

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee

## Agenda Item 32

**Subject:** Sports Facilities Investment Plan (SFIP) – Progress Update

**Date of meeting:** 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Report of:** Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

**For general release**

### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The Sports Facilities Investment Plan 2021-31 (SFIP) was approved by Policy & Resources Committee in June 2021, and was published and launched as the strategic plan for investing in and improving the sports facilities across the city.
- 1.2 One of the key recommendations within the plan was to create three large multi-sports hubs for the city; North (being the existing centre at Withdean Sports Complex), East (a site to be identified in the East of the City), and West (a site to be identified in the West of the City that will replace the King Alfred Leisure Centre).
- 1.3 This report sets out the detailed work undertaken since the launch of the SFIP in 2021, reports on progress made to date and provides an update on the capital projects that are currently being mobilised ready for implementation.
- 1.4 Further detail has been provided in this report about the recent capital investment projects underway at Withdean Sports Complex, including a planned change to the management of the car park.

### 2. Recommendations

*That the Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee:*

- 2.1 Notes the progress and timeline for implementing the capital projects at Withdean Sports Complex which will further enhance the North Hub, as outlined in the Sports Facilities Investment Plan.

- 2.2 Notes the progress on the King Alfred/West Hub redevelopment project and supports the upcoming engagement and consultation on site options planned for early 2024.

### **3. Context and background information**

#### **Sports Facilities Investment Plan Overview**

- 3.1 The Policy & Resources Committee approved the Sports Facilities Investment Plan (SFIP) in July 2021 which included a plan for how the council intends to invest in and improve the sports facilities across the city (see Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The council's ambition is clear; residents and visitors should have access to outstanding sports facilities which support year-round healthy lifestyles and are designed to facilitate inclusion for all. The council recognises the significant contribution that sport and physical activity makes to the quality of life for residents and the local economy.
- 3.3 The importance of providing local authority sport and leisure services, including sports facilities, is set out in the Plan (see p10 in Appendix 1). This provision has become even more important, and valued by residents, as the benefits of having good physical and mental health came to the forefront during the Covid-19 pandemic and remains as the world continues to recover. Despite being a relatively active city (6<sup>th</sup> highest in the country for the % of physically active adults), there are health inequalities that exist within some of the city's communities. Having quality, accessible and inclusive sports facilities will help reduce this inequality by providing more opportunities for more people to be more active.
- 3.4 To give a sense of scale of their importance, the city's leisure facilities attracted over 1.6 million visits in 2018/19 and 2019/20 including over 550,000 swims. Based on current data, it is estimated that the facilities have now recovered to approx. 90% of those pre-pandemic levels.
- 3.5 The quality of the facilities and access to those across the city is key to encouraging and increasing participation. New facilities have a significant impact on participation and based on the supply and demand analysis of the needs of the city along with the increasing costs of maintaining the ageing and inefficient existing facilities the delivery of the SFIP is hugely important and increasingly urgent.
- 3.6 One of the key recommendations within the SFIP was to create 3 large multi-sports hubs for the city, in the North, East and West, as well as investing in and maintaining our network of smaller community leisure centres. This will ensure there is a good geographical spread of provision and will also help to achieve a financially sustainable offer with the larger, more efficient hubs subsidising the less commercial, smaller leisure centres for local communities.

### **'North Hub' Progress and Next Steps – Withdean Sports Complex**

- 3.7 Withdean Sports Complex was identified as the 'North Hub' in the SFIP, and already has good quality, extensive facilities including: a large gym, two studios, squash courts, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, athletics track, grass football pitch, a temporary padel tennis court, training rooms for hire and leased areas such as a large indoor climbing wall facility and sports injury clinic. The intention is to further enhance these existing facilities to broaden the current offer.
- 3.8 There are currently three capital projects planned for the site, which are set out below (and a site map included as Appendix 2);
- 3.9 A new small-sided 3G football pitch facility will be located in the overflow/East end car park. This will be a purpose built all weather pitch floodlit facility that will provide four small sided pitches for recreational 5-a-side football in the city. This was identified as a need and priority in both the 2016 Playing Pitch Strategy and 2019 Local Football Facility Plan. This will also help meet the increasing demand from particular groups including women and girls, which has grown in popularity since the Women's Euros held in the UK (including Brighton & Hove) in 2022 and the recent successes of the England's Women's team on the international stage. The budget has previously been agreed at Policy & Resources Committee in February 2022 and will be funded by allocated S106 monies as well as historical revenue contributions. Following planning permission granted in June 2023, work is anticipated to start on site this winter with completion by the end of the financial year in Spring 2024.
- 3.10 A new 3-court Padel tennis facility will be located towards the East end of the site, behind the existing training room block and adjacent to the Sportsman pub garden. With planning permission secured, this will be the first padel facility in the city and has been designed with floodlighting and a canopy cover to enable all-weather and all year-round use. Padel tennis is an exciting and innovative form of tennis that's fun and easy to learn. It is also one of the fastest growing sports in the UK and will appear for the first time at the Olympics in Paris in 2024. Following the huge interest and usage of the temporary pop-up court installed on this site in 2021, this new bigger facility will be well-used and a great addition to the overall offer at this centre. To deliver this project, our leisure operator Freedom Leisure appointed Game4Padel as their chosen provider, who are investing capital monies to build and then manage/operate the facility. A long-term lease and rental agreement has been agreed and it is anticipated that this project will be completed in Spring 2024.
- 3.11 Two existing, underutilized squash courts are to be converted into a children's soft play and activity space for the under 12's. Centre users and the community have been consulted and 82% supported the proposal, which will provide a much-needed facility for the children and young people in the city. This new facility is expected to generate high-levels of usage and additional income that will support the centre's operations and increase

participation and financial viability long-term. The proposal has already been formally approved at previous Tourism, Equalities Communities & Culture and Policy & Resources Committees. The scheme is approaching cost certainty and final designs, and it is anticipated that the facility will be open and operational by April 2024.

- 3.12 The delivery of these projects in Spring 2024, will be key to enhancing the offer at this site as the 'North Hub', increasing participation and importantly improving the long-term financial sustainability of the site and marks significant progress in delivering the actions outlined within the SFIP.

### **'West Hub' Progress - replacement for the King Alfred Leisure Centre**

#### **3.13 Site Search**

Whilst the current location remains one of the options for the new facility, the decision to replace the current King Alfred facility creates the opportunity to also consider alternative locations. Officers have therefore undertaken an extensive piece of work to examine other possible sites across the west of the city. Relocating the facility to an alternative location has the potential to offer a number of significant benefits, most notably:

- reduced construction costs, recognising that major remediation works would be required on the current site ahead of the delivery of any new facility
- reduced maintenance costs by moving away from the coastal location where environmental weathering is much more severe than for a more sheltered inland location
- the opportunity to make the facility more accessible for more residents, with a 360 degree catchment area reaching more deprived areas where levels of physical activity are currently lowest
- greater placemaking opportunities and more potential to incorporate a health hub with GP practices and other healthcare services
- delivering the maximum possible capital receipt is received for the disposal of the current site, which will be the principal source of funding for the project.

- 3.14 Between autumn 2022 and spring 2023 an extensive site search process has been undertaken. Officers initially examined over 20 sites across the west of the city. To be viable, sites generally had to be at least 1.5 hectares in size in order to accommodate the new, 9,500m<sup>2</sup> facility with all the necessary ancillary features such as parking spaces. Sites were also favoured which were more centrally located in Hove, with good transport connectivity for private road vehicles, public transport, and for active travel.

- 3.15 The sites examined included both public and privately owned sites. Particular attention was given to examining all viable brownfield sites in the west of the city which could offer the potential to deliver the new facility without the loss of open space or biodiversity.

3.16 The sites were assessed by a multi-disciplinary panel of experienced officers drawn from a range of relevant disciplines including planning, sport and leisure, regeneration, finance, legal, and estates. The assessments were conducted in a structured way against 10 criteria to examine each site's relative strengths and weaknesses. These criteria related to themes including location, land ownership, planning considerations, legal constraints, and likely development and maintenance costs.

### 3.17 **Expressions of interest process**

To ensure that all potential sites were identified, in addition to the site search work described above, an 'expressions of interest' (EOI) process was undertaken which ran between January and the end of March 2023. Through this process over 100 developers, landowners, commercial agents, and other sector contacts were invited to come forward with any sites with the potential to accommodate the new facility. Five proposals were received in response to the EOI process, two of which were proposals based on sites which officers had already examined.

3.18 These proposals were also assessed by the same cross-functional site assessment panel using the same approach as used for the officer-identified sites to ensure consistency.

### 3.19 **Outcome of the site search and EOI process**

Through their assessments of the sites, the panel determined that the majority of the sites did not offer the potential for further development. The reasons for not taking forward the other sites are summarised below:

- landowners not prepared to sell their sites
- the sites being too small, too constrained, or not sufficiently well connected to support the development of a landmark sports and leisure facility
- the sites' locations being too remote and not sufficiently accessible for local residents
- a disproportionate loss of open space or biodiversity that could not be readily replaced or mitigated with the new development
- the topography and shape of the site making development costly, and/or compromising the design layout and thus quality of any facility to be delivered on the site
- planning policy constraints on the sites.

3.20 The council is now working with Continuum Sport and Leisure, the council's specialist sport and leisure consultants and architects to examine a range of delivery proposals on the sites that the panel did determine offered potential. This is described in more detail in paragraph 3.23.

## Project engagement to date

- 3.21 A key priority throughout has been to do continuous engagement and ensure people are aware of project progress. This has been achieved to date through an extensive programme of activities which has included:
- Creating a webpage for the redevelopment on the council's website - [King Alfred development \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk), supported by press releases, podcast interview and social media posts.
  - Face-to-face engagement with key stakeholders including resident groups, sports clubs, and groups representing the diversity of the city.
  - Ongoing communication to core users and hirers of the current facility via the leisure operator Freedom Leisure
  - An all-day drop-in event held at the King Alfred Leisure Centre with over 200 people attending
  - A visioning workshop held at the King Alfred Leisure Centre with 40-50 delegates
  - Trust for Developing Communities commissioned to undertake engagement with young people and those from minoritized ethnic groups
  - A new Reference Group has been established, which will act as important sounding board for the project ongoing, and is made up of representatives from the local community, organisations representing communities in the city, and professionals in the sport and leisure industry
- 3.22 In addition there will be communications activity in the coming weeks. The purpose of this activity will be to:
- describe the project's journey to date. This will involve highlighting the extensive engagement work undertaken and the breadth and depth of the site appraisal work to ensure the new facility delivers the best possible value for money for the city
  - generate interest and excitement in the new facility and encourage residents to participate in the engagement programme being undertaken in early 2024.
- 3.23 The key upcoming milestone for the project will be to take a decision on the location for the new facility. This will be informed by the work undertaken with the council's specialist sport and leisure consultants and architects. Each option will be examined for the practical feasibility of delivery, delivery costs and operating costs, likely future revenue, and the wider economic and social benefits each has the potential to deliver. The output of that work will be a preferred option for delivery, with a supporting business case to demonstrate why that represents the most compelling option. Once that has been agreed a programme of engagement will be undertaken in early 2024 to share the proposals with the city.

### 3.24 **Early 2024 engagement on site options**

During early 2024 the council will undertake a programme of engagement on the site options. The principal channel of engagement will be through the council's established on-line engagement portal. This will be supported by a series of face-to-face engagement sessions which will mirror the engagement activities that have taken place since the project's mobilisation. These events will be held both at the current King Alfred centre and other locations across the west of the city.

3.25 The key messages for the engagement programme will be:

- Setting out the final choice of options for the new facility, which will best balance value for money with what we know residents want
- Setting out the process that was followed to arrive at the final options, explaining the challenges associated with finding a suitable site in the west of the city and the financial constraints that have influenced the project.
- Outlining the benefits the new facility will offer for the city, highlighting the health, wellbeing and quality of life benefits for residents
- Describing how the new facility will help raise the city's profile and stature as a destination for sport, in being able to host events and competitions

### 3.26 **Overall Project Timeline**

The engagement process is expected to be completed by the end of March 2024. The exact approach to procurement of the design and build contractors is yet to be agreed, and that will affect some elements of the delivery schedule. However, in overall terms, the headline milestones for the delivery of the project are as follows:

- Appointment of lead architect and concept design – summer 2024
- Planning application process – to begin mid-late 2024, to complete late 2025
- Procurement of main design & build contractor - 2025
- Initial works on site to begin – late 2025 / 2026
- Completion of new facility - 2028

### **Other Areas of SFIP Progress**

3.27 As identified in the SFIP, the new proposed 'East Hub' requires more feasibility work to look at possible sites and options for delivery. Given that the current focus is on progressing plans for the 'West Hub', it is anticipated that this work will begin next year. In the meantime, officers will continue to work with other colleagues internally to identify any opportunities.

3.28 Another key part of the SFIP is a set of principles that we intend to work to when investing in our sports facilities (see p5 in Appendix 1). Additional programmes of work have been created around these, including:

### 3.29 Decarbonisation and energy efficiency

There has been extensive work delivered over the last 2 years to decarbonise our leisure centres to make them more energy efficient, reducing the running costs and improving their sustainability for the future. Examples of works already completed are: replacement LED lighting, improved control systems, installation of pool covers, new glazing and replacement boilers. Solar PV has also been implemented on roofs of 2 of the leisure centres, with another 3 in the pipeline for 2024.

### 3.30 Accessibility and inclusivity

For any new capital projects such as the soft play at Withdean Sports Complex various aspects of accessibility and inclusivity are considered at the beginning of the process both in relation to the facility and future programming. The soft play feedback received from customers highlighted the need for accessible unisex toilets, a platform lift and a programme that ensures activities suitable for all ages of children and families with SEND. Industry guidance will be followed including Sport England Accessibility Guidance and Building Regulations Doc M.

## **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

4.1 N/A

## **5. Community engagement and consultation**

5.1 Community engagement – with any new scheme or project we have ensured it has been informed either by the previous ‘Your Sport Your Vision Your City’ consultation conducted as part of the SFIP, or by delivering additional engagement activities to listen to our residents and centre users.

5.2 It is important that the investment and facility development is based on evidence and need. This will ensure opportunities are provided that reduce barriers and encourage more people to be more active, more often. This work is ongoing and a fundamental part of any project, as demonstrated by the extensive engagement surrounding the ‘West Hub’/King Alfred redevelopment work set out above.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 There has been significant progress in delivering some of the key capital projects set out in the SFIP, particularly at our North Hub. In addition, work linking to our key investment principles of sustainability and accessibility has also created improvements to many of our facilities which will enhance the offer and increase the long-term efficiency of our centres.

6.2 Progress to redevelop the King Alfred Leisure Centre is continuing at pace, and as per the plans set out in this report, the upcoming key milestones will enable this project to move to the next phase in Spring 2024. Ongoing engagement with our residents will remain a key part of the project.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from recommendation 2.1 of this report which is for noting. Existing capital projects at Withdean are funded from S106 developer contributions and direct revenue funding from Sports & Leisure budgets. The 3 court padel tennis will receive investment from Game4Padel who will then manage and operate the facility. Any significant variations to budget will be reported as part of the council's monthly budget monitoring process.
- 7.2 The investment plan is expected to be delivered in phases and therefore full financial appraisals of each stage will be required included updated costs and the potential improved revenue streams alongside any grants. Capital investment net of grants would be funded through council borrowing with the borrowing costs funded from the improved revenue streams. As with all investments reliant on revenue income there is an inherent risk that estimates may not materialise creating a financial pressure on the council and these risks will need to be mitigated through robust business plans and any proposals for capital investment will require approval from Strategy, Finance & City Regeneration committee or Budget Council.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack    Date consulted: 25/10/2023

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 Legal Services continues to work closely with the project team to advise on the implementation of the SFIP as the project progresses and the legal implications of further decisions will be reported in future reports.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert    Date consulted 24/10/23

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The council seeks to provide a range of opportunities and provision for residents to participate in sport and community activities across the city. Good quality, accessible sports facilities that meet the needs of the local community, improve the levels of participation and provide further opportunities to increase the diversity of the user are therefore fundamental to that provision.
- 9.2 If facilities are not improved and have to close, then there will be an impact and loss of a host of numerous targeted sessions currently offered by Freedom Leisure including those with protected characteristics.
- 9.3 The Leisure Card is an income means tested card for residents of Brighton and Hove (administered by Freedom Leisure) which provides discounts of up to 40% - enabling a lower cost way of accessing the sports facilities both on a pay and play and member basis. The membership cost was held for 2023/24 and is lower than the inflationary increases applied to activities.

9.4 There is also an Active Communities Plan (ACP) that Freedom Leisure deliver. Many of the ACP sessions and activities are provided to support a wide range of targeted groups within local communities. Also, the team support the NHS with social prescribing and GP exercise referral schemes.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

10.1 As highlighted above there has been investment in the sports facilities to improve environmental sustainability.

10.2 Three replacement LED lighting projects have also been delivered over summer 2023 - funded from the council's Carbon Neutral Fund which will continue to improve both the sustainability and financial performance of the sites.

10.3 A recent application by Property and Design colleagues has also been made to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) following site energy audits and assessments.

10.4 Solar photovoltaic systems have already been implemented at two of the leisure sites to reduce the reliance of energy from the National Grid. Further installations (pending structural investigations) are also now planned at other sites such as Prince Regent Swimming Complex, Portslade Sports Centre and Moulsecomb Community Leisure Centre. This would benefit sites including Prince Regent Swimming Complex where the PV will support the requirement for energy to operate the swimming pools.

10.5 Capital funded projects replacing the old inefficient boilers at St Lukes Swimming Pool and Prince Regent Swimming Complex have also been delivered and a new boiler control panel has been installed at King Alfred.

10.6 The Council is also applying for Phase 2 of the Swimming Pool Support Fund which could also help in relation to improved sustainability of the leisure facilities.

## **11. Other Implications**

### **Social Value and procurement implications**

11.1 N/A

### **Crime & disorder implications:**

11.2 N/A

### **Public health implications:**

11.3 The sports facilities in the city are a vital provision enabling regular participation in sport and physical activity. There is a growing awareness and evidence relating to the importance of regular participation in sport and physical activity for people's health and well-being.

- 11.4 The BHCC Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Corporate Plan and Sports Facilities Investment Plan all demonstrate the desire for Brighton & Hove to be a healthy and active city. This includes using our built environment as well as our natural assets – such as the seafront (blue spaces) and parks (green spaces).
- 11.5 The Council's new Sport & Physical Activity Strategy (due to be published in 2024), also makes reference to the importance of the 'Active Environment' and having quality, modern, accessible spaces and places that enable residents and visitor to be active.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

1. Sports Facilities Investment Plan (2021-2031)
2. Withdean Sports Complex (WSC) Site Plan

