

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Cabinet	Date: 31 October 2016 9 November 2016
Subject:	Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy – Delivery Update	
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment	
Wards Affected:	All	
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework: No
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Appendices:	1. Action Plan Update (September 2016) 2. Draft priority list for playing fields and ancillary facility improvements	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Following the adoption of the Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy and Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy by Council in January 2016, this report provides Members with an update on their delivery.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked, subject to any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet, to **note** the contents of the report.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:
- (1) The progress that has been made in delivering the Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy and Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy as set out in this report and at Appendix 1 – Action Plan Update (September 2016) be noted; and
 - (2) The draft priority list for playing fields and ancillary facility improvements as set out at Appendix 2 be endorsed.

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 PPS provides the framework for the Council, its partners, key stakeholders, clubs, schools and the community can work together in making improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities.

- 3.2 At the Council meeting, Members also agreed to the creation of a 'Delivery Group' for a period of three years. The purpose of the Delivery Group is to monitor, evaluate and review the delivery of PPS, related Action Plan, and AGPS, with officers reporting back to Cabinet on at least an annual basis.
- 3.2 The Delivery Group has representation from the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for each of the main sports played in the City, Sport England, Active Gloucestershire and officers from the Planning Policy and Heritage Team, Neighbourhood Management Service and Asset Management.
- 3.3 The group meets on a six-monthly basis and has now met twice. The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress that has been made in delivering the PPS and AGPS and to seek agreement from Cabinet on a priorities list to guide how investment is made to playing fields and ancillary facilities.
- 3.4 The aims and strategic recommendations of the PPS are:

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

To achieve this aims, 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.*

- 3.5 Since the PPS and AGPS were adopted the following projects or tasks have been completed or are being implemented by the Delivery Group. They are a direct result of having in place an adopted PPS and AGPS:
- a) A range of improvements have been made to priority sites by the NGBs and / or sports clubs. In some cases this has included a visit from a specialist FA / RFU

'Pitch Improvement Advisor'; this tends to be where the NGB funds the assessment and improvement measures in the first year, with a commitment from the club for the two following years. Improvements works undertaken to pitches so far include top-dressing, verti-draining and over-seeding. Sites that have benefitted are Gala Wilton, Gordon League RFC, Hucclecote Playing Fields, Saw Mills End Playing Field, Longlevens Recreation Ground and Waterwells Sports Centre. A full summary of improvements made is provided at Appendix 1 to this report – Action Plan Update (September 2016).

- b) Improvements have also been made direct by the City Council. Again this includes verti-draining and over-seeding, as well as the application for fertiliser. Sites that have benefitted are Longlevens Recreation Ground, Elmbridge Park (Windfall Way) and Kingsway Sports Fields (working with Quedgeley Parish Council). The Council has also implemented new football posts at Hempsted Recreation Ground and removed poor quality rugby posts from Saintbridge Recreation Ground. Pitches at Randwick Park have been reconfigured (two 9 v 9 pitches rather one adult pitch) to better reflect the needs of the club.
- c) The FA, RFU and ECB have offered training courses for grounds men and women of Gloucester sports clubs to enable improved skills for maintaining and improving playing fields in the City and will continue to do in the future.
- d) The Delivery Group, drawing on the expertise of Cllr David Norman in this field, are currently planning a stakeholder workshop with schools in the City, to be held before the end of the year. The aim of the workshop is to identify opportunities for increased community use and funding for sports facilities at education sites in the City. The City Council is helping to facilitate this process moving forward.
- e) The adopted PPS and AGPS now form a key material consideration of planning decisions, providing the necessary framework and evidence to inform the assessment of applications. For example:
 - The University of Gloucestershire's recent planning application at the Oxstalls Campus involved the development of new sporting facilities, a business school and student accommodation; but would also lead to the loss of some existing sports facilities on site. The PPS and AGPS provided the necessary evidence and framework to justify the extent of the proposal and ensure that none of the affected sports would experience of loss of playing pitches / facilities during the construction phase of the proposal or upon completion. Overall, once complete, the proposal will provide significant enhancements to sports facilities in the City, through the provision of two '3G' pitches, of which there are currently none in the City, as well as a new sports hall and improvements to the quality of existing pitches at Oxstalls Sports Park.
 - There have been other planning applications where the PPS has been important in either protecting from the loss of playing fields (such as the recent residential consent at the former Bishops College) or been used to ensure that adequate sports pitches and facilities are provided, either onsite and/or, where appropriate, through alternative off-site financial contributions (for example the recent application for residential development at Winnycroft Farm).
- f) Both strategies now form a very important part of the evidence to inform and justify planning policies in both the Joint Core Strategy and Gloucester City Plan. Once adopted these policies can be given significant weight in decision making, unless there are 'material considerations' that outweigh them.

- g) The City Council and Active Gloucestershire have provided funding and are working in partnership to support the delivery of the 'Blackbridge Sports Hub', exploring surface options at 'The Glebe' in Tredworth and in assisting Gloucester City FC's return to Meadow Park.
- h) Officers continue to work with the NGBs to identify priority clubs that would benefit from increased security of tenure on pitches that are in City Council ownership. This will enable those clubs to bid for funds for the improvement of pitches and/or facilities direct from the NGBs or Sport England. Whilst in the early stages, opportunities are currently being explored with Tuffley Rovers for changing rooms at The Lannett.
- i) Gloucester City FC has submitted funding bid to the FA's Football Stadium Improvement Fund (FSIF) to assist towards the implementation of the new stadium, which has recently been granted planning permission.

Next steps

- 3.6 A number of the workstreams identified above are ongoing and the Delivery Group will continue to work together in delivering these.
- 3.7 To assist further within the implementation of the PPS and AGPS, officers have prepared a draft priority list for playing fields and ancillary facility improvements – see Appendix 2. The list has been prepared in the context of the improvement measures and priorities identified in the PPS Action Plan.
- 3.8 The list is intended to set the priorities for how the Council will invest money, arising through S106, the Community Infrastructure Levy (once adopted) and other funding sources, in improving / providing playing pitches and sports facilities. Projects are identified within cost thresholds of less than £10k, £10k-£50k, £50k-£250k and £250k plus. The allocation of funding will be taken forward by officers, working with the Delivery Group and will consider all possible funding streams to take forward projects, which could include for example match funding from the NGBs.
- 3.9 Officers seek agreement from Cabinet on this list, which will be reviewed and updated at subsequent Cabinet meetings.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 The PPS provides the framework for the Council, its partners, key stakeholders, clubs and the community to work together in making towards 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 immediate future.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 None – this report provides an update to Members on the delivery of the delivery of the PPS.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 As agreed by Council in January 2016, officers will report to Cabinet at least on an annual basis, progress in relation to the delivery of the PPS and AGPS. This is the first of the delivery updates.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 The Delivery Group will continue meet on a six-monthly basis to monitor, evaluate and review the delivery of PPS and related action plan until January 2019. The first interim review of the PPS is due to take place in spring 2017; this is a critical element of keeping the PPS robust and up-to-date.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are various financial implications for the City Council associated with the delivery of the PPS and AGPS. These include for example the cost of improving the quality of pitches in City Council ownership and officer time in investigating / implementing alternative tenure arrangements for clubs in order that they can apply for funds from NGBs.
- 8.2 However to date the majority of improvements have occurred at no cost, or very little cost to the City Council, being implemented directly by the NGBs and / or clubs as a direct result of the adoption of the PPS and AGPS. Efforts are being made by the Delivery Group to improve the security of tenure for priority clubs so that external funding bids can be made, for example to the relevant NGB. In addition, courses for grounds men and women, facilitated by the NGBs, will have a direct impact in improving the quality of playing field sites and at no cost to the City Council.
- 8.3 Appendix 2 of this report sets out a range of possible playing pitch and sports facility improvement projects, to guide investment priorities of the City Council from S106, Community Infrastructure Levy (once adopted) and any other funding sources.

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

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are various legal implications for the City Council associated with the delivery of the PPS and AGPS. The City Council is already working with the 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 the time of writing.
- 9.2 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 this report.)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

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

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

11.1 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.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

12.1 N/A

Sustainability

12.2 The delivery of the PPS and AGPS will have a positive effect on sustainability in Gloucester, providing a framework for the protection, enhancement and provision on playing pitches in the City over the next ten years. It will also set a good foundation for the ongoing consideration of playing pitches through future updates to the strategies.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 Not applicable

Background Documents: None