

Cabinet Meeting

13 January 2016

Report title	Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment Report	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Sandra Samuels Public Health and Wellbeing	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, People	
Originating service	Healthier Place Team, Public Health	
Accountable employee(s)	Andrea Fieldhouse Tel Email	Active People and Places Manager 01902 556224 Andrea.fieldhouse@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Corporate Landlord Board	18 November 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Playing Pitch Strategy

Recommendations for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note and discuss:

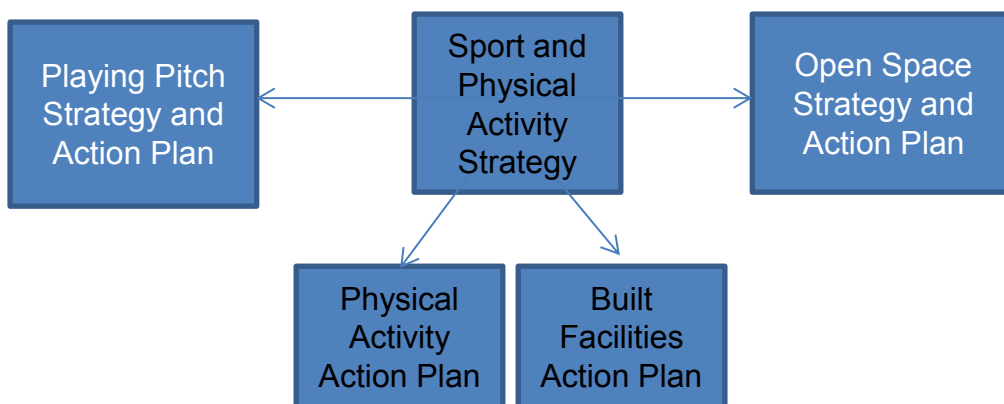
1. The action plan and Playing Pitch Assessment Report.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the completion of the draft Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and outline recommendations and key points raised by the report.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2012, the Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) to produce a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) in line with Sport England requirements and was assessed under their previous guidance 'towards a level playing field: A guide to the production of playing pitch strategies'.
- 2.2 In parallel, a Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSAP) and Wolverhampton Sport Development and Investment Strategy (WSDIS) were produced and adopted by Cabinet. These three strategies form a suite of documents that have since informed investment in playing pitches, open space and built sports facilities across the city.
- 2.3 Since the production of these strategies, the landscape has changed significantly and there is an increasing need to review the usefulness of corporate assets and to consider disposals, change of use or assets transfers on unused or unrequired land. An increasing population and business growth within the city is also adding pressure to this as the need to improve the housing offer and provide land for business use is a growing concern. This is not unique to just City Council assets and other landowners are also looking to use their land in new ways.
- 2.4 This report focuses specifically on the PPS but it is important to note that an updated Open Space action plan will be presented to Corporate Landlord Board at a future meeting as will a new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy that will replace the WSDIS. The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy will focus on increasing physical activity and the impact this will have on the health of the city. A Built Facilities Action Plan will sit under this strategy which will identify key investment opportunities for sport and physical activity. The relationship between these strategies is shown in the diagram below:



- 2.5 Policy R5 of the adopted Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006) states that playing pitches should be protected from development unless it can be demonstrated, with reference to an up-to-date needs assessment, that the pitches are no longer required to meet local demand. National planning guidance also expects any open space, sport and recreation planning obligations required by a local authority to be justified with reference to a needs assessment. The Playing Pitch Strategy, together with the Open Space Strategy and Action plan and Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, form a rigorous and up-to-date source of needs assessment evidence. This evidence will be used to make planning decisions affecting built sport facilities and playing fields and will inform future planning policy.
- 2.6 The PPS provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities between 2015 and 2020. The PPS covers the following types of pitches used for outdoor sport:
- Football pitches
 - Cricket pitches
 - Rugby league pitches
 - Rugby union pitches
 - Artificial grass pitches
 - Bowling greens
 - Tennis courts
 - Netball courts
 - Cycle tracks
- 2.7 The PPS identifies current levels of provision in the area, across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors, and compares this with current and likely future levels of demand.
- 2.8 Pitch assessments were also conducted and undertaken using a variety of methods including site visits, non-technical assessments and user feedback. Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; for example poor drainage and poor maintenance may lead a pitch to be assessed as poor therefore limiting games per week that can take place without detrimental effect.
- 2.9 The PPS outcome for the Council is to see the provision of a range of good quality and accessible facilities, services and opportunities that:
- Reflect the nature of the city
 - Maximise the strengths of the voluntary sports sector
 - Increase participation in sport and physical activity
 - Contribute to an overall improvement in health and wellbeing

3.0 Key Findings

- 3.1 There are 172 grass football pitches within Wolverhampton across 83 sites. Of these, 129 are available at some level for community use. 49 of these are on school sites. Overall, 13 football pitches are poor quality, whilst 90 are standard and 26 are good.

- 3.2 There is spare capacity to accommodate adult football teams both now and in the future but there is a predicted shortfall of youth 11 v 11 in the future based on predicted growth and the current shortfall of one match session. This can be accommodated by changing unused adult pitches to 11 v 11 youth.
- 3.3 There are 15 grass wicket cricket squares, 11 of which are available for community use. In addition there are 9 standalone non turf wicket pitches.
- 3.4 No wickets are overplayed and there is an overall surplus of 0.5 wickets across the city. However there is a shortfall of 0.5 wickets in the Bilston area.
- 3.5 There are four senior and one mini rugby union pitch across four sites. All pitches are rated as standard. There is spare capacity on mini rugby pitches at two school sites but there is no spare capacity for senior pitches. The pitches at Wolverhampton Rugby Union Football Club are overplayed by six matches per week.
- 3.6 There is one rugby league pitch in the city at Moreton Community High School, this is assessed as standard and has spare capacity.
- 3.7 There are four full sized sand based artificial pitches in Wolverhampton. The sand based pitch at Heath Park Business and Enterprise College will be rebuilt as a 3G artificial pitch and will not be suitable for hockey use. Supply is deemed adequate enough to meet demand for both senior and junior hockey.
- 3.8 There are 2 full sized 3G artificial pitches available for community use in the city, both are assessed as good quality. On the basis that 267 teams are playing competitive football in the city, in order to satisfy training demand, there is a recommended need for at least five full size 3G pitches. However, new 3G pitch developments at Codsall High School and Sporting Khalsa in Willenhall, Walsall may satisfy some of this demand due to their proximity to the Wolverhampton boundary.
- 3.9 There are 22 crown green bowling greens in Wolverhampton across 20 sites. 14 are assessed as good quality and the remainder are assessed as standard. There is spare capacity for clubs to increase use of their home greens at the majority of sites.
- 3.10 There are a total of 122 tennis courts across 26 sites, 72 of which are available for community use. 34 courts are assessed as good, 33 are standard and 5 are rated as poor.
- 3.11 Use of park courts is more common than in other local authorities and no education sites are available to the community report any regular demand.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The PPS recommends that Wolverhampton should pursue three strategic objectives. These are outlined in the table below:

Objective 1: To protect the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs

Recommendations:

- a. Ensure, through the use of the Playing Pitch Strategy, that sports facilities are protected through the implementation of policy.
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is a need to do so.

OBJECTIVE 2 To enhance outdoor sports facilities through improving quality and management of sites

Recommendations:

- d. Improve pitch quality on poor quality sites.
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding
- g. Secure developer contributions.

OBJECTIVE 3: To provide new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

- h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current pitch stock
- i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

4.2 An action plan is included in the PPS that shows how Wolverhampton can best deliver these recommendations.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

5.2 Whilst there are a range of suggested costs outlined in the action plan, the action plan is a City plan and suggested improvements to facilities would be the responsibility of external partners and the Council. Any projects which fall under Council responsibilities will follow the appropriate governance procedures for approval.

5.3 The information outlined in the action plan will be used to inform future planning contributions and funding applications by the Council and other partners.
[GS/21122015/Y]

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no immediate legal implications from this report. [RB/04012015/W]

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 The consultation undertaken was an integral part of the PPS and all clubs and organisations involved with playing pitches within the identified sports were consulted. A main aim of the PPS is to highlight areas deficient in playing pitch provision and to recommend ways of achieving equal access for all to a sufficient quality and quantity of sports pitches of different types.

8.0 Environmental implications

8.1 Any environmental implications would be addressed within a planning application should this be required for the site.

9.0 Human resources implications

9.1 There are no human resources implications

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

10.1 This report will assist in informing any proposed disposal strategy for sites and also any future planning proposals.

10.2 Whilst there are a range of suggested costs outlined in the action plan, the action plan is a city plan and suggested improvements to facilities would be the responsibility of external partners and the Council. Any project which would fall under Council responsibilities would be reported on a case by case basis to the Corporate Landlord Board for approval.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 [Draft Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan \(KKP, Oct 2015\)](#)
[Draft Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Assessment Report \(KKP, Oct 2015\)](#)