

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 It is recommended by Sport England, both as champions of sport but also as statutory planning consultees in respect of sports facilities and playing fields, that all local authorities should have an up to date and robust Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) to ensure there is a sufficient supply of quality playing pitches and playing fields to meet the sporting needs of local communities.
- 1.2 A new Playing Pitch Strategy for the borough has been produced using the latest Sport England methodology. The strategy analyses current, future supply and demand for grass and artificial pitches for five key sports: football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket and hockey.
- 1.3 The PPS reflects the Council's strategic role in respect of ensuring sufficient and appropriate playing pitch provision across the borough. It recognises that the playing pitch stock is owned and maintained by a range of organisations and highlights the opportunity for the Council to continue to develop its work with partners (such as through its Asset Transfer Policy) to bring about sustainable models for the future management, realise future efficiencies to enable improvement of playing pitches and associated ancillary facilities.
- 1.4 This report and the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) sets out the requirement for improved quality and increased quantity of outdoor provision for a range of sports. These objectives will require additional funding and investment which cannot be accommodated within the Council's existing budget. In order to avoid creating a pressure on Council budgets alternative management structures, enhanced partnership working and external funding sources will be explored and identified.
- 1.5 This report summaries the key findings, strategic recommendations and actions for each key sport. Consultation and feedback has been ongoing with Sport England, Energize STW (County Sports Partnership) and the National Governing Bodies of Sport during the development of the PPS. Feedback from the public consultation which took place between October 25th – November 30th 2015 has been incorporated into this final Strategy which is now being presented for adoption by the Council.
- 1.6 The PPS will provide a robust evidence base for the Council and its partners to seek to secure external investment in the form of planning gain and funding grants such as the Sport England, Protecting Playing Fields fund.

- 1.7 Subject to endorsement by cabinet the Playing Pitch Strategy is a pivotal document in informing planning policy including:
- The Green Guarantee - a Council land management commitment where the level of provision of playing pitches and other formal/informal recreational spaces are protected across the borough in the long term.
 - The Local Plan which recognises that public open spaces are an important and integral part of the quality and function of places. Policy NE3 seeks to protect existing public open spaces including sports provision from development and requires replacement (at an equal or higher quality) for any sport facility (or other public open space) impacted as a result of development. Policy NE4 requires the provision of new sports facilities and public open spaces are in line with the Playing Pitch Strategy and Policy NE5 requires developers to provide financially for the long term management of open space (including sports facility) which is part of or is created by a new development scheme.
 - The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) addresses the strategic off site infrastructure needs which arise as a result of the development proposed under the Local Plan and seeks to address the wider, cumulative impacts of development. Site infrastructure is still required to make proposed developments acceptable in planning terms. The current level of playing pitch provision is assessed in the IDP and an estimation of the future need is given based on the PPS. The IDP sets out the anticipated funding gap over the plan period and sets out the mechanisms by which the funding gap is anticipated to be met.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorse and formally adopt the findings and recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy 2016 for Telford & Wrekin.**
- 2.2 That Cabinet support the inclusion and protection of Telford & Wrekin Council owned playing pitch sites as part of the Green Guarantee.**

SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>As a Co-operative Council, we will work with our communities to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained</i> • <i>improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	<i>The strategy provides guidelines and actions which will provide enhanced community and sporting provision for a range of community groups including people of all ages, different genders, those with a disability and affected by deprivation. The resulting projects will also impact positively</i>

		<i>on people's health.</i>
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE		<i>Formal adoption of the Strategy is required by February 2016. Actions to be progressed as a result of the Strategy will be delivered from March 2016 onwards.</i>
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<i>This report and The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) sets out the requirement for increased quality and quantity of sports provision for a range of sports. These objectives will require additional funding and investment which cannot be accommodated within the Council's existing budget. In order to avoid creating a pressure on Council budgets alternative management structures, enhanced partnership working and funding sources will be explored and identified. The PPS also recommends that Telford and Wrekin Council owned playing pitch sites are protected under the Council's Green Guarantee. Consideration should be given to the potential impact of this recommendation on future savings proposals and the Enterprise Telford growth agenda. Financial advice and support will be provided as requested. JAC 260116</i>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<i>The Council have a number of powers and duties that allow the provision of playing fields, leisure facilities and land for recreational purposes. Although there are no direct legal implications as a result of the adoption of the strategy it is clear from the Key Strategy Recommendations of this report that detailed legal advice will be required for the development and implementation of specific proposals and projects in respect of planning/development control, the management of property assets, commercial agreements for the procurement of services and developing stakeholder agreements. Legal Services will provide advice as appropriate as specific proposals and projects linked to the Playing Pitch Strategy are brought forward.</i>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	<i>The report highlights future options for investment and rationalisation in playing field provision across Telford & Wrekin. It identifies ways to support the sustainability and where appropriate increase participation in a range of sports. The PPS will support the development of physically active, healthy, prosperous and safe communities.</i>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	<i>Borough wide.</i>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3. INFORMATION

3.1 The current Telford & Wrekin Playing Pitch Strategy was formally adopted by the Council in 2012. Since then Sport England has significantly changed the recognised methodology for such strategies and changes have also taken place in respect of playing pitch provision across the borough. The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme for example has resulted in changes to the pitch stock and has improved pitch quality and access across a number of school sites. The PPS has been produced in consultation with Sport England; the respective National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of sport and the County Sports Partnership (Energize STW).

3.2 In line with the new Sport England guidance a full and comprehensive review of current playing pitch provision across the borough (both quantitative and qualitative) has been undertaken and takes into account projected future population growth, sports participation rates and latent demand.

The PPS assesses current and future supply and demand for grass and artificial pitches for five key sports: football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket and hockey.

3.3 The PPS is an important tool for both the Council and other organisations such as sports clubs and NGB's to inform future decision making in respect of planning applications and to promote sustainable sports development and participation growth. The strategy takes account of the forthcoming Local Plan and the Green Guarantee and will be used along with the Telford & Wrekin Leisure Facilities Framework, the latter covering indoor sports and leisure facility provision, to inform future infrastructure needs.

3.4 The PPS provides a strategic framework for the provision, future management and maintenance of pitches, identifies priority sites and establishes quality standards. The PPS recognises that playing pitches are owned and maintained by a range of organisations and aims to support each of these through encouraging greater partnership working.

3.5 There are a total of 229 playing pitches across the sports assessed - 188 football pitches, 11 rugby pitches, 18 cricket pitches (4 with artificial turf wickets), 9 full sized artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and 3 small smaller AGPS. All Telford & Wrekin Council owned playing pitch sites have been included within the sites proposed for protection under the Council's Green Guarantee or are already protected through Fields in Trust status.

3.6 Ownership of pitches varies across the sports – Schools, Colleges and Universities have the largest ownership of grass football pitches (approximately 47%) followed by the Local Authority (with 44%). This scenario changes with other sports where the majority of ownership lies with the Local Authority or a Sports Club/other organisation. Not all pitches have formal community use agreements.

3.7 There are around 367 teams (207 football, 51 cricket, 96 rugby, 13 hockey) across the five assessed sports. The majority of these play regular fixtures in affiliated and unaffiliated leagues. Football, as in most areas of the country, accounts for majority – 56.5% of all teams identified are football teams playing regular games.

3.8 Playing Pitches are fundamental to improving health, social and cultural wellbeing. It is notable across all five sports that they are male dominated in terms of current participation and wanting to participate. This is with the exception of hockey where the Sport England Market Segmentation informs us that it is dominated by females wanting to play the sport. Also in terms of participation there is a clear correlation between deprivation and low participation rates. Telford & Wrekin is in the top 30% most deprived local authorities in the West Midlands, and in the top 40% most deprived nationally. There are fourteen Telford and Wrekin Super Output Areas (out of a total 108) ranked within the top 10% most deprived nationally.

3.9 Sport Specific Findings – Football

3.9.1 When considering all community provision both secure (formal agreement in place) and unsecure (no formal agreement in place) there is sufficient capacity to accommodate all forms of football: senior, junior and mini. However when taking unsecured pitches (the majority located on educational sites) out of this equation junior and mini pitch provision is reduced during the peak period (at the weekend when competitive football takes place). Based on population projections and team generation rates there will be insufficient provision to meet the need for mini soccer by 2019 and junior/youth provision by 2026.

3.9.2 Further analysis of current provision by sub area shows that at peak times there is no capacity in South Telford and Newport for additional mini soccer, youth/junior and is severely limited for senior/adult football. Provision for is severely limited for junior/youth football in North Telford and mini football in Wellington.

3.9.3 Spare capacity exists across all types of AGP, predominantly at the weekend and late evenings. Third generation pitches (3Gs - a surface created using synthetic fibres and rubbers, made to look like grass) are the only form of AGP that can be used for competitive football matches. However, there is reluctance from some senior teams to play on this type of surface for competitive matches preferring the traditional grass pitch. In addition to this some pitches cannot accommodate all formats of the game as no line markings have been provided on the pitch. Also League rules currently enable away teams to refuse to play on a 3G surface. There are four 3G pitches within the borough although there is currently no community access at Thomas Telford. It is the FA's ambition to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once a week on a 3G pitch.

3.9.4 Pitch quality is an issue across the borough resulting in match cancellations due to adverse weather. This can be addressed through improved/increased maintenance however, with a reduction in council resources, alternative solutions need to be identified.

3.9.5 Much of the ancillary provision such as changing rooms are tired and dated. Lack of ancillary provision inhibits development of the game i.e. toilets for girls football – requirement of the league. Space for social activities would support the retention of teams.

3.9.6 The strategy has identified a lack of Step 7 provision across the borough. The National League System is the league structure for senior men's football that sits directly below the Football League, League Two. It stretches from the Football Conference Premier Division at Step 1 through to County Leagues at Step 7. Clubs within the step system must adhere

to specific ground requirements set out by the FA. The higher the level of football being played the higher the requirements. Clubs cannot progress into the league/step above if the ground requirements do not meet the correct specifications.

3.9.7 The highest percentage (43%) of football teams are junior. The majority of junior clubs currently play across a number of sites, sometimes in 3 or more geographical sub areas.

3.9.8 A number of clubs have expressed an interest in taking on the management of provision in the future. The Community Club Asset Transfer Policy provides a framework for doing so. However, consideration needs to be given to both the club and community with regards to protecting the asset i.e. fencing this off, as clubs feel that without this it would be extremely difficult to maintain a pitch to a high quality standard due to dog fouling and vandalism issues to name but a few.

3.10 **Cricket**

3.10.1 There is insufficient capacity to meet current and future demand and as such some of the current cricket provision, St Georges and Madeley is deemed to be overused. There is no community cricket provision in Central Telford and limited provision in South Telford.

3.10.2 Generally the quality of pitches is good therefore additional wickets/pitches, rather than quality improvements are required to accommodate need. Ancillary provision has generally been assessed as acceptable although some facilities are ageing and clubs reported that this is inhibiting growth and progression.

3.10.3 The majority of teams are senior men (57%) followed by junior boys (36%) of all teams.

3.11 **Rugby Union**

3.11.1 There is no spare capacity and significant overuse on all rugby union grass pitches (Newport Salop RFC, Telford Hornets and Harper Adams University), with the exception of one pitch at Harper Adams. Therefore there is no capacity to accommodate any further competitive play or training within the current provision and no capacity to accommodate any future demand. This is mainly down to the quality of pitches as a result of poor drainage and lack of maintenance (with the exception of Harper Adams). In addition, this is as a result of training on pitches also used for matches. There is potential spare capacity at Abraham Darby Academy as the pitches originally identified for football have been used for rugby union. A Community Use Agreement is in place for use of these pitches which will provide additional capacity.

3.11.2 Currently there is spare capacity (hours available for training and competition) on some 3G pitches. However, currently these 3G pitches are not World Rugby Regulation 22 compliant, therefore no Rugby Union training and competition can take place. If there was a need for Rugby to use the 3G pitches then an assessment under World Rugby Regulation 22 would need to be undertaken.

3.11.3 Both community clubs, Telford Hornets and Newport Salop, lease their facilities. Terms mainly with regards to the length of their leases is currently restricting the clubs ability to apply for external funding to improve their facilities. Telford & Wrekin Council (Landlord) is

currently working with Telford Hornets to explore future opportunities with respect to the development of this site.

3.11.4 Mini/midi rugby accounts for the highest proportion of teams playing across Telford and Wrekin (69%). There are no dedicated pitches for mini/midi rugby; these matches are all played on senior pitches.

3.12 Rugby League

3.12.1 Some capacity exists on the 3G pitch at Phoenix Sports and Leisure Centre but this is typically late evening and weekends. The club have expressed the desire for a grass pitch and social provision in order to develop and grow. Currently there are 2 adult, 2 junior and 1 mini team.

3.13 Hockey

3.13.1 There is adequate AGP provision in Telford and Wrekin to accommodate competitive Hockey. However, there is no community access on two of the newest AGPs both based on education sites, Thomas Telford and Madeley Academy. Telford Hockey Club currently use St Georges Sports and Social Club. The club's home pitch carpet will need replacing in 18 – 24 months and remedial works are required to improve pitch quality. Ideally, the club require a site with two artificial hockey pitches in order to grow. Other issues include lack of security of tenure and income generating opportunities.

3.14 Artificial Grass Pitches

3.14.1 There is a balance of AGP provision in Telford and Wrekin with the exception of a stadia pitch. There is significant capacity across all types of AGP surface i.e. sand filled/dressed and 3G; however this is typically late evenings (9-10pm) and weekends when teams are competing. The Football Association recommends that all 3G pitches should be approved and registered for training and competitive use; only one 3G pitch has been approved and registered at the time of writing the strategy.

3.14.2 Based on the number of football teams in Telford and Wrekin at the time of writing the strategy the need for 1 additional 3G pitch has been identified. There is a lack of community access to 3G provision in South Telford.

3.15 Key Strategy Recommendations

- Strengthen local policies to protect sports facilities (such as through the Green Guarantee)
- Increase and secure community use and access to sites for well established, organised and sustainable clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- Maximise community use of outdoor sports provision where there is an identified need.
- Improve the quality of provision taking into consideration resource implications.
- Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to inform management and investment decisions.
- Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure external funding.
- Establish an approach to securing developer contributions.
- Rectify quantitative shortfalls in the current pitch stock where there is a need to do so.

- Identify opportunities to add to the overall pitch stock to accommodate both current and future demand where required.

3.16 Sport Specific Actions

3.16.1 Based on the Assessment Report there are a number of recommended sport specific objectives which are outlined below. Site specific actions associated with the respective sports objectives and recommendations are detailed within the action plan contained within the PPS.

3.16.2 The PPS and agreed action plan has been developed in partnership with a Strategic Stakeholder Group comprising of representatives from Sport England, local and regional National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), STW Energize and other strategic stakeholders. This group will meet every 6 months in order to monitor, update, review and revise actions/progress accordingly.

Football objectives

- Maximise use of sites (both grass and 3G)
- Improve quality of provision
- Focus future investment around multi-pitch and hub sites.

Cricket objectives

- Increase the number of new pitches
- Increase/secure access to existing educational provision
- Endorse the use of artificial turf wickets for competitive matches

Rugby Union objectives

- Improve the quality of pitches, pavilions, floodlighting and parking
- Increase/secure access to existing educational provision
- Increase the number of new pitches

Rugby League objectives

- Maintain access to existing provision
- Work towards increasing provision (grass) to increase participation

Hockey objectives

- Maximise access to existing provision particularly increasing/securing access to existing educational provision
- Improve the quality of existing provision

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NA

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

CB 117. Telford & Wrekin Council Cabinet 29th March 2012.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NA

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