

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 20 May 2025

Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham - Action Plan

Accountable member:

Cllr Rowena Hay - Leader

Accountable officer:

Richard Gibson - Head of Communities, wellbeing & partnerships

Ward(s) affected:

n/a

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 2023, the Council worked collaboratively with stakeholders including local clubs and national governing bodies to develop an overarching [vision for physical activity and sport](#) that was agreed by Cabinet in July 2023.

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 Council also updated its playing pitch and built leisure and sports facilities strategies which were endorsed by Cabinet in 2024. These strategies provide a picture of current infrastructure and how well it meets future needs, along with a set of recommendations to improve provision.

The action plan has been developed to respond to the recommendations from the playing pitch and built leisure and sports facilities strategies, plus information from demographic data, recent consultations and ongoing engagement with the national

governing bodies across the sports identified by the playing pitch and built leisure and sports facilities strategies.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- 1. endorses the physical activity and sports action plan, attached as Appendix 2.**
 - 2. delegates authority to the Director for Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Leader, to make any final amendments to the action plan as it is presented in its final designed format.**
 - 3. uses the action plan to establish a sports and physical activity steering group that will oversee the progress of the action plan identifying where partners can work collaboratively to support delivery.**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

Whilst there are no direct financial implications from the physical activity action plan, there are a number of projects that will have financial implications for the Council.

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

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, and any procurement requirements for necessary goods, works or services arising as a result of this report. It should be noted that the Council is required to consider whether there are any Subsidy Control implications and One Legal will be able to assist with this.

Signed off by: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk, One Legal

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 Action Plan



It is proposed that specific sustainability guidance for sports and physical activity is developed that will provide practical advice to support community leads who manage and maintain built leisure & sports facilities and playing pitches to encourage sustainable transitions, to effectively target investment, and reduce negative environmental impacts.

The guidance will sign post to nationally recognised organisations such as Sports England and the Local Council documents to support with improving facility energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gases, and mitigating flood risk. Local case studies will also be included to showcase projects which are achieving effective energy efficiency and flood risk management.

The guidance will also ensure actions taken within the Physical activity and sports action plan align with the Council's net zero ambitions, mitigate negative environmental impacts and support with effectively targeting investment.

Signed off by; Maizy McCann, Climate Officer

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 deliver the three actions from the action plan that specifically progress equality and diversity commitments.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

The action plan sets out what actions will be taken under each of the outcomes. The actions are identified for those to be taken in the current year, in the medium-term and in the longer-term.

The plan also identifies which person or organisation is responsible for the action and suggested measures of success.

Progress against the action plan will be monitored via stakeholder 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

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 In 2023, the Council worked collaboratively with stakeholders to develop an overarching vision for physical activity and sport that was agreed by [Cabinet in July 2023](#).

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

2.3 This vision was supported by three outcomes:

- Our physical and community infrastructure is accessible and affordable but also high-quality and sustainable;
- Cheltenham is a place where all our communities enjoy and benefit from physical activity and

- We will collaborate to create active and inclusive communities.

2.4 The Council also committed to updating its playing pitch and built leisure and sports facilities strategies. These strategies provide a picture of current infrastructure and how well it meets future needs, along with a set of recommendations to improve provision.

2.5 Work on the supporting strategies commenced in July 2023 with work on the Built Leisure and Sports 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 was presented to [Cabinet in July 2024](#).

2.6 Alongside the playing pitch and built leisure and sports facilities strategies, the Council has also sourced demographic data from Sport England and undertaken engagement activities direct with sport's governing bodies and where relevant local sports clubs, set out in more detail in section 4. In addition regard has been given to recent engagement undertaken with young people by the St. Giles Trust that was reported to [Cabinet in February 2025](#).

3 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 The development of the action is one of the commitments set out in the 2023-2027 corporate plan and was actioned by.

- working with stakeholders to agree a vision and outcomes for physical activity and sports
- undertaking detailed assessments of the infrastructure that supports the delivery of physical activity and sports
- reviewing the latest data on physical activity and reviewed engagement findings.

3.2 The action plan provides an important part of the evidence base for the consideration of planning applications and an input into the preparation of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan

3.3 The action plan has been developed to respond to the recommendations from the playing pitch and built leisure and sports facilities strategies, plus information from demographic data and recent consultations which Cabinet is now being asked to endorse.

3.4 Cabinet will note that some of the actions are reliant on a number of stakeholders for their delivery alongside securing funding. Developing a steering group will be a key action to work collaboratively on the action plan and will be an important group in monitoring progress and identify any challenges/blockages.

4 Consultation and feedback

4.1 The Council carried out a physical activity survey between January and March 2024 and which had 163 responses. This was reported to [Cabinet in April 2024](#)

- 87% of respondents felt either reasonably or very active;
- 90% of respondents are either reasonably or very interested in being more active;
- Over 60% of respondents enjoy being active either around their neighbourhood, in local parks or in the countryside.

4.2 Top five ways of keeping active:

Option	Total	Percent
1. Walking	104	63.80%
2. Cycling	45	27.61%
3. Running	44	26.99%
4. Pilates / yoga	44	26.99%
5. Indoor swimming	38	23.31%

4.3 Top five barriers:

Option	Total	Percent
1. Costs of taking part	68	41.72%
2. Lack of time	53	32.52%
3. Having to book in advance, or be a member	38	23.31%
4. Feeling nervous to start a new activity or go to a new place	34	20.86%
5. Getting to places to be active	29	17.79%

4.4 In the summer of 2024, the Council worked with the St. Giles Trust to engage with local young people. Via a survey, which had 578 responses and which was reported to Cabinet in February 2025, young people told us that their most popular free time activities were

- hanging out with friends (62%);
- online activities (59%);
- and sport/physical activity (45%).

4.5 Given the interest of young people in sport and physical activity, there are three recommendations from the [St. Giles Trust report](#). These are:

- Enhance sports infrastructure: Investment in youth-specific sports facilities such as more gyms, football pitches, and recreational areas to meet demand;

- Offer affordable physical activity programmes: Collaborating with local sports organisations to offer free or low-cost programmes to help remove financial barriers and increase participation;
- Promote inclusive sports opportunities: Developing programmes that cater to a wide range of interests and abilities will ensure all young people, regardless of skill level, feel welcome to participate.

5 Key risks

5.1 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, feed into Community Infrastructure Levy funding opportunities and updates to the Infrastructure Delivery 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. Cheltenham action plan for promoting physical activity and sports
- 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 Overview and Scrutiny 25 March 2024](#) - Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham – Phase 2 – built facilities and playing pitch assessments

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

[Report to Cabinet 23 July 2024](#) - Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham
– [Phase 2 –Playing Pitch Strategy](#)

[Report to Cabinet 18 February 2025](#) - Youth Voice – a process for hearing the voice
of young people in Cheltenham

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	Leisure & Culture Venues - If the Council does not have a long term vision & investment plan in place for its leisure & culture venues then significant unplanned maintenance, repairs & investment may be required to keep the venues running & it may undermine the ability of the Trust (or any future provider) to run leisure & culture services in a profitable way.	Claire Hughes	5	4	20	Reduce	- Detailed maintenance plan to be developed - Project to review and appraise venues and identify investment required. - procurement to commence to secure external consultancy support on future options for the leisure-at and PoW site	Richard Gibson	Brief finalised by 31 March 2025
	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 current Cheltenham Plan and the emerging Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan.	Tracey Birkinshaw	2	1	2	Reduce	Ensure the Council is using up to date playing pitch and built facilities findings as the basis of negotiations with developers across all relevant planning applications.	Richard Gibson	Strategies completed. Risk will be closed upon agreement of the action plan by Cabinet and the set up of a steering group.