



Cabinet

Report of: Paul Billington

Report to: Cabinet

Date: June 18 2014

Subject: Outdoor Sports Strategy

Summary:

Sheffield is committed to finding ways of increasing levels of physical activity and outdoor sports will play important role in achieving this. The health and community benefits of sport are well documented and the city has recently launched a physical activity strategy (*Move More*) within which outdoor sports will play a key role. This report calls for a renewed approach to outdoor sport in response to the rapidly changing sporting and economic context. The longstanding approach of the local authority being by far the biggest funder and provider of outdoor sport must change as the Council faces continuing and unprecedented budget pressures. In response, there are new opportunities for the sports to take a greater lead and to seek new investment, work with the Council to shape the city's priorities and find new ways of managing the delivery of programmes and venues.

Within this changing context, this report sets out a strategy for outdoor sport in the city and is guided by three core principles:-

- i. shared leadership – between the City Council, sports governing bodies, leagues and clubs and a move from an over-dependence on the local authority as the single biggest provider and funder towards greater interdependence amongst the key partners;
- ii. new ways of doing things– the current model of significant Council subsidy; low income levels and reducing quality of provision has to be

replaced with a new approach based on investment in quality, a rationalised use of resources, improved financial sustainability and greater responsibility for sports governing bodies, leagues and clubs;

- iii. Sport for all – as public funding for sport continues to fall and clubs are required to take on new responsibilities, there is a risk that poorly resourced clubs and communities may find it increasingly difficult to be involved in sport. The city and its partners must therefore work towards ensuring a network of successful and accessible clubs across all parts of the city. UK participation in sport has traditionally been highest amongst high income groups. The challenge is to ensure that the ‘participation gap’ does not increase as public funding falls and indeed everything should be done to reduce the gap.

These core principles will be delivered via five strategic priorities:-

- i. shared and prioritised investment in high quality facilities;
- ii. improved access to existing facilities – specifically schools;
- iii. increased self-management by clubs;
- iv. a proactive response to falling Council subsidy;
- v. City Sport Plans for key sports.

Reasons for Recommendations:

The recommendations reflect the consensus of key partners and will be used to shape the future decision making and investment of the City Council and its partners.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:-

- i. agree the core principles and strategic priorities set out in this report;
- ii. note the financial implications;
- iii. agree the Playing Pitch Strategy and facilities assessment outlined in Appendix 1 as a guide to inform the development and implementation of planning policy and inform the assessment of planning applications;
- iv. delegate to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance, Director of Finance and Director of Capital and Major Projects the authority to enter into such legal and financial arrangements as appropriate and take such further steps as appropriate to achieve the delivery of this strategy.

Background Papers:

- Playing Pitch Assessment Report – March 2013
- Playing Pitch Strategy – 2013

Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
YES Cleared by: Paul Schofield
Legal Implications
YES Cleared by: David Hollis
Equality of Opportunity Implications
YES
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
YES
Human rights Implications
NO:
Environmental and Sustainability implications
NO
Economic impact
NO
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
YES
Area(s) affected
ALL
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader
Cllr Isobel Bowler
Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in
Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
NO
Press release
YES

OUTDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Sheffield is committed to finding ways of increasing levels of physical activity and outdoor sports will play important role in achieving this. The health and community benefits of sport are well documented and the city has recently launched a physical activity strategy (*Move More*) within which outdoor sports will play a key role. This report calls for a renewed approach to outdoor sport in response to the rapidly changing sporting and economic context. The longstanding approach of the local authority being by far the biggest funder and provider of outdoor sport must change as the Council faces continuing and unprecedented budget pressures. In response, there are new opportunities for the sports to take a greater lead and to seek new investment, work with the Council to shape the city's priorities and find new ways of managing the delivery of programmes and venues.

Within this changing context, this report sets out a strategy for outdoor sport in the city and is guided by three core principles:-

- i. shared leadership – between the City Council, sports governing bodies, leagues and clubs and a move from an over-dependence on the local authority as the single biggest provider and funder towards greater interdependence amongst the key partners;
- ii. new ways of doing things– the current model of significant Council subsidy; low income levels and reducing quality of provision has to be replaced with a new approach based on investment in quality, a rationalised use of resources, improved financial sustainability and greater responsibility for sports governing bodies, leagues and clubs;
- iii. Sport for all – as public funding for sport continues to fall and clubs are required to take on new responsibilities, there is a risk that poorly resourced clubs and communities may find it increasingly difficult to be involved in sport. The city and its partners must therefore work towards ensuring a network of successful and accessible clubs across all parts of the city. UK participation in sport has traditionally been highest amongst high income groups. The challenge is to ensure that the 'participation gap' does not increase as public funding falls and indeed everything should be done to reduce the gap

- 1.2 These core principles will be delivered via five strategic priorities:-
- i. shared and prioritised investment in high quality facilities;
 - ii. improved access to existing facilities – specifically schools;
 - iii. increased self-management by clubs;
 - iv. a proactive response to falling Council subsidy;
 - v. City Sport Plans for key sports.

2.0 **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE**

- 2.1 Delivery of the strategy will mean that people in the city will be invited to play a greater role in the management and delivery of their outdoor sports. It means they will be asked to consider doing things differently and in some cases making a greater contribution – financial or in kind – towards the sustainability of their sport. The result will be a rebalancing between the Council’s role and the role of sports clubs/teams and their members; new investment in the quality of priority sites and new plans for each sport which address a number of issues, but in particular the pursuit of greater participation.

3.0 **OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- 3.1 The aim of the strategy is to steer clear of the risk of entering a spiral of decline in future years whereby the quality of facilities continues to fall; clubs struggle for members and volunteers; the presence of clubs in the city becomes increasingly patchy and participation stutters and falls.
- 3.2 Instead, the strategy seeks to create momentum towards investment in better facilities, more sustainable clubs with increased membership and increased participation across all parts of the city. The ultimate outcome would therefore be a more active and healthy city.
- 3.3 The strategy work has included an update on the demand and supply of pitches. This will help inform the development and implementation of planning policy and inform the assessment of planning applications. It will also help inform future funding applications.

4.0 **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The City Council and Sport England commissioned a study of the quality and quantity of outdoor sports provision in both public and private ownership in 2013. This involved a major consultation exercise with around 300 clubs, schools and governing bodies across a number of outdoor sports including:- football, tennis, bowls, rugby league and

union, cricket and hockey. The Planning Service has been involved in the preparation of the Pitch Strategy

4.2 The findings of the study have been shared with the consultees and the key recommendations of the study provide the backbone of the strategy outlined in this report.

4.3 The City Council and sports governing bodies, with the strategic support of Sport England, have agreed to work together on the delivery of this strategy and this will involve regular and structured dialogue at three levels:- overall strategy delivery; plans for each sport (see later in this report) and specific facility/club developments.

5.0 **CORE PRINCIPLES**

5.1 The delivery of the strategy by the City Council and its partners will be consistently guided by three core principles:-

- i. shared leadership – traditionally the City Council has been by far the biggest provider and funder of outdoor sports. However, the Council is facing unprecedented and continuing budget reductions and it can no longer fulfil its traditional role. . Recent discussions with Sport England and sports governing bodies have indicated a recognition of the urgent need to share the lead in developing and funding sport and that a switch away from the historical dependency on the Council to a new interdependency amongst partners is vital;
- ii. new ways of doing things – the increasing financial pressures faced by local authorities is forcing a re-think of traditional ways of delivering sport. In Sheffield, one of the best and most recent examples is the move towards self-management and maintenance by the city’s parks bowling clubs. This, together with a number of other successes, such as Handsworth Sporting Club, point the way to clubs taking a lead and finding new ways of reducing costs; increasing membership; boosting income and attracting capital funding.
- iii. Sport for all – as the role of the public sector inevitably shifts from core provider and funder, to one of facilitator and part funder/ provider there is a risk that some clubs and communities are left behind. The result could be further inequalities in the already unequal pattern of sports participation. The Council will therefore commit to work with Sport England, governing bodies and clubs to ensure that future investment and development work is designed to avoid more disadvantaged communities, including people with disabilities – falling further behind. The clarion call of Sport for All will therefore inform the strategy at every step.

6.0 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

6.1 The core principles will be delivered via five strategic priorities. These reflect the challenges of on-going financial pressures and the key issues that emerged from the consultation with governing bodies and clubs.

6.2 Shared and prioritised investment in high quality facilities

As indicated earlier, the Council in conjunction with Sport England conducted a supply and demand assessment of outdoor facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Methodology. The assessment provides a quantitative, qualitative and geographical overview of facilities and levels of community access. The assessment focused on cricket, football, rugby union, rugby league, hockey, tennis and bowls. The main findings of the assessment and the associated consultation are provided for each sport in Appendix 1. The assessment includes snapshot site assessments and this will be updated at regular intervals.

The key points arising from the assessment which will guide future investment are as follows:-

- i. concentrate investment on a relatively small number of high quality hub sites which offer multiple pitches - these will be economic to operate and cater for significant levels of play, both training and competition. At the same time, seek to rationalise and improve the quality and sustainability of non-hub sites;
- ii. work with governing bodies to address specific identified shortfalls such as mini-football pitches;
- iii. work with governing bodies and key clubs to invest in artificial surfaces – often within hub sites - that have much higher capacities to meet training and competitive play;
- iv. ensure a geographical spread of high quality facilities – including the proposed hubs - to fairly serve all parts of the city;
- v. maximise the potential leverage of external investment via a seamless approach with governing bodies to facility planning and prioritisation;
- vi. review the demand and supply of facilities every 3 years and use the assessment to guide statutory planning decisions. Sheffield's Core Strategy (2009) contains two main policies which the demand and supply assessment will help to implement. Policy CS45 Quality and Accessibility of Open Space sets out that priority will be given to safeguarding and improving existing open space, rather than creating new areas. The assessment will help to identify which facilities should be safeguarded and prioritised for improvement in line with the policy. The assessment will also help with the implementation of policy CS47 Safeguarding Open

Space, which sets criteria against which proposals for development on open spaces should be assessed.

6.3 Improved access to existing facilities - schools

The City Council is currently conducting a joint review with Sport England of the opportunities to further increase community access to sports facilities within schools – both indoor and outdoor facilities. The current position on both primary and secondary schools is that only 50% of sports pitches are regularly available for community use. The study will review the factors behind current levels of the community use and then in consultation with schools assess the operational and/or investment needs to further increase access. The study may subsequently trigger selective access to capital improvement grants from Sport England. Whilst the review will focus on secondary schools – the conclusions will also be considered in relation to access to primary schools.

School sites offer the advantage of potential access to high quality facilities and the scope for strategic coverage across the city. A number of schools could become hub sites thereby attracting potential investment and thereafter supporting high levels of community training and competitive use. Clearly, given the increasing independence of schools, any investment would need to be supported by robust and sustainable community access obligations.

The greater independence of schools is offering some signs of a more enterprising approach by some to engage with their communities and to seek investment in facilities. The study will assess how this new culture can be embraced for the benefit of community use, whilst recognising that school budgets cannot subsidise community programmes and therefore realistic but affordable pricing policies will be essential.

6.4 Increased self-management by clubs

As the Council's resources continue to reduce and are unlikely to increase in the future, the requirement for clubs and/or leagues to consider managing their own facilities will become ever more important. Whilst this will not suit every club and will therefore not become a prerequisite for accessing public facilities, successful self-management by clubs can become a catalyst for improving facilities, drawing down external investment and increasing participation.

There are already a number of successful examples in the city of assets being transferred to clubs. However, club management of public facilities carries risks of restricting public access and a potential monopoly of the best facilities by clubs with the most resources. Therefore, whilst self-management is recommended as an increasingly important policy, it should be guided by a number of key principles:-

- i. clubs must have open and affordable membership policies and clear governance arrangements;
- ii. clubs must consult the Council in advance on future capital investment proposals;
- iii. governing bodies should work with the Council to support clubs who have aspirations towards self-management but do not necessarily have immediate access to the required financial resources or volunteers;
- iv. self-management arrangements on Council sites will be governed by formal agreements or leases with the Council which provide the necessary balance between creating opportunities for the club to grow and prosper, whilst also accepting obligations in terms of community access and affordability;
- v. a property lease to a club or league will only be considered on the basis of there being a satisfactory sports development plan and a commitment to extend and increase participation.

6.5 A proactive response to falling Council subsidy

As the Council's budget continues to reduce, facilities can only be sustained and improved via a combination of reduced operating costs and increased income. Measures to address this will need to include:-

- i. investment in higher quality facilities – including artificial surfaces – which can accommodate increased play and therefore generate increased income;
- ii. a shift to self-management whereby clubs meet operating costs and generate their own income;
- iii. offer to clubs who continue to opt for pay and play (as opposed to self-manage) the option of reducing their facility costs via potential shared maintenance of facilities e.g. self-marking of lines;
- iv. a review of all sports charges such that City Council charges are benchmarked and aligned with prices charged by comparable local authorities (South Yorkshire and Core Cities);
- v. review the option of a 'sports dividend' whereby a proportion of any increased income from increased charges is reinvested in facilities to increase service quality;
- vi. the Council and each governing body should monitor any differential impact of falling subsidy on different sports and clubs in different parts of the city and this should form part of the City Sport Plans outlined below.

6.6 City Sport Plans

The core principles and strategic priorities set out in this report should be enshrined, delivered and monitored via a City Sport Plan for each sport. These will be developed and agreed with the governing body which will link the plan with the regional and national goals for their

sport. An agreed plan will form the cornerstone of the City Council's partnership working with a governing body and each plan will address the following issues:-

- i. Sport for All – how to maximise participation and in particular reach those communities and groups who are currently under-represented. In particular this will address junior participation and participation by women and girls;
- ii. club development – especially of those clubs operating in and/or serving disadvantaged parts of the city. Amongst other things, this will cover club volunteering, sustainability and junior and female participation;
- iii. facilities investment plan;
- iv. support for self-management;
- v. participation links with schools - high performance plans to show how competitive and talent programmes will be developed and sustained

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific or immediate financial implications arising from this report. However, the financial position of the City Council in relation to outdoor sports will increasingly be shaped by the following principles:-

- i. a shift towards the facilitation of partners rather than their core funder e.g. tapered and reducing grant rather than regular funder;
- ii. optimise income via consistent alignment with benchmarked charges by other relevant local authorities;
- iii. potential reinvestment of capital receipts from surplus facilities on the basis of 'invest to save' in alternative more sustainable facilities;
- iv. support to clubs to seek and maximise their own external capital investment;
- v. jointly seek match capital funding with governing bodies and clubs on the basis of agreed facility priorities within City Sport Plans.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 These implications cover the high level over-arching strategy itself. Implementation under the strategy may have further legal implications such as procurement, state aid, property, planning, public liability etc. Consideration will need to be given to those implications at the appropriate stage.

8.2 The Council has a discretionary power under Section 19 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to provide 'recreational facilities', which will include playing pitches. It can do so either in its own right (including where a third party is contracted to

operate the facilities on behalf of the Council) or can contribute by grant or loan to voluntary organisations to allow them to provide recreational facilities.

- 8.3 Recreational facilities will contribute to the Council's duty under s2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area.

9.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 This strategy is based on a joint programme of work with Sport England and extensive consultation with governing bodies and local clubs. The three core principles set out in the report closely reflect the thinking of the City Council and its partners and there is also significant consensus on the strategic priorities set out in this report.

10.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The recommendations reflect the consensus of key partners and will be used to shape the future decision making and investment of the City Council and its partners.

11.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:-

- i. agree the core principles and strategic priorities set out in this report;
- ii. note the financial implications;
- iii. agree the Playing Pitch Strategy and facilities assessment outlined in Appendix 1 as a guide to inform the development and implementation of planning policy and inform the assessment of planning applications;
- iv. delegate to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance, Director of Finance and Director of Capital and Major Projects the authority to enter into such legal and financial arrangements as appropriate and take such further steps as appropriate to achieve the delivery of this strategy.

Paul Billington
Director of Culture and Environment

Appendix 1

Summary of facilities assessment by individual sport

Football

- Whilst site assessments suggest that generally the quality of pitches across the City is 'good', consultation indicates that the quality of pitches in the City is perceived to be poor.
- Over three-quarters (76%) of clubs responding to the survey, report that the number of teams fielded over the previous three years has decreased or remained static.
- A fifth (20%) of clubs report that if more pitches were available at their home ground they would have more teams. Similarly over a quarter (27%) of clubs believe that better ancillary facilities at the home ground would mean that they would have more teams.
- The assessment shows a significant shortfall of mini pitches. In most areas there is also a shortfall of senior pitches, most likely due to juniors playing on senior sized pitches.
- Almost all clubs report that access to a 3G artificial pitch is required to support their training requirements. This is reinforced by the Facility Planning Model for AGPs which identifies that the total demand for pitches exceeds the total supply available for public use by 9.42 pitches and that unmet demand for AGPs in Sheffield equates to 7.96 pitches

Cricket

- Site assessments generally score the quality of available cricket pitches as good. However, this assessment is not shared by the governing body which has concerns about the quality and loss of pitches. The City Council, Sport England and the governing body have agreed to work together to conduct further analysis and to identify solutions and necessary funding
- Sheffield has ten focus clubs.
- Over half (55%) of clubs have increased the number of junior teams in the previous three years and almost three quarters (73%) have plans to increase the number of teams further.
- There is a high level of latent demand expressed for additional access to cricket pitches, with five clubs reporting demand. This may increase in line with national and regional initiatives to increase adult participation
- Demand for additional cricket training facilities across Sheffield is reportedly high with over four-fifths (91%) of clubs report that they have demand for additional training facilities..
- The Council is working with the governing body to develop a City Plan for facilities in Sheffield

Rugby (Union and League)

- Sheffield Eagles (rugby league) will host a Development Centre at the new Bawtry Road development (Sheffield Hallam University).
- Redevelopment of the former Westfield School site is now being led by Mosborough Miners' Welfare in conjunction with the Council.
- Sheffield RFC (with the exception of the universities) is the only club in Sheffield fielding a senior women's team and is the largest club playing in the City. The club is a hub for women's rugby in the region.
- There are no specific junior girls' teams although junior girls can play competitively with boys until the age of 12 (mini rugby).
- It is likely that participation in rugby union will increase given the focus of the RFU's Strategic Plan which identifies an annual growth of 2% of adult players until 2013, with an average of one more adult team per club. Furthermore, the hosting of the Rugby World Cup is also predicted to see an increase in the demand for rugby provision in the City.
- Although the assessment expresses an oversupply of rugby pitches in Sheffield, spare capacity is outside the peak period.

Hockey

- There are nine full size AGPs suitable for competitive hockey in Sheffield; of which seven are rated as good quality. All sites except for Ecclesfield Secondary School and King Ecgbert School are floodlit. Seven of the nine pitches are located on school sites.
- Clubs in Sheffield are heavily reliant on school provision to play hockey. It is a real concern for clubs that as school AGPs come to the end of their life span the replacement surface will be 3G which is unsuitable for competitive hockey.
- Clubs report that there has been increased demand following the success of the 2012 Olympic Games with the increase of new players and also returning players.
- From a hockey perspective, current demand appears to be being met. However, there are reports of displaced demand where clubs are travelling away from their home ground due to AGPs being played to capacity.
- In addition it is likely that any future demand cannot be met by the current supply.

Tennis

- There are 150 tennis courts in Sheffield identified for community use although nearly a third have been assessed as being in poor condition. The majority of provision is focused around the south

and south west of the City with gaps in lack of provision across the North and North East.

- The quantity of courts is adequate to accommodate current demand. However, issues with quality mean that several courts will need to be resurfaced.
- Although the quality of courts at the outdoor centres is considered to be adequate, these would not always comply with league standards.

Bowls

- Analysis of club membership shows that demand has generally decreased or remained constant over the previous three years. In addition, club membership is low, particularly on Council greens.
- Current demand for bowling greens is being met by provision in Sheffield.
- Based on a trend analysis and estimated population growth, it is also thought likely that current provision can also meet anticipated future demand.
- It is evident that there is some spare capacity across greens in Sheffield to accommodate more play. However, further site by site capacity analysis is required to fully determine the extent of this. In addition, membership fees at private sites are considerably higher than Council fees which may inhibit some participation.
- Two private bowling clubs report latent demand for access to more greens.
- In general the quality of greens across Sheffield is good. However, Council greens are reported to be of a lower quality due to a lack of regular specialist maintenance. This may change and improve under the new grant aid policy between parks clubs and the Council.

Further Reading:

Planning Reports & Guidance - The Playing Pitch Strategy & Assessment Reports are available at:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/planning-and-city-development/planning-documents.html>