

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	6 February 2019
Subject:	Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy Delivery		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan Update		
	2. Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy Update		
	3. Playing Field Location Map		

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress in the delivery of Council's adopted Playing Pitch Strategy, seek resolution on an alternative delivery mechanism for onsite improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities in City Council ownership in the future, and agree to the continuation of the Delivery Group.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) progress made in delivering the Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy (Appendix 1) be noted;
- (2) the updated Action Plan (Appendix 1) be approved;
- (3) the updated Gloucester Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy (Appendix 2) be approved;
- (4) an alternative approach to delivering onsite pitch and ancillary facility improvements be approved, delegating authority to the Head of Place to appoint a suitable third party (Section 5); and
- (5) the continuation of the Playing Pitch Strategy Delivery Group for a further three years until January 2022 be approved.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The City Council adopted the Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and an associated Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy (AGPS) in January 2016. The strategies provide the framework for the Council, its partners, key stakeholders, clubs, schools and the community to work together in making improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities. The delivery of the PPS and AGPS is led by a Delivery Group (see Section 6 below for further information).
- 3.2 This is the third time officers have brought an update to Cabinet on the delivery of the PPS. Since adoption significant progress has been made in delivering the aims and recommendations of the strategy, which are summarised below.

AIM 1 – To protect the existing supply of sports pitches for meeting current and future needs.

To achieve this aim, the PPS makes the following strategic recommendations:

- a) Protect sports facilities through planning policy;*
- b) Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements; and*
- c) Maximise community use of outdoor sports facilities where there is a need to do so.*

AIM2 – To enhance outdoor sports facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

To achieve this, the PPS makes the following strategic recommendations:

- a) Improve quality;*
- b) Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) for the management and improvement of sites; and*
- c) Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.*

AIM 3 – To provide new outdoor sports facilities where there is a current or future demand to do so.

To achieve this, the PPS makes the following strategic recommendations:

- a) Secure planning gain for playing pitches from housing growth;*
- b) Rectify quantitative shortfalls in current pitch stock; and*
- c) Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.*

- 3.3 A more detailed summary of the progress made in delivering the PPS and AGPS is provided in the Action Plan Update (Appendix 1) and AGPS Update (Appendix 2). Headline achievements since adoption in 2016 are:
- a) The northern sports hub at Oxstalls Sports Park and the University of Gloucestershire has now been delivered. The scheme provides the first two full-sized 3G artificial surfaces in the city and a 12 badminton court sports hall, along with ancillary facilities. The facilities are proving incredibly popular and are operating at nearly full capacity. Further grass pitch improvements to Plock Court are expected in the near future.
 - b) The proposed southern sports and community hub at Blackbridge is being taken forward in a partnership between Active Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester City Homes and the City Council. It is anticipated a planning

application for a full-sized 3G artificial surface, grass pitches, a community, health and wellbeing building, along with other facilities aimed at encouraging informal physical activity will be submitted by March 2019.

- c) New playing field provision has been delivered, including a full-sized sand-based surface at King's School with secured community use, and new provision secured through planning permissions off Winnycroft Lane in Matson and Robinswood.
- d) Participation in football and rugby has increased since PPS was prepared in 2015. All National Governing Bodies (NGBs) continue to work with their clubs to increase participation further.
- e) Over half of playing field sites in the city have now been improved or are subject to emerging proposals. This includes direct grass maintenance works, reconfigured pitch layouts to provide for current needs and/or new posts or nets. This is the result of investment from the City Council, the NGBs and the sports clubs themselves.
- f) The Football Association (FA) has completed a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) for the City. This sets out the investment priorities for the FA in Gloucester, aligned with and expanding upon those set out in the PPS and AGPS. The full Gloucester LFFP is available to view at <https://lffp-prod.ff-apps.dh.bytemark.co.uk/local-authorities-index/gloucester/gloucester-local-football-facility-plan/>.
- g) A targeted event was held with schools to explore opportunities for increased community use of school pitches as well as opportunities for pupils to engage in sport in the city.
- h) The Rugby Football Union (RFU), Football Association (FA) and England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have held pitch improvement workshops with clubs and groundspeople. This included an event at Gloucester Rugby's Kingsholm Stadium, lead by the head groundsman of Twickenham stadium, Keith Kent.
- i) Approaches have been made to clubs via the NGBs to identify opportunities to improve tenure arrangements for clubs playing on City Council owned sites, in order to facilitate funding bids, where available. Take up has been limited, but there are positive movements from Tuffley Rovers at The Lannett and Quedgeley Town Council at Kingsway sports pitches.
- j) A review of the AGPS has been completed by the Delivery Group and identified the need for additional artificial surfaces. This is discussed in more detail at Section 4 below.

3.4 Some changes have also been made to the Action Plan to reflect changing priority levels or changing priorities. Cabinet is asked to approve these changes.

4.0 Revised Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy

4.1 The AGPS sets out the preferred network of existing and proposed artificial surfaces in the city, both public and private. Discussions with the PPS Delivery Group in March 2018 concluded a review was necessary because of the following reasons:

- Increased interest from various parties in new artificial surfaces to provide for different needs and the need to coordinate investment priorities;
- Evidence from use at the new 3G surfaces at Oxstalls Sports Park that indicate there is a need for additional facilities for football and rugby; and
- New initiatives from the NGBs that will create additional need within the timeframe of the strategy, for example the Football Association's focus on increasing participation in girls and ladies football.

- 4.2 Subsequently the Delivery Group prepared a revised strategy, which was finalised at the meeting in September 2018 – see Appendix 2. Overall this demonstrates an additional need up to 2025 of 1 x full-sized 3G surface and 1 x full-sized ‘World Rugby’ compliant surface. A site known as ‘The Glebe’ is introduced as an opportunity for a new youth sized artificial surface that could provide for identified need in Barton and Tredworth, a ward that is deficient in sports facilities. It also recommends a watching brief around the need for sand-based surfaces to meet the needs of hockey, given the growth aspirations of Gloucester Hockey Club and impact of secured community use at the new King’s School facility.
- 4.3 The preferred location for the additional full-sized 3G surface, reflecting demand and site availability, is Waterwells Sports Centre. The RFU is looking for an existing rugby club site in the city for the additional ‘World Rugby’ compliant surface. Taking all of this into account, the revised AGPS is as follows:

Facility	Surface	Note
Northern Sports Hub (Oxstalls Sports Park)	1 x full sized sand-based AGP. 2 x full-sized 3G AGPs (both football compliant, 1 x World Rugby’ compliant).	In situ. Completed Autumn 2017 and operational.
Southern Sports Hub (Blackbridge Sports and Community Hub)	1 x full-sized 3G AGP	Emerging proposal
Severn Vale School	1 x full-sized sand-based AGP	Poor condition and needs resurfacing. To be resurfaced and retained.
St Peters Roman Catholic School	1 x full-sized sand-based AGP 1 x ¾ 3G AGP (World Rugby Compliant)	Recently resurfaced and to be retained
King’s School (Archdeacon Meadow)	1 x full-sized sand-based AGP	In situ. Completed winter 2018.
Waterwells Sports Centre	1 x full-sized 3G AGP	Proposed
To be confirmed	1 x full-sized 3G AGP (World Rugby compliant)	RFU taking forward
The Glebe	1 x youth-sized AGP	Proposed

- 4.4 Cabinet is asked to approve the revised AGPS.

5.0 Delivery of onsite pitch improvements on Council land

- 5.1 To date any onsite improvements to City Council playing fields and/or ancillary facilities, paid for through S106 funding, have been managed and arranged by officers from Planning Policy and City Improvement and Environment. However, in embracing the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), officers consider there to be an alternative option that will better support the sustainable delivery of the PPS.

- 5.2 It is proposed that a specialist body is appointed to set up, administer and manage a grants-based system to support ongoing maintenance and improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities in Council ownership, in accordance with the aims, recommendations and priorities set out in the PPS and AGPS. The money will continue to be held, and procurement administered, by the City Council. Specifically, the successful third party will:
- a) Advertise the grant scheme to local sports organisations and to encourage them to apply;
 - b) Accept grant application forms and assess them against defined criteria;
 - c) Recommend to the City Council which applications to support and if to meet their request in full or part;
 - d) Liaise with representatives of the PPS Delivery Group and other stakeholders to identify opportunities for additional funding to support improvements; and
 - e) Monitor club's compliance with grant requirements.
- 5.3 The application process will seek commitment from the club and NGB in terms of the contribution they can provide in managing and improving the pitches and ancillary facilities they use, embracing the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). It will also create opportunities to add value by linking with other sources of funding, such as that from NGBs and social enterprise funding. It is important to note this will be in addition to the basic pitch maintenance (grass cutting and line drawing) currently provided by the Council via Amey.
- 5.4 Initially it is proposed that the specialist body will support the allocation of £100,000 of funding over a period of two years, plus an administration fee. This money is the result of financial contributions made from new developments specifically to support improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities and will continue to be held by the City Council. During the final six months of this contract, the arrangement will be reviewed in light of available funding.

6.0 Continuation of the Delivery Group

- 6.1 When the Council adopted the PPS and AGPS in January 2016, it was agreed that the Delivery Group would be established for a period of three years. The group is led by City Council officers from Planning Policy and City Improvement and Environment, with representation from the NGBs (Football Association, Rugby Football Union, England and Wales Cricket Board, England Hockey), Active Gloucestershire, Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust and the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association. It meets at least every six months and is tasked with monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the delivery of the PPS, Action Plan and associated AGPS. Officers report to Cabinet the progress made in delivering the PPS at least once a year.
- 6.2 The Delivery Group has proved incredibly useful in taking forward the PPS and AGPS and has led to the vast majority of improvements made to playing pitches and ancillary facilities over the past three years.
- 6.3 With this in mind, Cabinet is asked to agree to the continuation of the Delivery Group for a further three years until January 2022.

7.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 7.1 The PPS provides the framework for the Council, its partners, key stakeholders, clubs and the community to work together in making improvements to playing pitches. The preceding section of this report sets positive ways this is already happening and will continue to take place in the future.
- 7.2 The alternative proposed approach to improvements to onsite pitches and ancillary facilities in the Council's ownership provides further opportunities for added value through an ABCD approach. When assessing grant applications, one of the key criteria will focus on the principles of ABCD.

8.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 8.1 The Council could maintain its current approach to delivering improvements to onsite pitches and ancillary facilities in the Council's ownership; however, the proposed approach has the potential to deliver greater benefits for the community and through an ABCD approach.

9.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1 To support the delivery of the Council's adopted PPS and AGPS.

10.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 10.1 Subject to resolution by Cabinet, the Delivery Group will continue to meet at least every six months, delivering the aims and recommendations of the PPS. A further Interim Review will be brought to Cabinet in 2020.
- 10.2 Furthermore, if agreed by Cabinet, officers will seek to appoint a specialist body to support the delivery of onsite improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities in Council ownership.

11.0 Financial Implications

- 11.1 The PPS is being delivered by a variety of different parties. Some of the actions are made at no cost to the City Council, being implemented directly by the NGBs and / or clubs as a direct result of the adoption of the PPS. Some costs will be incurred by the City Council, for example, the cost of improving the quality of pitches in City Council ownership.
- 11.2 Some projects will draw funding from a range of different sources and this is something that will be coordinated through the Delivery Group. Suitable funding streams for the delivery of projects will be identified in advance of them being initiated. If funding is not available, the projects will not go ahead.
- 11.3 As set out at Section 4, officers propose an alternative approach to delivering improvements to onsite pitches and ancillary facilities, through the appointment of a specialist body. This will assess grant applications and make recommendations to the City Council on projects to support, in the context of the priorities identified in the PPS and AGPS. This arrangement will be put in place for a period of two years,

being reviewed during the six months leading up to the expiration of the contract, in light of available funds. The money is to be drawn from existing S106 funds and is therefore cost-neutral in terms of the council's budget.

- 11.4 As agreed by Council at adoption, any more significant delivery projects will be brought for consideration at Senior Management Team as and when relevant.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

12.0 Legal Implications

- 12.1 There are various legal implications for the City Council associated with the delivery of the PPS and AGPS. The City Council continues to work with NGBs to identify opportunities for increased security of tenure for priority clubs. There is also the potential for 'Community Asset Transfer' – although there are no such cases being progressed at this time.

- 12.2 Now that the PPS and AGPS have been adopted they are important material considerations in the determination of planning applications and as evidence supporting the emerging Local Plan.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

13.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 13.1 A 'risk register' was completed at the time of taking the PPS and AGPS to Council for adoption and remains valid. The main risks are around the failure to deliver the strategies. However, as evidenced above, officers, the Delivery Group and partners are working collectively to ensure delivery.

14.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 14.1 A PIA 'Screening' has been undertaken and shows that the delivery of the PPS would not affect a particular group any differently to any other. A full PIA is not therefore required.

15.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 15.1 Not applicable.

Sustainability

- 15.2 The delivery of the PPS is having a positive effect on sustainability in Gloucester, providing a framework for the protection, enhancement and provision of playing pitches, playing fields and ancillary facilities in the city between 2015 and 2025. It will also set a good foundation for the ongoing review for future updates of the PPS.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 15.3 Not applicable.

Background Documents: None