

# Report to Cabinet

**18 October 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Adoption of Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Padda Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism
<b>Director:</b>	Alice Davey Director of Borough Economy
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes all wards affected
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ben Percival Rob Marlow

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Playing Pitch Strategy 2023 is approved and adopted by the Council.
- 1.2 That £5,000 of external funding is drawn down (from Sport England) towards the consultancy costs that have been incurred in producing the strategy.
- 1.3 That an implementation group is formed, representing key Council services to ensure the effective implementation of the Council-led actions recommended within the strategy.
- 1.4 That the Playing Pitch Strategy delivery group of wider stakeholders and partners continues its work and meets twice yearly in order to explore opportunities for pitch/facility improvements and participation development.



## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Having a formally adopted Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) along with a Strategic Needs Assessment will help to;
- Ensure that the provision of outdoor playing pitches meets the local needs of existing and future residents within Sandwell.
  - Provide evidence to the council when making planning decisions.
  - Assist when seeking investment / grants from external funding agencies.
  - Enable officers and partner agencies to deliver against an action plan of recommended improvements / interventions.
- 2.2 As a key partner agency, Sport England has offered match funding of £5,000 towards the costs of employing the specialist consultant, Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) that prepared the PPS in conjunction with the Council and other partner agencies. This will contribute towards the Councils overall budget position.
- 2.3 The formation of an implementation group representing key service areas and wider stakeholders within the Council will help to ensure the effective implementation of the actions recommended within the strategy and contribute towards the Corporate Plan. A Terms of Reference (TOR) document will be prepared to set out / agree roles and responsibilities. Meetings will be scheduled between Delivery Group meetings.
- 2.4 Adoption of the PPS and the Action plan contained within will enable National Governing Bodies (NGBs), funders and external agencies to work alongside the Council, sports clubs and schools to implement actions against a robust evidence base.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b>
	<p>There is significant and accepted research indicating that physically active children and young people achieve higher educational attainment than those classed as inactive. Therefore, the provision of quality outdoor playing pitches which meet the needs / requirements of children and young people will undoubtedly help the Council to meet this objective.</p>



	<p>Enabling children and young people to access safe, quality pitches and partake in either formal / informal sport within their neighbourhoods will help them to achieve the recommended levels of sport / physical activity, stay fit and healthy.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the formation of an implementation group, which will include the Council's play service, will help to ensure pitches meet the need of this crucial service moving forwards.</p>
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b></p> <p>Similar to the above, enabling adults and older people to access safe, quality pitches and partake in either formal / informal sport within their neighbourhoods will help them to achieve the recommended levels of sport / physical activity and stay fit &amp; healthy. Outdoor pitches offer a wealth of opportunities for people playing competitive sport and enjoying recreational activities. Over recent years there has been a move to 'walking' sports such as walking football and rugby which enable residents to extend their playing 'careers' but in a less impactful way.</p> <p>The implementation group previously described will invite representation from Adults Services to help ensure pitches meet the need of this important cohort of residents / service users moving forwards.</p>
	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b></p> <p>It is well documented that playing sport together helps to promote and support community cohesion. Sport is universally recognised as being able to break down barriers and help communities from different backgrounds to understand each other and communicate through the medium of sport.</p> <p>Providing quality outdoor playing pitches which meet the needs / requirements of local communities will help to ensure that leagues can succeed, fixtures be fulfilled, and residents</p>



	given the opportunity to compete and socialise together after matches / informal locally arranged events.
	<p><b>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</b></p> <p>The PPS is a key document for colleagues within Planning and will help to ensure that correct / strategic decisions are made using an 'up to date' and robust evidence base.</p> <p>The PPS references population forecasts (to the year 2039) and the likely demand it will have on pitches. The document also tests a number of scenarios for housing growth within the borough and provides suggestions around how the resultant demand for pitches could be managed.</p>
	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b></p> <p>Some of the outdoor sporting facilities in Sandwell have the potential to contribute significantly to the local economy. A good example of this is the Sandwell Urban Bike Park which has recently opened within Sandwell Valley. The new facility is attracting cyclists from across the midlands region and is expected to bring in tourism and spend within council owned facilities as well as local shops / hotels, restaurants etc.</p>
	<p><b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b></p> <p>The adoption of the PPS has less impact on this objective, however as mentioned above, the promotion of cycling within Sandwell is likely to encourage active travel along the many cycle lanes within the borough.</p>

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The primary purpose of a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is to provide a strategic needs assessment report and a strategy document, (including an action plan) which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches



meet the local needs of existing and future residents within an area. The PPS is also an important document when seeking evidence for external funding and making planning decisions.

4.2 Sandwell's current PPS, which was adopted on 30 October 2019, is at the end of its usable life and therefore the provision of a new Strategy was commissioned. Specialist consultancy practice Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) won the commission (via external tender) to deliver the works on behalf of Sandwell Council. The value of the commission was £62,475. KKP was appointed in March 2021 for a contract duration of 13 months.

4.3 The 2019 PPS identified:

An under supply of 26 actual spare match equivalents across Sandwell for 11 v 11 grass football pitches. All other size football pitches are expected to be either at capacity during the peak capacity or being used beyond their carrying capacity across the week. This under supply is largely caused by the increased amount of youth football demand and a lack of high-quality. Appropriately sized youth football provision across Sandwell.

The need for an additional 5 full size Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP's)

13 grass cricket grounds accommodating 44 teams (28 senior and 16 junior) with pitches being overplayed.

4.4 Development of the PPS was undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders including local sports clubs, NGBs, Schools and Sport England.

4.5 The strategy was presented at the Leaders meeting on 17 August 2022 and the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board meeting on 26 January 2023 and 15 March 2023.

4.6 From a quantitative perspective, the existing position for each sport is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall; the future position shows the creation of shortfalls for some pitch types and in some areas where demand is currently being met, as well as the



exacerbation of existing shortfalls. The supply and demand picture remains relatively unaltered since the previous study, although shortfalls are now evident for adult football and affiliated cricket due to worsening pitch quality and / or the loss of provision. However, in contrast, there are reduced shortfalls for youth and mini football pitches despite demand increasing, primarily because more teams are now using 3G pitches (of which there is a need for more). Overall spare capacity also now exists for rugby union due to a reduction in demand. Supply continues to be sufficient for most other sports (e.g., hockey, tennis, netball, bowls, athletics and golf), but quality improvements are needed at specific sites to ensure this remains the case.

- 4.7 There are current shortfalls of adult, youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 football pitches as well as 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union pitches, all of which will be exacerbated when accounting for future demand. Many of the shortfalls identified within the PPS can be met by better utilising current provision, for example through improving quality, re-configuration, installing additional floodlighting, improving ancillary facilities and enabling access to existing unused provision e.g. unavailable school sites. The shortfall of 3G pitches can only be met through increased provision. An increase in 3G provision could help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, which in turn can reduce overplay and aid pitch quality improvements.
- 4.8 A full summary of the current PPS supply and demand assessment for each sport is presented as appendix 6.



4.9 The Vision of the PPS is: 'To have a portfolio of high quality and accessible outdoor sports facilities, which service the changing needs of residents and offer opportunities for all sections of the community to participate in both formal and informal sport, contributing to a higher quality of life.' KKP used Office of National Statistics (ONS) population projections and proposed housing growth, as well as likely participation growth informed through the consultation process to estimate likely future demand for facilities.

4.10 Team generation rates are used to provide an indication as to how many people it may take to generate a team (by gender and age group). This ratio was then applied to predicted population growth to help estimate the change in demand for each sport that may arise in the future. Other information sources that were used to help identify future demand including:

- Recent trends in the participation.
- The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate.
- Feedback from clubs on plans to develop additional teams or attract additional members.
- Local and NGB specific sports development targets.

Future demand projections across the PPS cover the period up until 2039.

4.11 The PPS identifies 3 aims. These are:

Aim 1. To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.

Aim 2. To **enhance** outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Aim 3. To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.



## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option is to not formally adopt the PPS. The impact of this would be as follows:

- Sandwell would not have a robust / up to date strategy to relate to when making planning decisions
- The Delivery Group would not have a formally adopted action plan to work towards achieving
- Opportunities for securing inward investment from NGBs and funders would be limited due to the lack of a formal 'sign off'.
- NGBs may be more reluctant to work with the authority on future developments / strategies
- £5,000 of 'match funding' towards the consultancy cost would be lost.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>Whilst development of the PPS is complete and consultancy fees of £62,475 already paid, there is a need for officer time to oversee the development of the PPS moving forward. This is via a Senior Lead Officer post within the Sport and Leisure Team along with officers from other sections engaged in the implementation group referenced in section 1.3 above.</p> <p>In order to improve the quality of Council owned / managed pitches funding will be required. Grants are available for this purpose via National Governing Bodies and funding agencies including the Football Foundation and Football Association (FA)</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>Should the PPS be formally adopted then it will become a recognised Council strategy and be published on the Councils website.</p> <p>Planning Colleagues will refer to the PPS when relevant relating to potential developments and allocation of Section 106 monies</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	None
<b>Equality:</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.



<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The delivery of actions identified within the PPS Action Plan will assist in promoting sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing opportunities within the borough.
<b>Social Value:</b>	A robust, adopted PPS and the associated benefits will help in enabling volunteering / social opportunities within communities
<b>Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	The delivery of actions identified within the PPS Action Plan will assist in promoting sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing opportunities within the borough.

## 7 Appendices

1. Playing Pitch and Outdoor sports strategy assessment report
2. Strategy and Action Plan
3. Action plan (prepared for updates and colour coded)
4. Terms of Reference – PPS Delivery Group
5. Terms of Reference – PPS Implementation Group
6. Current PPS supply / demand summaries per sport / pitch type

## 8 Background Papers

- 2019 PPS Strategy
- 2019 Assessment Report

