

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 10

Subject: Brighton and Hove City Council Playing Pitch Strategy

Date of meeting: 26 June 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Sports & Recreation

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Ward(s) affected: All

Key decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The Brighton & Hove Playing Pitch Strategy 2025-2041 (PPS) is a comprehensive plan to protect and enhance the city's playing pitch infrastructure. The strategy supports delivery of the Council Plan, Outcome 1, A city to be proud of, by further developing Brighton & Hove as a place where people want to live, work and learn, and where they can live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. The provision of good quality community sports and physical activity facilities are vital for improving the health and wellbeing of residents, and in making an important contribution to the local economy.
- 1.2 Sport England recommends every local authority to produce an evidence base strategy to inform future decisions regarding the development of existing and new playing pitches. It further guides and prioritises investment and acts as a central document to support funding bids for pitch improvements and new facilities. The strategy focuses on four primary sports - cricket, football, hockey, and rugby - and includes the analysis and review of supply, demand, accessibility and availability. The strategy's methodology and sport selection are delivered in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance. It replaces the previous strategy developed in 2016.
- 1.3 The strategy builds on the findings of the 2021 Sports Facilities Investment Plan and the 2024 'Let's Get Moving' physical activity strategy. It has been developed in partnership with key national and county-level sporting governing bodies (NGBs), Sport England and services across the council including parks & leisure, education, planning and healthy lifestyles
- 1.4 A detailed action plan accompanying the strategy outlines priority projects and facility needs for each sport. It emphasises the importance of protecting existing facilities, investing in new and improved facilities, and ensuring equitable community access including to educational playing pitch facilities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves and adopts the Playing Pitch Strategy 2025 – 2041 as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 That cabinet approves all of the recommendations (set out in 4.6 below), including the longer term need for more pitch provision, in all future place planning.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The last playing pitch needs assessment, and plan was undertaken in 2016. As part of the councils overall strategic planning for sport, 'Continuum Sport and Leisure' were commissioned to lead on a production of a new Playing Pitch Strategy 2025 – 2041, replacing the previous 2016 strategy.
- 3.2 The strategy includes analysis and review of facility supply, demands, accessibility and availability for the four primary playing pitch sports of cricket, football, hockey and rugby.
- 3.3 The strategy has been agreed by each primary sport's associated National Governing Body and in partnership with Sport England.
- 3.4 The strategy's supply information is generated through standard facility audits used for all levels of facility from parks to elite sport.
- 3.5 The strategy's demand information is generated from surveys of current users including local community sports clubs, club and team data provided by the relevant governing bodies of sport and council sport booking data where available.
- 3.6 All level of sports clubs including grassroots and across deprived areas were engaged with as a part the survey which also captured team classification in terms of adult, youth, women & girls or disabled.
- 3.7 Through the strategy, the council aims to deliver pavilion and facility improvements across the city, introduce further community asset transfers and encourage community use agreements across education sites. Pavilion and facilities improvements to address increasing demand alongside providing fit for purpose ancillary facilities. Community asset transfer to provide future financial sustainability and provision of facilities which can better support their local communities. Lastly, community use agreements will maximise community access at educational sporting facilities to aid increase demand levels.
- 3.8 The strategy is delivered in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance which details a 13-stepped approach, separated into five distinct sections:
 - Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach
 - Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision

- Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views
 - Stage D: Develop the strategy
 - Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date
- 3.9 Implementation of the strategy's recommendation can assist in reducing inequalities, improving inclusivity of facilities and increase physical activity participation.
- 3.10 The Health Counts 2024 Health & Wellbeing survey reports 53% of adults did less than 30 minutes per week of sport or fitness activity in the past 7 days, 11% between 30-149 minutes and 36% 150 minutes or more. The playing pitch strategy directly correlates with health lifestyles objectives and promotes increased fitness through length of match play.
- 3.11 The strategy will be made available on the council's website including an executive summary platform.

4. Review findings and strategy objectives

- 4.1 The review conducted by 'Continuum Sport and Leisure' and engagement through a steering group for the strategy development, delivered the following findings as part of the analysis of current supply, demand and future need for playing pitches.
- 4.2 Since the previous review in 2016, demand across all sports has increased with notable increase in women and girl's participation across cricket, football and rugby. In cricket, there has been a total increase of 57 cricket teams with the greatest increase in adult women's teams from 2 to 7 teams (350%) and youth girls teams growing from 6 to 12 teams (100%) since 2016. Across football, there has been an increase of 45 women's and girl's teams representing an increase of 433% since 2016. Rugby has experienced growth in youth rugby with 11 new teams including 2 new girls teams. It is also anticipated there will be an increase in women and girls rugby following the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup which Brighton & Hove is one of the host cities. To facilitate this demand and support further growth, additional pitches and improvements to ancillary facilities are recommended.
- 4.3 *Cricket:*
There are currently 14 fine turf pitches and 10 non-turf pitches available for community use. The majority of pitches are at or over capacity, with clubs requiring additional facilities, indicating a high level of demand for cricket pitch space. One additional pitch is required to meet current demand level and a further one fine turf pitch of 12 wickets is needed to meet future demand in 2041
- 4.4 *Football:*
There are 101 grass pitches and 25 artificial grass football pitches (AGPs) available in the city. There is a shortfall of pitches for youth football, with many pitches being overplayed at peak periods. Eight natural turf pitches and one full sized 3G pitch is required to meet current demand levels. An

additional 7 natural turf pitches and 0.35 full-size AGP are needed to meet future demand in 2041

4.5 *Hockey:*

There are four full-sized sand-based AGPs available in the city. Most pitches are at capacity for matches, with clubs requiring additional facilities. To meet current demand levels, all existing pitches require resurfacing. An additional 0.15 full-size AGP is needed to meet future demand in 2041.

4.6 *Rugby:*

There are 10 adult-size grass pitches available for community use. Pitches are significantly overplayed, with clubs requiring additional facilities. Six additional pitches are required to meet current demand and one additional full-size floodlit natural turf pitch is needed to meet future demand in 2041.

4.7 Based on the findings of the review the strategy proposes the following key objectives for the 2025 – 2041 period:

- a) Ensure protection of existing playing pitches and facilities through the emerging City Plan 2041.
- b) Continue to seek community use agreements at education sites.
- c) Support community asset transfer of sporting facilities.
- d) Significant maintenance improvement is required at many sites to improve capacity.
- e) Investment is required to meet existing demand and to provide additional capacity to meet future demand growth.
- f) Ancillary facilities, in particular changing room pavilions, require refurbishment to support inclusivity and the growth of women & girl's sporting demand.

The strategy also includes an advisory site-specific action plan.

5. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 5.1 If the Playing Pitch Strategy is not adopted there will be no clear action plan for management and enhancement of playing pitch sports facilities. Through the implementation of this strategy, the council has a leading role in enabling access to sporting opportunities at a cost that is acceptable to the wider community.

6. Community engagement and consultation

- 6.1. Consultation has been undertaken as per sections 3.4 and 3.5 of this report and the inclusion of relevant councilors during production and finalisation.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report, which are yet to be quantified. The paper sets out a list of potential capital investment opportunities to deliver on the strategy, each area of investment will require individual business cases to be presented to and considered by Cabinet, this will include all revenue and capital implications

ensuring Value for Money is achieved. The outcome of these business cases will be included in future iterations of the councils Medium Financial Plan.

- 7.2 The business cases will also require consideration to be given regarding the expectations of what can be achieved within the resources available, and it will be important to have clear list of priorities to ensure resources are maximised in delivery of the strategy. The recommendations to approve and adopt the playing strategy and all the accompanying recommendations set out in 4.6 of the report does not commit the council to delivering on all recommendations, moreover it outlines the councils' aspirations and priorities to deliver on the strategy.
- 7.3 The council's capital programme already includes a level of capital budget to deliver against some of the priorities but will not be sufficient for all of them. This budget is currently funded from corporate borrowing budgets and is included in the councils MTFP. Implementing the strategy will provide the clarity and a degree of certainty for external funding bids to be made and contribute to either reducing the financing costs associated with the existing capital budget or unlock further investment beyond that approved budget.
- 7.4 Monitoring of all revenue and capital budgets will be undertaken in line with the councils' financial regulations and procedures.

Name of finance officer consulted: Craig Garoghan Date consulted :
(09/06/2025)

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 empowers local authorities to provide recreational facilities, and this report sets out the options as perceived by its consultants for furthering the provision of and securing specific sporting facilities for the future needs of the City. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report but if further contracts or projects arise as a result of adopting the recommendations in this report, the attendant legal implications will need to be considered.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam Date consulted (02/06/2025):

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 There is limited risk in the adoption of the strategy. There will be an expectation to work through the advisory action plan which the council are already implementing. This will be subject to project feasibilities, resource and budgets.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 The council seeks to provide a range of opportunities and provision for all residents to participate in sport and community activities across Brighton & Hove. The strategy has helped to identify the city's poor quality ancillary

facilities as a key barrier to the growth of women, girls & disability participation and recommended future investment.

- 10.2 Future investment is proposed through the Pavilion Programme with objectives to increase accessibility and inclusivity to the council managed changing room facilities. Each capital project will consider feasible options to increase access to all on a site and project specific basis and follow industry guidance where achievable including Sport England's accessible and inclusive sports facilities design guidance. The Equality and Human Rights Commission Code of Practice for services, public functions and associations is currently being updated following the Supreme Court ruling on sex in relation to the Equality Act 2010. We will consider how to implement this to meet our statutory duties once this information is available.
- 10.3 The councils Community Asset Transfer Policy 2018 and associated Self Managed Sport Facilities appendix outlines that community group proposals for self management must include how under represented groups will be encouraged to use facilities.

11. Sustainability implications

- 11.1 The advisory action plan recommends investment in ancillary facilities including changing rooms and new artificial turf pitches which will have sustainability implicants. New and existing pitch improvements and developments will have their own site-specific sustainability implications that will need to be addressed on an individual basis to minimise and reduce environmental, biodiversity and flood risk impacts. Delivery of actions within the PPS will be aligned with the Council's approach to net zero and biodiversity.

12. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 12.1. N/A

Crime & disorder implications:

- 12.2. N/A

Public health implications:

- 12.3. The adoption of the strategy will assist in the health and wellbeing of the public and support the council's Corporate Plan 2023-2027, Outcome 3 a healthy city where people thrive.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 The adoption of the Playing Pitch Strategy 2025 – 2041 aims to create a sustainable and good quality community sports infrastructure that meets the

needs of the city's residents. By implementing the strategy's recommendations and action plan, the health and wellbeing of the community will be enhanced through improved access to playing pitch sports facilities.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Playing Pitch Strategy 2025 - 2041

