

ACTIVE AND COHESIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24th March 2015

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Submitted by: Executive Director – Operational Services

Portfolios: Leisure, Culture and Localism, Planning and Assets and Environment and Recycling.

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval to adopt the Newcastle-under Lyme Playing Pitch Strategy 2015-2020

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet

- a) approve the Newcastle under Lyme Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2020 (PPS) which will be the basis for making strategic decisions on future playing pitch provision and associated facilities across the Borough.**
- b) That a review of the PPS is carried out by the Steering Group on an annual basis and that any significant changes are reported to Cabinet, to ensure that identified local priorities continue to be achieved.**

Reasons:

The PPS sets out the Council's strategy for identifying and meeting the playing pitch and associated facilities needs of the Borough from now through to 2020. It considers how well the existing playing pitch provision and associated facilities meet the needs of communities in terms of supply and demand throughout this time period.

The PPS identifies key areas of improvement to address the needs of the different sports, actions to improve existing sites, and recommends the disposal of sites that are of no value to sport.

The PPS forms part of the evidence base required in the development of the Joint Local Plan.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The last assessment of playing pitch provision in the Borough was carried out in 2006 as part of the wider Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy (PPG17 Study).
- 1.2 PPG17 has now been replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Sport England has subsequently revised their PPS guidance for

assessing needs and opportunities. The Newcastle-under-Lyme PPS 2015-2020 follows this guidance.

- 1.3 In order to drive forward the review of playing pitch provision in the Borough a steering group was established involving representatives from a range of internal teams and external partner organisations who have a role in shaping the future provision of playing pitches in the Borough:
 - **Internal teams:** Planning, Leisure and Cultural Services, Operational Services, Planning and Development and Assets and Regeneration.
 - **National Governing Bodies of Sport:** Staffordshire County Cricket Board, Staffordshire Football Association, Rugby Football Union and England Hockey.
 - **Partner Organisations:** Keele University, Newcastle College, Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent (County Sports Partnership), Sport England and Staffordshire County Council.
- 1.4 The Steering Group developed a brief for the delivery of the PPS and subsequently specialist advice was commissioned from Knight Kavanagh and Page Ltd. (following procurement in accordance with Sport England's Procurement framework) to ensure that the preparation of the PPS was in accordance with Sport England's revised methodology (paragraph 1.2 refers).
- 1.5 The PPS guidance covers both natural and artificial pitches, which are used for football, cricket, rugby union and hockey. The strategy also covers bowls, netball and tennis. The strategy therefore covers the wide range of pitch sports available in the Borough.
- 1.6 The completed PPS identifies local priorities which can be used to direct resources and guide planning policy. However the steering group have had to commit to an on-going review of the strategy and its' action plan to ensure it remains current and that where improvements /investment is recommended, proposals are viable and deliverable.
- 1.7 The implementation of the Strategy is dependent upon a range of funding streams, including the receipt of developer contributions collected via section 106 obligations and the community infrastructure levy (CIL). The Council is not yet committed to introducing a CIL, but because of competing priorities between CIL projects, it is anticipated that this source of funding will be limited. Similarly problematic are the tests for seeking developer contributions via section 106, resulting in developer challenge because of the potential impact on a scheme's viability. It therefore needs to be recognised that both sources of developer contributions cannot be relied upon. Similarly the likely level of funding from the National Governing Bodies is unknown at this stage. Nevertheless, for the Joint Local Plan to be sound it needs to be supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which demonstrates that the PPS can be delivered. It is therefore necessary to commit to reviewing the Action Plan to refine the information on costs and potential funding in order to provide a robust evidence base for the Joint Local Plan.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Playing pitches are an important resource in enabling healthy and active lifestyles in our communities. Good quality, accessible and suitable playing pitches with ancillary facilities provided in the right locations, deliver important opportunities for residents to participate in sporting activities at different levels. A priority of this Council is to support and encourage residents of all ages to stay fit and active and in doing so help avoid the pitfalls of inactivity and sedentary lifestyles which can contribute to poor health and affect quality of life.
- 2.2 There are a significant number of playing pitches within the Borough, used by a wide variety of organisations for an array of sports. These pitches are typically owned and managed by public sector bodies, educational establishments, the private sector, sports clubs and not for profit organisations.
- 2.3 The overall demand for, and nature of, the use of playing pitches and associated facilities in the Borough has changed since 2006 and is likely to change in the future. This can be attributed to a number of factors including new housing developments, differing participation rates in sport and an evolution in how individual sports and playing pitches are managed, along with changes to the Borough's demographic profile.
- 2.4 The PPS provides an up-to-date assessment of how well the current supply of playing pitches is meeting current levels of demand from communities. It identifies key actions for specific sites concerning their ongoing maintenance and improvement to meet the needs of individual sports and communities.
- 2.5 The PPS sets out to achieve a number of outcomes as detailed below:
- To identify current supply and demand for playing pitches
 - To identify current and future predicted unmet demand.
 - To establish, protect and enhance strategic multi pitch facilities.
 - To form part of the Joint Local Plan evidence base.
 - To identify potential funding opportunities to enhance outdoor sports facilities in the Borough.
 - To identify lapsed sites that are not required to meet current or future demand for sport.
- 2.6 The PPS has highlighted the following findings for the following sporting activities:

Football:

- a) There are a number of underused football pitches resulting high levels of spare capacity in the Borough.
- b) Where pitches are of a poor quality these are typically located on educational sites.

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- c) There is a growing demand in the Borough for youth pitches coupled with insufficient current and future supply. However this could easily be addressed through reconfiguration of pitch markings or over marking existing adult pitches.
- d) On a number of sites there is a requirement to improve drainage, and to provide or enhance changing facilities to meet future demand.

Cricket:

- a) Typically the cricket pitches in the Borough are of a poor or standard quality due to the fact that they are overplayed.
- b) Overall there is a shortfall of eight cricket wickets in the Borough. However the shortfall could be addressed by clubs using educational sites, increasing the number of wickets at some clubs, and improved maintenance regimes allowing pitches to be used more throughout the cricket season.

Rugby Union:

- a) Typically the rugby pitches in the borough are of a poor or standard quality due to the fact that they are overplayed.
- b) There is a shortfall of rugby pitches in the Borough to meet current and future demand. However this could be addressed by clubs using educational sites and through reconfiguration of pitch markings on sites that currently accommodate football.

All Weather Pitches:

- a) Typically the all Weather Pitches in the Borough are of a standard or good quality.
- b) There is an adequate supply of suitable artificial grass pitches for hockey (to meet current and future demand) that are played to capacity but a shortfall in the supply to meet the demand for 3G pitches for football. However this shortfall in supply could be addressed through the improvement of all-weather pitches on educational sites and the PPS has identified there is a willingness to do so both at Keele University and Kings School Kidsgrove subject to adequate funding being in place.

Crown Green Bowling:

- a) There are a number of underused bowling green's resulting high levels of spare capacity.
- b) In most instances where sites are being used by clubs they should be supported to attract new members, particularly juniors and quality standards maintained to ensure their long term sustainability.
- c) Where bowling greens have little demand or are not used consideration should be given to their disposal or ongoing maintenance programmes.

Tennis:

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- a) There are a sufficient number of tennis courts to meet current and future demand.
- c) Typically tennis courts are of a poor or standard quality and at risk of deteriorating. Where tennis courts are of a poor quality these are typically on educational sites
- d) Priority for investment in tennis courts should only be made on sites where there is a latent demand or there is an opportunity to increase site capacity.

Netball:

- a) There are a sufficient number of netball courts to meet current and future demand in the borough, and these are typically located on educational sites.
 - b) Priority for investment should be linked to those sites where there is the opportunity to supplement indoor netball provision.
- 2.7 Taking into account the points highlighted in section 2.6 the PPS has identified the following sites as low quality single pitch locations that are not required to meet current or future predicted demand for sport:
- Black Bank, Knutton
 - Crackley Bank Recreation Ground, Chesterton
 - Knutton Recreation Centre Bowling Green, Tennis Courts and three-quarter size 3G pitch
 - Arnold Grove, Bradwell
 - Conservative Club bowling green, Silverdale (Private Ownership)

2.8 The review of sites also identifies four lapsed former playing pitch locations which have not been used for playing pitch purposes for a considerable length of time. (In three cases approaching a decade and in the other approaching a quarter of a century). In terms of assessing current provision, these sites have not been included in the calculation as they are in effect no longer playing pitches.

- Knype Way, Bradwell
- Sheldon Grove, Holditch
- Park Road, Silverdale
Gloucester Road, Kidsgrove

These sites will be assessed as part of the Councils Green Space Strategy in terms of whether they are required in whole or in part to meet the agreed local standards for future green space provision.

2.9 There is a requirement for regular monitoring and review against the actions identified in PPS. This will be undertaken annually by the steering group. The review will also contribute to the examination of the Joint Local Plan.

3 Proposal

3.1 That Cabinet approve the Newcastle under Lyme Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2020 (PPS) which will be the basis for making strategic decisions on future playing pitch provision and associated facilities across the Borough.

- 3.2 That a review of the PPS is carried out by the Steering Group on an annual basis and that any significant changes are reported to Cabinet, to ensure that identified local priorities continue to be achieved.

4. **Reasons for the Preferred Solution**

- 4.1 The PPS sets out the Council's strategy for identifying and meeting the playing pitch and associated facilities needs for the Borough between 2015 and 2020. It considers how well the existing playing pitch provision and associated facilities meet the needs of communities within the Borough in terms of supply and demand.
- 4.2 The PPS identifies key areas of improvement to address the specific needs of the different sports, actions to improve existing sites where appropriate, and recommends the disposal of sites which do not make a strategic contribution in meeting current or future demand for sport.
- 4.3 The PPS forms part of the suite of documents that are needed to contribute to the evidence base required in the development of the Joint Local Plan. The PPS also satisfies the majority requirements of the NPPF by identifying what the local priorities are. To remain relevant the PPS needs to be accurately maintained and developed further to identifying the necessary resources to fund priced up improvement plans to meet future demand.

5. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from adopting the PPS.
- 5.2 Whilst protection is justified for the majority of the sites a number are unused (for over ten years) or disused (for over five years) and have no value for sport. Their future will be considered under the Green Space Strategy and disposal, in whole or in part, could result in a capital receipt for the Council.
- 5.3 The PPS also provides a basis to seek future external funding for improvements to playing pitches and associated facilities. Although further work by the steering group is required because of the current uncertainty around developer contributions either through Section 106 Agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy, if adopted by the Council.
- 5.4 However, any contributions will need to 'fair and reasonable in scale' to the development. It should be noted that there are no longer National Standards for developer contributions arising from new planning applications, as the NPPF emphasises the importance of identifying local priorities according to local need. This is one of the main reasons why the PPS needs to be kept updated as it will be relied upon by Sport England in their role as a statutory consultee.
- 5.5 Should it be identified that there is a requirement for the Council to make a financial contribution to projects, this will be considered and given an appropriate priority as part of the Newcastle Capital Investment Programme.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 The efficient management and operation of outdoor sports provision contributes towards the following corporate priorities:

- A healthy and active community
- A cooperative council, delivering high quality community driven services.
- A clean, safe and sustainable Borough
- A Borough of opportunity.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 The PPS follows the latest Sport England methodology and will be a key strategic document which will inform the Joint Local Plan.

8. **Major Risks**

- 8.1 The PPS enables the Council to manage the risks when making strategic decisions concerning the provision of playing pitches and associated facilities in the Borough.