

ITEM

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 19th January 2015

Report of: Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets)

Title: Adoption of a Final Sports Facilities Strategy for Watford for 2015-2025

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.2 This report presents the final version of a Sports Facilities Strategy for Watford and contains a number of strategic goals as well as an action plan.
- 1.3 Progress has been considerable with a cross departmental working group established and engagement and consultation undertaken with a number of key stakeholders.
- 1.4 A report was presented to Cabinet in September 2014 with a Draft 10 year Strategy, which was approved for wider consultation. Consultation was carried out internally and externally and the feedback has been fed into the new FINAL strategy with an updated 10 year Action Plan to be adopted by January 2015. It is proposed that now wider public consultation has been completed on the draft Sports Facilities Strategy that Cabinet approve and formally adopt this new 10 year strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1 Approve the FINAL Sports Facilities Strategy
- 2.2 Receive regular updates on the Sports Facilities Strategy progress and Action Plan.

Contact Officer:

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Report approved by: Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 The Cabinet report of 1st September 2014 highlighted details in relation to the need for Watford to develop a Sports Facilities Strategy. Initially a detailed Sports Facilities Study was commissioned partly due to early objections to the Core Strategy pre-submission document from Sport England. It was also commissioned due to the overall lack of strategic direction for development of sports facilities across the Borough and to initially underpin the Sports Development Framework as well as provide the evidence base to develop a way forward for improving and enhancing sports facilities across the Borough.

This Sports Study was an important piece of work and:

- Identified shortcomings in existing provision;
- Provided information that could help the Borough Council, local schools and other sports facility providers manage their facilities more effectively;
- Identified local needs for more or better facilities and provided evidence to support investment in them and bids for external funding;
- Provided an evidence base to underpin the Council's planning policies in relation to sports provision; and
- Identified opportunities for potential cross-boundary working with adjacent councils

It also set out:

- A number of "guiding principles" for the Council and its key partners;
- Three long term "strategic goals" – in other words, what the Council intended to achieve, sometimes in the fairly long term;
- The key facility-related issues that the Council and its partners needed to tackle; and
- The specific actions that the Council and its partners intended to implement over the next decade

The findings from this Study were reported to cabinet in September 2014 and fed into a draft strategy which was presented to members for consideration and a recommendation to carry out further detailed consultation and engagement.

3.2 A number of presentations were made in June and July of 2014 highlighting and summarising the key issues facing sport both nationally and locally in Watford. They gave a mixed view of sport and highlighted those who were **thriving** or merely **surviving**. It was clear that we needed to look at the existing provision of sports facilities much more strategically and as a result of further engagement during September to December, with clubs, governing bodies and key stakeholders, a final 10 year strategy was developed and is now presented for final approval and adoption. The summary of consultation and engagement is attached as Appendix A. The final strategy is attached as Appendix B.

3.3 **Conclusions**

3.3.1 The final strategy considers a number of principles including the role of the council, clubs and governing bodies.

Taking all into consideration, this final 10 year Sports Facilities Strategy in essence sets out what the council intends to achieve over this period, setting a number of strategic priorities based on the evidence base collected in 2011 / 12 and later discussions and engagement throughout 2014. It now clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Council and its partners / stakeholders to deliver this strategy.

In summary, this 10 year strategy sets out:-

- A number of “guiding principles” for the Council and its key partners;
- Three long term “strategic goals” – in other words, what the Council intends to achieve, sometimes in the fairly long term;
- The key facility-related issues that the Council and its partners need to tackle; and
- The specific actions that the Council and its partners intend to implement over the next decade

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.2 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that a considerable financial investment has been made over the past few years in upgrading our green spaces ‘offer’. This ability to invest ‘in the future health and well being of our community’ will be constrained as available local authority funding continues to reduce.

Any detailed Action Plan necessarily requires a financial commitment and, with the reductions in funding, the Action Plan for 2015-25 will need to recognise a longer delivery period. Alternative funding mechanisms such as government funding and partnerships will need to be further developed in order to make the Action Plan a reality.

Traditional funding through Section 106 capital receipts and the community infrastructure levy will be used wherever possible and this Sports Facilities Strategy will provide the evidence base to justify such investment.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Legal and Democratic Service Section Head comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the strategy. Implementation of the results emanating from the Action Plan will require the execution of appropriate legal documentation (e.g. leases, contracts).

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 An initial Equality Impact Analysis has been undertaken on the strategy. See Appendix C.

4.4 **Risk**

- 4.4.1 The Environmental Services Client team will develop a detailed risk register for the delivery of the Sports Facilities Strategy and Action Plan which will set out all the current risks and identifies the mitigating actions needed to manage the risks. This will continue to be monitored and updated throughout the life of the Strategy.

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Unable to secure capital funding	2	4	8
Changes in policy locally and nationally	1	2	2
Staff pressures and lack of resources to deliver	2	4	8

4.5 **Staffing**

- 4.5.1 The responsibility for delivery and management of the Sports Facilities Strategy with Action Plan rests with Corporate Strategy and Client Services but working in partnership across the Council and with a range of partners identified within the strategy. The delivery of the Strategy will be monitored by the Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets).

Background Papers:

Appendix A: Engagement and Consultation Report

Appendix B: A Sports Facilities Strategy for Watford 2015-2025

Appendix: C: Equality Impact Analysis

File Reference: None