

SPORTS FACILITIES EVIDENCE

Item HP 25/34 referred from Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee of 15 July 2025

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health outlined the Council's emerging approach to maintaining and enhancing sports facilities in the borough through the adoption of the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy [Annex 1] and the Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy [Annex 2], which were evidence base progressed as part of the Local Plan process to ensure delivery of sustainable development to support existing and new communities.

It was noted that Sport England Guidance for progressing indoor sports strategies and playing pitch strategies provided a five-stage approach to assessments, of which Stage E provided an opportunity for monitoring and review of the assessments undertaken. In addition to accounting for increased housing need in support of the Local Plan process, Stage E also provided an opportunity to understand supply and demand changes in sports provision. There are a number of sports related developments under consideration in the borough at present, as outlined under paragraph 4.4 of the report.

Due regard was given to the proposal to adopt both Strategies as the Council's current policy position on Sports Facilities, in order to maximise the Council's ability to support and develop key facilities across the borough as well as to inform the negotiation of s106 agreement where development would impact on facility use and might therefore drive a requirement for a contribution towards enhancement or replacement.

Both the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and the Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy were well received by Members, although concerns were raised in respect of the challenges faced by local sports clubs and teams in securing suitable facilities and the lack of support that the Borough Council was able to provide due to not having provision to deliver sports activities. It was hoped that adoption of the strategies as the Council's policy position on sports facilities would facilitate the sports clubs and teams in seeking to meet their facility needs, and their views and comments received as part of the evidence base exercise through consultants during the Stage E review would be welcomed, however, the Borough Council would not be resourced to undertake a separate engagement exercise for an individual piece of evidence, which was acknowledged by Members.

It was proposed by Councillor King (Chair), seconded by Councillor Bell and the Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

RECOMMENDED*: That

- (1) the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy, set out in Annex 1, and the Playing Pitches and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, set out in Annex 2, be endorsed and adopted as the Council's current policy position on sports facilities, subject to careful consideration of comments received from local sports teams; and
- (2) the authority to publish Stage E reviews of these strategy reports to update the position to help inform the Local Plan and other Council workstreams, be delegated to the Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Planning and Community Services.

***Recommended to Cabinet**