

Information / Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny

25 March 2024

Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham – Phase 2 – built facilities and playing pitch assessments

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

On 2 April, Cabinet will be asked to note the findings and recommendations from two important elements that will form the evidence base for our physical activity and sport strategy; assessments of the Cheltenham, built sporting facilities and its playing pitches. Cabinet will also be asked to oversee the development of an action plan that will set out what the Council can do in response to the recommendations.

Overview and Scrutiny has asked to receive an update on the physical activity and sports strategy in order that it can contribute to the discussion about how best to support physical activity in Cheltenham.

This report provides a brief overview of the process and the emerging findings. The cabinet report will provide more detailed information.

2. Summary of the Issue

In the Council's corporate plan 2023-2027, we set out our commitment to work with partner organisations to develop a sports strategy for Cheltenham in the expectation that this will improve sports provision and help improve health and wellbeing opportunities for local people.

The strategy is needed to help the council address some of the following challenges:

- Determining the longer-term future of Leisure at Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium.
- Addressing long-term health inequalities within some of our communities

- Addressing inequalities in access to community-based physical activity opportunities

But also needed to harness some significant opportunities:

- How we support communities to meet their own ambitions to be physically active and help secure investment into improving local facilities;
- How we use sport and physical activity to support the longer-term growth ambitions of Cheltenham by ensuring people lead healthy, fulfilling and productive lives

In July, Cabinet agreed [agreed a draft vision](#) and outcomes for physical activity and sports which was the result of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

The draft vision is:

Cheltenham is a place where everyone has the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from physical activity and sports, creating active, healthy and happy communities

The three outcomes are as follows:

- Cheltenham is a place where all our communities enjoy and benefit from physical activity;
- Our physical and community infrastructure is accessible and affordable but also high-quality and sustainable; and
- We will collaborate to create active and inclusive communities.

Cabinet also committed to updating its playing pitch and built facilities assessments. Together, these studies will provide a rich picture of our current infrastructure and how well it will meet the future needs in our communities, along with an action plan for how we secure funding to improve provision.

The assessments provide a technical evidence base to shape future investments within the context of:

- An up-to-date picture of our population;
- An up-to-date picture of current provision;
- An up-to-date assessment of future needs in respects of sports and recreation facilities, clearly identifying any under/over provision up to 2041.

The assessments also set out how the planning system, changes in policy and potential funding bids can deliver improvements to the physical infrastructure that underpins sports and physical activity.

This second phase of work was the subject of a procurement exercise and Max Associates was appointed to carry out both the playing pitch and built sports facilities assessments.

Work on the strategies commenced in July 2023 with work on the Built Facilities strategy concluding in January 2024 and the Playing Pitch strategy concluding in March 2024.

The two assessments will be presented to Cabinet and agreement sought to move to the third phase which will see an action plan created to support future investment into our sporting facilities and also to guide the Council's future work.

3. The Built Facilities assessment

The Built Facilities assessment looked at the following sports and leisure provision:

Athletics tracks
Bowls (indoor and outdoor)
Cycling facilities
Gym and fitness facilities
Gymnastics
Indoor cricket
Indoor football and futsal
Indoor Lacrosse
Indoor swimming pools (minimum size 160sqm)
Netball (indoor and outdoor)
Outdoor education type facilities
Sports halls 3+ courts size (badminton, basketball and volleyball)
Squash
Tennis (indoor and dedicated outdoor), plus padel and pickleball
Village halls/community halls and their role in providing sport and physical activity opportunities
Wheeled sports (ramps and facilities for BMX, skateboard, scooters)

Consultation was undertaken with national governing bodies, sports clubs, schools and parish councils and the assessment uses Sport England Tools such as Active Places Power and Active Lives data.

In addition, Sport England Facility Planning Models (FPM) were completed for sports halls and swimming pools in October-November 2023. These studies are a quantitative, accessibility and spatial assessment of the supply, demand and access.

Key themes emerging from the built facilities assessment

- Future consideration of options for the future of Leisure at Cheltenham due to its importance as the only public facility in the borough, its extensive off-peak availability and its proximity to some of more deprived areas.
- Given dependence on educational sector in providing sports facilities (sports hall and swimming pools), CBC should continue to work in partnership with schools and

encourage investment/modernisation where community access is given and consider a communication plan to keep the various partners informed.

- The Council should also work with education providers to increase community access to sports halls, with increased secured community access provided through formal community use agreements.
- General theme of protecting existing sporting facilities through the local plan process and maintaining council-owned facilities.
- Cheltenham Borough Council to continue dialogue with NGBs to increase usage, financial sustainability and to identify if there are any possible club led opportunities for improved facilities.
- The Council should continue to build relationships with local sporting clubs to explore the potential of facilitating club-led improvements of their facilities.
- Many users of Cheltenham sporting facilities come from Tewkesbury Borough. It will be important to understand TBC's future plans with regards to facility strategies.
- Where appropriate, Cheltenham Borough Council should seek to secure developer contributions from strategic developments that could contribute towards the development of sporting facilities – either on-site or off-site.

4 The Playing pitch assessment

The Playing Pitch assessment looked at the following outdoor pitch sports:

- Football;
- Rugby Union;
- Rugby League;
- Lacrosse;
- Hockey;
- Cricket: and
- Other Sports (eg American Football)

Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) relevant to the sports noted above will also be captured, as will any ancillary provision that accompanies any pitches included with the agreed scope.

The PPS has been developed in line with Sport England's 'Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy', which was published in October 2013.

Key themes emerging from the playing pitch assessment:

- Consider plans to improve the quality of pitches that are considered poor
- Consider plans to improve the security of tenure of sporting club use of school pitches
- Consider plans to improve the ancillary facilities which are identified as poor
- Consider plans to improve other associated infrastructure such as floodlighting to increase capacity
- Liaise with sport national governing bodies about possible 3G pitch provision at the following sites with the potential to be suitable for multi-sports, subject to further testing and feasibility studies:
 - Petersfield Park

- Leisure at Cheltenham/Prince of Wales Stadium;
- Consider 3G pitch provision at other sites assuming community use agreements in place
- Create additional capacity for other sports on existing artificial grass pitches when new 3G pitches are developed by encouraging the relocation of football training demand
- Secure new sporting pitches as part of the strategic developments at North West Cheltenham and West Cheltenham

4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider

Cabinet are being requested to delegate authority to the Director of Community & Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, to finalise the playing pitch strategy and agree an action plan to deliver the Council’s physical activity and sporting ambitions.

The action plan will bring together the Council’s response to the findings and recommendations from the two assessments.

The council is also preparing to commission consultants to undertake an options appraisal of the future provision of Leisure at Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales stadium to include indicative capital costs.

The committee are welcome to consider a further update on the development of the action plan.

Background Papers

Contact Officer

Richard Gibson
 Head of communities, wellbeing & partnerships
Richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk

Accountability

Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing