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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

COUNCIL – 28 June 2006

REPORT BY CABINET MEMBER FOR FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

RESPONSE TO PETITION ON ASHBURNHAM ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND (WEST CHELSEA PLAY SPACE)

This report provides information for Members on action taken following the petition presented to the Council requesting a delay in the closure of Ashburnham Adventure Playground.

FOR INFORMATION

1. Background

The prayer of the petition said,

"Ashburnham Adventure Playground has provided safe and popular play facilities to children and young people for many years. Every day up to 100 young people use the playground, but it is due to close on March 31. Alternative facilities are being considered but many of the young people who use the playground will have nowhere to go in the spring and summer months.

Therefore we, the undersigned residents of West Chelsea, call upon the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to delay the closure of Ashburnham Adventure Playground until such time as full alternative provision has been made."

The petition, with 481 signatures, was presented to the Council by Councillor Cunningham on 8 March 2006, having been submitted by Ms Pat Healy.

2. Action

The site

- 2.1 West Chelsea Play Space ceased operations on 31 March 2006 in order to make the site available for the development of the new Chelsea Academy. Demolition will occur during late spring/early summer. Various surveys of

the building, including the possible removal of asbestos, are being undertaken. The early work on the proposed school site will consist of various surveys of the site in advance of construction work on the school and the movement of the Transport for London underground cables. The programme for the cabling work is currently being finalised, but it is likely to mean early investigative work with some trenches being dug in summer 2006. The main work will take place from late autumn 2006 to early spring 2007. There could be significant health and safety issues if the adventure playground was in place whilst surveys and the digging of trenches take place.

Alternative play and youth facilities

- 2.2 In preparation for determining the nature of improved facilities, an independent consultation exercise (SIMALTO) was conducted, as part of a wider review of youth and play services in the local community, to determine the needs of local children (both current users and non-users) and parents. The outcome of this consultation indicated that there was no overwhelming support for the re-provision of an adventure playground.
- 2.3 The Council has made capital funding of £485k available for replacement youth and play provision in the locality and £70k revenue funding for successor play provision in the West Chelsea area.
- 2.4 In the short term, the Council developed an Easter programme by developing the facilities at the Ashburnham Centre in Lots Road. Called 'Centreplay', it ran from 3 April to 13 April, catering for 8 to 14 year olds. It was open each weekday between 10am and 6pm and there is no charge for the service. Facilities included a specialist art and pottery room, dance studio, and outdoor play space. Children and young people had the chance to try drama, rocket building, dance, tri golf, to work towards the St John Junior Lifesaver Award, and to take part in arts and crafts, sports and games. 140 different children and young people from the West Chelsea area attended the centre, an average of 25 a day.
- 2.5 Centreplay has provided the opportunity for children and young people from local provision to access specialist activities alongside the group attending the new centre. Children and young people from Flashpoint, Park Walk, Servite, and Holy Trinity play centres accessed Centreplay. Flashpoint play centre has indicated that this has improved the programme for the older children, whilst allowing for more focused work with the under 8s at the Flashpoint site.
- 2.6 During term time, Centreplay is remaining open on weekdays from 3.30pm to 6.30pm and from 11am to 4pm on Saturdays. There are similar activities to the holiday provision, but with the addition of skateboard ramps, Yamaha keyboard lessons, and arts classes. Centreplay will continue to operate from the site until July 2007 when construction work

is due to begin on the new school. A full summer programme of youth and play activities will operate in 2006.

- 2.7 There will also be services and activities for young people aged between 13 and 19 during term time and these will be open from 7.30pm to 10pm. These will include sports provision, youth club activities, Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme and drop in sessions with Connexions personal advisers.
- 2.8 Earls Court Youth Club in Ifield Road is due to be refurbished from July 2006. During the six-month period of the capital works, the youth club will also operate out of the Ashburnham Centre building, allowing for an even more comprehensive service for young people in West Chelsea.
- 2.9 In the summer holiday, the Summer'S Cool programme for young people aged 11 to 16 will continue and will include activities at the Ashburnham building.
- 2.10 The West Chelsea area has a very high level of alternative play provision. The twelve children under the age of 8 that regularly used West Chelsea Play Space have been encouraged to use local play centres, including Flashpoint, Park Walk and Servite. All of these centres provide a full programme of play activities for children aged 5-13 years of age during term-time and holidays.
- 2.11 These play centres have capacity for 144 children during term-time and 200 children during holidays. Charges for these services are very reasonable, with parents of children on income-related benefits receiving free places.
- 2.12 Parents of children who used West Chelsea Play Space have been provided with full details of all alternative youth and play provision in the local area.

Improved provision in the long term

- 2.13 Officers are now finalising plans for how the £485k capital funding is to be spent, which is likely to involve improvements to current facilities. The current proposals are for:
 - Development of play facilities in Westfield Park, £250k. A full consultation will take place with local residents during the summer.
 - Enhanced facilities at Flashpoint play centre, £135k. Work will be done to improve the external area, make internal alterations and provide an extension to improve the environment and increase numbers;

- Enhanced youth services, £100k.
Consideration is currently being given to how to make best use of this funding in line with Youth matters. The newly developed Cremorne Riverside Centre will play an important role in improving youth facilities in the area.

2.14 These improvements are planned to be operational by summer 2007.

2.15 In a nearby project, the Council is supporting the complete refurbishment of Earls Court Youth Club in Ifield Road. This work will be completed early in 2007.

FOR INFORMATION

**Councillor Shireen Ritchie
Cabinet Member for Family and Children's Services**