



Local Plan Committee

20 August 2015

Item
9

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Beverley McClean ☎ 282480
Title	Sports Facility Strategy		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the findings of the Sports Facilities Strategy

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Local Plan Committee is requested to note the findings of the Sports Facility Strategy carried out on behalf of the Council by Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP).

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Committee is aware of the evidence base being gathered to inform development of a new Local Plan.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 None - the Council must demonstrate its policies are based on a robust evidence base.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 A new Sports Facilities Strategy was required by the Council to provide evidence about sport and leisure need to inform the emerging Local Plan for Colchester to 2032. Additionally, the Council also required the Strategy to enable Operational Services to plan and manage the future delivery of sport and leisure at CBC owned facilities under its new business model and to drive a year on year 1% increase in participation in sport across Colchester.
- 4.2 A project brief for the production of a strategy to guide the provision of sport and leisure facilities across the Borough was developed jointly between Commercial Services and Operational Services between December 2012 and December 2013. In February 2014, Colchester Borough Council appointed Knight Kavanagh and Page, a Sport England approved consultancy, to prepare a Sport Facilities Strategy. Work commenced on the project in March 2014.

- 4.3 The Sport Facilities Strategy was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders; these are listed in paragraph 7.1 of this report.
- 4.4 A full audit of existing indoor and outdoor facilities was undertaken to identify current levels of provision of indoor and outdoor sport. As part of this process, 121 site visits were made to existing sport and leisure facilities across the Borough.
- 4.5 The outputs from the audit were published in separate Needs Assessments for indoor and outdoor sports facilities following consultation with national sports governing bodies and other sports providers to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the situation around the Borough.
- 4.6 Population data from the 2011 Census, estimated housing growth figures and information on potential team generation rates for various sports were then used to calculate future sport and leisure needs up to 2032.
- 4.7 The outputs from the Needs Assessments were used to inform recommendations in the final Sports Facilities Strategy. The key recommendations for the future delivery of both indoor and outdoor sport facilities are detailed in section 5 below. The Needs Assessments are available on request from the Planning Policy team.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 The Strategy comprises 4 volumes; the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan, the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy Needs Assessment, the Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan and the Playing Pitch Strategy Needs Assessment.
- 5.2 The Strategy also includes a vision which states ‘The creation of high quality, sustainable sports facilities which meet community need, increase participation, help tackle health and crime issues and provide accessible and inclusive activities for all Colchester residents as part of an active lifestyle’.
- 5.3 The Indoor Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy identify the following 3 broad objectives to support the future provision of sport and leisure facilities across the Borough;

Objective 1 - To protect the existing supply of sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future demand. There is also a requirement to protect sports facilities where there is a need to do so through local planning policy

Objective 2: To enhance the borough-wide approach to programming and management at all sites with a view to improving sports development aspirations and increasing physical activity outcomes, based on identified strategic need.

Objective 3: To provide a coherent range of good quality, accessible facilities reflecting the hierarchy and serving key current and future communities across Colchester.

Indoor Facilities Strategy

- 5.4 The Indoor Facilities Strategy identifies the key challenges and issues facing the future provision of indoor sports /extreme sport facilities in the Borough which include sports halls, swimming pools, health & fitness clubs, cycling, squash, indoor bowls and water sports. These issues are set out in Table 1 below. The key strategic priorities identified to address these issues and to guide the future provision of indoor sports facilities across Colchester are listed in table 2.

Table 1: Key challenges for indoor facilities

Facility type	Key challenges and issues
Sports halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is more demand for sports hall space than currently exists in Colchester. There is restricted use at schools, the Garrison and University of Essex. The diverse management arrangements of facilities lead to variations in quality, programming, access and pricing. There is lack of availability of sports halls in neighbouring authorities for Colchester residents. The projected increase in population will place increased pressure on resources/sports halls especially in the North of the Borough.
Swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure World Colchester is the only fully community accessible pool in the Borough. It is strategically significant for residents. There is unmet latent demand for more swimming provision in the Borough which is likely to be exacerbated (especially in the North and East) by projected population increases. Management indicates that public sessions are not full to capacity. Corporal Budd VC Swimming pool offers a high quality facility. The recent closure of Colchester Academy will put further pressure on water space.
Health & Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a wide range of Health and Fitness operators in the Borough offering different levels of pricing and access. The reach of Leisure World Colchester appears to be good. Membership data from the three local authority managed venues is not compatible. Facility modelling indicates that there are sufficient stations for the size of the population. A good Health and Fitness offer can help cross subsidise other types of leisure facilities.
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycling is increasingly popular in the Borough for different age groups and both genders. Local clubs are strong and British Cycling appears keen to invest in the area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ CBC has the potential to develop a closed cycling circuit in the Northern Gateway as part of a wider facility mix.
Squash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ The Borough is well served with a number of squash courts although the quality varies. ◀ There is a need to support the club infrastructure if squash is going to increase participation
Indoor bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ The Borough has two indoor bowls facilities with c.700 members. ◀ There is still scope for increasing participation given the projected increase in older people in the Borough.
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ There are a range of different size water spaces across the Borough, which do not appear to be used to their full potential ◀ Given its extended coastline there is the opportunity to develop a water sports strategy per se, to help drive increases in participation.

Table 2. Key strategic priorities for indoor sport provision

Key strategic priorities	
◀	Investment in Leisure World Colchester is a key priority. It remains the main and only community accessible swimming facility in the Borough. CBC staff must continue to monitor usage to ensure that it remains genuinely available to all sections of the local community.
◀	The opportunity to develop facilities fit for the 21 st Century in the Northern Gateway is a key strategic priority for Colchester. It has aroused the interest of a range of national governing bodies which are keen to be involved. This has also been the subject of a separate study and needs to be considered in respect of a growing population.
◀	CBC needs to continue to liaise, develop and maintain relationships with a range of leisure providers/partners which have potential to open up a number of facilities (including the Garrison, Colchester Institute and the University). These could/should underpin increases in participation and the resulting positive effect on health and well-being and reduction in crime etc.
◀	There is a need to provide additional indoor sports hall and water space in the Borough (particularly the North) to accommodate current and projected increases in population.
◀	There is an identified need for small scale flexible affordable space for sports to develop and flourish.
◀	The importance of coordinating programmes of activity in sports halls is key to improving local opportunity. There is a need to increase the number of sports halls hours available to the community, especially in areas identified for significant growth (i.e. NGUAE and Severalls)
◀	Any new school build should consider how sports facilities are to be made available (via access and management) for wider community use.
◀	Consideration should be given to how a Sports Delivery Board might be created and developed, comprising key partners to take responsibility for key aspects of Strategy delivery. Investigation into the variety of roles that partners could/should play will also help to draw in Active Essex and enable CBC to make best use of the strengths of different partners.
◀	To ensure that CBC works with and through partners to get best value for money and drive investment into facilities in line with the Strategy.

Playing Pitch Strategy

5.5 The Playing Pitch Strategy identified the key issues and challenges facing the provision of football, rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis, bowls and athletics across the Borough. These are listed in Table 3. The key strategic priorities identified to address these issues and to guide the future provision of indoor sports facilities across Colchester are listed in Table 4.

Table 3. Key challenges for outdoor sport provision

Sport	Key challenges and issues
Cricket England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ There is a lack of indoor provision specifically for training ✦ The pitches are generally good quality. ✦ There is good distribution across the Borough. ✦ There is a significant amount of overplay on cricket wickets across the Borough per season.
Football The Football Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ The natural turf pitches across the Borough are generally in good condition. ✦ Some pitches across the Borough (95), due to their quality and levels of play, show some spare capacity. ✦ The projected population growth suggests that there will be demand for additional adult (3), youth (11) and mini soccer pitches (10) in total. ✦ The key challenge is to ensure that as demand grows (as expected) the quality of the natural turf pitch is retained. ✦ There are three sand dressed and two 3G artificial grass pitches. The two 3G pitches require re-surfacing. This is, in order, to meet the FA standard code of rules to ensure both training and competitive activity is retained. ✦ On the basis of 395 teams playing competitive football in Colchester, Sport England's methodology indicates there is a recommended need for six full size 3G pitches, of which there are currently two in the area.
Rugby Union Rugby Football Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ There are two clubs based in Colchester, one of which is at capacity and is working with CBC to affect a move to the Northern Gateway. ✦ Rugby pitches are of a standard quality, although one of the sites has recorded overplay. ✦ There is a need for an International Rugby Board (IRB) compliant pitch in the Borough which will best be supplied in the North to service the growing club.
Hockey England Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ There is only one club in Colchester. ✦ There are three sand dressed AGPs suitable for competitive hockey within Colchester, with only one being utilised solely for Hockey. ✦ In order for hockey to grow the pitches at The Garrison and at

Sport	Key challenges and issues
	the University of Essex will need to be maintained and ensure that both have continued community use.
Tennis Lawn Tennis Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colchester has a significant number of tennis courts (60) identified within the Borough, 17 of which are located at privately owned sites. The standard of courts is considered to be either good or standard with only 10 being rated as poor. The development of a Tennis Development Plan in partnership is critical to move tennis forward in the borough. CBC owns a significant site at West End sports ground with nine grass and 10 macadam good quality courts. It is currently operating at a deficit. Consideration/feasibility should be given to covering all/some of the courts to allow for all year round tennis. This has the potential to attract new players and also become a focal centre for the tennis community based on the Tennis Development Plan objectives.
Bowls Crown Green Bowls Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 10 bowling greens in Colchester provided across 10 sites. All of the greens in Colchester are assessed as good quality. A number of clubs are keen to increase membership suggesting that some greens are not at capacity. The exception to this is clubs in the South analysis area which are at capacity.
Athletics England Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is one athletics track within Colchester which has a synthetic surface and it has been assessed as good. Use of the facility is sometimes limited due to its location at the Garrison. The Northern part of the Borough has been identified as a priority for England Athletics in relation to the development of recreational running through marked runs.
Rugby Football League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst the RFL have a strategy of participation and facility development, the RFL have expressed that Colchester is not a priority for the development of the game and not a focus going forward within the current Whole Sport Plan period up to 2017.

Table 4. Key strategic priorities for indoor sport provision.

Key strategic priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informing the review of the Local Plan to shape policy, inform protection and provision of sports facilities and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining the quality of football pitches (in particular) as the growth of football and demand for more play on pitches evolves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing more formal agreements between individual clubs and schools (in particular Primary) to ensure better access to school pitches and changing

leading to increased participation across a range of sports.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ In general, providers need to maintain the generally good quality of pitches and address the few pitches which are considered to be below standard.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Improving the quality of pitches, particularly on primary school sites is important to ensuring improved access.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ There is a need to consider how to finance the development of four 3G football turf pitches if Colchester is going to provide the recommended number of pitches identified in the Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Resurfacing of the current two 3G football turf pitches is required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Use the consultation and engagement with different sports to help identify demand for sports activity (evidential based) in the Northern Gateway. This will influence the specific facility needs for the area.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Endorsement of the Sports Facilities Strategy will help the Council deliver the following objectives in the new Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

Vibrant – working hard to shape our future and creating the right environment for people to develop and flourish in all aspects of life both business and pleasure.

Thriving –promoting Colchester’s heritage and wide ranging tourism attractions to enhance our reputation as a destination, being clear about the major opportunities to work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve more for Colchester than we could on our own and cultivating Colchester’s green spaces and opportunities for health, wellbeing and the enjoyment of all.

Prosperous - generating opportunities for growth and supporting Infrastructure, improving sustainability, cleanliness and health of the place by supporting events that promote fun and wellbeing.

- 6.2 Strengthening working partnerships with other key sports providers such as The Garrison, University of Essex and Colchester Institute to implement actions in the Sports Facilities Strategy, will help improve and increase the range of leisure facilities available to residents and visitors across the Borough, thereby helping support health and well-being.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The Sports Facilities Strategy has been prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including Sport England, the national governing bodies for football, rugby, cricket, hockey and tennis, The Garrison, University of Essex, local schools and colleges, local sports clubs/providers and parish councils. There has also been considerable input from Colchester Borough Council senior managers and officers from Commercial Services, Operational Services and Community Services.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 The Sports Strategy has been distributed to all the key stakeholders and publicised on the Council's website

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The Sports Facilities Strategy was jointly funded by the Council and Sport England. The Strategy will be a key document for securing future grants, both from Sport England and developer contributions, for new sport and leisure facilities across the Borough. Sport England requires the Strategy to be reviewed triennially. A mechanism for reviewing the Strategy has not yet been set up but any mechanism put in place is likely to involve an additional commitment in terms of officer time.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 The Sports Facilities Strategy aims to protect, provide and enhance sport and leisure facilities across Colchester Borough to help meet the recreational needs of existing and new communities. Another key aim is to increase participation in sporting activities year on year. Improving the provision of sport and leisure facilities has the potential to increase access to sport and leisure facilities for a greater number of residents and visitors across Colchester Borough.
- 10.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan and is available to view on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Your Council > How the Council works > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Strategic Planning and Research..
- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 The study will support development of a new Local Plan which will address the community safety implications of creating sustainable communities.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 The study will support development of a new Local Plan which will address the health and well-being implications of creating sustainable communities.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 Development of a robust evidence base will help ensure that the Council's planning policies are well-informed and up-to-date and will help to reduce the risk of inappropriate development being permitted.

14. Disclaimer

- 14.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omissions.

Background Reports

Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=18680&p=0>

Playing Pitch Strategy

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=18681&p=0>