

CABINET
7 SEPTEMBER 2021

PLAYING PITCH AND FACILITIES STRATEGY

Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Kevin Nicholson, Health and Housing Portfolio

Responsible Director -
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present to Members the updated Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategy for approval.

Summary

2. The Playing Pitch and Facilities Strategy is updated on a periodic basis to reflect actions taken, new guidance and the future direction of travel to ensure the Council, Partners and other parties are best placed to improve facilities across the borough.
3. This updated strategy (attached at **Appendix 1**) gives consideration to both indoor and outdoor sports facilities (including playing pitches) and sets out the strategic direction and site-specific priorities for the future delivery of sports facilities across the borough until 2031. It will remain a valid document for the period 2021–2025, when the next review will be undertaken.
4. The report outlines:
 - (a) An overview of the previous five years improvement and investment in infrastructure.
 - (b) Re-affirms the vision and the drivers for the strategy covering a range of sporting activity.
 - (c) Updates the strategy and action plan following a recognised Sport England methodology and consultation process with key stakeholders.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategy.

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
- (a) To inform the Local Plan and to deliver the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework;
 - (b) To ensure ongoing sustainability of the facility stock, ensuring that facilities are effectively managed and maintained and that best uses are made of existing resources;
 - (c) To drive participation in sport and leisure within the Borough.

Dave Winstanley
Group Director of Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	By providing appropriate playing pitches and facilities can have a positively impact on reducing Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	By providing appropriate playing pitches and facilities has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No impact
Diversity	There is no on the diversity agenda as a result of this report.
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	There is a positive impact on sporting groups and clubs.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no impact on the Budget and Policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	The Playing Pitch and Facilities Strategy supports the vision for Health and Housing Portfolio by putting in place the foundations for access to excellent leisure facilities.
Efficiency	There is no impact on Efficiency.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. In May 2019, Darlington Borough Council appointed WYG to update the Sports Facilities Strategy that was previously published in 2014. This updated strategy gives consideration to both indoor and outdoor sports facilities (including playing pitches) and sets out the strategic direction and site-specific priorities for the future delivery of sports facilities across the borough until 2031. It will remain a valid document for the period 2021 – 2025.

Review of Previous Five Years

8. Darlington's existing Playing Pitch and Sports Facilities Strategy has successfully driven significant improvement and investment into the sporting infrastructure across Darlington Borough. Successes include:
 - (a) Provision of a new 3G AGP at Eastbourne Sports Complex in partnership with the Football Foundation
 - (b) Provision of new sand based AGP at Carmel College
 - (c) Provision of new football pitches at Staindrop Road
 - (d) Implementation of new Community Use agreements at key school sites
 - (e) Relocation of Darlington FC to Blackwell Meadows and drainage works completed to ensure facility is fit for purpose
 - (f) Investment into the the improvement of bowling green quality following a successful Inspired Facilities Funding application
 - (g) Significant investment into the Dolphin Centre resulting in improving facilities and long-term sustainability.
9. This strategy seeks to build upon these successes and to deliver the sporting vision for the borough up to 2031. The vision for the strategy therefore remains the same, specifically:

‘to develop a comprehensive, robust, up to date and user-friendly assessment of sports provision and need in Darlington to ensure that the right amount and type of sports facilities are protected, and where appropriate enhanced to provide a range of quality, accessible and safe facilities, in the right place at the right time to meet the needs of the community now and in 2031.
10. The key drivers for refreshing the Playing Pitch Strategy are to:
 - (a) Inform the local plan and to deliver the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
 - (b) Ensure ongoing sustainability of the facility stock - ensuring that facilities are effectively managed and maintained and that best uses are made of existing resources

- (c) Drive participation in sport and leisure within Darlington Borough.
- 11. The review of the strategy also considers the impact of the projected population growth in the borough.
- 12. The strategy has been updated to ensure that the audit of supply and demand reflects the current situation and that actions remain reflective of current need and take into account the changing ways in which sports are played, as well as the impact of changes that have occurred between 2014 and 2020.
- 13. The final outcome is an updated project action plan (See Appendix 1). This action plan will be used to monitor the delivery of the required actions and will also be used to provide evidence on which to secure funding and helps support the investment and the infrastructure of the Sporting Facility provision in Darlington from 2021 onwards.

Structure

- 14. This updated strategy considers the adequacy of existing provision to meet current projected future need and sets strategic and site-specific priorities for a range of facilities including:
 - (a) Playing pitches for football, cricket, rugby and hockey.
 - (b) Outdoor sports facilities including tennis and bowls.
 - (c) Indoor built facilities including swimming pools, sports halls and community halls.
 - (d) Specialist provision including golf courses, skateparks, athletics tracks and climbing.
- 15. This is the strategy document, which briefly summaries the key issues across Darlington Borough Council and sets out the action plan for addressing the key issues. The accompanying assessment report summarises the data collated and sets out the evidence underpinning the recommendations and action plan.
- 16. The remainder of this strategy is therefore set out as follows:
 - (a) Section 2 – Methodology
 - (b) Section 3 – Context
 - (c) Section 4 – Action Plan, Implementation, Monitoring and Review.

Methodology

- 17. This update has been undertaken in line with guidance by Sport England (Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities; 2014) and 'Playing Pitch Guidance, An Approach to Developing and Delivering a Playing Pitch Strategy (Sport England 2013). The Playing Pitch Guidance note sets out the requirement for the delivery of a playing pitch strategy for football, cricket, rugby and hockey. It advocates a ten step approach, as illustrated below.



Financial Implications

18. Any financial implications as a result of delivering the action plan will be brought back to Cabinet as any scheme progresses. Officers will continue to work with governing bodies to identify any potential funding opportunities

Consultation

19. A significant amount of consultation was carried out over a longer period than usual because of interruptions with the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the consultation took place between June 2019 and February 2020, with further work, mostly with Governing Bodies, from February 2021 to May 2021.
20. Partners and consultees involved in the consultation process and development of the updated strategy were as follows:
 - (a) Sport England
 - (b) England Cricket Board
 - (c) The Football Association
 - (d) Lawn Tennis Association
 - (e) England Hockey
 - (f) Rugby Football Union
 - (g) England Athletics
 - (h) Football Foundation
 - (i) Tees Valley Sport

- (j) Darlington Borough Council Leisure Services
- (k) Darlington Borough Council Planning Team
- (l) WYG Associates
- (m) Darlington Voluntary Sector Clubs and Community Groups (whole range)
- (n) Darlington School Sport Partnership

Outcome of Consultation

21. The outcome of the detailed consultation has been built into the Action Plan detailed in pages 51-60 of Appendix 1.
22. Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee considered the Playing Pitch and Facilities Strategy on 19 August 2021 and it was resolved:
 - (a) *That the report be received.*
 - (b) *That Cabinet be advised of this Scrutiny's view that:*
 - (i) *consideration should be given to the introduction of a Street Sports and Play Strategy.*
 - (ii) *consideration should be given to the utilisation of the Covid Fund towards the provision and improvement of sports facilities in Darlington.*
 - (iii) *a paragraph be included in the Strategy, providing clear, explicit information in respect of the disabled sports provision in Darlington.*