

Report to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

26 January 2023

Subject:	Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy
Director:	Director of Borough Economy – Alice Davey
Contact Officer:	Ben Percival – Assistant Director – Contracts, Projects, Strategy & Policy

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers the establishment of a short-life working group to support the completion, adoption and implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities play a huge role in improving the quality of life for residents. These assets directly support organised physical activity and provide a range of informal recreational opportunities and give residents access to local greenspaces.
- 2.2 Playing pitches – especially natural grass – require substantial resources to maintain to a good standard. Activities may also need to be restricted if the playing surface is to be maintained to a good standard. It is critical that resources are optimised and used to best effect.
- 2.3 Member Scrutiny input into the development of the Playing Pitch Strategy will add real value and help to secure an ambitious but pragmatic approach to meeting residents needs within available resources. Adoption of the approved strategy will also support efforts to secure external funding for pitch developments / improvements.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?



	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>A vibrant and sustainable playing pitch infrastructure will support children’s participation in sport and physical activity. The increased use of playing pitches by junior leagues has been a feature of sports development in the past decade.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <p>Encouraging active lifestyles – both formal and informal recreational activity - is critical to improving the health and wellbeing of Sandwell residents.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>With the advent of activities such as “back to...” and walking football, pitch sports can provide a positive impact on all ages and demographics.</p>
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <p>Making optimum use of our physical assets alongside having a planned approach to development are key to developing a strong economy.</p>
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell</p> <p>Outdoor activities – particularly informal recreation can help support and encourage active travel.</p>

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 A Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) has been commissioned in accordance with Sport England guidance. The Strategy aims to address the facility needs of all identified sports and should assess both current and future demand issues – reflecting both population growth and major regeneration areas. The Strategy should set out realistic aspirations which are implementable within the Council’s budgetary position and procurement regime.

4.2 The key outputs of the Strategy should be:

- A series of recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock.
- A series of sport by sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision.
- A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.



4.3 The commissioned strategy takes a very inclusive approach, assessing facilities for a broad range of sports:

- Athletics
- Cricket
- Football (including 3G pitches)
- Hockey (sand/water based AGPs)
- Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
- Tennis
- Bowls
- Cycling
- Golf
- Netball
- Rugby league (including 3G pitches)
- Water sports (e.g. sailing and water skiing)

4.3 The Strategy was commissioned concurrently with the other authorities, with the Black Country Consortium also commissioning an overarching framework. This will allow a coordinated approach and support opportunities for cross boundary facility provision.

4.4 The supply analysis identifies that – in common with many authorities - Sandwell has a very large stock of playing pitches of limited quality with a continued heavy reliance on natural grass pitches. This starts to indicate the potential for strategic changes to both improve provision and make better use of resources and assets.

5 Implications

Resources:	No immediate resource implications. The strategy and action plan will need to be costed and a resource plan developed.
Legal and Governance:	None
Risk:	A strong PPS supports the planning process, reducing the risk of challenge.
Equality:	Any proposals from the PPS will be subject to an equality impact assessment.
Health and Wellbeing:	Opportunities to encourage physical activity deliver critical health and wellbeing benefits to residents.
Social Value:	Social value will be considered as part of any proposed projects.
Climate Change:	Climate, flood and ecological impacts of any proposed projects will be assessed.



6 Appendices

None

7. Background Papers

None

