



**This is a guide for Councillors, staff and community groups to explain the collection and use of Planning Obligations funds for Recreational Provision within Poole.**

### *What is the Planning Obligations Fund?*

Planning Obligations describes the funding that is generated through the Local Plan Policy L17 whereby a developer who builds flats or houses agrees to pay the Council money which is to be spent on the provision and improvement of Recreation and Open Space to help the local area cope with more people using facilities or open spaces. The calculation and collection of the funds is handled by Planning Design and Control Services and by Finance who make a charge on the developer for the service.

Funding for improvements by developers can also be achieved by using an agreement (a Section 106 agreement) as part of the planning process. The Council occasionally requires S106 agreements from developers of large schemes where there is a specific requirement for local improvement.

### *How are funds allocated?*

Money collected contributes to funds for district wide facilities including:

- Major Built Facilities (e.g. leisure centres, multi use games areas)
- Youth/Adult Outdoor Play (e.g. sports pitches and facilities)

The remainder is then paid into the ward-based funds of the electoral ward in which the development is taking place. There are three collections in each ward:

- Equipped Children's Play (children's play areas)
- Casual Play (informal areas for open space play)
- Amenity Open Space (general improvements to open spaces)

A percentage of casual play and amenity open space money is collected from the wards for improvements to the following strategic outdoor facilities:

- Beaches
- Poole Park
- Upton Country Park

The amount collected varies according to the ward (based on market research and consumer feedback) and is capped to ensure that it does not unnecessarily impinge on provision of ward-based improvements.

### *Where can it be spent?*

Spending is controlled by the wording of the Local Plan Policy which (currently) requires ward-based funds to be spent within the wards in which it is collected so that the benefits are accessible to those who have paid for it – the new residents. While the ward boundaries are a convenience for collection, the arrangement can lead to big disparities in available funding; areas of the borough where a lot of building development takes place will have large ward-based funds, those where there is little or no development have small ward-based funds. Within these parameters, spending should be needs based.

### *Who allocates and controls the spending?*

The allocation of Planning Obligations money is determined by the Planning Obligations sub-group. This group is made up of five Councillors, appointed by the Environment Overview Group, who meet 4-6 times a year and make recommendations on projects put before them by Officers. Projects with a value under £50,000 can be signed off by Head of Leisure Services and the Portfolio Holder and referred to the Environment Overview Group as an item for information. Projects with a value over £50,000 have to be approved by Cabinet, usually after consideration by the Environment Overview Group, and those over £250,000 require full Council approval.

### ***What should I do if I have an idea for a project?***

Projects are generated in a variety of ways:

- Local Member interest
- Leisure Services staff
- Partnership working with other Service Units
- Residents/Area Committee requests
- Management plans
- Community group aspirations

Ideas should be reported, using the Green Card application form, to the Leisure Services Open Spaces Manager, Clare Freeman, or the Technical and Development Team Leader, Richard Nicholson. Checks will be carried out (see below) to make sure the project meets the necessary criteria.

### ***What say do the public have in new projects?***

The Planning Obligations sub-group protocol requires that projects meet certain criteria before they are presented with a request for funds.

- Ward Councillors: are they supportive?
- Area Committee: has the item been presented to the public and is there support?
- Strategic Fit: does the project meet strategic priorities?
- Consultation: have local residents and user groups been consulted?
- Feasibility: has Leisure Services the capacity to deliver the scheme taking in to account available funding and any site constraints?
- Priority: where does it fit in the current programme of works and what is its priority?

### ***How long do projects take to deliver?***

Projects may take up to a year or more to deliver, depending on their complexity and the workload of the Technical and Development Team. There are a number of stages that projects have to go through and the following is an example of a project to refurbish a play area:

#### **Exploring the idea (6 weeks)**

- Does it fit service strategy and priorities, and the Council's strategy and priorities?
- Does Leisure Services have the capacity to deliver?
- Is funding available?

#### **Consultation (16 weeks)**

- Member and local residents support through the Area Committee process?
- Will it be delivered in-house or contracted out?
- Is planning permission required?
- Detailed project plans and estimates
- Presentation to the Planning Obligations sub-group for approval
- Referral to next available Environment Overview Group.

#### **Design and specifications (16 weeks)**

- Site survey
- Detailed design
- Tender documents prepared and checked through the Council's internal systems
- Tender documents sent out
- Tenders analysed and successful contractor chosen.
- Contracts drawn up
- Equipment ordered

#### **Installation (weather dependent, 12 –16 weeks typically)**

### ***Planning Obligations funding is:***

- For spending on appropriate projects including play equipment, footpath construction, interpretation, lighting, open space re-design and landscaping etc;
- An open and transparent allocation system

### ***Planning Obligations funding is not:***

- For maintenance of sites, including footpath maintenance, drainage and sports pitch maintenance etc;
- A fund for Leisure Services to distribute without committee approval;
- A fund for Ward Councillors to allocate.