



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 16 NOVEMBER 2022
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 8
Subject	PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	CLlr Joy Aitman, Cabinet Member for Stronger Healthy Communities Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Scott Williams, Business Manager – Contracts Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the findings and recommendations proposed by consultants commissioned to develop a Playing Pitch Strategy for the District and to approve the Strategy.
Annexes	Annex A – Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan Report
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <i>a. Endorse the findings of the consultants and approves the Playing Pitch Strategy, including its key recommendations and site specific action plan;</i> <i>b. Authorise officers to work in partnership with other organisations to establish the feasibility and funding sources for the projects identified within the strategy and to prepare business cases, where opportunities arise, and bring them forward for consideration;</i> <i>c. Approve the relevant resources including an allocation of £50,000 from the Council's Priority Fund for a fixed term post to support and facilitate the development of partnerships and bring business cases forward for approval.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Healthy Towns and Villages: Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone● Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Consultation was undertaken with town and parish Council, local schools and sports clubs, during the strategy development.

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1 The Covid-19 pandemic and rising utility costs have had a devastating impact on public sport and leisure services, with loss of income combined with higher monthly maintenance cost significantly affecting the viability of the sector. With ever reducing budgets we need to ensure that we focus our attention on efficient deliverable projects, so we can prioritise resources to support corporate priorities, whilst meeting any deficiencies in playing pitch provision.
- I.2 The Council last completed a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) in 2014, therefore it required an update (Sport England specifies that PPSs should be updated every 3-5 years). In addition, the 2014 PPS only covered the principal towns, therefore it was recommended that the new strategy extended to cover the whole district. The main driving reasons for the updated strategy are:
- To Inform the development and implementation of planning policy and infrastructure planning work, including;
 - the Area Action plan for the Oxfordshire Cotswold Garden Village (Salt Cross);
 - the supplementary planning documents for the key strategic planning areas;
 - and the infrastructure delivery plans, for West Oxfordshire and the Eynsham area;
 - to comply with National Planning Policy Framework, ensuring access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity.
 - To provide a robust and up to date evidence base to assist the Council in determination of planning applications in the provision or loss of playing pitches.
 - To provide justification and evidence base for developer contributions and external funding bids involving playing pitches.
 - To identify opportunities for improving access to leisure facilities, whilst supporting the delivery of the Council's plan and sporting governing bodies objectives.
- I.3 Consultants Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) were appointed to undertake an assessment and develop a districtwide PPS for the Council. The strategy will provide a framework for the provision of formal outdoor playing pitches and ancillary facilities, to determine the needs of existing and future residents in the District.
- I.4 The strategy was produced in accordance with Sport England PPS and Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance, to provide a robust and up to date assessments of the needs,

whilst complying with paragraph 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – to provide a robust and objective justification for future playing pitch provision in the District.

- 1.5 The strategy covers the whole district and is broken down into five analysis areas which align to the Local Plan; Burford/Charlbury, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Witney.
- 1.6 In terms of scope, the assessment focused geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements, including grass playing pitches (Football, Cricket, Rugby Union and Rugby League), artificial turf pitches (Hockey and third generation artificial grass pitches) and some non-pitch facilities (tennis and bowling greens). The assessment considered the number of pitches/facilities and took into account the size, quality, location, accessibility and capacity of the provision as well as accompanying ancillary facilities e.g. changing rooms.
- 1.7 This is a medium to long term strategy, which will provide the evidence base to support the Local Plan to 2031 and will also inform the master planning for strategic development area and future section 106 funding requests.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The quantitative assessment for each of the sports listed in 1.6 is that current demand is being met or that there is a shortfall. Current shortfalls exist for adult grass football pitches in the Carterton and Witney analysis area, Cricket pitches in Carterton analysis area and a shortfall of four full sized 3G pitches districtwide. When taking into account the various housing growth scenarios for the district in the future, further shortfalls will be created and exacerbated.
- 2.2 The objectives and recommendations are set out as follows:
 - a. To protect the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed, to meet the current and future needs
 - Ensure through the use of the PPS, that outdoor sports facilities are protected through implementation of local planning policy;
 - Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solution and partnership agreements;
 - Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so.
 - b. To enhance outdoor sports provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites
 - Improve quality;
 - Adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of sites;
 - Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding;
 - Secure developer contribution.
 - c. To provide new outdoor sports facilities where feasible and where there is current or future demand to do so
 - Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand;

- Rectify qualitative shortfalls through the current stock;
 - Consider opportunities to meet the need of community demand for playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities, through new and proposed education facilities.
- 2.3 In parallel to the key recommendations, a site by site action plan addresses the key issues identified and provides further detailed recommendations – see Annex A.
- 2.4 If the recommendations and site specific action plans are approved, the feasibility and viability of projects will need to be established. Issues such as facility ownership, capital cost and sources of funding will be key considerations, as all projects will be reliant on external funding in order to be delivered. In addition to this, partnerships with various stakeholders will need to be established to work through the prioritisation of future projects, some of which have already been formed.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Cabinet resolves to:
- a. Endorse the findings of the consultants and approves the Playing Pitch Strategy, including its key recommendations and site specific action plan.
 - b. Authorise officers to work in partnership with other organisations to establish the feasibility and funding sources for the projects identified within the strategy and to prepare business cases, where opportunities arise, and bring them forward for consideration
 - c. Approve the relevant resources and an allocation of £50,000 from the Council's Priority Fund for a fixed term post to support and facilitate the development of partnerships and bring business cases forward for approval.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In order to enable the successful delivery of this strategy, the relevant resources and budgets need to be allocated. This included a provision of £50,000 from the Council's Priority Fund for a fixed term post to support and facilitate the development of the partnership and bring forwards related business cases.
- 4.2 Although not all the actions within this Strategy will result in a financial implications to the Council directly for the Council, there are financial implications for the District. Based on the housing growth scenarios the district will have an additional population of 28,206 (11,513 forecasted dwellings), which will increase match and training demand on pitches. When this is translated into associated capital costs needed, this is estimated at £6m for new pitch provision and £9.7m for ancillary facilities such as changing rooms.
- 4.3 The strategy will be used to provide evidence in securing external sources of grant funding and section 106 contributions, which can be used to support individual business cases.
- 4.4 If the strategy is approved, further reports will be submitted to Members identifying sources of funding for consideration and approval to progress the recommendations in the strategy as opportunities arise.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 Failing to adopt and update a Playing Pitch Strategy could disadvantage the Council when bidding for future external funding and seeking developer contributions, towards specific projects and schemes.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 Any projects emerging from the Playing Pitch Strategy, will be assessed individually for equalities impact.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None at this time.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1 Members could choose not to accept the report and/or its recommendations, accepting the associated risks involved.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

(END)