

<b>Cabinet Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	13 July 2016
<b>Report Title</b>	Adoption of the Swale Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2026
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<p>Cllr David Simmons, Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs</p> <p>Cllr Ken Pugh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Well-Being</p>
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact
<b>Head of Service</b>	Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Martyn Cassell, Leisure and Technical Services Manager
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Forward Plan</b>	<b>Reference number:</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This report recommends that Cabinet adopt the Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2026 as drafted in Appendix I to allow implementation of the Stakeholder Delivery Group.</li> <li>2. That delegated authority is given to the Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Well-Being to make minor amendments, should Sport England recommend any final changes.</li> </ol>

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

- 1.1 The Council has developed a Playing Pitch Strategy for 2016 – 26 (see **Appendix I**) which analyses the Borough’s sports pitches in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. The Strategy considers pitches that are available for public use provided by the Council and other organisations. It also sets out the Council’s intended approach with partners, and the priorities for ensuring there is sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.
- 1.2 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.

- 1.3 The document recognises the balance needed between setting priorities for action and the pressure on budgets in the public sector. It therefore identifies the need for a partnership approach with Sport England, National Governing Bodies of Sport, schools, local clubs, and private facility operators, to enable delivery of the action plan as resources allow.
- 1.4 The findings are based on a technical assessment which pulled together the baseline data that the actions are informed by. This included physical visits to sites, consultation with site owners, and consultation with users.
- 1.5 The public consultation, which ran for six weeks in early 2016, concluded that 86% of those responding agreed with the principles and suggested actions in the Strategy. Feedback from this consultation has been included in the strategy (see **Appendix II** for a full summary of the consultation results).

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In order to ensure there are sufficient pitches and ancillary facilities such as changing rooms and social facilities, the Council has worked with external consultants to analyse the currently available provision and develop a series of actions to ensure unmet and future demand can be met cost effectively.
- 2.2 Following the extensive review process, which has spanned a couple of years, this final document will inform the Borough's Local Plan (a requirement of the Local Plan process is to provide robust evidence base for decisions), and will help to ensure that appropriate contributions are made by developers, and suggested levels of provision are maintained.
- 2.3 The Strategy will be a 'live document', updated regularly and used to set parameters for maintaining facilities the Council owns, and influencing other organisations that can help meet the needs of participants. The baseline data will be refreshed periodically to enable quicker decisions to be made based upon changing needs.
- 2.4 The document makes a number of recommendations, as set out in the Management Objectives section of the Strategy. An action plan has been drafted that the Leisure and Technical Services Team, with support from other departments (eg Economy and Community Services and Planning), will interpret appropriately and engage the relevant organisations to deliver. Given the document's ten-year lifecycle, these actions will need to remain flexible and will be reviewed bi-annually.
- 2.5 Whilst the Council have undertaken this work, it recognises that we are not the sole provider of sports facilities, and so the Strategy suggests a partnership approach, making sure wider organisations understand the role they can play. Stakeholder meetings with the relevant operators and governing bodies will be held to help deliver the actions.

- 2.6 It was also important to note the tough budgetary position of public sector organisations. The document therefore regularly refers to the need to look at all options for investment, balancing out Swale BC expenditure with external income from grants and developer contributions.
- 2.7 The action plan sets out which sites are a priority, and provides guidance for how improvements would be made should the resources become available.
- 2.8 This Strategy links to other Council strategic frameworks and documents, such as the draft Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy, the developing Open Spaces audit, and the Council's strategic Sport & Physical Activity Framework, which focuses on maintaining and increasing participation in sport and physical activity in Swale.
- 2.9 The strategy has gained endorsement from the following National Governing Bodies of Sport - the Football Association, the English Cricket Board, and England Hockey. Final sign-off from the Rugby Football Union has also been requested. Following that, Sport England will give their final endorsement.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 Therefore, a recommendation is made that delegated authority is given to the Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact, in consultation with relevant Cabinet Members, to agree any final changes suggested by the RFU and Sport England.

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 This report recommends that Cabinet adopt the Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2026 as drafted in Appendix I, to allow implementation of the Stakeholder Delivery Group.
- 3.2 That delegated authority is given to the Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs and the Cabinet member for Housing and Well-Being to make amendments should Sport England recommend any final changes.

### **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 Failure to adopt a Playing Pitch Strategy would severely limit the ability of the Council to gain developer contributions and national funding to support the development and delivery of playing pitch provision in the Borough, and so is not recommended.

## 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Targeted consultation as part of the audit was undertaken with facility providers, clubs, schools, appropriate National Governing Bodies of Sport, Sport England, town and parish councils, Kent County Council Sports Service, countywide partners, health organisations, and local leagues.
- 5.2 A separate public consultation, which ran for six weeks in early 2016, concluded that 86% of those responding agreed with the principles and suggested actions in the Strategy. Feedback from this consultation has been included in the Strategy (see Appendix II for a full summary of the consultation results).

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The provision of a Playing Pitch Strategy supports the Council's aims to be both a 'Borough and a Community to be Proud of' as described in the Council's Corporate Plan.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>This Strategy will ensure that the Council and its partners are providing cost-effective services, and are making best use of the appropriate resources and property.</p> <p>By adopting a robust Playing Pitch Strategy the authority will stand a better chance of being successful with external grants and developer contributions to assist in delivery of the action plan.</p> <p>At this stage, no additional costs to the Council have been identified. However, there may be requests for contributory funding for individual projects as they are developed.</p> <p>The review of the Grounds Maintenance contract will need to consider the best value that the new contract can provide for pitches.</p>
Legal and Statutory	<p>The Strategy will underpin key sections of the Local Plan relating to Open Space. This is a required element of the Local Plan Process, providing a robust evidence base for decisions. It will therefore assist in the Planning Inspectorate process.</p> <p>By providing a robust strategy that is endorsed by Sport England, the Council will be better placed to defend any challenges which may be presented by developers.</p>
Crime and Disorder	The provision and good management of a broad range of playing pitches and changing rooms can make a positive contribution to managing issues of crime and disorder by providing diversionary activities and encouraging community cohesion. However, the remoteness of the sites does leave them open to vandalism, and therefore good design and management are vital.

Sustainability	Where possible, environmentally friendly maintenance regimes will be considered and adopted. The improvement/replacement of changing rooms with up-to-date technology will help to reduce energy costs and save more water.
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.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Without a strategy that is endorsed by Sport England, the Borough will be at risk of not having the Local Plan agreed, missing funding opportunities, losing challenges to planning applications by developers, and not providing high quality facilities for its residents.  By maintaining its own pitches to agreed standards, the Council will ensure their facilities are safe and fit for purpose.
Equality and Diversity	Issues of equal opportunity will be addressed through applications for any changes to existing or new developments, ensuring that such facilities are compliant and fit for purpose.

## 7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I: Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2026
  - Appendix II: Summary of consultation Results

## 8 Background Papers

- 8.1 The draft strategy was discussed at the Policy Development and Review Committee – a link to the minutes on 28 October 2015 can be found [here](#).