

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Cabinet - 23 July 2024

### Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham: Phase 2 – Playing Pitch Strategy

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**Accountable member:**

Councillor Martin Horwood - Cabinet Member Economic Development, Wellbeing & Culture

**Accountable officer:**

Richard Gibson - Head of Communities, Wellbeing & Partnerships

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

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**Key Decision:** No

**Executive summary:**

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, to improve and further develop sport provision and help ensure more opportunities for external funding in order to improve health and wellbeing opportunities for local people”***

In July 2023, Cabinet agreed a draft vision and outcomes for physical activity and sports which was the result of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Cabinet also committed to updating its playing pitch and built facilities strategies. These strategies are needed to provide a picture of our current infrastructure and how well it will meet the future needs in our communities, along with an investment plan for how we secure funding to improve provision.

This second phase of work was the subject of a procurement exercise utilising the Sports England procurement framework. Max Associates was appointed to carry out both the playing pitch and built sports facilities strategies, with the playing pitch element being sub-contracted to consultants FMG.

Work on the strategies commenced in July 2023 with work on the Built Facilities strategy being

reported to Cabinet in April 2024. The Playing Pitch strategy was prepared on a longer timeframe to enable the full assessment of both winter and summer sports provision. This has now been concluded and is hereby presented to Cabinet for approval.

Cabinet in April also endorsed the move to the third phase which will see an over-arching physical activity and sports strategy and accompanying action plan that will review investment into our sporting facilities with identified organisations and partners and which will address issues such as capacity-building for sports organisations in less affluent communities. This wider action plan will be presented to Cabinet later this year.

**Recommendations: That Cabinet:**

- 1. notes the findings and recommendations from the Playing Pitch Strategy as set out in section 4.6 and attached as appendix 2.**
- 2. shares the Playing Pitch Strategy with all the organisations and partners identified in the action plan for review.**
- 3. delegates authority to the Director for Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Economic Development, Wellbeing & Culture, to make any final amendments to the Playing Pitch Strategy.**
- 4. notes that an over-arching physical activity and sports strategy and accompanying action plan that will deliver the council's vision and outcomes for physical activity and sports as set out in section 3, will be brought to Cabinet later this year.**

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## **1. Implications**

### **1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications**

Whilst there are no direct financial implications from the playing pitch strategy recommendations, there may well be financial costs for the council associated with the implementation of the over-arching physical activity and sports strategy.

These costs, be they capital or revenue, will be fully understood and approval sought in line with the council's usual financial and budget processes.

**Signed off by:** [gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk).

### **1.2 Legal implications**

There are direct legal implications arising from this report. The council has discretionary powers under various legislative provisions to provide sport and leisure facilities and also provide financial assistance to others to do so.

One Legal will be able to provide legal advice and assistance surrounding potential grant funding opportunities to the council or from the council or third parties. Such will have Subsidy

Control implications to consider.

**Signed off by:** One Legal, [legalservices@onelegal.org.uk](mailto:legalservices@onelegal.org.uk)

### 1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

The completed dashboard and summary report are attached as **appendix 3**. The strategy is generally positive in its contribution to environmental and social outcomes.

#### Physical Activity & Sports Strategy



In advance of the over-arching physical activity and sports strategy and accompanying action plan coming to Cabinet in the Autumn. Sustainability frameworks will be devised to offer support to local community and sports groups in sustainable transitions, to effectively target investment, and reduce negative environmental impacts.

**Signed off by:** [maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### 1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

The Physical Activity and Sports Strategy will contribute to

Priority 4: Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham’s future growth and prosperity

### 1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

The completed community impact assessment is attached as **appendix 4**. The action from the impact assessment is to work with key partners and stakeholders to develop over-arching strategy and action plan that will address inactivity inequalities

## **1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review**

Once the playing pitch strategy is signed off, work will commence on the over-arching action physical activity and sports strategy and action plan that will set out how the council and its partners can deliver against the strategy in order that we can demonstrate that it is making progress towards the achieving the vision.

The action plan, will set out what actions will be taken under each of the objectives and shared commitments. The actions will be identified for those to be taken in the next year, in the medium-term and in the longer-term.

The plan will also identify which person or organisation is responsible for the action and a timescale.

Progress against the action plan will be monitored via steering group meetings at which those that are accountable for actions will be asked to supply updates.

Consideration will also be given to placing the action plan on the forward plan for the council's overview and scrutiny committee to test the monitoring and performance in future years.

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## **2. Background**

**2.1** 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, to improve and further develop sport provision and help ensure more opportunities for external funding in order to improve health and wellbeing opportunities for local people.

**2.2** The strategy will not only assist in the development of a wider sports and physical activity strategy but will also be a tool to help inform the council in addressing some of the following challenges:

- Determining the longer-term future of Council physical activity facilities, particularly Leisure at Cheltenham and Prince of Wales Stadium. Due to their age, both facilities require significant investment.
- Addressing health inequalities – health data identifies that some of our geographic communities face long-term health inequalities. Local partners have assessed data relating to a range of health conditions including obesity, depression and heart disease. The data paints a picture that low income communities have worse health outcomes than more affluent communities.
- Access to physical activities - we are aware that some of our low income communities do not have the same access to physical activity opportunities as more affluent communities.

**2.3** The strategy will also assist to harnessing some significant opportunities:

- Our communities are ambitious and are coming forward with plans to deliver improved activity and sports facilities; both Cheltenham Saracens FC and Belmont School have developed multi-million pound sporting schemes. A new strategy can

help create the framework by which these communities can access external investment.

- Creating opportunities to be more physically active and to enjoy sports is going to be central to creating sustainable and healthy communities in our growth areas such as Elms Park and Golden Valley developments. The over-arching strategy will set out how we can use physical activity and sports to support the longer-term growth ambitions of Cheltenham, and inform the preparation of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan together with identifying future priorities for infrastructure, negotiation of Section 106 obligations and allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy.

### 3. Summary of the vision and outcomes for physical activity and sports

3.1 Cabinet in July 2023 agreed the following draft vision:

***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.**

3.2 The vision and outcomes for physical activity and sport created a framework for the second phase of the strategy – which is the assessment and future strategy for the physical infrastructure that underpins sports and physical activity in Cheltenham, split into a playing pitch strategy and built sporting facilities strategy.

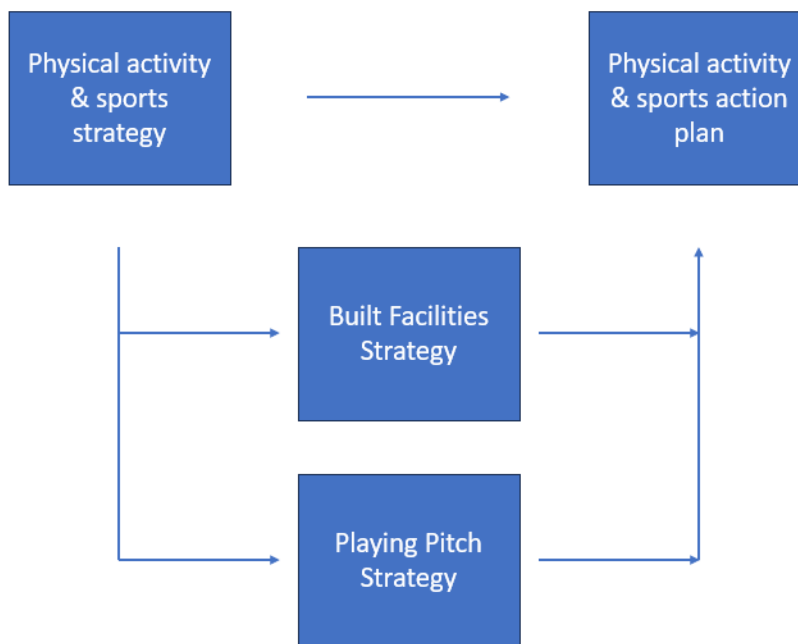
3.3 To achieve the vision agreed with partners, the strategies should deliver against the following objectives:

- Cheltenham has the physical sporting infrastructure (playing pitches and built facilities) needed to ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy sports and physical activity.
- Cheltenham has the community sporting infrastructure (clubs, teams, and groups) needed to ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy sports and physical activity.
- That this physical and community infrastructure is of appropriate quality, is in the right place to meet current and projected future demand, meets up-to-date standards of accessibility and is sustainable over the longer-term.
- We create active communities where everyone has the chance to be active and thrive.

3.4 The strategies provide a technical evidence base to shape potential future investments and priorities 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.

**3.5** The council went out to procurement via Sport England's Active Environments Framework and after a thorough analysis, Max Associates was appointed to carry out both the playing pitch and built sports facilities strategies. This included the sub-contracting of the playing pitch strategy to consultants FMG.



*The relationship between the over-arching physical activity and sports strategy action plan and the supporting built facilities strategy and the playing pitch strategy*

## **4. The Playing Pitch Strategy**

**4.1** The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) considers the following outdoor pitch sports:

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

**4.2** The provision of Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) relevant to the sports above was also

assessed, as was any associated ancillary facilities.

**4.3** 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.

**4.4** The guidance references a 10 step, 5 stage approach:

- Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1);
- Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (Steps 2 & 3);
- Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views (Steps 4, 5 & 6);
- Stage D: Develop the strategy (Steps 7 & 8);
- Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (Steps 9 & 10).

**4.5** The Playing Pitch Strategy covers stages A – D of the approach.

**4.6** The table below sets out the key findings for each sport along with some provisional areas for consideration that still need to be robustly tested before inclusion within the final playing pitch strategy.

**4.7** Please note the following definitions of secured and unsecured.

**4.8** Community use of a site is deemed to be secured if use has been confirmed for three years. Unless known otherwise, Local Authority, Town Council and Parish Council sites are deemed to have secured community use. Clubs’ sites would be deemed secured, dependent on the type of agreement they have in place with the site owner

**4.9** The term unsecured mainly relates to educational sites where the following should be in place to ensure certainty of secured community use (if not in place, then the site provides unsecured community use):

- A formal community use agreement;
- A leasing or management agreement requiring pitches to be available to the community/a community club;
- A formal policy for community use adopted by the owner and or educational establishment;
- Written confirmation from the owner and or educational establishment.

Sector	Overview	Summary of recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are currently 44 sites in Cheltenham Borough that provide grass football pitches, this equates to 95 pitches in total. There are 54 pitches that are available for community use across 21 sites.</li> <li>• 41% (39) of pitches assessed as good, 39% (37) of pitches were assessed as standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to protect all existing sites used for football.</li> <li>• Seek to secure sites that have been identified as unsecured for football.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to work with clubs who are keen to take on the management and operation of Council pitch sites.</li> </ul>

Sector	Overview	Summary of recommendations
	<p>and 20% (19) of pitches were assessed as poor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All poor quality pitches that are available for community use (12), are located on Council sites.</li> <li>• There are currently 167 male teams playing in Cheltenham Borough and 15 female teams.</li> <li>• If future demand forecast by clubs who took part in the consultation was realised, an additional 34 football teams would be created in the Borough.</li> <li>• The greatest amount of demand generated would be for youth boys' football, this would account for 44% of all new teams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to improve the quality of poor and standard quality grass pitches to a good standard.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to work with clubs to improve the quality of ancillary facilities.</li> <li>• Seek to support any displaced demand to return to the Borough by ensuring that there is enough provision of the right quality to meet this demand.</li> <li>• Where there is demand, consider opportunities to bring unmarked pitches back in to use for football.</li> <li>• Work with Gloucestershire FA on a plan for how clubs are able to meet the relevant Stadium Accreditation to progress through the system.</li> <li>• Work with the Gloucestershire FA and the Football Foundation to update the Local Football Facilities Plan for Cheltenham once the PPS has been approved by Cabinet.</li> </ul>
3G AGP's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is currently one full size 3G AGP in Cheltenham Borough that is located at All Saints Academy. There is also a full size World Rugby compliant 3G pitch located just outside the Borough at Cheltenham Tigers Rugby Club.</li> <li>• There is also a smaller sized 3G AGP at Civil Service Sports Ground which is also located just outside of the Borough.</li> <li>• 50 teams currently train on sand based pitches or 3G AGPs outside of the Borough due to a lack of provision.</li> <li>• Could also be demand from rugby league and lacrosse to access 3G AGPs in Cheltenham.</li> <li>• Shortfall of 4 full size 3G AGPs in Cheltenham.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to protect the existing stock of 3G AGPs in the Borough and maintain their quality.</li> <li>• Encourage sites identified as potentially being able to provide 3G pitches to undertake any necessary feasibility work to understand if a 3G pitch is viable. These sites include Petersfield Park, the Prince of Wales Stadium; Pittville School and Bournside School.</li> <li>• Seek to ensure that any current or future 3G AGPs have a longer term maintenance plan place that enables them to be resurfaced when required.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities where any new 3G AGPs can be developed to meet demand from rugby union, rugby league, American football and lacrosse teams.</li> <li>• Seek to ensure than any future 3G AGP developments are delivered strategically to meet the identified shortfalls, this should be done in conjunction with the PPS steering group.</li> </ul>
Rugby Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are currently 43 rugby union pitches identified within Cheltenham Borough across 15 sites, 28 pitches are on education sites.</li> <li>• There are three community rugby union clubs located in the Borough and four just outside of it.</li> <li>• All grass rugby union pitches in the Borough have been assessed as being basic quality.</li> <li>• If demand forecast by community rugby union clubs was realised, there could be up to 24 new teams created.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to protect existing community rugby union pitches.</li> <li>• Explore options to improve the security of tenure of rugby clubs.</li> <li>• Encourage the clubs, in partnership with the RFU to improve the quality of pitches via access to the Grass Pitch Maintenance fund and also seek investment into wider ancillary facilities including sports-lighting to support wider demand.</li> <li>• Consider other community rugby union club sites that may benefit from providing additional sports lighting on pitches to</li> </ul>



Sector	Overview	Summary of recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are two pitches with spare capacity to accommodate rugby union on a Sunday.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meet midweek training demand.</li> <li>Consider opportunities to provide World Rugby compliant 3G AGPs to help alleviate overplay on community rugby union club sites.</li> </ul>
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are currently five hockey clubs based in Cheltenham Borough who between them have 25 teams.</li> <li>Out of 11 full-sized AGPs, there are 8 available for community use.</li> <li>There are 12 teams exported outside of the Borough as they are unable to access hockey AGPs for midweek training. This is partially due to them being used by football clubs.</li> <li>There is spare capacity of 8.5 hours per for midweek training on hockey AGPs in the Borough and 14.5 hours of spare capacity at weekends. This spare capacity identified is on sites where tenure is deemed unsecured and is therefore discounted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore how best to secure use at all sites currently used by hockey clubs in the Borough.</li> <li>Encourage all hockey AGPs providers to have a long term maintenance plan and sinking fund in place to resurface the pitch when required and that when pitches are resurfaced, they are done so to the appropriate standard to meet the requirement for hockey.</li> <li>Support sites that provide AGPs for hockey to replace their existing sports lights with LEDs.</li> <li>Explore how football demand currently catered for on sand-based AGPs can be transferred to 3G AGPs to create additional capacity for hockey clubs.</li> <li>Work with clubs, sites and England Hockey to explore how to create sufficient capacity to allow for the future growth of hockey in the Borough, including match play, training and recreational programmes.</li> </ul>
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are currently 12 sites in Cheltenham Borough that provide grass cricket pitches, this equates to 22 grass cricket pitches in total. Seventeen of these pitches are currently available for community use.</li> <li>There are currently two cricket clubs playing in Cheltenham Borough and three who are just outside the boundary. Between them these clubs have a total of 70 teams.</li> <li>There were 20 cricket pitches assessed as good in Cheltenham Borough, one as standard and one as poor.</li> <li>If future demand identified by clubs was realised, there would be seven additional cricket teams created.</li> <li>There are current and future shortfalls identified on cricket pitches in Cheltenham across all three of the peak periods, Saturday, Sunday and midweek.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to protect existing cricket pitches to meet demand.</li> <li>Explore how best to secure longer term use of sites where clubs do not have security of tenure.</li> <li>Seek to improve the pitch quality at Swindon Village Park.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to bring unmarked pitches back in to use to meet shortfalls identified.</li> <li>Explore how any proposed housing developments can meet demand for cricket in the Borough.</li> <li>Seek to support local cricket clubs improve their ancillary provision including car parking..</li> <li>Seek to support the ECB to implement programmes such as Allstars, Dynamo's and softball cricket for Cheltenham residents</li> </ul>
Rugby League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cheltenham Phoenix play and train outside the Borough at Cheltenham Tigers RFC.</li> <li>Cheltenham Phoenix reported that they are looking to grow two new girls' teams for the 2024 season at under 14's and under 16's.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to protect the existing senior rugby league pitch at Cheltenham Tigers RFC and secure use for Cheltenham Phoenix with an appropriate agreement.</li> <li>Identify opportunities where the Cheltenham Phoenix could play within Cheltenham Borough. Ensuring that any provision provides secure tenure.</li> <li>Consider how future 3G provision could meet the needs and requirements of Cheltenham Phoenix</li> </ul>

Sector	Overview	Summary of recommendations
Lacrosse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is one lacrosse club from Cheltenham Borough, which is Cheltenham Lacrosse club. They play at Civil Service Sports Ground.</li> <li>• Cheltenham Lacrosse Club highlighted some issues accessing 3G pitch provision for training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to protect the existing lacrosse pitch at Civil Service Sports Ground..</li> <li>• Consider how future 3G provision could meet training demand from Cheltenham Lacrosse Club.</li> </ul>

## 5. Consultation and feedback

5.1 The playing pitch strategy has been prepared on the basis of extensive consultation with Sport England, the national governing bodies, local sporting clubs and associations, plus community organisations.

5.2 A summary of the findings from the Built Facilities and Playing Pitch strategies was also shared with the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 March 2024.

## 6. Key risks

6.1 The key risks are that without a robust and up to date strategy, the council will be unable to:

- Develop a long-term vision and investment plan for Leisure at Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium.
- Not have an appropriate evidence base to inform the preparation of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan and not being able to negotiate effectively on development sites across the borough and maximise investment in sports provision to meet the needs of local communities

### Report author:

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### Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Playing Pitch Strategy
- iii. Climate Change Impact Assessment
- iv. Equality Impact Assessment

### Background information:

[Report to Cabinet 25 July 2023](#) - Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham – Part 1 - [our draft vision and outcomes for physical activity and sport in Cheltenham](#)

Report to Cabinet 2 April 2024 - Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham – [Part 2 Built Facilities strategy](#)

[Report to Overview and Scrutiny 25 March 2023](#) - Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham – Phase 2 – built facilities and playing pitch assessments

**Appendix 1: Risk Assessment**

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
385	If the council does not have a long term vision and investment plan in place for its sports and leisure venues then significant unplanned maintenance, repairs and investment may be required to keep the venues running and it may undermine the ability of the Trust (or any future provider) to run leisure services	Claire Hughes	4	4	16	Reduce	Source external consultancy support to deliver sports assessment and recommendations for investment  Develop long term investment plan and specific options appraisal of leisure venues	Richard Gibson	Brief finalised by 1 September 2024
	If the council is not able to set out a robust assessment of current sporting and physical activity provision and a strategy for how to meet demand, there is a risk that provision will not be met appropriately via the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan.	Tracey Birkinshaw	3	2	6	Reduce	Undertake phase 2 work – playing pitch strategy and built facilities assessment.  Once complete incorporate assessments with the review of the statutory development plan for Cheltenham via the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan	Richard Gibson	Closed by the approval of strategy by Cabinet 23/7/24

