

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 20/06/23

Executive Portfolio: Cllr Simone Taylor

Report by: Martin Grey, Sports Development Manager

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the report is to present the new Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy (IBF) and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) 2022 - 2043 for adoption by Huntingdonshire District Council.

This strategic piece of work started back in February 2022 following a tender process in December 2021.

Endorsed by Sport England the strategies provide a comprehensive review and assessment of facilities and pitches and provide strategic recommendations in line with population growth forecasts contained in the Local Plan. The strategies will provide the evidence base to develop the right facility mix across Huntingdonshire and maximise financial funding across this area. These strategies are to be utilised by partners and providers to benefit and enable the leisure and sporting landscape across Huntingdonshire as a whole and are not solely a HDC document.

The strategies will support the upcoming HDC Local Plan review and support the new HDC Place Strategy and Climate Strategy.

Recommendation(s):

- To endorse and agree the Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2022 - 2043
- To recognise the strategic recommendations as set out within the strategies. See Appendix 2 and 4 as detailed in section 11.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT & CONTEXT TO FINDINGS

- 1.1 To provide an overview to the Council on the overall outcomes and aims of the identified strategies highlighting the importance of the independent assessment of the provision needs of Huntingdonshire.
- 1.2 To provide clear and transparent recommendations to enable HDC and partners to make informed decisions ensuring that sport and physical activity facilities have the right combination of amenities, are located in the right places, to help ensure that the maximum number of local people can be engaged in meaningful physical activity.
- 1.3 To showcase the strategic importance of the existing leisure and sporting facilities and to ensure HDC and partners have a concise, robust and comprehensive evidence base in-line with Sport England guidance which can be utilised to support the review of the Local Plan, Place Strategy and Climate Strategy.
- 1.4 To suggest a forward plan (listed within section 5.0 Actions) that will encompass a priority list of works supported by a capital investment plan.
- 1.5 It is highly unlikely that any local authority will ever have its full provision of facilities needs met, due to the changing nature of demand and the cost of meeting all needs. However, a clear gap analysis, such as this ensures that every penny spent can be spent effectively and opportunities for external funding maximised.
- 1.6 National challenges for the sport and leisure sector in terms of affordability of leisure provision and closures, should be taken into consideration when consider the district leisure requirements.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?

- 2.1 Sport England's aim in working with the planning system is to help provide active environments that maximise opportunities for sport and physical activity for all, enabling the already active to be more so and the inactive to become active. This is supported by the Sport England planning objectives of Protect, Enhance, Provide.
- 2.2 Endorsed strategies for both Indoor and outdoor sports facilities will support delivery at a local level and provide the needs assessments and strategic recommendations to act upon.
- 2.3 HDC has not had an accredited Sport England strategy done since 2008 (Playing Pitch). We have undertaken some internal work but was not accredited by Sport England or covering cross boarder activity and use. A Sport England endorsed strategy is the gold standard for assessment of sports facilities. Its commissioning is a commitment to a robust evidence base to support and enable improved sporting facilities for Huntingdonshire residents.

- 2.4 The strategies will provide evidence for community clubs, external partners and housing developers to enhance sporting and leisure facilities on place-based evidence.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The Panel discussed the Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy Report at its meeting on 8th June 2023.
- 3.2 Following a question from Councillor Alban, the Panel heard that in house assessments had been undertaken in recent years and were available on the Council's website. The Panel were also advised that the work undertaken on the assessment being considered had cost in the region of £37,000, however this assessment has been endorsed by Sport England and will help the Council make informed decisions across many of its services such as Planning. By creating the independent and verified report, ensured a robust report which would support these decisions.
- 3.3 In response to a question from Councillor Bywater, the Panel were advised that independent sports clubs and external partners could use the report to apply for available funding across the leisure sector. In particular it was mentioned that the Leisure team were in contact with the operators of the Sawtry swimming pool and would support them with their funding bid to Sport England.
- 3.4 The Panel also heard, following a further question from Councillor Bywater, that Outdoor Gyms would be added to the Action Plan which would be developed following the approval of the report. Councillor Lowe added an observation that, in her experience, some Parish Councils had purchased outdoor gym equipment and located this within the park facilities that they maintain.
- 3.5 The Panel were advised that a future review of the One Leisure swimming pools would be undertaken and that this would include the supporting operational plan for energy efficiency purposes. This review will aim to align with the Council's Climate Strategy.
- 3.6 Councillor Shaw observed that the report made mention of facilities outside of the district within a 30 minute radius, and enquired where the 30 minutes was measured from. The Panel were advised that this detail would be sought and reported back at a future date.
- 3.7 Councillor Alban expressed concern surrounding the discrepancies that the Panel had observed within the report considering the cost. The Panel were advised that the consultants had been very supportive and would feed this back to them.
- 3.8 Councillor Shaw drew attention to what appeared to be conflicting information surrounding the number of Badminton courts at Hinchingsbrooke, the Panel were advised that this would be checked and the findings reported back to the Panel.

- 3.9 The Panel heard, following an enquiry from Councillor Alban, that the Athletics track at the One Leisure St Ives Outdoor Centre once again had England Athletics accreditation. The officer advised that the industry had recognised national issues within these type of facilities and had revised their accreditation criteria accordingly. The Panel were also advised that although the infield space within the track was used for athletics, it can also be used for mini soccer outside of the athletics season.
- 3.10 In response to concerns from Councillor Alban relating to the promotion of the Courts For Kids scheme at One Leisure centres, the Panel were advised that the scheme was still available and that the promotional schedule would be communicated to Councillors.
- 3.11 The Panel were advised that running clubs were consulted during the formation of the report, however the officers would check how non track based running clubs had been referenced in the report with the consultants.
- 3.12 In response to a further question from Councillor Shaw, the Panel were advised that whilst a full audit had been undertaken of parish, community and village halls, further input would be sought from those facilities to ensure that availability details be included, allowing for other groups to get the full benefit of the report and therefore utilise the report to subsequently apply for their own funding if required.
- 3.13 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

4. KEY IMPACTS

- 4.1 The key impact of adopting the IBF Strategy and PPOSS is to provide clear evidence based documents to detail the current requirements and what is needed in line with future growth to support sport and physical activity across the District.
- 4.2 The strategies will impact future developments to support onsite and offsite provision in line with the Supplementary Planning Document (HDC) and in managing negotiations by providing clear evidence of need.
- 4.3 The adoption and publication of these strategies will allow HDC, Sports Clubs, external partners and housing developers an opportunity to update existing facilities and invest in new resources which will allow a greater provision of sporting facilities which will support increased participation in physical activity, and to enable and influence others to do the same.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 5.1 Following the approval and adoption of these strategies the following actions will be undertaken by senior officers following the Do, Enable, Influence approach outlined in our Corporate Plan:

- 5.2 These new strategies will be made available on the HDC website and used to support future negotiations with sports clubs, partners and developers.
- 5.3 HDC will review and utilise the actions within the IBF Strategy and PPOSS to clearly identify a priority list for capital investment, either directly or by identification of external Capital pots that can be accessed.
- 5.4 Finalise and present a capital investment plan for the development of existing facilities and creation of new assets to support physical activity and commercial revenue generation.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 Corporate Plan Priority 1 – Improving quality of life for local people. Better and improved facilities meeting requirements will support resident's well-being.
- 6.2 Corporate Plan Priority 2 – Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations. With an outlook through to 2043 for sports and Leisure facilities the strategies will support the needs for the next 20 years and beyond.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Consultants KKP carried out consultation with National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Sport England, Parish and Town Councils, private providers and Sports Clubs.
- 7.2 A working group was set up including HDC staff from Sports Development, Leisure and Planning as well as NGBs representatives.

8. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The strategies support health and wellbeing both physically and mentally by outlining required facilities and playing surfaces to provide opportunities for people to be active in many forms through a variety of facilities both indoors and outdoors across the District.

9. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Continue with the Authority's energy efficiency programme across all sites. All Local Authority owned leisure sites currently have an energy efficiency plan and have benefited from Salix Finance funding to improve facilities. Each facility will require regular investment, to ensure they remain as energy efficient as possible, in line with the Council's carbon neutral target. Future investment should focus on plant maintenance, lighting and energy sources.
- 9.2 Through the strategies support local community groups, sports clubs and private facilities to become more energy efficient.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 To support opportunities to improve facilities across the district.
- 10.2 To allow officers to present a comprehensive priority action list based upon the strategies to Cabinet including a capital investment plan.
- 10.3 Development and presentation of the capital investment plan for approval and delivery of new facilities and assets.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix 1 - Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Needs Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy
- Appendix 3 - Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment Report
- Appendix 4 - Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and Action Plan

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