

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

6 OCTOBER 2011

**REPORT OF
CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Arts, Leisure & Culture - Lead Cabinet Member - Councillor Dixon

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

1. Summary

The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is an essential piece of the strategic policy framework for sport and active leisure in the borough. A great many people engage in pitch sports across the Borough and playing pitches are extremely important in supporting the maintenance and development of the health of our communities. The PPS provides a comprehensive picture of pitch sports provision across the borough (for football, cricket, rugby and hockey) and makes recommendations about how, through partnership and appropriate rationalisation, we can ensure there is a stock of playing pitch facilities that meet the needs and aspirations of our communities.

A copy of the PPS is attached for members' consideration. The supporting appendices to the PPS are available on e genda via the Council's web site.

2. Recommendations

1. that the 2011 Playing Pitch Strategy be approved.
2. that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Culture and Leisure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture, to approve any further minor amendments to the strategy.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To confirm the Playing Pitch Strategy as an official Council Strategy enabling immediate commencement of its delivery and assisting the evaluation of planning applications in relation to pitches and amenity open space.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code

of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held –

- In a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- In any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

And must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is an essential piece of the strategic policy framework for sport and active leisure in the borough. A great many people engage in pitch sports across the Borough and playing pitches are extremely important in supporting the maintenance and development of the health of our communities. The PPS provides a comprehensive picture of pitch sports provision across the borough (for football, cricket, rugby and hockey) and makes recommendations about how, through partnership and appropriate rationalisation, we can ensure there is a stock of playing pitch facilities that meet the needs and aspirations of our communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. that the 2011 Playing Pitch Strategy be approved.
2. that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Culture and Leisure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture, to approve any further minor amendments to the strategy.

DETAIL

1. The Playing Pitch Strategy has been developed to provide a commonly agreed direction for the development of playing pitch facilities within the Borough. We currently face the reality that in general the publicly funded playing pitch infrastructure requires significant investment to bring it to a standard which meets the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. Allied to this is the fact that in many cases secondary school gates remain firmly locked at weekends when they could be providing quality pitches and the associated infrastructure, especially for the football fraternity.
2. The Strategy considers the Borough as a whole but also provides analysis of four distinct sub areas (Billingham & North Stockton, Central and Western, Eaglescliffe & Yarm and South East). Clearly we are keen to ensure that

players can access facilities within the locality they live where possible and as such it is right and proper to ensure we cater for pitch sports across the Borough. This strategy provides a framework for how we might achieve this.

3. Although this Strategy fulfils the requirements laid out by Sport England and is entirely consistent with playing pitch strategy's across the country, we have decided to commission an additional piece of work to look at primary school provision. The purpose of this additional work is to identify opportunities for facility improvements and how we might maximise our stock of primary school fields, many of which lie idle most evenings and weekends. This additional information will be available for consideration as an appendices to the main document in November 2011.

Note: Sport England has only recently provided comments which require some superficial changes to the detail of the report. However these will not affect the proposed recommendations and outcomes and as such it is suggested that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Culture and Leisure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture, to approve any further minor amendments to the strategy.

4. Key Issues – General

- There are generally enough football pitches to meet existing demand
- There is a mismatch between adult and junior football pitches, with junior teams often playing on adult size pitches.
- The quality of football pitches and ancillary accommodation is variable and there are issues in respect of the proliferation of small, 1- pitch sites.
- There are many sites that do not provide even the most basic accommodation (changing & toilets), which leads to teams changing etc in the open air, leading to regular complaints from residents and the players alike.
- There is a reliance by many football teams on pitches on school/education sites, which are not in secured community use.
- In certain parts of the Borough new development will have a marked effect on the demand for football pitches.
- Improving access to school/education sites in return for qualitative improvements and formalising access arrangements could help in meeting future needs and also make a valuable contribution to meeting existing needs.
- The comments of local leagues and clubs have highlighted sites where there is a desire to see improvements. A separate technical appraisal has confirmed these views with regard to some sites.
- Adult clubs and leagues have expressed concerns about the wear and tear on pitches brought about by intensive use by both adults and juniors over the weekend periods.
- Clubs have identified opportunities on specific sites for marking out additional pitches, allowing for separate provision for adults and juniors at some locations.
- The supply/demand situation in respect of rugby (union) is very marginal, and clubs have concerns about the overuse of pitches for both matches and training, as well as lack of availability in bad weather in some cases.
- Generally speaking, the supply of cricket pitches meets demand, and responding clubs have raised no issue with the general supply, although the overall lack of indoor training facilities has been mentioned in club surveys, and is reinforced by the governing body which in contrast to the clubs has

expressed concern about the future supply of pitches due to burgeoning participation amongst the young. At least one indoor 4-lane venue would be very welcome.

- Generally, hockey clubs are satisfied that the provision of synthetic turf pitches meets their needs for matches, although some teams have to spread their matches and training across different sites. There is also a concern about the cost of hiring facilities (including for training); the ageing status of some of the playing surfaces; and, the competing demands of other sports- especially from small-sided football and training by other sports.
- Strategic analysis conducted by Sport England suggests a need for an additional synthetic turf pitch, and that the best location for this might be in the central part of the Borough. This would help to reduce the strain on the existing stock in meeting both the needs of training and match-play in respect of hockey and football in particular, but also potentially for rugby.

5. Area Specific Considerations (football unless otherwise identified)

Billingham and North Stockton

- There are currently sufficient pitches to meet the demand for adult football but a deficiency in junior pitches at peak time (Sunday AM). Northfield does provide many pitches for juniors but these pitches are not in secured community use and could in theory be withdrawn at any time.
- Securing the use of junior pitches at school sites via formal community use agreements is advisable to safeguard junior football provision.
- The scale of future housing development will not create a significant additional need for pitches
- Opportunities for development currently being pursued include improving the quality of the football pitches at Rievaulx and High Grange Recreation Ground's where quality has been identified as an issue. Other opportunities where funding has been sought include Billingham Synthonia Cricket Club (work to the square) and Billingham Rugby Club (work to the junior pitches) and we are awaiting decisions from Sport England on funding applications.

Central & Western

- There are currently sufficient pitches to meet the needs of adult football, however there are significant issues relating to ancillary facilities, which will be exacerbated by the development of the North Shore Academy and the loss of the changing rooms currently on that site.
- There is currently a deficiency in the number of junior pitches in secured community use at peak times (Sunday AM). Securing the use of junior pitches at school sites via formal community use agreements is advisable to safeguard junior football provision.
- Due to the general poor quality of ancillary facilities and the proliferation of 1-pitch sites, it is suggested that the development of a large multi-pitch site in the sub area for adult football is advisable to safeguard participation and eliminate potential reputation damage for SBC. It is believed funding for such a site could be realised through site rationalisation linked to the Asset Review.
- There is evidence to suggest another third generation (3G) synthetic turf pitch is required for the Borough and the Central and Western sub-area is the most appropriate location.

Eaglescliffe and Yarm

- There are currently sufficient pitches to meet the demand for adult football but a deficiency in junior pitches at peak time (Sunday AM).

- Securing the use of junior pitches at school sites via formal community use agreements is advisable to safeguard junior football provision.
- Through the disposal of the Saltergill site and funding opportunities via the Sport England Protecting Playing Fields Fund, it is anticipated that improvements offered to both Conyers and Eggescliffe Schools will bring school pitches within the sub-area into secured community use. This will significantly enhance provision within the sub area.
- The scale of future housing development will not create a significant additional need for pitches

South East

- There are currently sufficient pitches to meet the demand for adult football but a deficiency in junior pitches at peak time (Sunday AM).
- Securing the use of junior pitches at school sites via formal community use agreements is advisable to safeguard junior football provision.
- Future planned development will be large enough to generate demand for additional facilities or the expansion of existing ones.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. Projects or activities arising from the Strategy will either be funded from resources released through the Asset Review and facility rationalisation, or will be the subject of separate external funding or partner agency delivery mechanisms.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. None identified at this time

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. A lack of action to improve facilities directly or improve access to quality facilities is likely to have a negative affect on participation rates in pitch sports in the future.
9. The issues mainly lie with football and with the development of commercial small sided football centres. Lack of improvement in grass pitches and facilities will lead to a decline in 11-a-side adult football across the borough and a decline in the voluntary sector infrastructure that supports it.
10. Failure to provide toilets and changing facilities for clubs may lead to reputation damage to SBC. This is particularly true in relation to football.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

11. The Playing Pitch Strategy will contribute to the delivery of a number of strategic priorities. The outcomes it will contribute to are many and include:
 - Increase in positive activities for young people
 - Halting the year on year rise in obesity amongst children under 11 years
 - Reduce health inequalities
 - Improved access and quality of green spaces
 - Greater Equality of Opportunity

12. The Strategy will also contribute to the delivery of the following nationally identified priorities:
- Increase % of adults participating in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport and physical activity on at least 3 or more days per week
 - Increased resident satisfaction with sports & leisure services within the borough
 - Increase in the number of people volunteering in sport
 - An increase in the % of people participating in community sports organisations

CORPORATE PARENTING

13. By focussing on improving facilities and opportunities for people of all ages to participate in pitch sports, we will be creating greater opportunities to participate for all the children in the Borough.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/ COUNCILLORS

14. There has been formal and informal consultation with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of pitch sports across in respect of the development of the Strategy. Any individual site developments would be the subject of additional consultation with those affected locally.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

15. The strategy aims to positively impact on all members of the community and to ensure that all organisations are committed to its principles and provide equitable access to pitch sports provision. As a general principle, the provision of changing and toilet facilities extends access for some groups who are currently excluded or dissuaded from participating because of that lack of provision.
16. When considering the development of a site for pitch sports, equality impact assessments will be undertaken to consider the impact of such development upon local people.

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Education related? - No
Background papers – see appendices.

Wards and Ward Councillors – not ward specific