

Report to Cabinet

26th September 2019

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture



DECISION REQUIRED

Not Exempt

Adoption of Playing Pitch Strategy

Executive Summary

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of a Horsham District Council Playing Pitch Strategy for the period up to 2031. This Strategy focusses on the supply and demand for playing pitches (grass and artificial) within the District and is complemented by a separate Built Sports Facility Strategy.

The Strategy provides an assessment of the current supply and demand of outdoor sports pitches (both grass and artificial) within the District in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility, location and management. The Strategy was undertaken by independent consultants and uses the methodology prescribed by Sport England.

The Strategy provides a robust evidence base that will allow the District to plan, prioritise and schedule future outdoor sport pitch improvement projects.

The overall finding within the Strategy is that the District's playing pitches are in-line with standard quality and quantity. The rates of participation in sport are also higher in Horsham District when compared with the national rates. The playing pitches that are owned by HDC are not statutory services – these are provided by HDC as additional services to benefit the local community.

The Strategy provides an evidence base that will allow the District to plan, prioritise and schedule future playing pitch improvement projects. The Strategy is primarily to aid the Local Plan process to enable HDC to advise and direct potential developers to ensure they deliver new playing pitches or improve current playing pitches within the district.

It is not anticipated that HDC will directly fund any additional improvements to playing pitches owned by other organisations. HDC's primary financial obligation will be to the long-term improvement of its own leisure assets and to look to support community organisations in accessing external or developer funding opportunities.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended:

- i) To approve the Horsham District Playing Pitch Facility Strategy and Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

This report presents Cabinet with the Horsham District Council Playing Pitch Strategy for the period up to 2031. The Strategy:

- 1) provides guidance to assist with determining what provision of outdoor sport pitches is required to respond to large scale infrastructure requirements for new community housing developments
- 2) provides an evidence based strategy for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities
- 3) helps guide investment, funding bids, planning applications and decision making.

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 Horsham District Council Playing Pitch Strategy 2018 – 2031 Needs Assessment

Appendix 2 Horsham District Council Playing Pitch Final Strategy and Action Plan

Consultation: Leisure and Culture PDAG, Sport England, Governing Bodies for Sport, relevant HDC Departments.

Wards affected: All

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Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Horsham District Council Playing Pitch Strategy as set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 In October 2016, the District Council commissioned consultants to undertake a Built Sports Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy for the period 2018 – 2031.
- 1.3 The District Council appointed Strategic Leisure Ltd to undertake the audit of indoor leisure facilities and 4Global to audit outdoor playing pitches. This report specifically relates to the study commissioned in relation to outdoor playing pitches.
- 1.4. The Horsham District Planning Framework plans for the delivery of 16,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 and together with a demographic shift associated with a changing population there is a need to ensure that there is a clear and effective strategy for maintaining the appropriate levels and quality of community sporting infrastructure.
- 1.5 In line with NPPF (paragraph 96) it is important that there are robust and up to date assessments of the need for sport and recreation facilities, including quantitative and qualitative deficits or surpluses of facilities. Information gained from the assessments can then be used to determine what provision is required to meet both current and future demand.
- 1.6 Sport England is a statutory consultee on all planning applications that affect sports facilities and has provided published guidance that specifies the methodology and approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy. This Strategy is compliant with Sport England requirements.
- 1.7 Given these factors, it is important that the Council has a clear and effective strategy to ensure it can deliver the outdoor sporting provision and infrastructure the community needs.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 In January 2017 the Council adopted the Horsham District Council Sport and Physical Activity Strategy which had as a key action to undertake a pitch and facilities audit in line with Sport England best practice.

3 Details

- 3.1 The Horsham District Council Sport and Physical Activity Strategy identifies 5 priorities being:
 - 1) Ensure sufficient and appropriate sporting infrastructure – provide the right type of facilities, of the right quality in the right place.
 - 2) Increase participation and improve health– encourage and support behaviour change so that people who don't currently participate to do so and get people who are already active to take part more often.

- 3) Develop effective sporting and physical activity pathways – encourage and enable people to stay involved in sport and physical activity and achieve the highest standard that they want to and are capable of.
- 4) Widen access to sport and physical activity – make sure that people who don't traditionally participate in sport and physical activity are supported to do so.
- 5) Strengthen organisations and partnerships – increase the number and quality of volunteers, coaches and clubs.

3.2 Each of these aims has a reliance on, or connectivity with, pitch and ancillary facility infrastructure so it is essential that the Council adopts an approach that enables it to prioritise the mix, location and quality of outdoor pitches and ancillary facilities for a period which aligns with the period covered by the Horsham District Planning Framework.

3.3 The Playing Pitch Strategy will sit alongside the Built Sports Facility Strategy to provide an evidence base for use in planning, investment and sports development decisions. The Strategy provides a robust and up-to-date evidence base to inform policy direction, specifically the development of planning policies concerned with the protection of existing playing pitches and new provision required to meet future demand. The findings and recommendations will also be used as a basis upon which to consider planning applications and development proposals.

3.4 The evidence base used for the Strategy covered the following core sports:

- Football
- Cricket
- Rugby Union
- Hockey

The evidence base also covers Stoolball which is popular locally.

3.5 These are the core sports which Sport England identifies as sufficiently important to determine levels of playing field provision. Other sports can, of course, be played on those areas.

3.6 A variety of consultation methods were used to obtain information about supply and demand from providers of facilities, leagues, clubs, county associations and national/regional governing bodies of sport. Issues identified by clubs returning questionnaires were followed up by telephone or face to face interviews.

3.7 All identified outdoor sports facilities were assessed and a quality rating recorded within the audit. These quality ratings were used to help estimate the capacity of each facility to accommodate competitive and other play, within the supply and demand assessment.

3.8 Future demand was estimated from population projections and housing growth by applying national standard formula for participation rates. The propensity for future populations to participate in pitch sports, feedback from teams and National Governing Bodies specific sports development targets were also considered.

3.9 The capacity of each playing pitch was determined to indicate how many match equivalent sessions per week it can sustain. This was compared to the number of

matches actually taking place and an understanding of spare capacity or overuse was identified. Once capacity was determined on a site by site basis, spare capacity was calculated on an area by area basis.

- 3.10 Modelling scenarios were then used to look at whether existing provision could cater for unmet, displaced and future demand.
- 3.11 A Project Steering Group comprising representation from the Council, Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) has guided the study from its commencement. At critical milestones, the Steering Group members have reviewed and verified the data and information collected to allow the work to proceed efficiently through each stage, reducing the margin of error.

Findings and recommendations of the Study

3.11 The study concludes that:

- The quality of football provision across the District is standard and appears to have stayed at a consistent level over the past years, with 78% of the 146 pitches assessed scoring in the standard quality rating or above.
- The majority of poor football pitches identified as part of the study are located at educational establishments; however Jubilee Fields, Jolesfield Common, Rusper Recreation Ground and Rothery Field are some of the Council sites identified as poor.
- Projected demand for football teams is likely to increase linked to population growth. The largest growth is projected in Youth Boy's 11v11 (U13 to U16s) – 8 teams are expected by 2031. This demand is projected to be particularly significant in the Horsham sub area, given the current level of demand in this area.
- The supply of 3G (third generation) artificial grass pitches (AGPs) in the district falls well short of the FA target. It is projected that 9 full size accessible 3G AGPs will be required by 2031. There are currently only 2 in the district.
- 85% of cricket pitches are of standard quality or better.
- There are six cricket pitches across the District that scored as poor: Wiston Cricket Field, Washington Recreation Ground, Pulborough Recreation Ground, The Forest School and The Weald Community School were identified as some of the lowest scoring in the area and therefore these sites require increased maintenance and investment to upgrade them.
- The current supply of sites for cricket has spare capacity which can help meet future demand, although there are some sub-areas where capacity will be stretched.
- There are 12 rugby sites in Horsham comprising a total of 15 senior pitches and 14 junior pitches and a World Rugby 22 Compliant AGP that was opened in September 2018 at Coolhurst Sports Ground. All club demand is concentrated at five sites: Barns Green RFC, Coolhurst Ground, Pulborough Rugby Club, The Holbrook Club and Steyning Grammar School.

- The demand for rugby in the district is currently satisfied with facilities of good quality and there is spare capacity to meet future demand.
- The quality of provision across the District for hockey is standard; out of the 7 existing full sized AGPs, 5 were scored as standard and 2 as poor.
- Three out of the 7 AGPs in Horsham are over 10 years old and are therefore likely to require refurbishment or replacement in the near future.
- Future demand for hockey in Horsham is expected to increase the number of formal hockey teams in the Horsham by two teams (in the senior women and junior girls age group).
- Horsham HC is a key club with large growth plans (increasing the youth numbers to 400); however these growth plans are currently limited because the club has to play across 5 different sites and the club have no home ground. This is not sustainable.
- Of the nine stoolball clubs in Horsham, two clubs projected a slight growth in membership over the next 2-3 years. Six clubs say that membership numbers are expected to remain constant and one club predicts a potential decrease in membership numbers.

3.12 On the basis of the above key findings the Strategy lists both general and sport specific recommendations and delivery action plans which can be found on pages 34 - 52 of the Strategy and Action Plan, set out at Appendix 2.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Once adopted the Strategy will be accessible to all stakeholders and partners so that they can coordinate their own priorities with those of the Council.
- 4.2 The Strategy will be used to provide a robust evidence base to aid decision making in respect of future provision and management of built sports provision.
- 4.4 The Steering Group (as detailed in 3.11) will continue to meet, to ensure the delivery and implementation of the PPS recommendations and actions, as well as ensuring the evidence and data remain up to date.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 The **Leisure and Culture Policy Development Advisory Group** supports the Strategy.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 There is no statutory requirement to have this Strategy but having a strategy which has a robust evidence base will allow the Council to plan, prioritise and schedule

future built facility projects and take advantage of external funding opportunities. Without it the Council would be open to challenge regarding its priorities and would be less likely to maximise future sporting provision opportunities.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 None identified at this stage. However, this Strategy will be helpful in determining potential future expenditure priorities on maintaining sporting facility provision within the District.

- 7.2 The Strategy does not require any financial commitment from the Council – it should be seen more as a guide to strategic planning and protection of existing assets. Many of the facilities requiring maintenance or upgrades are not Council facilities. Those Council facilities that are identified as requiring maintenance or replacement are as expected under prudent planned cyclical replacement.

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 There are not considered to be any legal or human rights implications.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Without a Strategy clearly identifying sporting infrastructure priorities, future planning developments could lead to an imbalance in provision.

- 9.2 Without a Strategy the Council could be open to an objection from Sport England to the emerging Local Plan Review.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 The Strategy provides robust evidence, strategic direction and a set of appropriate recommendations in order to ensure appropriate levels of future provision of sports facilities to serve existing and new communities in the Horsham District until 2031.