

CABINET

20 September 2016

Title: Playing Pitch Strategy	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Leadership	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
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Accountable Strategic Director: John East, Strategic Director for Growth and Homes	
Summary <p>The Council's existing playing pitch strategy was adopted in 2005. It is now out of date because it can no longer be used as a robust source of evidence for assessing playing pitch needs for the borough and to support external funding bids to Sport England and other agencies to address deficiency in provision.</p> <p>This report seeks approval to formally adopt a new playing pitch strategy, which sets out the current quality, range and distribution of playing pitches in the Borough as well as providing recommendations for changes in provision that will meet current and emerging needs.</p> <p>The Playing Pitch Strategy has been developed in advance of the wider Parks and Open Spaces Strategy to enable the Council to bid for funding to the 'Parklife Football Hubs Programme'. As the Playing Pitch Strategy has been developed using best practice guidance, it is not considered that its production in advance of the wider strategy is a material consideration.</p> <p>Whilst initially it will be a standalone document, ultimately the findings and recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy will be subsumed within, and taken forward as part of, the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy delivery plan.</p>	
Recommendation(s) <p>The Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Approve the Playing Pitch Strategy at Appendix 2 to the report; and(ii) Authorise the Strategic Director for Growth and Homes, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Leadership, to agree any minor amendments to the Strategy prior to its publication.	

Reason(s)

The Playing Pitch Strategy provides a strategic framework for the effective and efficient management and development of the borough's sports pitch provision.

The actions and priorities within the strategy tie in with the Council's vision and the key priorities of 'encouraging civic pride' and 'enabling social responsibility', and aspirations in relation to: being commercially minded and financially self sufficient; reducing demand; outstanding customer service; public engagement, greater responsibility and civic pride.

The Strategy will assist the Council in being a well run organisation by promoting more effective management and maintenance of its sports pitches and associated assets.

It will also help ensure that residents have access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for formal and informal sport and recreation, which will make an important contribution to the health and well being of local people.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council's current Playing Pitch Strategy was published in 2005. It is now out of date and needs to be refreshed to take into account current and emerging needs.
- 1.2 The new Playing Pitch Strategy is an important strategic framework which provides an up to date assessment of supply and demand regarding playing pitches (grass and artificial) and hard courts, which serve the core sports of football, cricket, hockey, rugby, and tennis.
- 1.3 Therefore, the Strategy has significant implications for the delivery and management of the borough's sports pitches and also the health and wellbeing of residents. It will guide future decision making in a time when the Council faces significant financial challenges alongside a growing need to achieve and maintain high quality services.
- 1.4 An up to date playing pitch strategy is also a core requirement for any external funding bids that will be developed to support improvements to playing pitch provision in the borough.

2. Proposal and Issues

Strategic context

- 2.1 In these times of austerity the Council must think differently about the services it provides, and the way in which it provides them, if an efficient and effective service is to be maintained. This includes the borough's sports pitches, hard courts and pavilions, and the Council needs to consider alternative ways of sustaining the management and maintenance of these facilities in the future.
- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework establishes the requirement that Local Plans must ensure that there is provision of proper and adequate facilities to meet local needs, and the framework sets out the planning policy for the provision and protection of sport and recreation facilities.

- 2.3 Sport England is the statutory consultee on planning applications and has a long established policy of playing pitch retention. Sport England requires local authorities to have an up-to-date assessment of playing pitch needs and an associated strategy with a recommendation that the evidence base is reviewed every three years.
- 2.4 Many external funding programmes, such as the Sport England and Football Association 'Parklife Football Hubs Programme', require applicants to demonstrate clear evidence of strategic need for proposed facilities through an up-to-date playing pitch strategy.
- 2.5 In September 2016, the Council will be commissioning the production of an overarching parks and open spaces strategy for the Borough, which will guide the way that the Council, along with its partners, will ensure that green spaces in Barking and Dagenham are maintained and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable and continue to perform a range of functions that benefit the whole community. The strategy will outline the medium term objectives and key green space issues which will need to be addressed over the next ten years.
- 2.6 Barking and Dagenham is London's Growth opportunity. There is the potential for 35,000 new homes and 10,000 jobs across seven growth hubs. Growth of this scale will have a profound effect on the physical, social and economic character of the borough.
- 2.7 The new parks and open spaces strategy will be an important component of the planning and development process to help ensure that this unique growth opportunity is harnessed to improve the quality of life of existing residents and the new communities that will be created.
- 2.8 The Playing Pitch Strategy has been developed in advance of the wider Parks and Open Spaces Strategy to enable the Council to bid for funding from the 'Parklife Football Hubs Programme'. As the Playing Pitch Strategy has been developed using best practice guidance, it is not considered that its production in advance of the wider strategy is a material consideration.
- 2.9 Whilst initially it will be a standalone document, ultimately the findings and recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy will be subsumed within, and taken forward as part of, the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy delivery plan.

Scope

- 2.10 The assessment methodology used for the new Strategy is based on best practice and on the published guidance from Sport England.
- 2.11 The Playing Pitch Strategy will be a valuable tool for the Council as it will support facility related decision making at a time when the Council faces significant financial challenges alongside a growing need to achieve and maintain high quality services.
- 2.12 The strategic priorities that the refreshed Playing Pitch Strategy seeks to address include:

- (a) A robust understanding of local need to support enhanced local usage of playing pitches.
- (b) Ensure the Council's strategies and priorities are up to date.
- (c) Ensure pitch maintenance is in line with the latest Sport England and relevant National Governing Body guidance.
- (d) Provide accurate evidence to attract and justify external funding for pitch and ancillary facility improvements.
- (e) Provide valid evidence in order to support site allocations and develop suitable management policies.

2.13 The Strategy identifies the key issues arising from the supply and demand assessments and aims to:

- (a) Summarise the current supply and demand
- (b) Report on the current demand for playing pitches
- (c) Identify key issues for each sport
- (d) identify key issues for each site
- (e) Assess the overall adequacy of provision in order to meet present and projected future demand.

2.14 A summary of the key findings for football, cricket, rugby union, hockey, and tennis is set out at Appendix one.

2.15 The draft Barking and Dagenham Playing Pitch Strategy is attached at Appendix two.

Issues

2.16 Unsurprisingly, given the financial challenges facing the Council, the biggest single issue that will impact on the successful delivery of the strategy is funding.

2.17 There is, for example, investment of c£2.1 million needed in the next three years to simply maintain existing parks' buildings (pavilions, changing rooms, etc). However, the committed funding in the Council's Capital Programme for the period 2016 to 2021 for playing pitch related works is: £20,000 for the demolition of the derelict football changing facilities in Barking Park; and £500,000 prudential borrowing earmarked to part fund artificial turf pitch provision at Parsloes Park, which would need to be financed from additional income generated from the new pitches.

2.18 It is also inevitable in the light of Government funding cuts that Council revenue funding for parks will reduce during the lifespan of the Strategy.

2.19 Therefore, it is anticipated that playing pitch and related facility developments will be dependent on securing external funding, raising income and adopting alternative delivery models envisaged in the new way of working for the Council including:

- **Planning gain through section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions.** Given the significant scale of planned developments, particularly at Barking Riverside, it is expected that the contributions to provide associated infrastructure will be significant. These contributions will provide infrastructure including playing pitches to serve these new communities meeting the additional demand they generate.

- **Prudential Borrowing.** The Council has access to cheap capital available through the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB), subject to a business case and the ability of the Council to demonstrate longer term savings as a result of 'investing to save'.

Prudential Borrowing is often a popular method of funding leisure projects. However, the ability of many outdoor facility developments to generate sufficient income to cover both capital and interest payments is often a key barrier. This will more than likely need to be combined with some element of major grant or investment.

- **Third Party Investment.** Private sector developments, for example the proposed Academy of Dreams partnership scheme with Dagenham Football Club, could meet the capital costs of providing some of the required / desired improvements to pitch provision in the borough. If community use can be secured, developments of this kind can contribute significantly to playing pitch provision at no revenue or capital cost to the Council.
- **Grant Aid.** There are a number of grant aid funds to which the Council can apply for capital funding in particular Sport England, the Football Foundation and London Marathon Trust. However, in most cases Council match funding of between 25% to 40% will be required for external funding bids.
- **User income.** Revenue funding can be met by income from users under some circumstances and the Council's move towards full cost recovery suggests that this option is currently favoured. However, the high hire costs that this necessitates may provide a significant barrier to some residents.

It is likely that a policy of full cost recovery would lead to some displacement of demand, closure of some clubs and a fall in participation among some residents.

- **Council revenue funding.** It may be feasible to continue to fund the revenue costs of pitches in the future through rationalisation of existing pitch provision, which will allow the available budget to be targeted where there is greatest need and most potential benefit. It may also be possible to secure revenue contributions from Public Health to support the delivery of the healthy lifestyles agenda.
- **Community Asset Transfers.** The success of the Eastbrook May and Baker sports club is a great example of what can be achieved through community asset transfers. The club was established by the Council as a limited company with charitable status to manage the football, cricket, and rugby pitches and ancillary facilities owned by Sanofi and which were subsequently gifted to the Council. The estimated cost to the Council if the facilities were to be managed in-house was c£250,000 per year; however, the club is successfully managing these facilities at no cost to the Council.

It could well be the case that this delivery vehicle could be replicated elsewhere in the Borough, in particular at Parsloes Park, where a Community Football Trust model for the management of the football facilities has considerable potential.

Priorities

- 2.20 In the light of the funding constraints facing the Council and the perceived opportunities outlined above, it is proposed that over the next four years effort needs to be tightly focussed around areas where the maximum benefit will be realised in terms of encouraging greater sports participation, securing capital investment in facilities, and the achievement of revenue savings.
- 2.21 The proposed priorities are set out in table one below.

Table one Playing Pitch Strategy priority actions – 2016 to 2020

Sport	Proposed priority actions
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of adult pitches to reflect demand and increase pitches for youth and mini-football. • Pursue opportunity to develop a regional football hub at Parsloes Park to include provision of full size 3G artificial turf pitches and new changing facilities. • Improve the quality of pitches by seeking external funding to improve maintenance regimes and drainage systems. • Evaluate demand and viability of increased provision of pitches at Valence Park.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek external funding to enable the development of new cricket wickets and club house facilities at either Parsloes Park or Barking Park. • Undertake a review to establish informal demand for recreational cricket and then identify external funding to support development of new facilities. • Seek external funding to renovate the cricket pavilion at St. Chad's Park.
Rugby Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek external funding to increase the number and type of pitches at Central Park and for the provision of changing facilities suitable for children and young people.
Hockey	No action
Tennis	No action

- 2.22 In addition to the priority actions set out above, it is intended to present a report to a future Cabinet meeting in 2016/17 that will seek approval for the transfer of management responsibility for a number of parks' buildings to community sports clubs via long term lease arrangements.
- 2.23 This would be a mutually beneficial arrangement. As all of the leases would be on a full repairing and insuring basis, the Council would no longer be liable for repairs and maintenance and other costs associated with the operation of the pavilions. And because the sports clubs will have security of tenure they will be in a position to lever in funding that is not currently available to them (or the Council) to support their ongoing development.
- 2.24 The Playing Pitch Strategy will also be used to make the strategic case for investment by housing developers in new sports facilities that will be required to meet the needs of new communities, such as at Barking Riverside.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1 The options available to Cabinet are to approve the strategy and action plan (with any direction on amendments to be made) or to reject it.
- 3.2 The new Playing Pitch Strategy updates the Council's previous strategy, which was adopted in 2005. It is now out of date and cannot be used as a robust source of evidence for assessing the borough's playing pitch needs.
- 3.3 The Council is facing significant financial challenges and as pressure on the capital budget increases the Council must seek and secure external funding in order to achieve any significant improvement and capital investment in its parks and facilities. However, the majority of funding programmes require applicants to provide clear evidence of strategic need for proposed facilities, and in the case of football related schemes an up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy is essential.
- 3.4 Therefore, Cabinet is recommended to adopt the strategy with any amendments, removals, or additions as they consider appropriate and to endorse the proposed priorities set out in table one.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 A Project Steering Group comprising of representation from the Council, Sport England, National Governing Bodies and key stakeholders was involved throughout the development of the strategy. The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Leadership and the Council's Assets and Capital Board have also been consulted as part of the strategy development process.
- 4.2 Recurring issues and themes from the consultation process include:
 - Significant housing growth in the borough in Barking Town Centre and particularly Barking Riverside will have an impact on demand for pitches which will need to be addressed by the new strategy
 - The cost of maintaining pitches is a serious challenge for the Council but this should be balanced by a desire to encourage healthy lifestyles in the borough through increased participation in physical activity.
 - Full cost recovery may be sought from pitch hire, but opportunities to link this to Public Health subsidies for clubs that meet the Council's health priorities should be explored.
 - Informal cricket is very popular in the borough and ways of meeting the needs of these users through different forms of cricket provision should be explored.
 - The Eastbrook May & Baker Sports Club and Parsloes Park are sites of particular importance to the community in relation to pitch provision, and investment in the latter to develop its potential as a football hub is crucial.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Katherine Heffernan, Group Manager – Service Finance

- 5.1 The Cabinet is asked to adopt the new Playing Pitch strategy. At this stage this is a high level strategy that sets out the Council's priorities and does not commit to any specific projects. As such there are no direct financial implications at this stage.
- 5.2 If and when projects and schemes are brought forward under this strategy a business case will need to be developed and funding sources identified before any council funding can be released or work undertaken. This applies also to the £0.5m prudential borrowing earmarked in the current capital programme. As this report makes clear the level of council resources is likely to be extremely limited in future but there are a number of potential sources of external funding or alternative delivery models that can be explored.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr. Paul Feild Senior Governance Solicitor

- 6.1 The Health and Social Care Act 2012 amended the NHS Act 2006 to give local authorities such as this borough a duty to take such steps as it considers appropriate to improve the health of the people in its area. This duty includes the exercise of the power to give information, providing services or facilities to promote healthy living and providing incentives to live more healthily.
- 6.2 Furthermore as set out in the body of this report, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes an expectation that local authorities will in drafting their local plan make provision for access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation to support the objective described above.
- 6.3 The NPPF advises planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision are required. The draft Playing Pitch Strategy attached to this report sets out to achieve those legal responsibilities and objectives outlined and addressing change that has occurred since formulation of the previous plan.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 **Risk Management** – The implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy and associated recommendations will entail some significant changes to current methods of working and existing sports pitch provision, and any major development schemes will rely on successful applications for external funding. Robust governance and programme management will be put in place to manage any associated risks.
- 7.2 **Corporate Policy and Customer Impact** – The Government's new Sporting Future strategy has set a wider context to expand the focus beyond increased participation

in sport and physical activity with an overarching aim to harness the power of sport to help change peoples' lives for the better. Within this context, the Playing Pitch Strategy is a key strategic document which will support the Council's vision and priorities, and should help improve the lives of local people.

- 7.3 **Safeguarding Children** – The Playing Pitch Strategy will improve the Council's chances of securing investment into local, accessible facilities located in the heart of communities across the borough, and in turn create increased opportunities for a variety of community development initiatives aimed at children and young people.
- 7.4 **Health Issues** - On many measures of health and well-being, our residents have significantly worse health outcomes than the average in London and nationally – including lower life expectancy, and higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and smoking prevalence. The interpretation and application of the Playing Pitch Strategy provides opportunities to re-think current sports pitch provision and service delivery and provides opportunities for improving those outcomes.
- 7.5 **Crime and Disorder Issues** – Sport has always played an important role in the community – not only offering opportunities to get involved but also as an important means of delivering a wide range of positive social outcomes in the areas of health, education, community development and safety. The Playing Pitch Strategy will help to improve the prevention of, and response to, crime and disorder.
- 7.6 **Property / Asset Issues** - The proposals and recommendations include a more effective approach to managing the Council's existing assets including sports pitches and associated pavilions, and separately to inform and support a programme of capital investment.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Summary of key findings for football, cricket, rugby union, hockey and tennis

Appendix 2 – Draft Playing Pitch Strategy