

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Council Sports Strategy Documents

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform and seek approval from Cabinet and Council for Gateshead Council's Sports Strategy Documents, which comprise a Playing Pitch Strategy, an Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy, and the Gateshead Football Plan.

Background

2. Policies contained within Gateshead's emerging Local Plan need to be supported by an accurate and up-to-date evidence base. To meet this requirement, three sports strategy documents have been prepared which provide information on needs and opportunities for provision of sports facilities in Gateshead. In addition to supporting policy preparation, and the Development Management process, the sports strategy documents will be used to inform the development of future leisure provision across the Borough, and may provide key evidence in future funding bids.
3. In 2012 Gateshead published a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). In order to ensure that information on provision and use of all playing pitch space is up to date, and to comply with Sport England's requirements for undertaking needs assessments for sports pitches, the Council has prepared a new PPS.
4. Building upon the work of the PPS, the Council has also prepared a Football Plan (GFP). The GFP has been prepared in partnership with the Football Association, with the aim of developing a plan for grassroots football in direct response to reductions in public subsidy to develop a longer term sustainable model for football facility provision and management.
5. The Council has also produced an Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy (BSFS), which has assessed the need and opportunities for indoor and outdoor sports facilities (other than those covered by the PPS).

6. Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) were commissioned to assist in the preparation of these documents. KKP have extensive experience of preparing sports and leisure strategy documents for public sector clients, and supported Sport England in developing the PPS and BSFS methodology.

Proposal

7. It is proposed that Cabinet approves the findings and recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy, the Built Sports Facilities Strategy, and the Gateshead Football Plan (a summary of findings and recommendations is provided at Appendix 2). The actual documents can be viewed via the attached link <http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Building%20and%20Development/PlanningpolicyandLDF/LocalPlan/Gateshead-Sports-Strategy-documents.aspx>. Cabinet approval of these documents will allow the Council to implement their findings through collaborative work with local sports clubs, facilities providers, and sports' national governing bodies. Formal approval of the sports strategies will also provide Sport England with assurance that the Council's activities in exploring new mechanisms for the provision and maintenance of sports facilities are compatible with Sport England's policy approach, and will continue to support sporting activity in the Borough. Such new mechanisms for the provision and maintenance of sites and facilities could include developing partnerships, lease agreements and asset transfer arrangements with sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own sites and / or facilities.

Recommendations

8. Cabinet is asked to:
 - (i) Note the potential implications of the Gateshead Sports Strategy documents, including opportunities for new mechanisms for the provision and maintenance of sports facilities.
 - (ii) Recommend to Council the Gateshead Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-2019, the Gateshead Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy, 2016-2026, and the Gateshead Football Plan 2016-2019.

For the following reason(s)

- (i) Evidence within the sports strategies will be necessary to provide a valid assessment of provision to underpin future proposals relating to sports facilities.
- (ii) The sports strategies have the potential to support funding proposals to Sport England and national governing bodies of sport.

- (iii) Implementation of the recommendations of the sports strategies will assist the Council in making its approach to the management of sports facilities more efficient.

CONTACT: Neil Wilkinson/Chris Strong

extension: 3411/2708

Policy Context

1. In 2015 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a new national strategy for sport: Sporting Future; A New Strategy for an Active Nation. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:
 - More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
 - More people volunteering in sport.
 - More people experiencing live sport.
 - Maximising international sporting success.
 - Maximising domestic sporting success.
 - Maximising the impact of major events.
 - A more productive sport sector.
 - A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
 - A more responsible sport sector

2. Sport England's response to the new DCMS strategy: Towards an Active Nation 2016-2021, and identifies that it will invest in:
 - Tackling inactivity
 - Children and young people
 - Volunteering – a dual benefit
 - Taking sport and activity into the mass market
 - Supporting sport's core market
 - Local delivery
 - Facilities
 - These seven investment programmes will be underpinned by a new Workforce Strategy and a new Coaching Plan.

3. The National Planning Policy Framework specifies that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs. Planning policy should be based on robust, up-to-date assessments of need for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

4. Sport England reflects this by promoting a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities to participate in sport, in doing so adding value to the work of others and helping to deliver sustainable development goals through:

- Recognising and taking full advantage of the unique role of sport and active recreation in contributing to a wide array of policy and community aspirations, including leisure, health and education.
 - Using sport and recreation as a fundamental part of the planning and delivery of sustainable communities.
 - The development of partnership working using sport and active recreation as a common interest.
5. In line with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 73), Sport England advocates that at the core of planning for sport should be a robust and up-to-date assessment of the needs for sport and active recreational facilities and opportunities for new provision. The results of the assessment should be developed into a clear strategy for meeting the identified needs and integrated into Forward Planning and applied within Development Management.
 6. Local Authorities are required to prepare robust and up to date evidence regarding demand for, and supply of sports facilities to support preparation of Local Plan policies. Sport England has established a methodology for how this evidence should be collected and assessed. Sport England advises that two distinct, but inter-related strategy documents are produced: a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), and an Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy (BSFS).
 7. Preparation of these strategies provides an opportunity to review the Council's approach to the provision, maintenance, and management of sports facilities in Gateshead. Accordingly, a Football Plan has been prepared alongside the PPS which explores the specific issues related to supporting grassroots football, while addressing the challenge of reduced public subsidy for Gateshead's most popular team sport.
 8. The strategies' proposals accord with the provisions of the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan 2015 – 2020. In particular, utilisation of the Council's assets to support the Council's policy priorities including supporting health and wellbeing of residents

Background

9. Gateshead has a rich sporting heritage which can make a profound and positive impact on individuals, communities and wider society. According to Sport England, who commission their own research in Sport;
 - a. In 2010, sport and sport-related activity contributed £20.3 billion to the English economy – 1.9% of the England total.
 - b. sport and sport-related activity is estimated to support over 400,000 full-time equivalent jobs, 2.3% of all jobs in England.

- c. Physical activity, including sport, is linked to reduced risk of over 20 illnesses, including cardiovascular disease and some cancers.
 - d. Taking part in regular sport can save between £1,750 and £6,900 in healthcare costs per person.
 - e. Published studies show the positive effects of sport on education include improved attainment, lower absenteeism and drop-out, and increased progression to higher education. For instance, young people's participation in sport improves their numeracy scores by 8 per cent on average above non-participants.
 - f. Other studies have found that sport programmes aimed at youths at risk of criminal behaviour can enhance self-esteem and reduce reoffending.
10. The primary purpose of the strategy documents are to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of sports facilities which meet the local needs of existing and future residents within Gateshead.
11. Gateshead's PPS, BSFS and Football Plan have been prepared by consultants Knight Kavanagh and Page. The strategies have been developed with input from a steering group featuring representatives from Council services (including Spatial Planning and Environment, Sport, Physical Activity and Health, Corporate Asset Strategy, and Street Scene Services), Sport England, and national governing bodies of sport. Local sports clubs have been consulted as part of the assessment process, and have contributed to the strategies' understanding of the quality of facilities.
12. Sport England is a statutory consultee for planning applications which affect sports facilities. Gateshead Council has prepared its sports strategy documents in keeping with Sport England's requirements for assessing the supply of, and demand for sports facilities. The strategies assess valid and robust evidence and present clear recommendations for the future of sports provision in Gateshead. Rejecting the strategies' recommendations would miss this opportunity to improve the efficiency of Gateshead's sports facilities. It could also reduce support from Sport England for funding proposals related to facilities in Gateshead, and for development proposals which affect sports facilities.
13. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the key findings and recommendations of the sport strategy documents, however the following key strategic objectives are identified;

- Secure, protect and enhance the current provision where it is needed for meeting current or future needs.
- Enhance playing fields, pitches and ancillary facilities through improving quality management of sites.
- Identify key strategic playing pitch sites for improvement, development and investment. Focusing on securing sites, pitch quality and ancillary facilities (changing rooms and car parking)
- Increase the provision of 3G pitches in Gateshead to meet training and competitive demand for football and rugby.
- Identify the feasibility of converting surplus/under used sand based pitches to 3G.
- Establish a Gateshead wide Sports Board/Partnership to ensure facility programme pathways and sports development outcomes are cohesive and drive sports participation.
- Gateshead International Stadium's role as an integral sporting and cultural hub has been highlighted with an aim to provide, protect and enhance provision.
- Further develop partnerships, lease agreements and asset transfer arrangements with sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own sites and / or facilities. The aim is to improve quality and potentially access funding sources not currently available to the Council.
- Rationalise Bowling green provision.

Consultation

14. The Cabinet Members for Environment & Transport and Culture, Sport and Leisure have been consulted.

Alternative Options

15. There are no alternative options.

Implications of Recommended Option

16. Resources:

- Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, confirms there are no direct financial implications as a result of the proposals, however it is recognised that the strategy documents will support lever significant external funding to the Borough.
- Human Resources Implications** – No human resources implications.
- Property Implications** - The proposals present an opportunity to consider an alternative approach to the management and maintenance of local sports facility provision.

17. **Risk Management Implication** - No risks associated with the strategies
18. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – No equality and diversity implications
19. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – No crime implications.
20. **Health Implications** – Implementation of the sports strategies will allow Gateshead Council to continue to support sports and leisure activity in Gateshead, to support the health and wellbeing of local residents.
21. **Sustainability Implications** - A Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment will be carried out on proposals that are carried forward into the emerging Local Plan.
22. **Human Rights Implications** - No human rights implications.
23. **Area and Ward Implications** – The proposals relate to a Borough wide approach to the strategic approach to sport and leisure facilities, however the strategy documents include ward level recommendations. Further feasibility and ward level consultation would be undertaken prior to any proposal being delivered.

Background Papers

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Building%20and%20Development/PlanningpolicyandLDF/LocalPlan/Gateshead-Sports-Strategy-documents.aspx>

APPENDIX 2

Key findings;

1. The following is a summary of the key findings from the assessment carried out Knight, Kavanagh and Page;
2. Football grass pitch
 - The audit identifies 109 pitches across the borough. The 2011 PPS identified a total of 89 football pitches.
 - In total, 45 pitches are assessed as standard quality and 36 as poor quality.
 - In total, 53% of pitches have poor quality ancillary facilities and 47% have standard quality.
 - In summary there is an overall shortfall of match equivalent sessions to satisfy current and future demand for grass football in Gateshead. Any spare capacity expressed should be retained for strategic reserve and to help protect/improve quality.
3. Third Generation Artificial Turf Pitches (3G)
 - There are two full size 3G pitches within Gateshead, both of which are medium pile. There are also 13 smaller 3G pitches.
 - Pitches at Gateshead International Stadium have not been refurbished since 2006, and are likely to need refurbishing in the near future.
 - Based on 254 teams in Gateshead there is a requirement for six AGPs in Gateshead.
 - The FA model of training demand indicates a need for an additional four 3G pitches in the Borough.
 - Moving all mini (5v5 and 7v7) teams to 3G pitches would generate demand for a total of seven 3G pitches based on the programming principles
 - Although current 3G pitches are well used it is likely that some spare capacity exists, however, cost and access issues are likely to influence usage.
4. Cricket
 - In total, there are 11 grass cricket pitches identified in Gateshead all of which are available for community use.

- The audit found four pitches to be good quality, whilst the remaining seven were assessed as standard quality.
- Based on current demand, there is a small amount of spare capacity (to accommodate one team) on pitches in the South Analysis Area (Kibblesworth Park).
- Future demand for three senior teams (39 match equivalent sessions) results in a shortfall of 26 match equivalent sessions per season overall in Gateshead in the future.

5. Rugby Union

- Within Gateshead there are 14 sites containing a total of 23 senior rugby union pitches. Of these, 16 pitches are considered available for community use.
- Nine pitches available for community use were assessed as good quality and seven as standard.
- There will be a shortfall of match sessions in the Central South, East and Inner West areas, to accommodate demand, which is exacerbated in the Central South Area where Gateshead RFC is already overplayed.
- Overall there is spare capacity across Gateshead due to the spare capacity identified in the West Analysis Area. However, not all of this spare capacity can accommodate the demand from the other areas as five match sessions are at a club site (Ryton RFC).
- Spare capacity (two sessions) at Blaydon Leisure & Primary Care Centre could offer some capacity; however, this relies on teams from other areas accessing the pitch. Unused school sites could offer potential capacity to accommodate shortfalls with further investigation into access.

6. Rugby League

- There are three rugby league pitches within Gateshead.
- All pitches are assessed as standard quality.
- The pitch at Gateshead Stadium is overplayed by 2.25 match equivalents per week. The Club is nearing capacity and will require additional pitch capacity in the future.

7. Hockey

- There are five full sized sand based artificial pitches in Gateshead that are suitable and available for competitive hockey.
- There is a need for one hockey suitable pitch to accommodate current and future demand, there are currently five within Gateshead which means that demand is being met.

8. Bowls

- A total of 28 bowling greens have been identified across 19 different sites in Gateshead. Of these, the vast majority (26 greens located across 20 sites) are Council owned and maintained.
- There is a general perception that the maintenance of Council managed greens is of a poor standard. Prominent issues include a lack of sport specific turf knowledge and lack of grass cutting.
- Quality ratings determined through non-technical assessments show most greens in Gateshead to be rated as good quality, with five assessed as standard quality and two as poor quality
- Potential opportunities for asset transfer or for clubs to take on greater responsibility for green maintenance should be explored where appropriate.
- On sites where there is more than one green it is likely that all demand can be met on one green.
- Consideration should also be given as to whether one green could accommodate the demand of two or more clubs.
- A rationalised approach to bowling greens should be considered.

9. Sports Halls

- The KKP audit identified that there are 27 sports halls with the space equivalent of 96 badminton courts
- There has been significant investment in the sports hall stock within the Council managed and school facilities.
- Overall the quality of facilities (with three or more courts) in Gateshead is generally good with 11 of these above average, nine good and only one being poor at Dunston Activity Centre

- When the accessibility modelling is taken into account, the overall level of satisfied demand in Gateshead is 91% which is in line with national and regional figures.

10. Health and Fitness

- There are 24 health and fitness suites with 20 or more stations within Gateshead, all of which are considered to have pay and play community use.
- The good quality Gateshead Council managed facilities further reinforces the need to have high quality, well presented facilities in order to compete in this market.
- Based on the analysis the assessment is suggesting that there is sufficient supply to meet demand.

11. Swimming Pools

- Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) indicates that there are 13 pools on five sites.
- The FPM indicates that in Gateshead there is a current shortfall of 158m² (5 lanes), the shortfall is further exacerbated by calculations of future demand (based on population change) for an additional 2.26 lanes.
- Gateshead Council needs to consider its approach to pool programming to meet the needs of clubs, Learn to Swim and community access to pools. Improved programming may be able to result in additional future demand being accommodated within existing pools.

12. Squash Courts

- There are four squash courts across two sites in Gateshead, all located in Council managed facilities.
- No extra demand for courts is required at this time.

13. Indoor Bowls

- There is one indoor bowling centre in Gateshead; Gateshead Indoor Bowling Club, which is now managed by a group of trustees.
- The ancillary facilities were assessed as poor quality and in need of refurbishment.

14. Tennis

- There are 40 tennis courts in Gateshead across 16 sites; 24 are managed by Gateshead Council, the remaining 16 are located and managed on Education sites.
- As no indoor tennis courts were identified there is a case to further investigate the need to look at the potential to cover court(s) at Derwent Walk Country Park and Derwenthaugh Park the home to Blaydon Tennis Club.

15. Athletics

- There is one athletics track in Gateshead at Gateshead International Stadium which is of international standard.
- There is also a cinder 400 metre track located at Blaydon Leisure Centre, which is of poor quality and in need of maintenance and investment. It is recommended that any improvements to the Blaydon Leisure Centre site, are that to meet the club needs.
- Gateshead is seen as a priority by England Athletics, there is also a Gateshead Athletics Network established to support clubs.

16. Cycling

- British Cycling (BC) was consulted about the potential development of a closed road circuit; further investigation would need to be carried out as to the feasibility of such a facility.
- British Cycling also uses the Sport England Market Segmentation data to test the population need for new facilities. Within a one mile catchment of GIS there are 1,947 that would like to participate in cycling (total population 7,647).

17. Golf

- There are seven golf courses and one driving range servicing Gateshead.
- All clubs report an intention to increase membership in the future.
- The current level of supply is deemed sufficient for residents.

18. Gymnastics

- Overall in Gateshead, gymnastics is a thriving sport with a good spread of clubs for both male and females and disciplines. With

the move for British Gymnastics (BG) to support clubs to manage their own dedicated gymnastics centres, and to work closely with leisure facility operators, there is an opportunity for partners including Gateshead Council, BG and the Clubs to feasibly look at a dedicated gymnastics facility with the appropriate equipment.

19. Gateshead International Stadium

The focus of Gateshead International Stadium has changed and there is a need for the Council and its partners to embrace this and to refine the future role and function of facility in line with the needs of the wider community. The stadium was previously a nationally significant athletics venue which is reflected in the level of events that it has hosted. However, its status as a major athletics venue has been superseded on two fronts:

- The development of larger and more modern athletics venues in other parts of the country.
- The expansion of the facility mix and alternative uses of the stadium including developments such as 3G pitches, expanded health and fitness and use by Gateshead FC, which generate higher levels of throughput, thus diluting the focus for athletics.

As such, there is a need for the Council and its partners to recognise the future role of the stadium and what it should deliver rather than its previous status. This future role should be within the context of a multi-sport hub and events venue for the Borough and the North East Region.

The future role of the stadium should focus on the following:

- The North East's premier Athletics venue and one which is capable of continuing to host the English Schools Athletics Championships.
- A football stadium for Gateshead FC, accommodating their current league requirements and potential future stadium conditions if promoted into the Football League.
- A football development hub for Gateshead which accommodates both training and fixtures for junior football clubs.
- Part of the wider health and fitness offer across the Borough, but which is differentiated as a result of the functional training and strength and conditioning offer available.

- The main outdoor events venue for the Borough and one which can attract regionally significant outdoor events, shows, concerts and festivals; and which contributes to the wider economic development of Gateshead.
- A potential gymnastics venue for the Borough if the decision is taken to convert half of the sports hall into a permanent gymnastics venue.
- A potential closed road cycling venue for the Borough if the decision is taken to work with British Cycling to invest in a facility at GIS.

If GIS is to achieve the above, it will require the Council and its partners to ensure that the Stadium is recognised for more than just athletics and football and that it is a key tool in the delivery of a wider sporting, cultural and economic development offer for Gateshead.