

8. PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY MONITORING REPORT

REPORT OF: HEAD OF LEISURE & SUSTAINABILITY
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community
2 March 2016

Purpose of Report

1. The report outlines progress made in the delivery of the Mid Sussex Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan (2015-31).

Summary

2. The report provides an update regarding the actions detailed in the Mid Sussex Playing Pitch Strategy. This report forms part of the annual monitoring process and advises members regarding progress made to date.

Recommendations

3. **The Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Sustainability are recommended to note the contents of the report.**
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Background

4. In February 2015, Cabinet adopted the Mid Sussex District Council Playing Pitch Strategy (2015-2031). The document included an action plan for delivery of the strategy that is to be monitored annually. This report outlines progress made in the first year of implementation (see Appendix A).
5. The action plan identifies five key objectives:
 - (a) Provide additional playing pitches to meet growing demand
 - (b) Maintain the quality of existing playing pitches and ancillary facilities
 - (c) Ongoing management of playing pitches
 - (d) Upgrade and increase capacity at existing sites
 - (e) Ongoing management of resources
6. There are 30 actions to be achieved during the course of the plan. These include ten high priority actions to be completed by 2019, 12 medium term priorities to be delivered between 2020-2024, seven low priority actions to be completed after 2025 and the ongoing need to assess the quality of pitches in a systematic fashion.
7. The delivery of projects will be prioritised according to a number of criteria as outlined in the strategy such as the condition of existing provision, local demand and impact, feasibility and the availability of funding.

High Priority Actions (2015-19)

8. In relation to new pitch provision 'objective a)', the Council has met regularly with Haywards Heath Town Council and the St Francis Sports & Social Club to support additional playing pitch capacity at this site. In addition the Town Council is preparing a Leisure Strategy for Haywards Heath.
9. The Council has provided a grant to Warden Park Academy Trust toward the cost of perimeter fencing for a new Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) which is suitable for junior football and will be available for regular community use by local clubs.
10. With regard to the ongoing management of pitches 'objective b)', the current arrangements were reviewed by Outdoor Services, through the Service Redesign process, and are considered satisfactory. The future transfer of further sites to sports clubs, community groups and Parish Councils through Rural Management Agreements or lease disposal will be considered on an individual basis.
11. In relation to the need to upgrade existing facilities 'objective d)', there are six high priority projects (2015-19) identified in the action plan:
 - Fairfield Recreation Ground, Burgess Hill – a scheme to upgrade the changing facilities is currently being considered
 - Beech Hurst Gardens bowling green signage – a Steering Group meeting with site users is scheduled for Spring 2016 and this issue will be on the agenda for discussion.
 - Ansty Village Hall Trust – A report will be taken to the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community and Cabinet in relation to the lease arrangements to enable this project to proceed. Further fundraising by the steering group is required to secure the funds before work can start on site.
 - Lindfield Common – the club has obtained planning permission and has begun preliminary works on a single storey extension to the cricket pavilion to provide enlarged changing rooms plus 'dedicated officials' changing room and ancillary storage.
 - Finches Field, Pease Pottage – Community Centre and sports changing facilities. Ongoing discussions with the Parish Council. The Scheme is to be progressed through a grant application to the Council.
 - The Council will lease the land to Slaugham Parish Council to enable them to construct a new community centre with sports changing and parking at this site.
 - Imberhorne Lane Recreation Ground – Currently exploring options for a new pavilion and sports changing facilities at this site. Further details will come forward through the capital programme, subject to feasibility and all necessary approvals.
12. It is proposed in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/17 & 2017/18 budget to allocate £50,000 per annum to make pitch improvements to drainage and soil quality at sites across the District. The playability of pitches throughout the District between November - February each season is a recurring issue due to increasingly wet winters.

13. All of the capital projects identified in the action plan, to provide new and upgrade existing facilities, have been included in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP will form part of the evidence for the draft District Plan 2014-2031 and will inform the setting of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.
14. The action plan will be monitored annually and the strategy will be reviewed in 2020.

Medium Priority Actions (2020-24)

15. Projects to be considered in the medium term include the development of sports pavilions at Ardingly Recreation Ground, Whitemans Green and the Worsley Memorial Recreation Ground in Cuckfield, Hurstpierpoint Cricket Club (Fairfield Recreation Ground) and the potential relocation of Hurstpierpoint Football Club.
16. Other projects identified include resurfacing the tennis courts at Ardingly Recreation Ground, Victoria Park and Beech Hurst Gardens car park and pavilion improvements at Clayton Recreation Ground and playing pitch upgrades at the Haven Centre and the King George V Playing Field in Worth.
17. Priority will be given to projects where there is a clear need and demand for improvements and there is evidence of support from local residents and site users (as detailed in section 11 of the Playing Pitch Strategy).
18. Work to progress the Centre for Community Sport in Burgess Hill will be taken forward when the planning applications are received for the Northern Arc development. This will provide a clearer picture regarding the timetable for the handover of land and the funds available and will inform the production of a phased delivery plan.
19. A project to upgrade the cricket club pavilion in Cuckfield was completed in 2015 and work to resurface the ATP at the Triangle in Burgess Hill will be carried out in 2016.

Low Priority Actions (2025+)

20. Seven projects to upgrade and increase capacity at existing sites were detailed in the action plan. These include pavilion improvements at Berrylands Farm, Ashurst Wood (new doors and windows fitted in 2015), Staplefield Common and the North Lane Recreation Ground in West Hoathly. The facilities at Twineham Recreation Ground also need to be upgraded and there is an option to upgrade the junior football pitch at Leylands Park to an ATP to increase capacity (as shown in the Neighbourhood Plan).
21. A project to extend the bowls clubhouse at Beech Hurst Gardens to accommodate the tennis changing rooms is no longer required as the tennis club is no longer in operation although the courts are still available for public hire.

Ongoing Actions

22. To help achieve 'objective b)' of the strategy it was recommended that the Council carried out a District wide quality assessment of playing pitches and sports pavilions every three years (based on Sport England criteria). This process could identify sites that are in need of improvement to ensure the quality of existing playing pitches and ancillary facilities is maintained. A quality audit of existing facilities is planned to take place during 2017/18.

Policy Context

23. The Playing Pitch Strategy action plan aims to deliver on the Council's Corporate Priorities of Better Lives, Better Environment and Better Services
24. The Council's Leisure and Cultural Strategy (2009-20) recommended that a playing pitch strategy should be undertaken to determine the need for additional provision taking the projected housing and increased population forecasts into account.
25. Policy DP22 of the Pre-Submission District Plan makes reference to the Playing Pitch Strategy and 'supports the provision of additional facilities as well as protecting existing facilities.'

Financial Implications

26. Delivery of the strategy will not incur any costs. Capital projects to provide new facilities, upgrade and increase the capacity at existing sites will be funded through external funding sources, Section 106 and CIL contributions. Revenue costs for new facilities will be considered as part of any business case.

Risk Management Implications

27. There is a risk that the Council may be unable to deliver the new facilities and improvements identified within the strategy due to lack of funds or partnership engagement. Projects will be delivered in partnership with users of the facilities and priority will be given to projects that are funded, feasible and have local support.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

28. The Council provides outdoor playing pitches for community use that are accessible to all residents irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or maternity. The strategy aims to maintain and enhance Council provision and provide additional sport facilities that are accessible to all members of the community. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the strategy that highlights the need to regularly review disabled access and information about the age ranges and facilities suitable for male and female players at each site.