

<b>Community Committee</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	31 October 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Built Facilities Strategy (BFS)
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Jay Jenkins, Leisure & Technical Services Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. Members to discuss the content of the report and agree the draft recommendations in Appendix 1.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks Committee approval for the draft recommendations of the new Built Facilities Strategy (BFS) for a period in line with the Local Plan. This Strategy focuses on the built sports infrastructure and is complemented by a separate Playing Pitch Strategy.
- 1.2 The Strategy provides an assessment of the current supply of built sports provision in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility, location and management. The Strategy was undertaken by independent consultants (Strategic Leisure) and uses the research, consultation, site assessments, data analysis and mapping that underpins the study to set direction and determine priorities for future provision.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The existing Swale BFS expires in 2023. The new strategy will cover a period in line with the Local Plan. We have received an initial overview of the report but as yet have not agreed a final version.
- 2.2 The Strategy provides guidance to assist with determining what provision of built facilities is required to respond to large scale infrastructure requirements for new community housing developments and also provides an evidence-based strategy that maximises the opportunity to take advantage of external funding opportunities.
- 2.3 The Strategy provides an evidence base that will allow Swale to plan, prioritise and schedule future-built facility improvement projects. The Strategy is primarily to aid the Local Plan process to enable SBC to advise and direct potential developers to ensure they deliver the right leisure facilities for the borough.

- 2.4 The Strategy follows Sport England guidance and is supported by National Governing Bodies of Sport. This helps to provide robust evidence for supporting the Swale Local Plan process.
- 2.5 It is important to stress that this BFS study focusses on facility provision in the context of health and wellbeing. Facility investment priorities will reflect locally identified needs to deliver opportunities for the local community to be more active.
- 2.6 The recent quality audit and assessments have identified that the priorities for the future provision within the borough are:
- Sports Halls - Retain provision of existing levels as a minimum. Whilst there is an existing over-supply of 2 badminton courts, there are 14 sports halls unavailable for community use - the majority of these are on education sites. A number of courts in the borough are in poor quality. There is a potential to increase community access to the 14 'community' use courts on educational sites.
  - Swimming Pools - Retain provision of existing levels of community accessible and affordable swimming facilities as a minimum. Seek to redevelop and extend water provision at Sheppey Pool from 6 lanes to 8 lanes. Consideration should also be given to reviewing the current pool programmes at the public pay and play pool facilities in Swale to ensure that the highest number of hours are given to the most popular activities.
  - Health & Fitness - Look at opportunities to expand this level of provision on site as part of any future redevelopment. Consider small increase in fitness stations as part of any re-developments (21 stations), and/or facilitate additional private sector fitness provision, ensuring it does not impact negatively on the sustainability of public sector provision.
  - Squash - Retain, or increase, existing levels of squash court provision within the borough (all provided squash clubs i.e. The third-party sector).
  - Indoor Bowls - Retain provision of existing indoor bowling rinks at Milton Recreation Ground. Explore feasibility of increasing indoor bowls provision.
  - Gymnastics and Trampolining – Potential to explore dedicated gymnastics facilities.
  - Community Centres – Develop use of community centres for informal sports and physical activity.
  - General Provision - Overall, and specifically through the housing growth agenda, provision of more active environments, reflecting active travel, safe cycle routes to school, the need to link existing and new communities with walking/cycling/jogging routes.

- 2.7 Other future facility provision, linked particularly to long term population growth and housing development, is the development of new and improved walking, jogging and cycling routes, to encourage active travel, and provide an environment in which physical activity can be easily integrated into daily life.
- 2.8 It is clear from the strategy analysis that there is a need for some capital investment in Swale to address future needs. Whilst some of this investment relates to additional facility provision (more water space by 2038), there is also a need to start planning now for the refurbishment of Swallows Leisure Centre, Sheppey Pool (the sports hall and fitness provision at Sheppey Leisure Complex is being refurbished as part of a Levelling Up Funded project) and Faversham Pools. Investment is also required in some of the voluntary sector and education facilities.
- 2.9 The supply and demand analysis and priority for future provision within the borough clearly identifies 3 key needs:
- Redevelop and extend water provision at Sheppey Pool from 6 lanes to 8 lanes.
  - Retaining existing levels of community accessible (including pay and play) sports halls, swimming pools, and fitness stations as a minimum; and
  - Consider how best to facilitate enhanced and dedicated gymnastics facilities and explore feasibility of increasing indoor bowls provision.
- 2.10 Retaining and improving the quality of provision is important in Swale to ensure that participation levels are retained and wherever possible increased. Active Lives (Source: April 2023, data November 21/22) highlights that 28% of the Swale community is not active enough to have any health benefit.
- 2.11 It is important that Sport England sign-off the document as this will ensure the sports sections in the Local Plan are supported in the Local Plan approval process. It will also ensure that the Strategy can be used for decisions in planning applications and developer contribution negotiations.

### **3 Proposals - Findings**

- 3.1 Members to discuss the content of the report and agree that the draft recommendations are sent forward for review by key stakeholders as the next stage of the Sport England process.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

- 4.1 Failure to adopt a Built Facilities Strategy would severely limit the ability of the Council to gain developer contributions and national funding to support the development and delivery of new built facilities, and so is not recommended.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders, leisure operators, Sport England, town and parish councils and health organisations.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The new Corporate Plan is currently being developed. The existing Corporate Plan identifies the importance of health and wellbeing on our communities. Under Priority 3 objective 5 states 'Promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by signposting and encouraging a wide range of sporting, cultural and other leisure activities appropriate and accessible to each age group.'
Financial, Resource and Property	It is clear from the draft strategy analysis that there is a need for some capital investment in Swale to address future needs. Whilst some of this investment relates to additional facility provision (more water space by 2038), there is also a need to start planning now for the refurbishment of Swallows Leisure Centre, Sheppey Pool (the sports hall and fitness provision at Sheppey Leisure Complex is being refurbished as part of a Levelling Up Funded project) and Faversham Pools. This strategy will help to secure external investment to support these needs. Investment is also required in some of the voluntary sector and education facilities.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified.
Crime and Disorder	None identified.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified.
Health and Wellbeing	By providing and supporting a broad range of quality facilities across Swale, there will be greater opportunities for people to participate in healthy activities. Where possible, partnerships will be sought with appropriate health partners to encourage participation and maximise funding opportunities.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified.

Equality and Diversity	None identified.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified.

**7 Appendices**

7.1 Summary of Recommendations

**8 Background Papers**

9.1 None