

To: City Executive Board
Date: 7th December 2011
Report of: Head of Leisure and Parks
Title of Report: Oxford City's Playing Pitches Strategy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To approve the Draft Playing Pitches Strategy for public consultation.

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 Draft Playing Pitches Strategy for public consultation.

Appendix 1: Risk Register

Appendix 2: Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 3: Draft Playing Pitches Strategy 2012-2026

Introduction

- 1 Oxford's existing Playing Pitches Strategy has now expired. The overriding purpose of this document 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. 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 The Draft Playing Pitches Strategy has been developed over the past year using best practice guidance from Sport England to assess current and future demand over the next 20 years. It provides a robust framework for resource prioritisation and informed planning decisions.

Methodology

- 4 A steering group was set up comprising of council officers from Planning, Leisure and Parks, Sport England and the Oxfordshire Sports Partnership. In developing the strategy the Council and the Steering Group have primarily been guided by:
 - 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), and
 - Sport England's guide to developing a Playing Pitch Strategy 'Towards a Level Playing Field' (TALPF) (2003).
- 5 Sport England's 'Fit for Purpose' assessment frameworks for Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies have also been used to help direct and check and challenge the development of the work.

Relationships to other Strategies

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

Objectives

The following is a summary of the objectives from the Strategy.

	Objective
1	To gather the best available supply and demand data on playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities included within the study.
2	To assess the supply and demand data in line with available national guidance and identified good practice.
3	To ensure a good level of consultation with key parties throughout the development of the strategy.
4	To provide a robust evidence base which can be used by a range of Council departments and other parties to help protect and improve the provision of playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities.
5	To establish a clear prioritised list of actions which will help to maintain and increase participation levels in sport and physical activity within the City and ensure the efficient use of resources.
6	To establish clear prioritised infrastructure requirements including where new facilities are required and existing facilities should be enhanced, including ancillary facilities e.g. pavilions.
7	To identify and promote good practice regarding the provision, management and maintenance of provision within the City.
8	To establish a process to ensure the regular review and update of the strategy and the information on which it is based.

Summary of the conclusions from the Strategy

- 7 The main conclusion from the strategy is that within Oxford there is currently a shortage of playing pitch provision that has secured community use and this is especially prevalent in cricket. The strategy does not necessarily suggest that additional new pitches are required to meet the shortfall, as once you add back in those (unsecured) pitches that have community use then there appears to be adequate provision for all sports, with the exception of junior and mini football. However, the shortfall of junior and mini football pitches in the main can be addressed by the spare capacity in other pitch provision. The aim of the Council must be to continue to look to secure community access against other providers playing pitches.
- 8 It is important to note that any loss of provision within the City would place greater pressure on the other remaining facilities. Where development which would adversely affect pitch provision may be proposed adequate replacement (equivalent or better) should be secured. However, given the land restrictions in the City, the opportunities available to secure replacement playing pitch provision is limited.

- 9 Generally the pitches within the City are of good quality and this needs to be maintained to ensure no reduction in their capacity. However, the assessment has indicated that there are some significant issues of poor quality with ancillary facilities such as pavilions that need to be addressed.

Consultation Process

- 10 Prior to the public consultation there has been a significant amount of targeted consultation that has already 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. This has included a survey to all relevant clubs and teams, leagues, groundskeepers and national governing bodies of sport. Consultation focus groups have also been held and meetings have also taken place including a football forum.

- 11 It is proposed that the consultation going forward will consist of an executive summary and covering letter being circulated to the key stakeholder and user groups listed below.

- Sports Clubs and Teams
- League or other Sports Associations
- Referees or Officials Associations
- National Governing Bodies of Sport
- Sport England
- Friends / Voluntary Groups / Neighbourhood Action Groups
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Parish Councils
- Education Sector: Primary and Secondary Schools; Oxford University and Colleges; Language Schools
- Health Sector: NHS Oxfordshire; Surgeries; hospitals
- Police – PCSO's
- Community Centres
- Other City Council departments

- 12 In addition, throughout the consultation period the draft strategy will be available on the Oxford City Council Web Site and will be available for comment through the on-line consultation page. A press release will coincide with the start of the consultation.

Level of Risk

- 13 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.

14 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.

15 The risk register is shown in appendix one.

Climate Change

16 Playing pitches and green space 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

17 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

18 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.

19 The action plan highlights a way forward in regards to trying to identify funding for various improvements.

Legal Implications

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

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List of background papers: None: Version number: 1.4

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