

Report to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

12 October 2023

Subject:	Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan and Prioritisation – Establishment of a Steering Group
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1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board considers the establishment of a Steering Group to support the completion, adoption and implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

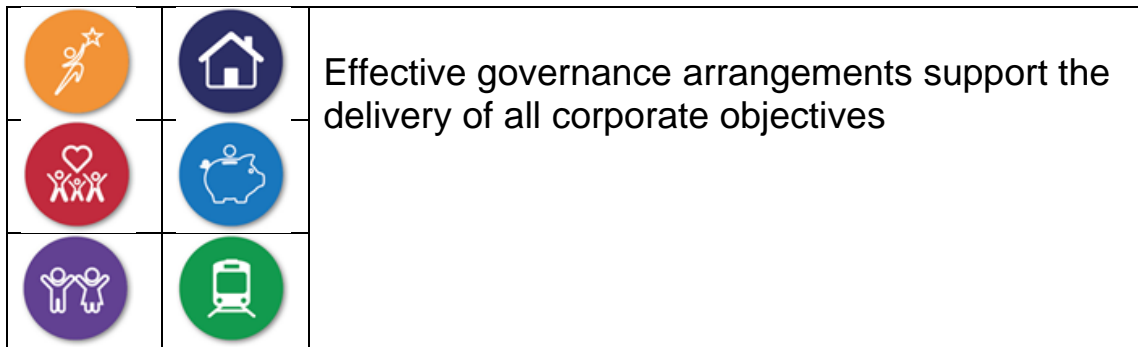
2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 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 also 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 implementation 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 and advancement 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?



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
- Bowls
- Cricket
- Cycling



- Football (including 3G pitches)
- Hockey (sand/water based AGPs)
- Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
- Tennis
- 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 Alternative Options

5.1 If the Scrutiny Board does not establish a working group, a vital opportunity to assist in the implementation of the plan will be missed.

6 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.
Corporate Parenting	Children in care should have equal access to high quality and well maintained outdoor playing provision

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Playing Pitch Strategy Steering Group Scope

8. Background Papers

None.

