules and definitions… as they are not personally directed and intrinsically motivated (although they may be freely chosen).

Making the Case for Play, 2002

Children
For the purposes of this Strategy the term ‘children’ is used to describe young people aged 0-19. This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As children and young people get older, the words they use to describe their activities may change.

Play Opportunities
Refers to situations and environments where children have freedom to play - this can include areas and situations not designated for play, indoors or outside, formal or informal, supervised or unsupervised, constructed and natural environments.

Play Provision
Refers to play opportunities in settings which have been specifically designated or planned for play – usually in response to a lack of ‘natural’ play opportunities. Play provision can be indoors or out, staffed or unstaffed, with or without equipment, static or mobile, free or charging. The recent government review on children’s play describes play provision as:
...a space, facility or set of activities that aims to give children the opportunity to play. In play provision, children decide for themselves what they want to do, why they are doing it and how they go about it (perhaps with a degree of adult support or guidance). If they wish, they can stop what they are doing and do something else. Good play provision offers children as much choice, control and freedom as possible, within reasonable boundaries.

Play work
Play work is a distinct discipline that involves supporting children aged 5-14 in a range of play settings. Play workers understand the play process and the:

“rich physical and social environments that maximise opportunities for children to engage in a wide variety of play types. Such play experiences include make believe, risk, contact with the natural environment, experimenting with identity, idea and objects”.

JNCTP Charter for Play work Education and Training

Youth Work
This is a distinct discipline that involves working with children and young people from 11-25, with the emphasis on 13-19 year olds. In the Transforming Youth Work Green Paper, good youth work is identified as “offering quality support to young people, enabling their voices to be heard, providing a rich diversity of personal and social development opportunities and promoting intervention and prevention”.

Early Years' Work
Early Years’ work is work with children aged 0-8 in a childcare or education setting. Work with younger children can be in a variety of settings from playgroups, formal childcare settings and private nurseries to initiatives such as Sure Start programmes.

Childcare
This differs from open access play provision in that a contract exists between the provider and parents/carers to ensure that children attend for a defined period of time, during which the provider is in loco parentis. For this reason, out of school care provision for older children, even where those children arrive and depart on their own, is distinct from open access play provision. However, open access play provision has a part to play in supporting those who provide childcare, in extending the range of play opportunities available to children in their care – this is especially the case for ‘informal’ carers, eg grandparents.

Community-led schemes
These are schemes, usually school holiday play schemes, run by and for local communities. Community members work on a paid or voluntary basis. Funding may come from a variety of sources: such as local and national trusts and charities, lottery funding or local authorities.
Children’s opportunities to play freely is decreasing: and their opportunities to play outdoors are restricted because of traffic and the fear of strangers. These restrictions affect children’s development and their capacity to grow into robust, emotionally, psychologically and physically healthy adults.

The erosion and control of children’s right to play in their own neighbourhoods by adults needs to be challenged with proactive campaigns and services that show that children at play is a mark of a civilised society. Children should be more visible in our public spaces. We need to show that they have as much right to these spaces and places as adults.
2 The case for play

2.1 The value and significance of play for the children and young people

As children grow, their play needs and wishes develop. As they grow more independent they want to spend time away from their home away from their parents. In developing a Play Strategy for the Maldon District, reference is made to the changing and developing play needs of children and young people of different ages, ranging from 0 -19. Although the national review is limited to children and young people aged 0-16 it was felt that Maldon District Council should address the needs for informal activity of those up to the age of 19. Few teenagers would describe what they do as play but it was felt that because youth activities are limited in the District, the Play Strategy should also address the needs of this age group.

The Children’s Act 2004 – Every Child Matters
The Children’s Act was produced following consultation on the Government’s Green Paper, Every Child Matters. The Act gives effect to the legislative proposals set out in the Green Paper - to create clear accountability for children's services, to enable better joint working and to secure a better focus on safeguarding children. The Act includes children’s education, training and recreation. The interpretation of “recreation” includes children’s play. It places a duty on local authorities to ensure partnership working to achieve five outcomes for children (and young people):

- Physical and mental health.
- Protection from harm and neglect.
- Education, training and recreation.
- Contribution to society.
- Social and economic well being.

The key elements of the Children’s Act are:

- The appointment of a Children’s Commissioner to ensure a voice for children and young people.
- Better integrated planning, commissioning, and delivery of children's services and provide for clear accountability.
- A duty on local authorities to make arrangements through which key agencies co-operate to improve the well-being of children and young people and widen services' powers to pool budgets in support of this.
- Professionals working together and sharing information to identify difficulties and provide appropriate support.
- Measures to ensure clear accountability for children's services.
- Designation of a lead member for children's services to mirror the director's responsibility at a local political level
- The creation of an integrated inspection framework and for inspectorates to carry out joint reviews of all children's services provided in an area.
Play keeps children healthy and active
At a time of increasing concern about children’s sedentary lifestyles, physical play can increase fitness levels and contribute to emotional well-being. The chief medical officer advises that:

“Children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate-intensity physical activity each day”.


There is growing research evidence that increased opportunity for free play is the most effective way to ensure this, and that a range of increasing health problems are associated with the decline in play opportunities. The Government White Paper ‘Choosing Health’ noted that:

“many children appear to have less time being physically active … because of the increase in the car use and heightened concern about potential risks of unsupervised play outdoors”.
2.2 The benefits of play for children

The benefits of play have been well researched. They are articulated in The New Charter for Children’s Play.

Play promotes children’s development, learning, creativity and Independence

As well as learning how and why things work through play, there is evidence from recent neurobiological research that early play experiences may have lasting effects on children’s development and later capacity to learn. Children under the age of 10 have at least twice the potential brain capacity of adults, and it is now being suggested that play in young children may have a critical role in the enlargement of brain capacity.

Hughes, 1999.

Play enables children to learn communication, negotiation and listening Skills

Such skills help to develop self-esteem and confidence, and are linked to what is now called ‘emotional intelligence’, an increasingly important attribute for successful functioning in the 21st century.

Goleman 1996

Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities and their interests

By doing, risking and sometimes failing in play, children learn how to deal with their environment and to understand their abilities and limitations.

Play is therapeutic and good for mental health

Play can help children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances, such as emotional stress or medical treatment. The Mental Health Foundation (1999) found that many of the attributes enhanced by play - communication skills, a positive attitude, a problem-solving approach and the capacity to reflect - made children more resilient to stressful events such as poverty and family discord.

Play gives children the chance to let off steam and have fun

Active physical play enjoyed by children reduces stress on their parents, especially during long summer holidays, and helps those families living in difficult circumstances to cope.
Benefits of play provision for families and community
Best Play: What play provision should do for children cites a study carried out in Zurich on the effects on the community of not providing good play opportunities:

A lack of good play opportunities can also have adverse consequences on families and communities. The Zurich research...found evidence that families of children who were kept indoors had poorer local support networks and consequently found it more difficult to, for, instance, organise informal childcare. This supports the thesis that community play opportunities form part of the “glue” that brings communities and families together.


For families and communities, play:
- Helps reduce the involvement of children and young people in anti-social behaviour, in the short term; and plays a part in promoting social cohesion in the longer term.
- Supports families and communities, by providing a focus for informal networks of family support, and by allowing children autonomy within an environment which parents feel secure about.
- Makes an important contribution, in parallel with education, in developing adults who are creative and effective in the social and economic sphere.
- Offers opportunities for exploring cultural identity and difference.
- Provides a focus for tackling social exclusion through community development.

Listening to children’s voices, identifies the need for activities that offer children regarding “recreational inclusion”:
- Stimulation
- Challenge
- Creativity
- Progression
2.3 The contribution play makes to wider agendas

How the Play Strategy fits with other key plans and Strategies
The right to play is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Every Child Matters identifies 5 key outcomes for children. In future, all children’s services including health, education and social services will be working towards these outcomes:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well-being

This will require a much more holistic view of the child, with services based on need and early intervention to prevent problems escalating.

Play and recreation has been identified as part of the ‘Enjoying and Achieving’ outcome. Good quality play provision will also contribute to the ‘Being Healthy’ and ‘Making a Positive Contribution’ outcomes – play encourages physical health and mental well-being, and develops confidence and self-esteem which in turn provides opportunities for children to contribute to the wider community.

The role of play is identified in a number of other initiatives such as Extended Schools, which looks at opening up the use of school grounds and premises for out of school activities including play. Based around the concept of ‘clusters’ of schools, Extended Schools services will be located in Maldon and Burnham. The Sports Development Service also plays a major role in young peoples activities and services.

Out of school childcare providers - childminders, playgroups, day nurseries and out of school clubs - will also need to demonstrate how they provide opportunities for play. All providers must:

“Provide activities and play opportunities which allow children to use their imagination and in which they have as much choice as possible.”

National Standards for Day Care and Childminding

The need to play is recognised in Planning Guidance. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) aims to safeguard open spaces and playing fields. It was revised in 2002 to focus on assessing the need for different types of open space. The guidance is the national context for the play space and open space aspects which are addressed in this Play Strategy.
The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires service providers to include disabled people and, from October 2004, requires them to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to the physical features of their premises to overcome barriers to access. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in 2003 published guidance covering ‘the need to not focus on impairment-specific issues – rather than identify obstacles to play for any child who might wish to access the play space and think about ways to circumvent them’.

**Barriers to Play**

Research has identified many common potential barriers to play, including:

- *Lack of informal and formal play spaces* – more building developments locally, with limited facilities for children and young people.
- *Increase fears of parents and attitudes of other adults* – parents do not allow their children to access hidden play areas alone; adults who do not have children, and the elderly, have a fear of children and young people and often try to suppress informal play activity in their neighbourhoods.
- *Too much emphasis on formal education rather than informal learning* – there is a drive to extend school times and use of school facilities outside normal school hours for extra education-related activities. Additionally, Community Education is often labelled as play.
- *Fears about litigation* – many providers of both facilities and organisations providing activities are fearful of the growing compensation culture and therefore ‘dumb down’ the play experience.
- *Lack of investment and commitment* – the lack of investment in good quality play areas mean young people and children often have nowhere of their own to go.
- *Cost of provision to children and families* – many of the most challenging experiences – theme parks and adventure play - have a cost attached.
- *Increases in traffic* – heavy traffic can limit unaccompanied children’s access to even their local playgrounds and open spaces. If they have to be accompanied by an adult, this alters the play experience.
- *Gaps in the provision and activities which interest some groups of children and young people* – there is limited provision for the 8-14 year olds and also girls between 12-18 years.
- *Children’s lack of ‘ownership’ of their spaces* – children often see the local open spaces as not ‘theirs’ – they see these spaces for tourists, dog walkers and elderly people.
- *Children’s concerns about safety/ fear of bullying* – children have genuine fears of older children, gangs from other locations and some adults.
Objectives of play provision

*Best Play, What play provision should do for children* is a nationally endorsed document used by play practitioners as a guideline for developing and improving play opportunities. It contains seven objectives for play provision:

- To extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
- To recognise that children need to test boundaries and to respond positively to that need.
- To manage the balance between offering risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
- To maximise the range of play opportunities.
- To foster independence and self-esteem.
- To foster respect for others and offer opportunities for social interaction.
- To foster well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.
3 Context

3.1 Play in local, regional, and national contexts

Developing Maldon District’s Play Strategy – National, Regional and Local Context and Policy
A National Play Review was launched in October 2002, following an announcement in June 2001 of a £200 million boost for children’s play funded from the New Opportunities Fund. Of this, £155 million has since been allocated for distribution across England. The Maldon District has been allocated £200,000. The aim is to use this allocation improve play opportunities for children and young people aged 0-16.

Corporate Strategy
In 2006 a new Vision and Corporate Priorities were agreed by the Council. These are:

“Creating a District that takes Pride in itself “and 4 key external priorities for the future:

- Protecting our Rural Heritage
- Supporting an Active Local Economy
- Increasing the Affordable Housing Supply
- Promoting Civic Pride

Officer working groups were developed for each priority, tasked with developing an action plan to take forward identified tasks associated with each theme. A recent proposal is that these the groups become project boards chaired by a Chief Officer to maintain momentum and assist with the delivery of the relevant action plans.

Equality
The Council recognises the requirement to meet the needs of all, and take account of the issues of Race, Gender, Age and Disability in the provision of services in the Maldon District. This is expressed in the Maldon District Council's Corporate Equality Scheme and in the all the Service Diversity Action Plans. (A copy of the Corporate Equality Scheme and Leisure & Liveability Service Diversity Plan can be found in Appendix 10).

Sustainable Community Strategy
‘Facing the Future’ A Sustainable Future for the District of Maldon, replaces the previous Community Plan, and provides information about the Maldon District as it is now and what it will be like in 2015. A first draft has been approved by the LSP and endorsed by Council. It went out for public consultation in March 2007. The final approved strategy is expected by September 2007.
The Strategy resulted from a significant review carried out during 2005. It marks the beginning of a new era of collaborative working and increased community togetherness and taking pride.

The Strategy also provides a framework for groups and organisations to plan their work as well as a focus for developing strategies. The supporting Action Plan sets out these actions in more detail, and describes how achievements will be monitored.

There are four ‘Pride’ themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

- Taking pride in ourselves
- Taking pride in our communities
- Taking Pride in our local businesses
- Taking Pride in our rural and coastal heritage

Play is to be developed within the theme ‘Taking Pride in Ourselves’ within which the aims are ‘encouraging individuals to take pride in themselves and their families enabling people to realise their full potential’.

The nature of play provision by Local Authorities has radically changed over recent years, prompted by recent reforms in legislation and recommended standards (the new European Standards introduced in 1999). This has led to a number of different responses, ranging from the closure of almost all play facilities by some Local Authorities, to enormous investment of capital by others in order to comply with every new recommended requirement.

Objective of the Play Strategy

The main objective is to develop a multi-agency Play Strategy involving each department of the Maldon District Council and external organisations. The Strategy can be used to raise the profile of play and identify future development of play facilities and opportunities for those living in the District, under the following criteria:

- Provide an overarching view of play shared by different local authority departments, other agencies and voluntary groups.
- Set out why children need to play and the benefits of play for children.
- Develop criteria to evaluate and protect existing provision – both physical (play sites) and play opportunities.
- Influence policy and planning decisions relating to housing and loss of play provision.
- Address issues to do with the need for formal and informal space.
- Address issues to do with quality (ie children’s access to space, opportunities, facilitation and the role of play work/youth work services).
- Provide a framework for the improvement and development of provision and services.
- Provide links with other corporate policies, strategies and community plans.
• Provide a co-ordinated approach across all agencies in the public and voluntary sectors to provide the best possible play facilities and opportunities for the community of the Maldon District.
Context for play: national meets local

We must look to reclaim for children and young people a part of their childhood that is in real danger of being lost. Too many play facilities are run-down, in the wrong place, or simply too dull to keep children’s interest...Young people want to play and spend time outside and it is important that we provide suitable spaces for them. Alongside learning more about themselves and each other, play facilities will help keep children fit and healthy, tackle the growing issue of obesity and provide parents with places where they are happy to let their children spend their free time.

Tessa Jowell,
Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport

A number of Government initiatives and policies have significantly increased services and provision for children and young people. Some of these have re-framed services for children and young people. Developing a more integrated approach to services for children is the Government’s Key Strategy.

Initiatives which can affect children’s play and leisure include Government policies that affect service provision for children across the whole (0 – 19) age range, those that will affect children from birth to four and then initiatives proceeding up the age range. National and local contexts are offered below to illustrate how national developments affect local delivery of play.

The Audit Commission acknowledged the importance of play. Their definition of a ‘quality’ play experience is based on the degree to which children are provided with opportunities to experience directly:

- The natural elements.
- Fabricated and natural materials and tools.
- Challenge.
- Free movement.
- Emotions.
- Play with identity.
- Varied social interaction Change.

Children’s Trusts
The preferred model for achieving this integration is Children's Trusts. The Green Paper confirmed that most areas should have Trusts by 2006.

Children's Trusts integrate local education, social care and some health services for children and young people. They incorporate an integrated commissioning Strategy delivered through a range of providers that is designed to meet local evaluations of need. Trusts can also include services such as Connexions, Youth Offending Teams and Sure Start. A range of further local partners - Police, voluntary organisations, housing and leisure services - can also become involved.
The Essex Children’s Fund
The Children’s Fund is targeted at 5-13 year olds and is a key part of the Government’s Strategy to tackle disadvantage and inequality deriving from child poverty and social exclusion. The Children’s Fund works to meet local needs and issues, and aims to increase multi-agency, partnership work. The programme aims to:

- Support services to identify children and young people who are showing signs of early difficulty.
- Provide children and young people and/or their families with the support they need to realise their potential and overcome poverty and disadvantage.
- Secure long-term improvement in children’s lives by building capacity in the local community.
- Actively involve children, young people and their parents in planning and delivering services.

Young people
The Government agenda for young people is personal development and outcomes that are related to this.

Connexions
Connexions is targeted at all young people aged 13-19 in England. It aims to provide integrated advice, guidance and offer access to personal development opportunities for young people to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. The priority for Connexions has been to reduce the number of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training. Each Connexions service is delivered through a multi-agency Connexions Partnership. These cover the same areas as the 47 Learning and Skills Councils in England.

Transforming Youth work
This document outlines the Government’s expectation of what Local Authorities are to provide for young people aged between 11-25, with the core target group being 13-19 years. It outlines ten objectives for the delivery of services to young people. The expectation is that youth services will work with Connexions to deliver the objectives.

Youth services must offer things which young people will want to use. They must be focused on young people’s:

- Personal, social and educational development.
- Voice and influence.
- Inclusion and engagement in society.

Voluntary sector organisations are expected to be key partners in this work as we build on their expertise and successful delivery.
Other initiatives

The aim of *Social Enterprises: a Strategy for success, July 2002*, produced by the Department of Trade and Industry, is to encourage the development of social enterprises. A social enterprise is defined as:

...a business with primarily social objectives who’s surpluses are principally re-invested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

The development of childcare enterprises, or a voluntary play association that can support the implementation of the Play Strategy, are examples of a social enterprise.

Outdoor play spaces

The Strategy provides guidelines for carrying out an extensive audit of outdoor provision. Consultations with children nationally and research, particularly focusing on observation of children’s patterns of outdoor play, shows that children prefer to play outdoors. When not in the care of adults, children like to play in:

- Parks and recreation grounds.
- Streets near their homes.
- Local open spaces.
- School grounds.

In *Making the Case for Play*, the author cites research carried out which shows that children and young people like to have:

> a variety of venues where children and young people like to play, amongst which, public outdoor places are an important venue for meeting friends and retaining some social autonomy away from adult supervision.

Matthews and Limb, 2000

The study found that young people considered the greatest dangers to play to be traffic and that they liked to play near homes of people and where other people generally were around.

The research shows the need to create streets and spaces which reduced or slowed down traffic so that children can play safely outside their homes.

The typology identified in this Strategy will be used to carry out a survey of outdoor play spaces and the matrix developed for this Strategy will be used to carry out a first step assessment of the play value of the District’s playgrounds.
Statement of principles
The statement of principles and values has been compiled from the consultation which has taken place, and takes on board the Audit Commission’s Best Value indicator for Play (BVPI 115).

Maldon District Council recognises the value of play and the need for improvement of play opportunities in the District. The Council and its partners are committed to ensuring that all children and young people have access to rich, stimulating environments - both indoors and out, free from unacceptable risks, offering opportunities to develop and explore through freely chosen play. This policy is based on the understanding that every child needs opportunities to play on their own, and with others.

Maldon is committed to ensuring that environments, services and provision for play (whomever is the provider) are attractive, welcoming, safe, and accessible to every child and young person - irrespective of age, gender, background or origin, or of individual capacities and abilities.

The Maldon District Play Policy and Strategy will provide a framework to develop targets and plans to increase play opportunities and to eliminate barriers with respect to children and young people with disabilities and those with specific needs. It is recognised that separate provision may sometimes be a valuable resource particularly for vulnerable children. Use of a range of specialist services should only be at the choice of the child or his/her advocate. All mainstream services must be welcoming and accessible to all children and young people.

Play policy
The Essex Play Policy is contained in Appendix 7. See section 6.
3.2 Profile of Maldon District Council

Maldon District covers an area of over 36,000 hectares in East Essex. The landscape and character are dominated by 60 miles of coastline that includes the estuaries of the rivers Blackwater and Crouch.

Many people know the District from its association with sailing. The Blackwater and Crouch rivers are of international importance for nature conservation, particularly for their extensive population of wildfowl and waders.

The District has a rural character ranging from the tidal salt marshes to farmland and rolling wooded ridges. A network of country lanes provides access to the countryside from the towns and villages.

The District had a population of 60,400 in 2004. The main towns are Maldon, Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch. The majority of people live in small rural villages, many of which have their origins in the coastal or agricultural economy.

Many residents are proud that this it is an area largely untroubled by crime. In recent decades it has become more prosperous, its natural qualities attracting new businesses and an energetic population. Many successful modern industries have been established or grown here in the past few decades. Clusters of high quality marine, food, leisure, and electronic industries have created new and well paid jobs. The coast and open rural areas provide outdoor recreation opportunities especially for sailing, golf, fishing, cycling, and walking, etc.

A full demographic information breakdown of the children in parishes and age ranges is detailed in Appendix 1.
4 Review of community engagement

4.1 Approach

As part of a county-wide approach to manage the process of formulating individual Play Strategies for all the different Districts, Boroughs and Unitary Councils, a group of Essex Officers, representing each Council, formed the Essex Play Officer Group. They worked together on producing their individual Play Strategies to give a holistic approach to a county-wide play provision exercise. It was anticipated this group would meet throughout the preparation and delivery of the Play Strategies.

The Children’s Fund in Essex funded and worked in partnership with an external organisation, Mapalim, to deliver a significant county-wide consultation and participation project. Maldon District Council provided extra financial support to ensure additional children could be catered for.

The Play 4 Play project is an innovative consultation and participation exercise undertaken with children and young people across the 12 districts of Essex. It was developed into a series of drama and arts-based workshops designed to ascertain children and young peoples’ needs and opinions about play. The workshops incorporated an inclusive approach to the differing needs of all the children, taking into account their abilities.

Over the course of this demanding and ambitious project 11,859 children and young people and 550 parents and carers across Essex have had a chance to give their views on the opportunities for play within their communities. In addition, 158 adults and children who were not able to take part in the workshops contributed on-line at www.essexplay.com.

Consultation with young people will continue after the action plan to ensure that the conclusions and recommendations remain inline with their needs.
4.2 Findings & Conclusions

The Play 4 Play work was extremely successful, with responses from 1,199 children and 42 parents answering 9 questions relevant to the Maldon District. All the responses were unprompted and the most popular answers are shown in each category. A full copy of the summary of the consultation exercise is in Appendix 6.

The key findings of the consultation exercise follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Top Answers</th>
<th>Comments/Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Play?</td>
<td>1) Football 14% 2) Swimming 12% 3) Games Consoles 8%</td>
<td>A myriad of other responses were received, reflecting the diversity of what people think play is, and that children enjoy different play activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you play?</td>
<td>1) The Promenade Park 25% 2) At Home 16% 3) At School 15% 4) In Water Park 10%, (within the Promenade Park)</td>
<td>A total of 53% of the individual responses identified that they play in the one of the Maldon District Parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where would you like to play?</td>
<td>1) The Promenade Park 26% 2) The Park 16% 3) The Burnham Rio Cinema 11%</td>
<td>A total of 54% of the individual responses identified that they want to play in one of the Maldon District Parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you like to play?</td>
<td>1) Ice Skating 26% 2) Swimming 25% 3) Climbing Wall 11%</td>
<td>Ice skating and a climbing wall are currently not available within the District. The Blackwater Leisure Centre offers a 25 metre leisure pool with flume and jungle river ride. This is fully accessible to the people of the District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Top Answers</td>
<td>Comments/Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who do you play with?</strong></td>
<td>1) Friends 31% 2) Siblings 17% 3) Parents 16%</td>
<td>Most children play with their families or friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Top Answers</th>
<th>Comments/Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who would you like to play with?</strong></td>
<td>1) Friends 49% 2) Mum 13% 3) Family 11%</td>
<td>Most children would like to continue playing with their family or friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Top Answers</th>
<th>Comments/Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What stops you from playing? (Accessibility).</strong></td>
<td>1) Money 25% 2) Distance 25% 3) Parents Busy 9%</td>
<td>Cost is the biggest barrier to access. Distance is the second biggest inhibitor; because of the rural nature of the District and the inaccessibility (by public transport) of the main towns from the outer-lying parish communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Top Answers</th>
<th>Comments/Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What stops you from playing (safety)?</strong></td>
<td>1) Teenagers 28% 2) Mess/broken equipment 21% 3) Vandalism 17%</td>
<td>This shows the need to have separate play areas for the different age groups, with the appropriate equipment to attract the right catchments. It also demonstrates the need for regular inspection and maintenance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

This consultation exercise has identified the following key objectives:

1. To provide a myriad of play activities appropriate to specific age groups.
2. Play activities should be concentrated in one of the District parks or opens spaces
3. Ice skating or skating should be investigated to see if it can be provided for the Maldon District. A feasibility study as part of the action plan must be completed before any implementation.
4. The climbing wall should be investigated to see if it can be included in any future play provision for the Maldon District.
5. For some, cost is a barrier to those play providers that charge for use. However, plans should aim to ensure that as wide a range of play facilities as possible is provided free of charge.
6. Accessibility to play is hampered by distance from the rural communities. Consideration must be given to either providing more play equipment in the parish areas or by taking play services directly to the areas.

4.3 Other Community Engagement

Local Strategic Partnership
The Maldon Community Plan was first produced in 2003 with local groups, organisations and residents identifying their key priorities for the District. Six Task Groups were set up to assist with the delivery of the Plan:

- The Leisure and Recreation Task Group.
- Planning and Environment Task.
- Transport and Access Task Group.
- Education Training and Employment Task Group.
- Health Housing and Social Care Task Group.
- Community Safety Partnership.

Task Groups met quarterly and each developed an Action Plan to take forward the key priorities in the Community Plan. The Task Groups have now come to a natural end with the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy, and from April 2007 have ceased to exist. They are being replaced with four new groups based around the four blocks in the Local Area Agreement for Essex. The groups will be:

- Children and Young People,
- Safer and Stronger Communities,
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Environment.

Leisure & Recreation Task Group/Play Partnership
The development of a Play Strategy was a task within the action plan for the Leisure and Recreation Task Group of the Local Strategic Partnership and the (Local Development Framework). The Task Group first discussed Play in November 2005 at a workshop session where priorities began to be developed. Further meetings in 2006 shaped these priorities and it was agreed that a sub-group be set up that would be called the Play Partnership.
Play Partnership – List of the partners (internal & external)
The Play Partnership is made up of the following partners, (internal function areas are shown in brackets):

Internal:
- The Play Champion – Cllr Rosewarne
- Leisure and Liveability Team Leader (Chair of the L&R Task Group)
- Maintenance Officer (Play equipment provision and maintenance)
- Leisure Services Officer (Leisure and liveability strategy and policy development)
- Countryside and Coast Development Officer (parks and open spaces development)
- Parks Manager
- Liveability Officer
- Anti Social Behaviour Officer
- Community Safety Officer (the Community Safety Partnership)
- Leisure and Sports Development Officer.
- Community Development Officer.

External:
- South East Essex Primary Care Trust
- Essex County Council (Youth Services).
- Essex County Council (Children & Young People Services)
- The Council of Voluntary Services
- Youth Service
- The Maldon Police
- Leisure Connection Limited
- Maldon Community Safety Partnership
- The Plume School, Maldon
- St. Peters High School, Burnham
- The Moat Housing Association

The Play Partnership has full terms of reference and a set of objectives. It meets regularly to discuss play-related issues.
5 Local District Provision

The Maldon District Play Provision Audit was sub divided into four sections for analysis: These being:

- 5.1 Existing Play Provision Inspection
- 5.2 Open Space Deficiencies Provision
- 5.3 Play Site Provision
- 5.4 Play Service Provision

5.1 Existing Play Provision Inspection – Methodology & Findings

The Maldon District Existing Play Area Provision Audit was completed by an independent private company to the BS EN1176 standard for play areas owned by Maldon District Council and play areas within the District owned by others, (Parish Councils). A full copy of the inspection report can be found in Appendix 4.

The audit identified the age of every asset, the manufacturer and life expectancy of each item of play equipment, and its safety surfacing, the current condition and an estimated replacement schedule and costs. The standard used was that all play areas should meet the LEAP or NEAP standard as specified by the National Playing Fields Association. Full definitions of these standards are detailed in section 7.1 of this Strategy.

Key future budget figure identified are:
- The estimated cost of essential replacement of equipment is £25,000
- Raising the standard of play sites to at least LEAP Standard is £410,500
- Developing the play equipment sites to their full potential is a further £94,600.

(See appendix 8 for a summary of these findings).

Conclusion

The essential replacement of equipment should be funded immediately, either by the local Parish Council or by grant from the Maldon District Council. The raising of the standard of play sites is not achievable in the short term. A full programme of new and replacement play equipment should be considered in light of the Play Space Provision Audit and Open Space Deficiencies report.
5.2 Open Space Deficiencies Provision Audit – Methodology & Findings

An open space deficiencies provision audit has been completed for the District. The key findings are summarised in a report in Appendix 3. Below is a summary of each key location requiring attention.

- **Burnham** – The majority of the town is well provided for with open space, with the exception of Stoney Hills. There is no single measure to resolve the need for formal or informal open space and further negotiations with key partners could resolve the short term problem. However, any developments should include the provision of new public open space. Development of small open spaces could be improved. However, any future developments in the area should include a requirement of additional open space to rectify the current shortfall.

- **Maldon (North & West)** – This is a residential area, with only a small number of open grass areas mostly owned by Housing Associations but none have any facilities. The nearest play sites are approximately 800 metres away. Any further loss of public open space should be prevented.

- **Mayland** – Some small areas to the east, north and west of the village where there is green space provision should be improved. Any further loss of public open space should be prevented and any new developments should include sufficient green space.

- **North Fambridge** – A sports field and play site was created in 2004 but access to the site is difficult and improvement should be made. People living in the properties in the southern part of the village would benefit from having access to the sea wall path. Any further loss of public open space should be prevented and any new developments should include sufficient green space in easily accessible locations.

- **St Lawrence** – The redevelopment of the recreational ground means that the southern end of village is well served. Most people have good access to the sea wall paths and areas of the beach in the Blackwater Estuary.

- **Tollesbury (North & East)** - The development of the parish could include provision of play facilities at Hassler Green open space and Woodrolfe Green. Any new developments to the north and east of the village should include sufficient open space.

- **Tolleshunt Knights (North West)** – A new village hall and recreation ground was constructed ½ mile to the south east of the village centre, but access is poor due to the lack of pavements. Access should be improved via Rights of Way network and local road. Any new developments within the village should include sufficient green space provision and take account of the layout of the village.

- **Wickham Bishops (West)** – This area has been significantly redeveloped, leaving little green open space. Any further loss of public open space should be prevented and any new developments should include sufficient green space. The possibility of providing permissive
access to farmland or woodland bordering this area should be explored.

Conclusion
The Maldon District is essentially rural, but there are locations in some towns and villages where there are limited opportunities for children to play on green open space. These locations are Burnham, North and West Maldon, Tollesbury, Wickham Bishops, Mayland, North Fambridge and Tolleshunt Knights. There should be consultation with Maldon District Council Planning Department to ensure that further new build developments include adequate green space provision for the new development and the existing communities.

The report also identifies the need to explore permissive access across land with local farmers, land owners and partner organisations, so that the current green open space can be utilised.
5.3 Play Site Provision Audit – Methodology & Findings

The Play Area Provision Audit in Appendix 5 provides a full analysis of the District play areas and how sites serve the communities. The audit analyses the District using the LEAP standard and identifies the following play area needs:

- **Althorne** – new play facility required.
- **Burnham** - needs for three additional play sites in Burnham, (1 in the south-east of Town, 1 in the west and one in Stoney Hills
- **Goldhanger** – relocation of the play area.
- **Great Totham North** – relocation of the Play Area.
- **Heybridge** - two additional play sites in, (1 at (Drapers Farm) and 1 in the west of the village).
- **Maldon** - two additional play sites in Maldon.
- **Mayland** – new facilities north or east of village
- **North Fambridge** – play ground improvements
- **Southminster** – new play area for the east of the village.
- **St Lawrence** – new play area in the centre of the village.
- **Tollesbury** - new play area in the north of the village.
- **Tolleshunt Knights** – new play area in the north of village
- **Wickham Bishops** – enlarged play area for village
- **Woodham Walter** – new play area required.

The priorities do not take into account availability of open space. Also, it is not in the practicalities of reaching a LEAP standard across the District. There must be a programmed approach to achieving this standard over a number of years, with agreed priorities built in.

With exception of the Burnham, Maldon, and Heybridge play areas listed in 5.2, the remaining 11 play areas are owned and maintained by local Parish Councils. The Play Strategy is concerned with bringing play opportunities to all, and provision should not be dependent on who is responsible for the management and development of a play area. Maldon District Council is the facilitator of the Play Partnership and will consult widely on this document to ensure the priorities are correct. Where monies are identified for individual Parish Councils, the District Council will grant funds to these organisations.

**Conclusion**

The following conclusions have been drawn from the audit on the new Play Area provision for the District

- **Althorne** – There is no suitable open space for a play area.
- **Burnham** – There is no available open spaces in the south east and west of the town nor in the Stoney Hills estate. There is green open space available in Springfield Road Park, Willow Close or The Leas for the development of a new play area. This would serve the north east of the town and be the closest of the identified sites to the Stoney Hills.
Estate. Further developments to this area or in the South East of the Town should include the provision of a new play ground.

- **Goldhanger** – There is no other suitable open space available for a play area.
- **Great Totham** - There is no open space available to relocate the play area.
- **Heybridge** – There is no available open space in the east of Heybridge. The only significant area is on the Drapers Farm playing fields, but this area is currently leased to rugby and cricket clubs. An additional play area could be located in Elizabeth Way. However, there are currently informal play opportunities at the location, and the removal of these facilities with formal play may not please the local community.
- **Maldon** – There is open space available at West Maldon for the development or redevelopment of a play area.
- **Mayland** – There are two suitable open spaces in the north and east of the village for a new play area. Both of these areas should be consulted on.
- **North Fambridge** – Additional play equipment can be installed on the current site.
- **Southminster** – There are two areas suitable for a new play site in Orchard Meadow.
- **Tolleshunt Knights** – There is no open space available for another play area in the village.
- **Wickham Bishops** – Because of the condition of the current play equipment, the site would require all new equipment.
- **Woodham Walter** – The only space available for a play area would be the village green. Further consultation would be necessary on this location.

### 5.4 Play Service Provision Audit – Methodology & Findings

The Play Service Audit in Appendix Two shows that there is sufficient multitude of Play Services, operating in around Maldon, Heybridge, Burnham and Southminster. There are limited opportunities for children to experience play in all other villages. The only services available to these children are ad-hoc Parish Council and individual activities.
5.5 Analysis of provision relative to needs and population

The analysis of provision relative to the population has identified the following in priority order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Order</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Population 0 - 19</th>
<th>Deprivation Index (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Southminster, Orchard Meadow.</td>
<td>4,011</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>13,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brickhouse Farm, West Maldon.</td>
<td>4,013</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>17,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Burnham, Springfield Road Park, Willow Close or The Leas. (North Burnham)</td>
<td>3,801</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>9,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mayland, North or East of the village for a new play area.</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>17,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wickham Bishops, current site.</td>
<td>2,016</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>25,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Woodham Walter, Village green.</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>22,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>North Fambridge, current site.</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>27,846</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: The lower the number, deprivation affecting children index as a percentage of children under 16 living in families in receipt of Income Support & Job Seekers Allowance or WFTC/DPTC whose equivalised income is below 60% of median before housing costs).

There is also a need for Play Services to operate in the Parish locations. These types of activities can be varied and should be in line with the ‘three frees’ definition of play. Therefore: free to access, free to choose, freely available.

All new play facilities which are identified will have to go through further consultation to ensure they meet the needs of the local population and that the service they provide is challenging enough for the children.
5.6 Management Arrangements

The current management arrangement for play areas and equipment is either with the individual Parish Council Clerk or with Maldon District Council. The District Council responsibility is managed from the Leisure & Liveability Team for play sites in the Council’s parks and open spaces. The Team is responsible for planned and reactive maintenance, and development of the service. In partnership with the nine active Friends Groups and other stakeholders across parks and open spaces in Maldon District Council ownership, play is an important aspect of the management planning process. The Liveability Fund, awarded to to the Council from the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, enabled a major upgrade of play facilities across all parks and open spaces, including major new capital investments such as the Play Galleon and Splash Park at Promenade Park, Maldon.

The Park Rangers play an active role in ensuring the equipment is safe. They act as custodians of the parks and play equipment and deal with incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The Leisure and Liveability Team at Maldon District Council is responsible for providing, arts, leisure and sports service. The proposed additional Play Rangers Service would be incorporated into the organisational structure for the term of the funding. Additional internal and external funding would be sought to continue the service after play funding had expired.

5.7 Summary of key findings

From the consultation and audit carried out, the key findings are:

In order to raise the standard of play areas in the Maldon District, an essential programme of replacement and additional of new play equipment is required. Although the Maldon District is predominantly rural, there are some towns and villages that lack existence of, and access to, green open spaces for children to play in. When future building takes place, green open spaces must be included. Negotiations with landowners and farmers would help utilise existing land which can be potential play areas for those lacking open spaces.
6 Play policy statements

6.1 Key policy statements

The Essex Play Policy is contained in Appendix 7.

6.2 Links with wider strategic documents

The Play Strategy links to the following wider strategic documents:
  o Playing Pitch Strategy
  o Local Strategic Partnership
  o Community Safety Strategy
  o Cultural Strategy
  o Sustainable Community Strategy
  o Corporate Strategy
  o Youth Strategy
  o Open Spaces Strategy
  o Children’s and Young People Plan (Essex County Council – Essex wide Plan).

The Play Strategy seeks to complement and join up the elements of play that appear in these wider strategic documents.
7 Local standards

7.1 Explanation of standards proposed

The National Playing Fields Association

The National Playing Fields Association publication “The Six Acre Standard” is literature that sets out the minimum standards for outdoor playing space, with the two main categories known as the following:-

**Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)**
The main characteristics of a LEAP play area are:-
- Located within a walking time of 5 minutes from home
- 5 play types, including safer surface
- Fencing complete with 2 pedestrian gates
- Minimum activity zone of 400sqm
- Seating, litter bins and a notice should be provided

**Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)**
The main characteristics of a NEAP play area are:-
- Located within a walking time of 15 minutes from home
- 8 play types, including safer surface
- Provision of a MEGA/Skate Park
- Fencing complete with 2 pedestrian gates
- Minimum activity zone of 1000sqm
- Seating, litter bins and a notice should be provided

**Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17)**

PPG17 is clear in its commitment to ensure adequate and good quality open spaces, sport and recreation facilities are available to whole communities. The policy states:

Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people’s quality of life. Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives. These include:

- Supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality.
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion - well planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people’s sense of well being
in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction.

- **Health and well being** - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.

- **Promoting more sustainable development** - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport.
8 Action plan

8.1 Criteria for identifying priorities for development

The Play Action Plan is detailed in Appendix 9, and details the projects of the Play Strategy linked to this. The criteria for identifying priorities for development have been taken from the following:

**Project Outcomes** – What will be the effect of the project? Improved social cohesion, reduced anti social behaviour, combating social exclusion, using play as a way of expression and learning.

**Community Engagement** - What is play?, Where to play?, Where would you like to play?, What do you want to play with?, Who do you play with?, What stops you playing?

**Play Provision Inspection** – What play equipment exists for the District?, What needs to be completed?, Does it meet the LEAP and NEAP standards, What needs to be completed to meet these standards?, Any additional development needs?

**Open Space Deficiencies** – Does the District have enough green open space for its population?, Where are the deficiencies?, Is the green open space suitable for play equipment? What is the local population and age range?

**Play Site Provision Audit** - What are the needs for play equipment exists in the District?, Where are the deficiencies in play equipment, Can this be facilitated locally?

**Play Service Provision Audit** – What are the play services operating within the District?, Does this meet the needs of the children?, Where are the deficiencies?
8.2 Play Projects

The research carried out through audit and consultation identified the following Play Projects to be developed:

- Play Ranger Service for the Parish Areas - (3 years)- Submitted for BIG Lottery Fund
- Ice Skating Rink - Submitted for BIG Lottery Fund
- New Southminster Orchard Meadow Play Area - Submitted for BIG Lottery Fund
- New West Maldon Brickhouse Farm Play Area - Submitted for BIG Lottery Fund
- New Burnham Play Area
- New Mayland Play Area
8.3 Play Developments

There have been other projects identified for children and young people in the Maldon District. The District Council has already identified and implemented the following Play Projects:

- New Promenade Park under 5’s Play Area
- Skate Board Park at Promenade Park
- Additional play equipment in the Valley, Promenade Park.
- New Crazy Golf and Petanque Terrain at Promenade Park.
- Further enhancement to play site at Oak Tree Meadow.
- BMX Track at Promenade Park and Riverside Park

These will be directly funded by the District Council.

The Children's Fund Essex has also funded other projects for the Maldon District. These are:

### CFE Funded Play Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theatre Resource</td>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>To provide access to creativity and creative learning opportunities for the most disadvantaged members of our community. A programme of educational arts activities for disabled and disadvantaged children and young people. Age range 5 - 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapalim</td>
<td>Play work and Play Therapy</td>
<td>To use play as a mechanism for early intervention and create a holistic &quot;playful&quot; approach to supporting children and young people in schools. Age range 5 - 13.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CFE Funded Anti-bullying Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maldon District Community Safety Partnership</td>
<td>Anti-Bullying</td>
<td>To help children in the Maldon district become safer and healthier by developing life skills involving inter-personal relationships by means of an understanding of methods to confront bullying and to encourage their positive contributions to society by improving their awareness of racism. This will be achieved by drama and workshops taking place annually in all 21 primary schools and both secondary schools to children of years 6, 7 and 8.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.4 Timelines & Resources

The Maldon District Play Strategy will be submitted to the Big Lottery Fund by 10 September 2007. It is hoped that that the programme of play works will commence on the April 2008. The Maldon District Council capital programme is on an annual rolling cycle with the play projects already identified within it.

The Maldon District Council's existing responsibilities under maintenance are already covered by appropriate revenue budget. The additional play areas identified by the Play Strategy will require annual maintenance. A revenue growth bid for additional play areas will be made through the Council's normal budget setting exercise. If Members are unable to approve additional funding for new sites this could affect the long term sustainability of the District's play provision.

Parish Councils identified as priorities within this document would be responsible for maintaining new equipment. Agreement will have to be reached with them to explore if they are able to take on additional revenue costs associated with the play sites.

It is necessary to work in partnership with Parish Councils to achieve more objectives and joint targets. More can be achieved with the pooling of resources and other streams of external funding that may become available. The partnership arrangements will continue to grow with the implementation of the Play priorities.

8.5 Monitoring

An annual inspection of all the play equipment will be completed by the Leisure and Liveability Team to ensure they continue to meet Health and Safety requirements. Day-to-day monitoring will be undertaken by the Park Rangers and members of the public.

Play Strategy will be part of the Leisure and Liveability Business Plan, with the work of the strategy being implemented and monitored by individual Officers and overseen by the Head of Service, Chief Officer and Chief Executive.

The original partners in the consultation have been given the opportunity to review and agree the outcomes and recommendations of the Play Strategy. Where individual new and revised play areas are required, the detail of the changes will be consulted on with the local population.

The monitoring of the action plan and its priorities are required to be monitored on an annual basis by the Play Partnership. The Play Partnership needs to ensure the outcomes are inline with children's and young people's priorities. If there are changes in needs, the plan needs to be adapted to ensure it still meets the new needs. The Play Partnership will be responsible for the monitoring of these needs.
9 Evaluation Plan

9.1 Outcomes

This Play Strategy has identified a number of outcomes, identified by consultation with children and other stakeholders and by the auditing of play and the future requirements of the District (using the nationally recognised LEAP and NEAP standards).

The aim of this Strategy is to meet the play needs of all communities within Maldon District and to ensure that all play equipment and provision is fully accessible to all children and young people, including those living within pockets of deprivation. The many positive impacts of play have already been explained in the other sections of this document. Play has an enormous beneficial effect on children’s lives: on their education, development of social skills, etc. This Strategy gives Maldon District a clear focus on where it should target its resources. Big Lottery funding can help the Council achieve its goals.

This Strategy will achieve the following outcomes:

- To provide additional good quality free play areas by 4,132 by December 2010, to help encourage healthy living & healthy lifestyles.
- To make the play outreach service available to the 11,297 children of the rural communities in the District by December 2010 to encourage social inclusion and activity.
- To provide an artificial ice skating rink to 2,942 of the children of Maldon by December 2010, to provide enhanced leisure facilities for Maldon.

The strategy also aligns with the Big Lottery Children Play Programme:

- More children will take part in a wider range of good, inclusive and accessible play experiences.
- Children will have more choice and control over their play.
- Children will develop greater well-being through play (including healthy growth, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn).
- Children will acquire greater social skills and respect for others through play.
- Children will be able to test boundaries, be challenged and take risks through play, while kept safe from harm.
- Local communities, especially children, will have greater involvement in designing, planning and running play projects.
Now that the priorities have been identified and confirmed by the consultation process, it is important to ensure that new facilities are again consulted on by the local children who will eventually use them.

The strategy has identified the need for more green open space for children to use in free form play and to develop their creative or sporting sides. This issue needs to be addressed by the Maldon District Council Planning Department to ensure that developments take account of current and future needs.

The evaluation of the action plan and priorities are required to be monitored on an annual basis by the Play Partnership, which needs to ensure the outcomes are in line with Children’s and Young People’s priorities. If there are changes in needs, the plan needs to be adapted to meet these. The Play Partnership will be responsible for the evaluation of these needs.
9.2 Benchmarks & Indicators

The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the Play Service by using the Best Value Performance indicator BVPI 10. This calculates the number of Play Areas in the District meeting the LEAP and NEAP standards.

9.3 Review

The Local Strategic Partnership will monitor the Play Strategy action plan to ensure the needs of the District are implemented correctly and in accordance with the consultation.

The Play Strategy will be reviewed on a tri-annual cycle by Maldon District Council to ensure that the local needs are being met and will be built into the Council's business planning cycle.