



# Northumberland

## County Council

CABINET

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### **NORTHUMBERLAND SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY 2019-2031**

### **NORTHUMBERLAND PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY 2019-2031**

**Report of:** Kelly Angus, Executive Director of HR/OD and Deputy Chief Executive

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Jeff Watson, Portfolio holder for Culture, Arts & Leisure

#### **Purpose of report**

To confirm that the Northumberland Indoor Sports Facility Strategy (IFS) and Northumberland Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) have been completed in accordance with the study briefs, to identify the key findings and recommendations, and consider the use and publication of these documents.

#### **Recommendations**

Members are recommended to:

- Note the completion of the Northumberland Indoor Sports Facility Strategy, and Northumberland Playing Pitch Strategy, in accordance with the agreed study brief
- Note the Vision and Aims of the Strategies
- Note the Priority Investment Needs identified from the research informing the Strategies
- Agree the Principles for future provision of Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities across the County
- Note the Recommendations and Action Plan underpinning delivery of the Strategies
- Agree that the Strategies provide an evidence base to support the implementation of the Northumberland Local Plan and other local development documents, as a material consideration for the determination of relevant planning applications, and provide an evidence base for use by other Council Services

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

The NCC Corporate Plan 2018-21 has identified a number of core strategic priorities of which the following are relevant to the provision of Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities to provide the opportunity to engage in sport and leisure activities throughout Northumberland:

- **Living** - “We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for”.
- **Enjoying** - “We want you to love where you live”.
- **Connecting** - “We want you to have access to the things you need.”

## **Key issues**

Physical activity is important for our personal health, wellbeing and vitality. The positive, direct effects of engaging in regular physical activity are particularly apparent in the prevention of several chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis. It also makes an important contribution to communities by bringing people together socially, building cohesiveness and adding a sense of place and local identity.

Sports and recreation facilities are important parts of the County’s infrastructure, providing a range of social opportunities and health benefits for communities and neighbourhoods. Planning for sports facilities is dynamic and needs to be carried out within the context of both the community’s needs and priorities and the available resources, including opportunities from developer contributions, land use and spatial planning decisions.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the requirements of local authorities to establish and provide adequate and proper leisure facilities to meet local needs:

*‘Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.’*

## **Northumberland Indoor Sports Facility Strategy (IFS)**

[Northumberland Sports Facility Strategy 2019-2031](#)

The vision for the future provision of sport and leisure in Northumberland as described in the IFS is:

*‘To facilitate development of sustainable, high quality, well-located, accessible sport and leisure facilities and opportunities in partnership, to encourage increased participation in sport and physical activity, and contribute to improved community health and wellbeing outcomes across the County.’*

The Strategy states:

*‘As a minimum, NCC wishes to see accessible community sport and leisure facilities, places and spaces for swimming, fitness and sports hall sports/activities available for all*

*residents. This ambition includes both formal and informal spaces e.g., community halls in which to play sport and be physically active’.*

Providing sufficient high quality, fit for purpose and accessible provision, places and spaces across Northumberland will create the conditions for the following aims to be delivered:

- to increase the amount of regular physical activity undertaken by individuals, and particularly by those who are currently inactive
- to encourage new participants to start taking part in physical activity
- to enable opportunities for participation to be provided in a wider range of places and spaces, and particularly at a very local level, open spaces
- to facilitate the development of healthier lifestyles across Northumberland’s communities
- to create active environments where the opportunity to be more physically active is an integral part of everyday life
- to support and provide opportunities for local sports clubs and community groups
- to maximise opportunities to take part in physical activity in areas where population is more sparse.

**Principles for Future Provision** - The analysis of existing provision identifies some principles that should underpin all indoor future sport and leisure facility development in the County. These are to:

- ensure residents in all areas of the County have pay and play access to good quality, local, accessible and affordable provision, whether it is a formal sports hall or a community hall,
- aim to ensure that existing, and any new, sports facilities on education sites provide a balance of opportunities (through a formal agreement) for community access – both pay and play and club use
- replace / refurbish ageing facilities where new provision is needed; all new and refurbished provision should be designed and developed based on Sport England and NGB guidance, and be fully inclusive
- rationalise existing provision where new fit for purpose facilities can replace/improve existing buildings
- make better use of all existing facilities, irrespective of provider; an example would be extending access to existing facilities on education sites, which are only operational for limited periods
- invest in existing provision to improve quality
- invest strategically to ensure economic viability and sustainability of provision.
- take the rural nature of the County into account when considering facility provision.

**Identified Issues** - Based on the findings and analysis undertaken to develop the IFS, the key issues in terms of future provision for the County are:

- co-ordinated and strategic local partnership working – to invest in provision, support the voluntary sector, develop informal and formal participation opportunities, and make optimum use of all available resources
- partnership working with education to better use the existing facilities, and increase sustainable community access (particularly pay and play)

- partnership working with public health and the CCG to develop an 'offer' targeted at the least inactive, using informal places and spaces, just to increase their levels of activity
- an extended offer for young people
- better linkages between programmes and activities in leisure centres and clubs and participants using the great outdoors
- investment in the voluntary sector to develop more coaches and leaders to support and develop the club network

**Priority Investment Needs** - Priorities for future provision of sport and leisure facilities in Northumberland are detailed in table 1.19. The evidence base and Strategy strongly reinforces the need for the capital investment committed to replacement facilities in Berwick, Morpeth and Ponteland and highlights the need for the improvements to the existing Blyth Sports Centre.

**Strategic Recommendations and Action Plan** - The Action Plan underpinning the Strategy is summarised in table 12.6 of the IFS.

### **Northumberland Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)**

#### [Northumberland PPS 2019-2031](#)

The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is a strategic assessment that provides an up-to-date analysis of supply and demand for playing pitches (grass and artificial ) in the Northumberland local authority area. In addition to the Strategy, a detailed Needs Assessment document has been produced which provides a full accurate evidence base for the analysis on which future planning and investment decisions can be made.

The key objectives of the Northumberland PPS are to:

- Engage with Sport England and the relevant NGB's to use the national PPS methodology to provide a PPS consistent with the structure and process used across England
- Provide a robust evidence base that can be used by the Council and other stakeholders for a wide range of future projects
- Gather a representative evidence base, by achieving a high response rate from the surveys sent to clubs, schools and Parish Councils/community organisations
- Identify cross boundary NGB issues, the nature and location of any overuse, unmet demand and spare capacity for play across all pitch types and sports including all elements of current and future demand
- Establish clear, prioritised, specific and achievable recommendations and actions to address the key issues around pitch provision and participation

The evidence base, and Strategy, use national guidance and facility insight from specific National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). The assessment focuses on facilities used by what was identified as key sports using these facilities within Northumberland. These key sports are: Football; Rugby Union; Cricket; Hockey; Tennis; Bowls and Athletics. Within these sports, the strategy will seek as far as is practicable to include consideration of all forms of play, whether Club and league based (formal) play and training, less formal programmed forms of the respective sports (e.g. turn up and play 'products,'and Informal

and un-programmed play by groups of residents, workers, students, school friends (out of school).

The Council is committed to providing sports provision that meets the needs of its residents and local clubs. The PPS provides a holistic analysis of outdoor sports facilities across the study area, leading to a comprehensive set of recommendations for the future development of facilities, in line with the needs of residents and sports clubs.

A Project Steering Group comprising representation from the Council, Sport England and NGBs guided the study from its commencement. At critical milestones, the Steering Group members reviewed and verified the data and information collected to allow the work to proceed efficiently through each stage.

The strategy is structured as follows:

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Section 1 – Introductory</b>  | <b>Page 5</b>  |
| <b>Section 2 – Strategic Context</b>   | <b>Page 9</b>  |
| <b>Section 3 – Key supply and demand findings for sport specific sections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Football key findings– Table 3.1</li> <li>• Cricket key findings– Table 3.2</li> <li>• Rugby key findings – Table 3.3</li> <li>• Hockey key findings –Table 3.4</li> <li>• Artificial Grass Pitches – Table 3.5</li> <li>• Tennis key findings – Table 3.6</li> <li>• Bowls key findings – Table 3.7</li> <li>• Athletics key findings - Page 29</li> </ul> | <b>Page 18</b> |
| <b>Section 4 – Scenario testing and options appraisal</b><br>To complement the analysis that has been undertaken in each of the sport specific sections, this chapter contains detailed further analysis on a small number of key scenarios, which have been identified by the project steering group throughout the development of the PPS  | <b>Page 30</b> |
| <b>Section 5 – Strategic Recommendations and Action Plan</b><br>A set of strategic recommendations to guide future governance and investment into pitch sport provision across Northumberland.   | <b>Page 57</b> |
| <b>Section 6 – Delivering the Playing Pitch Strategy</b><br>It is advised that the Stage E process, application and delivery of the PPS, is led by the Council closely supported by the Steering Group set up as part of the PPS project, to continue to work together to deliver the recommendations defined as part of this strategy.  | <b>Page 78</b> |

## **Background**

In November 2016, Northumberland County Council in partnership with Active Northumberland and Northumberland Sport (the County Sports Partnership), carried out a tender exercise to invite consultants to develop a new Countywide Northumberland Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy. Consultants 4global in partnership with

Strategic Leisure were appointed to undertake these studies. Due to organisational changes within NCC, Active Northumberland and the County Sports Partnership, both studies were stalled for a significant period.

In 2019 the newly formed NCC Leisure Client function picked up finalisation of the research, completion of the Sports Facility Strategy and progression of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The final version of the Northumberland Sports Facility Strategy and the Northumberland Playing Pitch Strategy are now awaiting approval by Cabinet to progress to adoption and publication by Northumberland County Council.

### **Implications**

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|---|--|
| <b>Policy</b>                                     | The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); Emerging Northumberland Local Plan 2016 to 2036; NCC Corporate Plan 2018-21; Northumberland Physical Activity Strategy 2018-28; Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-28; Active Northumberland Transformation Strategy |
| <b>Finance and value for money</b>                | No direct financial implications associated with this Report   |
| <b>Legal</b>                                      | No implications  |
| <b>Procurement</b>                                | A formal tender exercise for procurement of consultants to produce both the Northumberland Sports Facility and Playing Pitch Strategies was carried out.   |
| <b>Human Resources</b>                            | No implications  |
| <b>Property</b>                                   | Capital investment is providing replacement / improved sport facilities in Ponteland Leisure, Morpeth Leisure, Berwick, Blyth and Newbiggin Leisure Centre   |
| <b>Equalities</b><br>(Impact Assessment attached) | No implications  |
| <b>Risk Assessment</b>                            | N/A  |
| <b>Crime Disorder &amp;</b>                       | Engagement in sport and leisure can provide diversionary activity which will help to reduce crime and disorder within communities  |
| <b>Customer Consideration</b>                     | Consultation with Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport; Sports Clubs; Schools; Parish Councils, Neighbouring local authorities and stakeholders throughout the project process   |

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|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Carbon reduction</b>     | Energy conservation measures and sustainability are key considerations in the development, and improvement, of leisure facilities  |
| <b>Health and Wellbeing</b> | The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the requirements of local authorities to establish and provide adequate and proper leisure facilities to meet local needs |
| <b>Wards</b>                | All  |

### **Background papers:**

- Final version of the Northumberland Indoor Sports Facility Strategy.
- Final version of the Northumberland Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan
- Final version of the Needs Assessment document

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=144&MId=1249&Ver=4>

### **Report sign off.**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

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|--|----------------------|
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