

**Minutes of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities
Scrutiny Board**

**4th July, 2019 at 5.30 pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

- Present:** Councillor Moore (Chair);
Councillors Akhter, Bostan, Edwards, M Gill,
M Y Hussain and S Jones.
- Apologies:** Councillors Cherrington, P M Hughes and Padda;
Mr J Cash (Co-opted member).
- In attendance:** Alan Caddick (Director – Housing and
Communities);
Gemma Ryan (Business Manager – Sport and
Leisure).

6/19 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

7/19 **Sandwell Playing Pitch Strategy Refresh Needs Assessment Report and Strategic Document**

The Business Manager – Sport and Leisure attended the meeting and presented a report on the Sandwell Playing Pitch Strategy and the Parklife project.

The purpose of the Playing Pitch Strategy was to provide a needs assessment in relation to playing pitches across the borough – this aimed to ensure that the provision of outdoor playing pitches met the local needs of existing and future residents. The document would help inform planning decisions and could support funding bids for facilities. It was not a requirement to have such a Strategy, but it was recommended by Sport England that local authorities have one.

The refresh had been undertaken on the recommendation of Sport England, primarily to ensure the Artificial Grass Pitch modelling section was up to date.

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This was due to the Council's Parklife Football Hubs application that had been invited to proceed to stage 2. The refresh identified the need for four additional Artificial Grass Pitches to meet current demand, with a further pitch required to ensure future demand could be met.

The Parklife Football Hubs programme aimed to develop hub sites for football which included at least two Artificial Grass Pitches, natural turf provision and the required ancillary facilities. A key driver of the programme was to provide sustainable and better quality football facilities for the development of youth football. A number of local stakeholders had also expressed an interest in taking the lead on the development of Artificial Grass Pitches. The Board was informed that proceeding with the Parklife Football Hubs programme would prohibit external local stakeholders from securing Football Foundation or Sport England support as Parklife would account for all of the identified need for Artificial Grass Pitches in Sandwell.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- the Council would work with disability sports organisations to ensure that its strategy supported improved access for people with additional needs;
- Lion Farm Playing Fields provided 12 football pitches and was utilised fully for matches;
- to encourage participation in sport and physical activity by local communities it was important to ensure that casual play was provided for in Sandwell as well as club sports;
- all pitches were rated; lower quality pitches could only sustain low numbers of matches per week which restricted their use;
- charging for use of formal pitches helped to ensure their maintenance, but casual free play space could be considered as part of the Green Space Strategy;
- while pitch technologies were advancing the highest currently recognised standard was 3G;

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- the Playing Pitch Strategy was not just for football but also included facilities for rugby, cricket and hockey;

Whilst the Board felt that the Council should continue with its Parklife Football Hubs Programme application, alternatives should also be explored to ensure that existing and future need for Artificial Grass Pitches in the borough was met.

Resolved that the Cabinet be recommended to:-

- (1) continue with the existing application for the Parklife Football Hubs Programme;
- (2) continue to explore alternative options for the delivery of the required number of Artificial Grass Pitches in Sandwell;
- (3) consider the Sandwell Playing Pitch Strategy Refresh Need Assessment Report and Strategy Document, subject to matters relating to accessibility for people with additional needs and availability for local communities being addressed within the report;
- (4) ensure that where playing pitches are lost and replaced in line with Sport England requirements, the replacements are sited to ensure local communities do not lose access to playing pitches.

8/19

Work Programming 2019-20

The Council's Director – Housing and Communities attended the meeting and provided the Board with an overview of the Neighbourhoods directorate and areas of key activity in support of the ambitions contained within Vision 2030.

The Directorate was involved on several key initiatives and projects that directly supported a number of ambitions, especially Town Plans and Tasking, the Commonwealth Games, the delivery of 600 new homes and the Cultural Strategy.

The Chair advised the Board that he had met with the Cabinet Members for Safer Communities and Homes to discuss potential topics for scrutiny.

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The Board agreed to operate a flexible work programming approach and identified topics that it wished to review during its meetings in August and October. Topics for later in the municipal year would be determined in due course.

Resolved that the following topics be included in the work programme for the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board over the course of the next two scheduled meetings:-

- (a) Aquatics Centre;
- (b) legacy of the Commonwealth Games 2022;
- (c) tenancy related issues – including the Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Management;
- (d) cemeteries and burials.

(Meeting ended at 6.47 pm)

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