

## **Report to Cabinet**

**Subject: Adoption of the Gedling Playing Pitch Strategy**

**Date: 3 November 2016**

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### **Wards Affected**

1.1 All Wards.

### **Purpose**

2.1 To recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the Gedling Playing Pitch Strategy, 2016 - 2026.

### **Key Decision**

3.1 This is not a key decision.

### **Background**

4.1 A Playing Pitch Strategy is a document which sets out a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing outdoor sports pitches and ancillary facilities. It is owned by the local authority but for use by a range of local and national partners who have an interest in supporting the delivery of sport within communities. The methodology for compiling and presenting the Strategy is defined by Sport England in its document, Playing Pitch Strategies Guidance, 2013. For local authorities to access national funding regimes that help enhance outdoor sport provision it is a requirement to have an adopted Playing Pitch Strategy that has been developed using the agreed Sport England guidance.

4.2 An up to date Playing Pitch Strategy for Gedling will support delivery of the following Gedling Plan actions:

- Provide a varied range of leisure activities for younger people
- Enhance the range of activities at leisure centres
- Implement a range of activities to increase participation in sport and physical activity
- Promote and encourage employee and community volunteering and residents' involvement in local activities

- Ensure the council gets the best deal when negotiating developer contributions
- Review and implement Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

4.3 The Council's previous Playing Pitch Strategy was compiled in 2003. As a document for informing the current demand for outdoor community sport facilities in Gedling it is now out of date. It also does not comply with the 2013 Sport England methodology and therefore does not enable the Council to be eligible to apply for national funding regimes to improve or increase its current outdoor sports provision in the Borough.

4.4 In 2015, Council officers agreed to pursue a new Playing Pitch Strategy for the Borough. It employed Sport England recommended consultants Knight, Kavanagh and Page to undertake the full assessment of the Borough's playing pitch provision and to compile a Strategy and Action Plan to guide the Council and its partners in meeting the current and future demand for community sport in Gedling. A partnership steering group was established to lead on Strategy development, which included the Council, Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport (NGB's), local facility providers and community sports clubs. The steering group has now completed this work.

4.5 The purpose of the new Strategy is to:

- provide adequate planning guidance to assess development proposals affecting playing fields, directing open space contributions secured through development and informing and shaping local planning policy
- inform the protection and provision of sports facilities and Infrastructure Delivery Plan and S106 and CIL schedules
- inform land use decisions in respect of future use of existing outdoor sports areas and playing fields in the Borough
- provide a strategic framework for the provision and management of outdoor sports across Gedling
- support external funding bids and maximise support for outdoor sports facilities
- provide the basis for on-going monitoring and review of the use, distribution, function, quality and accessibility of outdoor sport.

4.6 The main findings of the new Strategy are:

- a current shortfall of football grass pitch provision for both adult and youth teams
- a significant shortfall of five full-size 3G football pitches with floodlighting
- a current shortfall of rugby union pitch provision
- a current shortfall of one full sized AGP hockey pitch, given existing pitches are of poor quality
- current and future demand is and can be met for cricket pitches, bowling greens and tennis courts

4.7 These findings have helped to define the following Strategic Recommendations for future outdoor sports provision in Gedling:

- To protect the existing supply of playing pitch facilities where it is required for meeting current or future needs
- To enhance playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites
- To provide new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so

4.8 All partner NGB's have now given their endorsement by signing off the final version of the Strategy and Action Plan as a reflection of community need in Gedling.

4.9 Delivery of the Strategy Action Plan will be led by the Community Relations Service Area that has responsibility for Sports Development in the community. Community Relations will coordinate working with Parks and Street Care, Leisure Centres, NGBs and community sport clubs to assess the short, medium and long-term delivery of the action plan. Liaison with other local facility providers, such as parishes and local education establishments, will also be required where appropriate. It is proposed that the existing partnership steering group is continued to govern the delivery of the action plan and those relevant partners are involved in any planning regarding the future provision of outdoor sport provision in Gedling. The expertise of NGB's and Sport England will ensure improvements to facilities meet nationally agreed standards, such as pitch dimensions and ancillary requirements.

4.10 The Strategy will have the status of a key background evidence document to inform the development and delivery of the Local Planning Document therefore representation from Planning on the steering group will also be required.

4.11 Details within the action plan and site by site assessments can quickly change due to a variety of factors such sports clubs moving or folding or improvements to sites being progressed. This Strategy should therefore be considered to be a "live" document and it is proposed it is subject to regular review on an annual basis. This is a requirement of Sport England and the relevant National Governing Bodies. Failure to do so will mean these national bodies will deem the document out of date and therefore not recognise it as a supporting document for assessing funding regimes that help to improve outdoor sports facilities.

## **Proposal**

5.1 It is proposed that:

- Cabinet adopt the Gedling Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, 2016-2026, while recognising its delivery will be determined within the parameters of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
- The Council works with partners when assessing the strategic development of improved or new outdoor sports provision in the Borough and develops a prioritised list of actions to direct this work.
- The Council works with partners to annually review the Strategy and Action Plan, in accordance with Sport England and NGB expectations.

## **Alternative Options**

6.1 Not to formally adopt the Playing Pitch Strategy. Not adopting the Strategy will weaken its status as an evidenced based document to inform funding applications that seek to make improvements to outdoor sport provision.

6.2 It will also weaken the Strategy's status as a key background evidence based document that informs future planning development, risking the Council's ability to meet local demands for sport and physical activity and reducing the health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities

## **Financial Implications**

7.1 The Council commissioned external consultants Knight, Kavanagh and Page to compile the Strategy on its behalf and the costs of this have already been committed to budget and paid for.

7.2 There may be additional financial costs for the future review of the site by site assessments where technical consultancy expertise is required to assess playing pitch quality. The frequency and extent of this will need to be determined through liaison with Sport England, the responsible body for determining the validity of local playing pitch strategies.

7.3 The Action Plan needs to be considered in the context of current budgetary pressures facing the Council, its partners and local community organisations. Where improvements or new facilities are cited in the Plan to meet community need, external funding will need to be obtained. Appendix Three of the Strategy defines potential funding opportunities. Some may require a commitment for capital match funding from the Council; each business case will need to be determined on a site by site basis.

7.4 Where improvements are made or new facilities developed, facility managers should plan for associated maintenance costs and sinking funds. If these sites are managed by the Council, such considerations would need to be made by either the Parks and Street Care or Leisure Centre Service Areas.

7.5 Given the deficit identified in the provision of 3G Artificial Grass Pitches for football in the Borough, the Football Foundation has recently agreed a funding application of £381,000 for new FA standard 3G provision at Redhill Leisure Centre. The successful application is a joint venture between the Council and Redhill Academy Trust, in consultation with local football clubs. Its success has only been possible due to the Council's commitment to producing an up to date Playing Pitch Strategy in line with Sport England methodology.

7.6 An alternative option for the future maintenance and management of the Council's outdoor sports provision could be the transfer of responsibility to community sports

clubs, while still protecting the wider community need of access to public open space. This could bring financial savings for the Council while also building a sustainable model of community management drawing upon good practice at sites such as the Poplars Sports Ground. Consideration would need to be in accordance with the Council's adopted Community Asset Transfer Policy. As with all cases of transfer there may be financial implications for the Council to support the process, such as legal costs for both parties, and training and business planning costs for local sports clubs. The viability of this would need to be assessed on a case by case basis.

7.7 Any future investment in Playing Pitches will be subject to Business Cases and financial assessment including availability of any potential match funding, and any identified budget requirement will be the subject of a resource development bid in accordance with the usual budget processes.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Gedling Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, August 2016

**Appendix 2:** Equality Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

Gedling Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report, March 2016

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Adopt the Gedling Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, 2016-2026, while recognising its delivery will be determined within the parameters of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.
- Approve that officers should work with partners when assessing the strategic development of improved or new outdoor sports provision in the Borough and develop a prioritised list of actions to direct this work.
- Approve the annual review of the Strategy and Action Plan in line with the expectations of Sport England and National Governing Bodies.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- An adopted Playing Pitch Strategy will inform funding submissions to improve outdoor sport provision in Gedling meeting identified community need. Funding bodies include Sport England, Football Foundation, other NGBs or alternatively potential Section 106 developer contributions.
- The Strategy will guide the Council when considering the future transfer of management and maintenance responsibilities of outdoor sports facilities to sustainable community sports clubs.

- Partnership working will ensure the Council draws upon the expertise of NGBs, but also the local knowledge of local community organisations when delivering the Strategy and applying for external funding.