

Select Committee Culture and Recreation – 12 January 2005

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Playing Pitch Strategy – Scrutiny of Implementation

Purpose

1. To inform the Select Committee of progress made in the implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Background

2. The Committee will recall that a draft playing pitch strategy was produced by the Council, utilising support from Strategic Leisure in late 2003, and that the Committee established a working group to consider the draft, receiving input from interested parties and amend the document for final comment by the Committee, prior to approval by the Cabinet Member.
3. Within the Strategy there are a range of recommendations that relate to strategic planning, facility development and sports development, that are aspirational in nature and as Members will be aware will require significant additional resources to implement in full.
4. The strategic recommendations were identified in the context of levels of playing pitch provision within the Borough and possible solutions to create the level of both supply and quality of facilities. Appendix 1 details the strategic planning recommendations together with an update of progress made against each.
5. Similarly the sports development recommendations, which are also detailed at Appendix 1 relate to the use of Team Generation Rates to both benchmark sports participation within the borough and to compare this with surrounding boroughs to assist county-wide planning and initiatives and investments. There has been little use made of TGR's as yet but work within the Black Country Sports Partnership has identified this as an area for future co-operative working.
6. The critical area for Members to analyse is in respect of facility development proposals and the priorities for investment, given that the strategy identified costs in excess of £10m to both develop and improve facilities in accordance with the supply and demand modelling exercise.

7. Within the Council's current capital strategy (2005) 'addressing the key issues identified in the playing pitch strategy' is identified as a key investment priority for the next 5 years. In short those key issues can be summarised as follows:-
 - Accommodating the increased demand for junior/mini soccer pitches
 - Encouraging/enabling greater use of school pitches
 - Enhancing carrying capacity of existing pitches and where necessary providing changing accommodation
 - Development of appropriate new facilities.
8. In terms of the growing demand for junior/mini soccer pitches this is being 'managed' within the service. In some instances this has meant that some senior pitches have been converted for use as either junior/mini soccer pitches, and on balance this has not been particularly problematic, although some Members may be aware of instances where increased usage of a particular site has led to certain issues being raised eg increased traffic; noise nuisance.
9. Insofar as the use of education sites is concerned there has been very little progress made corporately. There is established public use on a number of school pitches and this continues to provide important facilities to football teams and revenue to schools but there is no overarching framework within such use operates and it will be difficult, to implement one given the changing legal relationship between the Council and individual schools.. Such use will continue on the basis of local agreement relying on the goodwill of individual schools and the positive relationships that they have with local teams.
10. The most challenging area of the strategy relates to investment to either improve existing or provide new facilities. 'Priorities for Investment' were identified as part of the strategy's development and approval and attached at Appendix 2 is the list of priority areas for new facilities together with an update of progress made.
11. As Members will readily identify there has been very limited progress made with the priority sites, principally due to the lack of available finance to support these projects. Funding for playing pitch improvements can potentially come via Section 106 funding and as Members will be aware the use of such resources is very tightly controlled as part of a legal agreement which does not allow much discretion in the use of these funds.
12. Traditionally the main use for Section 106 sums has been in the provision of either on or off-site children's play facilities and investment in formal sports facilities from this source has been very limited other than via the provision of multi-use games areas

- 13 In addition to Section 106 resources another principal source of funding that could support the implementation of the playing pitch strategy is 'Liveability' funding. The parks that are eligible to Liveability grant aid are in the process of developing parks master plans to identify the range of improvements that are required by the local community to govern both the use of their existing liveability allocation and to support bids for external funding.
14. At present there are 12 master plans that have been prepared with the total funding required for implementation significantly exceeding the funding available. Whilst the majority of the items do not relate to the playing pitch strategy there are, nevertheless, a number of actual developments and/or proposals that do support the strategy including:-

Location	Project	Status
Priory Park	Multi-Use Games Area	Completed
Priory Park	Refurbishment of tennis courts	Completed
Priory Park	5 a side football	Planned
Grange Park	Multi-Use Games Area	Completed
Grange Park	Cricket Wicket	Planned
Grange Park	Junior 5 a side pitch re-orientation	Planned
Netherton Park	Multi-Use Games Area	Master Plan
Wordsley Park	Multi-Use Games Area	Master Plan
Buffery Park	Multi-Use Games Area	Master Plan
Buffery Park	Refurbish Tennis Courts	Master Plan
Green Park	Multi-Use Games Area	Completed
Green Park	New Changing Rooms	Completed
Green Park	Renovated Pitches	In Progress
Green Park	Artificial Cricket Wicket	Planned
Pedmore & Wychbury	Football Pitch Improvements	Planned

15. Finally the Council's own mainstream capital programme is a possible source of funding to support the strategy but in real terms has not been accessed for playing pitch developments in recent years. However a bid will be submitted for the 2006/07 financial year's capital programme to support the changing room proposals for North Dudley, Central Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen as part of a further application to the Football Foundation.
16. In conclusion it would be fair to say that only limited progress has been made with regard to the implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy, in particular the priority areas for new investment which, because of the scale of projects, requires a significant Council contribution to be made in order to take projects forward for development, either with or without external funding.
17. More progress has been made in the provision of informal recreation areas, with specific reference to Multi-Use Games Areas which are becoming relatively significant in number and provide excellent facilities

for sports clubs and organisations and locally accessible facilities that can be used on an ad hoc basis by local people

18. However, in order to make progress on the major playing pitch infrastructure improvements will require a sizeable sum being identified for inclusion within the Council's Capital Programme from either mainstream or Section 106 sources for the 2006/07 financial year.

Finance

19. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. However, the implementation of the strategy will require resources to be made available in order to achieve the outcomes sought.

Law

20. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its statutory functions.
21. Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976, empowers the Council to provide recreational facilities in its area.
22. There is a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to account for the implications of the impact of community safety of actions and decisions relating to service areas.

Equality Impact

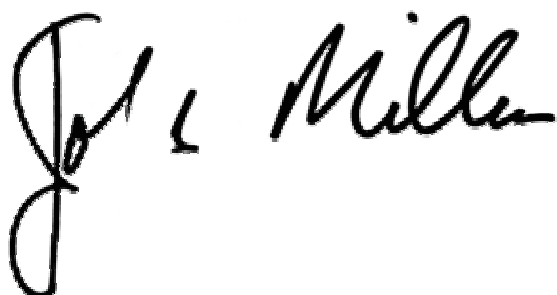
23. The proposals contained in this report are in full accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policies and should in no way have any impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

24. That the Committee considers the content of the report and comments accordingly.

J MILLAR

Director of the Urban Environment

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. L. Miller', with a stylized, looped initial 'J'.

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List of Background Papers