Agenda Item 14
Council
10 January 2024
Tracey Brown
Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

SUMMER PLAYSCHEMES 2024

This report was considered by Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28 November 2023. The report asks Council if it wishes to take part in the new three year funding cycle for the summer playscheme.

Flintshire County Council would like to present to you the plans and costs for the 2024 Summer Playschemes:

1 During a recent Scrutiny Committee several recommendations were supported by the elected councillors, the relevant recommendations for your attention as town and community councils are outlined below:

1. *The Committee support the Play Development Team in liaising with Town and Community Councils around a three-year cycle in principle funding cycle for play provisions.*
2. *That the Committee endorse the Play Development team to liaise with Town and Community Councils to opt for either a three or six-week sites only, to allow ease of recruitment, planning, business continuity and efficient use of recourses.*

<u>Point 1 – Three Year Funding Cycle</u>

2 Flintshire Play Development experiences a significant annual staff turnover, posing challenges in delivering top-quality services. It is difficult to train and retain staff to provide the highest quality of provision to children in Flintshire due to the short-term commitment of funding and lack of long-term funding availability. The staff turnover and lack of job security present substantial issues, resulting in the regular departure of highly skilled team workers. To retain and attract experienced staff and to provide the highest quality service within our Communities, it is imperative that we have the capacity to plan for the long-term.

3 We'd like to liaise with you as Town and Community Councils to explore the possibility of aligning with our 3-year cycle. This would enable me, as the Lead Officer, to engage in more long-term planning and better support our goal of building a sustainable service. We understand that not everyone may want to adopt the 3-year cycle, and we respect those who prefer to maintain the 12-month agreement. However, by choosing to opt in, we can initiate our processes well in advance and plan aspects like marketing with greater foresight. It must be stressed that the ask is for an agreement in principle subject to an annual review and that there is a mutual understanding that funding settlements in this current climate are difficult to predict.

4 Flintshire Play Development is planning an innovative and sustainable future to our delivery and commitment to children in Flintshire. Using the successful summer holiday provision as a blueprint, the aim is to provide holiday provisions during all school holidays. There is universal agreement of the benefits that the summer programme has on children's wellbeing, and this would be beneficial for children during all seasons. Community provision during term time will allow children the opportunity to engage with our service and their peers in a safe and supervised activity.

5 **Future Sustainability:** In order to establish a sustainable service for the foreseeable future, it is imperative that the Lead Officer can devise a long-term strategy. To achieve this, we seek a commitment from our partners and other stakeholders for a three-year agreement. This commitment will have several significant benefits:

1. **Enhanced Provisions:** It will enable the Play Development Team to expand its operations, providing a more extensive range of provisions throughout the year.
2. **Skill Development:** This will facilitate the delivery of comprehensive training programs, ensuring that our team is highly qualified and capable. And will allow us to have pride in our quality as well as our quantity.
3. **Stability for Staff:** Additionally, a multi-year commitment will provide medium-long term job security for our staff, fostering their confidence and commitment to the team.

6 This collaborative approach will pave the way for a sustainable and thriving service moving forward. As part of our future commitment, we will be measuring our success on both quantitative and qualitive data.

7 For a sustainable Playful future here in Flintshire we need to have a sustainable team.

Point 2 – Three or Six-week schemes

8 Historically as Town and Community Councils you have been able to choose the length of your local Playscheme. This has been a choice of 3, 4, 5, or 6 weeks. This is becoming increasingly difficult with the need to recruit a high number of staff over a short period. We will now be offering 3 or 6-week sites only which will mean that staff can be offered 6-week contracts rather than the current format which proves problematic for staff retention and recruitment. During the Summer of 2023 we had 20 x three-week, 17 x four-week, 3 x five week, and 12 x six-week sites. 3 or 6-week sites would make the managing of schemes and sites much easier and would also offer a longer provision in some areas i.e., a Town or Community Council funding two or more 3-week schemes would have one three-week scheme running for the first three weeks and the other for the last which means 6-week scheme for that community area. We hope that this will attract more people to apply for these positions as the work period would be longer.

Costings

9 Please see attached a costing structure for a one-year commitment and that of a three year. The first year for both the 1-year and 3-year commitment will be the same, but by opting in for the 3-year cycle you will be able to budget much further in advance and we as a team can plan much further in advance to ensure that we offer the children of your community the best service. As noted on the 3-year costings sheet, we will honour the costs set out for the 3-year period unless there is a significant increase in the cost of living to which we would contact you direct to discuss the best options.

10 In order to proactively manage our budget for the year and maintain fiscal responsibility, our plan is to invoice all Town and Community Councils ahead of the commencement of Summer

Playschemes. This approach enables me, as the Lead Officer, to effectively monitor and adhere to the allocated budget for the summer. Ensuring that funding is secured in advance guarantees its availability for all necessary expenses during the summer period.

Marketing / Promotion

11 Flintshire Play Development, in collaboration with the FCC Communications Department, is actively engaged in a marketing and promotional campaign to publicise the Summer Playschemes for 2024. Due to budget constraints, we are prioritising an online promotion strategy, utilising our social media platforms, website, as well as the platforms of Town and Community Councils, schools, and community groups. However, if there is a specific need for resources such as flyers or posters, please inform us of the desired quantity, and we can request a quote accordingly.

Conclusion

12 It would be appreciated it if you could agree in principle on the preferred plan and complete sections 1, 2, and 3 of the attached form (**T&CC EOI for Summer 2024**) by no later than **December 22, 2023**. Kindly return the completed form via email. A firm commitment is requested by **February 16, 2024**. This timeline is crucial for initiating the recruitment process, which demands a considerable amount of time and effort. For your awareness, this year's summer recruitment process consumed 1384 hours, incurring a cost of nearly £26,000 to the local authority, covered by the employment services and Integrated Youth Provision budgets. Your timely cooperation is invaluable in facilitating a smooth and efficient process.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL FROM FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023.

Council be asked to approve the proposed three year funding cycle.