

## **Committee: Borough Plan Advisory Committee**

**Date: 12 September 2019**

**Wards:** all

### **Subject: Merton's Playing Pitch Strategy 2019**

**Lead officer:** Director for Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

**Lead members:** Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing and Councillor

Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Cabinet Member for Commerce, Leisure and Culture

**Contact officers:** Kate O'Donnell, planning policy, Future Merton

Ann Maria Clarke, strategic planner, Future Merton

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### **Recommendation:**

That the Borough Plan Advisory Committee recommends that Cabinet adopt this Playing Pitch Strategy (2019), which will now form part of the evidence base for the Council's new Local Development Plan at the planning inspector examination.

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Council's current Playing Pitch Strategy was published in June 2011. Since then there have been changes to the national planning policy; namely the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), planning legislation and changes to Merton's population and the predicted population growth since 2011.
- 1.2. An Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy (known as the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), is required by the Council to ensure a planned approach to outdoor sport and physical activity facilities in the borough over the medium term and to ensure that residents continue to have access to high quality facilities. The PPS also sets out how the Council and its partners will secure access to high quality opportunities for sport and recreation.
- 1.3. Furthermore, the PPS enables the Council, its partners and developers to plan provision to meet the current and future demand for outdoor sport and recreation facilities and identify whether any pitches are surplus to requirements, whilst also recognising the financial pressures facing the Council and the need for a sustainable approach to revenue and capital spending on outdoor sports provision.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. In January 2018, officers tendered for consultants via the London Tenders Portal to produce a new PPS on behalf of the Council. The winning bid was won by 4global Consulting. The strategy was developed in partnership with Sport England and the National Governing Bodies for Rugby, Cricket,

Hockey, Football and Tennis; and the Council's Leisure, Public Health and Future Merton teams.

2.2. The PPS:

- Acts as evidence for the new Local Development Plan, informs the development of planning policy and the protection of playing pitches.
- Assists with development management decisions for planning applications involving new, improvements to, or the loss of playing fields.
- Supports the need for financial contributions such as Section 106, from developers to meet infrastructure requirements relating to sport, recreation and open space.
- Identifies where improvements and enhancements need to be made to existing facilities across the borough.
- Identifies any social, physical and affordability barriers of existing and new pitches to enable increased activity and participation for all ages, groups and communities.
- Builds on the borough's priorities for community cohesion, accessibility and social inclusion.
- Supports the borough's Health and Wellbeing priorities as set out in Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Highlights the key priorities in the borough and provides up to date evidence to support funding bids to National Sports bodies like Sport England, the National Governing Bodies of sport and the Mayor of London.

2.3. The Sport England methodology identifies four primary stages to preparing a PPS, all of which have been carried out by 4global Consulting in the development of this strategy:

Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach, agree timeline and set up the Steering Group;

Stage B: Gather supply and demand data for the sites and undertake detailed site quality assessments;

Stage C: Through analysis of the supply and demand information captured, identify the key issues; and

Stage D: Develop the action plan and recommendations to produce the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Once the PPS has been adopted, Sport England identify a further Stage E which is to deliver the strategy.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

The alternative option would be to not adopt the PPS. This is not recommended as Sport England and other bodies responsible for grant funding would expect to see a strategic plan adopted to enable any funding bids or significant changes to facilities to move forward. As mentioned above, an adopted PPS is also key to future planning decisions in the borough and required as part of the Local Development Plan evidence base.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. As part of the Stage B process, 4global carried out stakeholder consultations with the relevant sport's National Governing Bodies and Sport England, through detailed individual conversations in addition to the regular Steering Group meetings. Sporting clubs, leagues and schools throughout the borough were also consulted during the site quality audits and demand data capture. The consultation methods that were used included face to face meetings, focus groups, phone conversations and use of the 4global playing pitch online platform.
- 4.2. No further specific consultations are proposed for this strategy, however the PPS will form part of the suite of evidence base documents that will be published and consulted on through the Local Development Plan process.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The PPS will be considered by Cabinet for adoption in 2019.
- 5.2. Once adopted, the PPS can be implemented and used to inform the draft Local Development Plan and future planning applications on applicable sites throughout the borough.

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The costs for the preparation of this strategy fall within the existing Local Development Plan budget and existing Future Merton and Leisure staff resource time.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There is no statutory requirement for the Council to have a PPS, however paragraph 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 states that:

*“Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate”*

- 7.2. The PPS is a key evidence document that informs the development of the Local Development Plan and key evidence document for the Planning Inspector at the Local Development Plan examination.

**8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. None

**9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. None

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. None

**11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

No appendices.

The Playing Pitch Strategy is available to view on the [Council's Local Development Plan Research webpage](#).