

To: City Executive Board

Date: 4th April 2012

Report of: Head of Leisure and Parks

Title of Report: **OXFORD CITY'S PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY –
OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To seek approval for the Playing Pitch Strategy that has been amended to reflect the responses from the recent public consultation exercise.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Mark Lygo

Policy Framework:

Strong and Active Communities
Vibrant, Sustainable Economy
Cleaner, Greener Oxford

Recommendation(s): To approve the Playing Pitch Strategy that has been amended to reflect the responses from the public consultation.

Appendix 1: Risk Register
Appendix 2: Initial Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 3: Executive Summary
Appendix 4: Playing Pitch Strategy 2012-2026
Appendix 5: Summary of Consultation Results

Introduction

- 1 The draft Playing Pitch Strategy was approved to go out for consultation with the public by the City Executive Board on the 7th December 2011.
- 2 The overriding purpose of the strategy is to help ensure the City has a good supply of well managed, maintained and efficient playing pitches

and other outdoor sports facilities which meet identified needs and encourage residents to maintain and increase their participation in sport and active recreation.

- 3 The main sports that have formed part of the assessment are football, rugby, cricket and hockey, with other sports including tennis, bowls, athletics, baseball as well as the artificial grass pitches and Multi-Use games areas in the City.
- 4 One of the key drivers behind the strategy is the need to ensure that there is a more joined up approach to the provision of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities within the City bringing together key providers including Schools, Universities, Local Authorities and National Governing Bodies of sport.
- 5 The Playing Pitch Strategy has been developed over the past year using best practice guidance from Sport England to assess current and future demand over the next 14 years from 2012 to 2026. It provides a robust framework for resource prioritisation and informed planning decisions.
- 6 The strategy has been developed in line with the industry accepted methodology Sport England's guide to developing a Playing Pitch Strategy 'Towards a Level Playing Field' (TALPF) (2003) and in line with the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' (2002) and its companion guide Assessing Needs and Opportunities (2002),
- 7 An executive summary of the strategy including its objectives is found in appendix 3.

Relationships to other strategies

- 8 A detailed diagram of this is shown in appendix four on page six of the draft strategy. This strategy will feed into the wider Leisure Strategy which is being updated in 2012/13.

Previous consultation to develop the strategy

- 9 Prior to the public consultation on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy there has already been a significant amount of targeted consultation that has been conducted over the last year to enable the development of the strategy and has included clubs, teams, universities, schools, leagues, and National Governing Bodies of sport. A questionnaire was sent to all relevant clubs and teams, leagues, groundskeepers and national governing bodies of sport. The number of respondents is shown below.

Consultee	Response
Football Clubs	60 clubs / 203 teams
Rugby Clubs	9 clubs / 35 teams
Cricket Clubs	13 clubs / 35 teams
Hockey Clubs	7 clubs / 85 teams
Total Clubs / teams	86 clubs / 358 teams
Schools (including independent)	41
League Secretaries (all sports)	22
National Governing Bodies of Sport	5

10 An additional 10 consultation focus groups have also been held over the year and meetings have also taken place including a football forum.

Consultation on the draft strategy

11 The consultation period for the draft playing pitches strategy was conducted from the 9th January 2012 to 19th February 2012. An extension was agreed until the 21st February to enable those individuals who had had expressed a preference to complete this but had not managed to do so.

12 It was recognised that the strategy is a relatively large document that may put some clubs and stakeholders off commenting on it. To overcome this there was a targeted approach with a letter, executive summary and the chapter relating to the relevant sport sent to relevant stakeholders and users rather than just sending the strategy. A link to the full strategy was also included for those that wished to view the entire document.

13 The consultation was promoted through two separate press releases, through paper copy and also through direct email. In addition, throughout the consultation period the draft strategy was available for comment on the Oxford City Council Web Site through the on-line consultation page.

14 The following are some of the organisations that were directly contacted;

- Sports Clubs and Teams
- League or other Sports Associations
- Referees or Officials Associations
- National Governing Bodies of Sport
- Sport England
- Oxford Sports Council

- The Playing Fields Association
- Friends / Voluntary Groups / Neighbourhood Action Groups
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Parish Councils
- Education Sector: Primary and Secondary Schools; Oxford University and Colleges, Oxford Brookes University; Language Schools
- Health Sector: NHS Oxfordshire; Surgeries; hospitals
- Police – PCSO's
- Community Centres
- Other City Council departments

Summary of consultation results

- 15 There were a number of representations from various different clubs and organisations. Generally the comments were supportive of the strategy, its recommendations and actions. Although most of the comments were very specific to any one of the sports or to a specific area in the City a general theme was that there was strong support to look at securing community use of other facilities and this was especially prevalent within cricket.
- 16 Cricket clubs have also highlighted their strong concerns over any future loss of playing pitch provision and have supported the recommendations to try and protect and improve the pitch provision in the City.
- 17 Although clubs were generally pleased with the quality of pitches within the City there has been reference in the consultation to needing to improve the quality of some of the football pitches at Court Place Farm, Grandpont and for rugby at Cherwell School. Cricket clubs have also highlighted concerns over the quality of Horspath wicket number two, Risinghurst and some of the colleges. Actions have been included to try and address these issues.
- 18 The results from the consultation also highlighted the poor quality of the majority of the Council's sports pavilions and this is clearly referenced with actions to address this within the strategy.
- 19 Some respondents have also asked whether we can add other sports into the strategy such as skateboarding (wheeled sports), canal and river sports, equestrian and jogging. These have not been included on this occasion as they are outside the agreed methodology and we will be looking to review those sports that are included in line with the planned review of the strategy.
- 20 Those comments that have been raised within the consultation have been summarised along with what action has been taken in appendix 5.

Level of Risk

- 21 The level of risk has been categorised overall as low as playing pitch and outdoor sport facility provision will still continue to take place. However, there is a risk that without the strategy in place it will be difficult to demonstrate the need for these facilities and that it will become more difficult to protect and improve them especially in regard to competing priorities.
- 22 Also, this strategy will positively contribute to the evidence base for setting the Community Infrastructure Levy as well as applying for external funding from National Governing Bodies and Sport England. It will also become increasingly difficult to secure any external funding or contribution against them, without the strategy in place.
- 23 The risk register is shown in appendix one.

Climate Change

- 24 Grass pitches and surrounding areas play a role in combating the effects of climate change especially in regard to preventing flooding. There is no recommended loss of playing pitch provision within the strategy. Any improvements around ancillary facilities such as pavilions, will ensure that climate change factors have been considered.

Equalities Impact

- 25 One of the key aims of the strategy is to try and get more people participating in sport and physical activity. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment is shown in appendix two.

Financial Implications

- 26 The strategy once approved, will form a robust document with an evidence base that will help support applications for securing external funding and also for streamlining developer contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 27 The action plan highlights a way forward in regards to trying to identify funding for various improvements.

Legal Implications

28 There are no direct legal implications arising out of the contents of this report.

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**List of background papers: CEB Report 7th December 2011 Oxford's
Playing Pitch Strategy:**

Version number: 1.2