

Subject: Great Yarmouth Sport, Play & Leisure Strategy

Report to: EMT - 18th June 2015

CBS - 29th June 2015

Cabinet – 9th July 2015

Report by: Robert Read, Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods

Subject Matter: This report summarises the context and headline findings of the Sport, Play & Leisure Strategy and sets out recommendations for next steps

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Consultants, Neil Allen Associates, were appointed in May 2014 to undertake a review of the Council's strategy for sport, play and leisure, to include indoor sport, outdoor playing pitches and children's play. This would incorporate three existing strategies (Needs Based Leisure, Playing Pitches & Play) into one all encompassing comprehensive strategy for 2015-2029.
- 1.2 In addition to laying the foundation for planning sports and leisure provision and development in the most efficient, economical and effective way, the plan should also inform and complement the Council's Local Plan for development of the Borough.
- 1.3 It was anticipated that this large scale piece of work would require a period of up to 12 months from procurement to adoption. A project steering group was set up comprising of GYBC officers and a representative from Active Norfolk (County Sports Partnership) and Sport England.
- 1.4 The consultant commenced work in May 2014 with an initial data audit and analysis plus a consultation workshop with key stakeholders in June 2014.
- 1.5 From July onwards work commenced on consultation with schools and site visits. Public consultation was launched in August through to October with surveys distributed to parish councils, clubs, sports governing Bodies, facility providers, community groups/associations, agencies & organisations. A consultation report was produced prior to Christmas and the final stage has been to draft the Strategy document. This includes three strands; Built facilities (indoor), Playing Pitches (organised sport) and Non-Sports (play, leisure & recreation).
- 1.6 A final draft strategy has now been considered by the Steering Group.

2.0 OVERALL STRATEGY:

- 2.1 In line with Sport England methodology, the action plans for each sport or provision are based on a recommendation to;
- **Protect** existing provision
 - **Enhance** existing provision
 - **Provide** new provision
- 2.2 The Council and its partners are recommended to **protect the overall stock** of sport, play and leisure provision within the borough. This does not mean that facilities cannot be decommissioned but the aim should be to ensure that the overall stock and opportunities changes to meet the needs of an evolving population.
- 2.3 The borough has a reasonable stock of sports & recreation facilities and opportunities but sometimes there is an identified need for refreshment and upgrading to meet changing needs. The emphasis should be on **enhancing provision and management**.
- 2.4 Sometimes it will be necessary to **provide new and/or improved facilities** to meet the evolving needs of the community. However, providing is not just about physical installation, it is about how partners, clubs, groups cooperate in bringing projects to fruition and also sustaining them into the future; key objectives of the strategy will only be addressed **through cooperation and partnership working**. Working to achieve shared aims and objectives always makes sense but is now essential in the financial climate facing public spending.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Built Facilities (Indoor Sport)

Swimming Provision - Based on Marina Centre, Phoenix Pool & Yarmouth High School pools, the current level of provision is sufficient for population numbers but needs to be protected and enhanced.

Sports Halls – Now that each high school has a full size sports hall plus the refurbished Marina Centre, provision is good across the borough. However, partnership work is needed with the education sector to enable community access and use of facilities.

Indoor Bowls –Current levels of provision are very high; any re-development of Marina Centre bowls provision would be mitigated by availability elsewhere.

Squash – All existing provision in the borough ie. Marina centre & Broadland Sports Club should be protected.

Health & Fitness (including studio) – Latent demand identified and net shortage of 100 publically available stations. Expansion recommended at Marina Centre and new development at Phoenix pool.

3.2 PLAYING PITCHES (ORGANISED SPORTS)

- 3.2.1 Pitch provision includes grass pitches available for football, cricket and rugby in the borough; this totals 92 pitches.
- 3.2.2 Of the 92 pitches, 62 (67%) are Borough or Parish Council owned/maintained; 30 (32%) are education sector and 1 is private.
- 3.2.3 In addition, there are two full size **artificial grass pitches** (AGP's) – one sand based pitch at Cliff Park Academy (used for hockey & football) and third generation (3G) pitch at Lynn Grove High School used primarily for football. The supply of AGP's in the borough is well below the average for regional and national standards. Demand at present is primarily for training purposes but the FA has approved AGP's for competitive football and the demand for this will increase in the future.
- 3.2.4 Football Provision** – football remains the most popular pitch sport in the borough; in total there are 160 teams playing across the borough; peak times are Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Future population growth will increase demand. It is suggested that this could be absorbed by the remarking of some pitches to better suit junior/mini football needs. Plus review sites currently underused and reviewing sites with the capacity to lay out additional pitches in the event they are required. There is a need to engage more closely with football clubs to understand pitch requirements and to make best use of space.
- 3.2.5 Cricket Provision** – there are currently 6 teams across the borough operating from 7 sites with existing capacity for Club growth. Some Clubs have aspirations for club development and to field additional teams however, it is not felt population growth will generate any additional requirements.
- 3.2.6 Rugby Provision** – one Club operates in the borough based at Cobholm playing field. Population growth will generate little additional growth however, the Club does wish to consolidate & strengthen their position. It wishes to establish a long term lease (with Norfolk County Council) to enable the Club to access external funding for improvements to its clubhouse and potentially flood lighting.
- 3.2.7 Hockey provision** – one club operates in the Borough, Great Yarmouth Ladies Hockey Club based at Cliff Park High School. No men's team exists in the borough and this is unlikely to change, population growth will generate little additional growth. The Club has issues with the quality of the playing surface and highlights the need to maintain the pitch in accordance with National Governing Body requirements for match play. A shared approach with the high school is essential to the survival of the Club.
- 3.2.8 Outdoor Bowls** – There are 18 greens based on 13 sites in the borough. Most of them are single green sites; the largest being North Drive/Britannia on Great Yarmouth seafront owned by GYBC. Overall there are sufficient greens to meet demand. Data highlights that those aged 50 years & above have historically been more inclined towards bowls rather than other sports and this is evident in the bowls club

memberships. Martham Bowls Cub has been the only club active in attempting to engage with children & young people. It is noted that population changes will show an increase in 55+ age group which may generate additional growth of 7-8 members per Club. Future participation is only likely to grow amongst younger age groups if a more direct approach to recruitment is taken by Clubs. However, this requires coaches and volunteers to make it happen.

3.2.8 Outdoor Tennis – There are estimated to be 31 outdoor courts in the borough and only one established Club, Gorleston LTA. However, there is little evidence overall that the existing network of club and courts is insufficient to meet current demand. Future growth is unlikely to impact on supply and demand. Gorleston Tennis Club is an important local resource for tennis and could be an appropriate venue to channel additional improvements to satisfy future need plus the court facilities adjacent at Cliff Park High School.

3.2.10 Golf – There are two traditional membership Clubs in the borough; Great Yarmouth & Caister and Gorleston. No evidence of latent demand has been identified. Par 3 courses and driving ranges are considered in this assessment. Future population change and demographic growth is likely to increase adult participation. However, existing facilities are likely to be able to absorb additional demand.

3.2.11 Athletics – The borough's dedicated 6-lane floodlit synthetic athletics track is situated at Wellesley Recreation Ground, Great Yarmouth and used for training year round and athletics meetings from May to September. It is owned by GYBC and home to the well established Great Yarmouth & District Athletics Club alongside Great Yarmouth Town Football Club. The track is also used by local school during the summer term as part of existing dual use arrangements. It is suggested that the Wellesley complex could be suited to transfer to a Trust.

3.3 NON-SPORTS (PLAY, LEISURE & RECREATION)

3.3.1 Children & Young People's Play Provision – There is a concentration of play areas in the urban areas and far fewer around the rest of the borough which reflects the distribution of children. However, based on the analysis in the 2013 Open Space Strategy, it might be expected that more play/teen facilities would be located in Hemsby, Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby as well as Yarmouth North, Central and Northgate wards.

3.3.2 Throughout the borough there is a scarcity of teen facilities (15 locations between 4,744 children aged 14-17). Youth/teen provision is identified as a key issue to consider. Whilst some play areas are not considered fit for purpose and it may be better to reduce the number of small play spaces and focus on improving other areas that are accessible to more children.

3.3.3 Ongoing budgetary provision for maintenance is essential however; in rural areas there is the potential to work in partnership with Parish Councils. There is also the potential for

partnership working within Housing Services to develop & improve play & youth facilities in urban areas.

3.4 Walking, Cycling & Rights of Way – Countryside access, the coast and open spaces within the borough is facilitated by a network of Public Rights of Way open to walkers plus the seafronts /promenades that are heavily used for the taking of exercise. In addition, there are also networks & routes promoted for recreational cycling and the Council is actively promoting safer & convenient walking and cycling within the existing highway network in the urban area.

3.5 It is recognised that walking and cycling appeal to a wide cross section of the population, this is evidenced through increasing take up of both activities nationally and locally. Future planned changes in the population will increase demand for walking & cycling routes. However, new development will require detailed consideration for appropriate route development and provision.

3.6 There is great potential for enhancement of existing routes, scope for improvement and potential for development of related projects working in partnership with other providers to promote active use of provision ie. Activating CIC and Great Yarmouth Roadrunners

4.0 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND NEXT STEPS

4.1 The Strategy seeks to set out a framework for the future provision of facilities for sport, play and leisure in the borough of Great Yarmouth. Its main aim is to increase participation in sport & physical activity which is key to improving health & well being outcomes and can also play an important role in the development of self esteem and life skills. Participation in sport is also recognised for broader community safety benefits by providing diversionary activity to anti-social behaviour and through promoting greater community cohesion.

4.3 This strategy will therefore be key to future commissioning decisions in the borough relating to public health, children's and adult services. clinical commissioning and commissioning relating to the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

4.4 For the Borough Council there will be other key considerations. The strategy should be used to guide future planning policy in relation to sports facilities, open spaces and play areas. It should provide a starting point for engaging with residents in neighbourhoods and villages as well as with sports clubs and other interested community groups as part of a wider ranging conversation about the future of their neighbourhood and village and how the facilities in it will be shaped in the future.

4.5 The consultation underlying this strategy also highlights the importance of 'voluntary infrastructure' in helping to create and sustain local opportunities for sport & physical activity. A big challenge facing many activities and facilities is securing sufficient volunteers to support and maintain them. The strategy and action plan will recognise this issue and it needs to dovetail with an overall approach to community development and involving residents.

- 4.6 The strategy should also address the need to ensure that the extent to which sport is subsidised by the Borough Council is minimised. This will mean ensuring that built facilities are managed in a way that reduces the current management fee to zero within a target period and even looks to return an income to the Council in the future.
- 4.7 For outdoor sports, the costs of maintaining pitches and other sporting facilities needs to be met as far as possible from fees and charges or costs reduced or eliminated by reconfiguring or decommissioning facilities looking at other arrangements such as clubs taking responsibility for maintenance themselves, transferring assets or setting up Trust arrangements.
- 4.8 Within this context, the next stage in the process of delivering the Sport, Play and Leisure Strategy will be for the steering group to work through the action plan and to prioritise those pieces of work that are most able to meet the aims outlined above.
- 4.9 The intent of this work has been to develop a strategy for the borough, rather than purely the Borough Council. In keeping with this intention the delivery of the action plan will be about working with partners, external funders and local communities to realise these ambitions. Funding will not follow directly from the council to realise the ambitions in this action plan, although the council we work with others to make these a reality.
- 4.10 As part of the above process it is recommended that a Members Working Group for Sport and Leisure be reconvened to ensure members remain part of this process.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet notes the completion of the Sport, Play & Leisure Strategy, endorses the initial findings contained in the summary document and the overall approach and next steps laid out in this report.