

**CABINET
18 DECEMBER 2018**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY & INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY

REPORT OF: THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY AND THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – PLACE.

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING, ENTERPRISE & TRANSPORT: COUNCILLOR DAVID LEVETT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE AND GREEN ISSUES: COUNCILLOR DAVID BARNARD

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PROSPER AND PROTECT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and their associated Action Plans have been informed by their respective Assessment Reports. Facility providers, users and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) have provided input into the assessments, strategies and action plans and been given the opportunity to comment on the documents. While North Hertfordshire District Council has been responsible for the assessment work and preparing the strategies, the strategies are a partnership approach and all key stakeholders including the Council and NGBs will be jointly responsible for the overall delivery of the recommendations within the Action Plans. The Council, NGBs and other stakeholders will be able to use the strategies and action plans to identify projects and seek external sources of funding.
- 1.2 The Council has prepared a new Local Plan, containing planning policies and site allocations, which proposes to shape development in the District to 2031. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan the Playing Pitch and Indoor Sports strategies have been updated as the Plan needs to ensure that sufficient provision is made for sport. An assessment was carried out of all the playing pitches and indoor sport facilities across North Hertfordshire to inform the strategies. The Assessment Report documents have already been published and agreed by Full Council on 11 April 2017 as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.
- 1.3 The playing pitch assessment report has also informed the North Hertfordshire Green Space Management Strategy 2017–2021 and assists with the maintenance and management of sports facilities across the District.
- 1.4 This report seeks approval of the Playing Pitch Strategy and the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy for North Hertfordshire, as well as agreement of their associated Action Plans, attached at Appendix A and B respectively. The Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy are joint strategies prepared for Planning and Leisure Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet adopt the Playing Pitch Strategy and its associated Action Plan as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Cabinet adopt the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and its associated Action Plan as set out in Appendix B.
- 2.3 That Cabinet recommends that delegated authority is given to the Service Directors of Regulatory and Place to agree updates to the Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sport Facilities Strategy and their associated Action Plans as required in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport and the Executive Member for Leisure and Green Issues.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Playing Pitch and Indoor Sport Facilities Strategies will ensure that North Hertfordshire continues to work in partnership with key organisations to provide accessible sport and leisure facilities to meet current and future needs across the District. The Action Plans recommend a number of projects for the District which seek to deliver the vision and aims contained in the strategies.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No alternative options were considered as the Council's existing playing pitch and indoor sports strategies were no longer deemed suitable by Sport England, a statutory consultee, in light of current guidance and should be reviewed. The two strategies are required to plan effectively for the future sport and leisure needs of the District.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Meetings have been held with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise & Transport and the Executive Member for Leisure & Green Issues to ensure that the strategies, associated action plans and the supporting assessment reports are reflective of the Council's aspirations.
- 5.2 These are joint Strategies prepared by North Hertfordshire Council, Sport England and the relevant National Governing Bodies for sport. All stakeholders who took part in the assessment studies have been informed of the strategies and given the opportunity to comment on the draft strategies.
- 5.3 Full Council approved a report on 11th April 2017 to submit the Local Plan and associated documentation to the Secretary of State for examination. The Assessment reports for the Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sports Facilities Study were included in the list of documents.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 16th April 2018.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The requirement to review the Council's Green Space and Facilities strategies prepared in 2009 and 2010 respectively was in response to Sport England, a statutory consultee to the Local Plan. Sport England informed the Council that they considered these strategies as not being suitable in seeking to address the current and future needs of the local community for outdoor and indoor sport provision for the purposes of plan making as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 7.2 It is a requirement of the NPPF that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. A revised outdoor and indoor sports study and strategy will inform the Local Plan and will guide Development Management in determining planning applications. It will also provide opportunities for Leisure Services in terms of management and provision of the Council's outdoor and indoor sports facilities, as well as working in partnership with other sport providers that meet the needs and aspirations of all sectors of the population, and will assist in guiding future investment for sport provision by the Council and other potential providers.
- 7.3 Consultants were appointed to undertake the necessary assessment studies and prepare the relevant strategies in accordance with Sport England's '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities*'¹. The assessment studies included an audit of outdoor and indoor sports facilities across the District; an assessment of the quantity and quality of the facilities; and consultation with providers, users, non-users and key stakeholders. These assessment reports have informed the preparation of policies in the emerging Local Plan and the Council's current Green Space Management Strategy 2017-2021, adopted by Cabinet on 24th January 2017.
- 7.4 The relevant Assessment documents were approved by Full Council on 11th April 2017 as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. They provide the necessary background evidence for the preparation of the Playing Pitch (PPS) and the Indoor Sports Facilities (ISFS) strategies and the associated action plans, which are the subject of this report.

¹ Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities, Sport England 2014.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 As stated above, the Local Plan requires clear and robust evidence to ensure that the right sports facilities are provided in the right places. This evidence must be up-to-date and be able to inform policies, location, development and management of facilities.
- 8.2 The NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) 2012 states that *“Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required”*. (NPPF 2012 paragraph 73). The revised NPPF 2018 has made minor changes to this paragraph which now states that *“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate. (NPPF 2018 para 96)*.
- 8.3 New housing development in the District will impact on the quantity and quality of indoor and outdoor sports facilities required to meet the aspirations of the local community. Facilities for new and existing residents and employees will need to be in accessible locations and of a type that is suitable to meet the required demand. Leisure Services need information on how best to provide and maintain sports and leisure facilities that are owned and maintained by the Council and to ensure that there is a range of providers.
- 8.4 The purpose of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is to assess the provision of public and private outdoor pitch and non-pitch facilities across the District, in accordance with Sport England’s Guidance and to seek to address a range of issues and key challenges that have emerged through the preparation of the Strategy in partnership with stakeholders.
- 8.6 Similarly, the purpose of the Indoor Sport Facilities Strategy (ISFS) is to assess the provision of public and private indoor facilities across the District in accordance with Sport England’s Guidance and to seek to address a range of issues and key challenges that have emerged through the preparation of the Strategy in partnership with stakeholders.
- 8.7 The Assessment Studies together with the Strategies will be used:
- ◀ As the basis for the planning policies in the emerging Local Plan;
 - ◀ To inform the assessment of development proposals that may affect sport and recreational land and buildings;
 - ◀ To contribute to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the implementation of S106 planning obligations;

- ◀ To inform the long-term use, amount, type and location of facilities; and to inform on-going provision and management of facilities;
 - ◀ To inform and work in partnership with key stakeholders with respect to the facilities that they own or manage or have involvement with.
- 8.8 The Strategies cover a ten year period. Each strategy sets out a vision and aims to provide a clear coherent way forward for the management and delivery of sports facilities across the District through partnership working. They have been prepared in accordance with the Council's Corporate Priorities and have been developed in partnership with a range of agencies including national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) plus local clubs and leagues, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Stevenage Leisure, Herts County Sports Partnership and North Hertfordshire District Council.
- 8.9 The Strategies and their associated Action Plans recommend a number of priority projects for the District to be delivered over the 10 year period. These are split between Short (1-2 years); Medium (3-5 years) and Long term (6+ years).
- 8.10 The Strategies are a partnership approach and all key stakeholders including the Council and NGBs will be jointly responsible for the overall delivery of the recommendations within the Action Plans. The Council will be responsible for the on-going monitoring and updating of the Action Plans as developments occur and demand changes overtime (See paragraph 8.14 below). In preparing the Action Plans, the Council and other partners have had to consider what they deem to be deliverable within the timescales identified and budgets available. Possible sources for external funding are also identified as no commitment on funding has been given by the Council.
- 8.11 As these Strategies are based on the current assessments it is proposed that these provide the baseline and once adopted the Action Plans can then be reviewed and updated as actions are completed or amendments need to be made to accord with changes in demand or available resources.
- 8.12 In order to monitor these changes and progress, it is a recommendation of both Strategies that Steering Groups be set up comprising relevant stakeholders who will be responsible for ensuring the Actions Plans are kept up to date and check for cross partnership working/funding possibilities. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet adopts the Strategies and their associated Action Plans as set out in Appendices A and B. See 'Next Steps' section below.

Next steps

- 8.13 The Strategies set the vision and objectives for playing pitch and indoor sports facilities within the District. The actions emanating from the Strategies will be delivered by and in partnership with other key stakeholders. These documents will provide clarity about the way forward, and allow key organisations, including the Council in terms of its own facilities, to focus on the key issues that they can directly influence and achieve, subject to available capital and revenue resources.

- 8.14 In order to ensure that the Action Plans are monitored, updated and delivered, there is a need to reinforce and build key partnerships between the various levels of Council (County, District and Parish), National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Sport England, schools, further education providers, community clubs and private landowners to maintain and improve sport provision. This would best be achieved through the establishment of a Steering Group which would meet on an annual basis. These meetings would be organised and facilitated by Council officers. The proposed list of stakeholders who could be included is outlined in the executive summary of each Strategy.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet Paragraph 5.6.1 of the Constitution states that the Cabinet can prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council.
- 9.2 Under the Paragraph 14.3 of the Constitution decisions on executive functions may be taken by Officers.
- 9.3 Specific legal implications of the projects on the Action Plan will need to be considered as the projects commence.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The consultant costs for undertaking the assessment studies and completing the Strategies have been funded from agreed budgets. The management of the consultants and consultation with key stakeholders in finalising the strategies has been undertaken by officers in Strategic Planning and Leisure Services and has been funded through existing budgets.
- 10.2 There will be some revenue implications identified with setting up the Steering Group and undertaking annual monitoring of the Action Plans. It is anticipated that annual monitoring will be carried out by Leisure Services and the organisation of the Steering Group meeting will be the responsibility of Strategic Planning. This is anticipated to be covered through existing service budgets and resources.
- 10.3 It is not intended that North Hertfordshire District Council should be solely responsible for the provision of sports facilities but to be an enabler in their provision. The Action Plans should assist the Council, the NGBs and other stakeholders in seeking external sources of funding for enhancements or provision of new facilities. The Council provides public indoor leisure facilities within the main settlements, including the major leisure centre in Letchworth and facilities in Hitchin and Royston, which provide an operational financial surplus to the Council. There is long-term planning for NHDC owned facilities to ensure their sustainability and any future public provision would need to be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Action Plans will also assist when determining sport requirements for planning applications.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Local Plan itself is a Cabinet top risk, and the risks associated with the Council's Green Space Management Strategy are reviewed and updated on the Council's performance and risk management software. The management and maintenance of the Council's green spaces are assessed as a low risk.
- 11.2 The risks associated with not undertaking the actions set out in this report include: lack of clarity and uncertainty for case officers and applicants when determining planning applications, lack of consistency with the emerging Local Plan as well as national planning policy and guidance, impact in securing funding towards for the Council's own Green Space Management Strategy and the lack of sport facilities that meet the aspirations of the local community.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced for the Council's Local Plan. This has been submitted as an evidence base document as part of the Local Plan Examination. The assessment has identified no negative impacts arising from the Local Plan. As planning guidance directly stems from the Local Plan policies, it can be inferred that there are no negative impacts arising from the proposed actions outlined in this report. As section 8.4 notes, the strategy will assess the suitability of the provision of these facilities across the District. This will seek to improve the opportunities to foster good relations between all elements of the community.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at Section 12.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 This is a joint Leisure and Planning project and the two services will work together with the NGBs, Sport England and other external organisations to set up annual meetings to monitor and progress actions as they become viable.
- 14.2 The monitoring of the relevant facilities in the Action Plans and administration of the annual meetings will result in some additional officer time.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A - North Hertfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan
- 15.2 Appendix B - North Hertfordshire Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy & Action Plan

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 The Assessment Reports for the Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor Sports Strategy were agreed as part of the evidence base for the submission Local Plan in a report to Full Council on 11th April 2017.
- North Hertfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report (August 2015)
 - North Hertfordshire Indoor Sports Facilities Study Assessment Report (February 2016)
- 17.2 The above two reports are available on the Council's website in the Local Plan Examination Library under Section 9. Sports, Open Space and Community at <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library>
- 17.3 The NHDC Green Space Management Strategy 2017 - 2021 adopted by Cabinet on 24th January 2017 can be found at <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/parks-and-open-spaces/green-space-strategy-and-action-plans>