Subject: Playing Pitch Strategy                      Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet                                Date: 31st October 2016

Cabinet Member: Councillor Neil Emmott,            
Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Environment

Report of: Director of Neighbourhoods             Author: Janet Butterworth

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Key Decision:

1. Purpose of the report
   1.1. To seek member approval of the draft Playing Pitch Strategy

2. Recommendations
   2.1. It is recommended that
       2.1.1. Members approve the Playing Pitch Strategy for consultation
       2.1.2. Members delegate the final sign off of the strategy post consultation to the
               Director of Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing
               and the Environment

3. Reason for recommendation
   3.1. Attached is a draft copy of the Playing Pitch Strategy for Rochdale Borough. The
        strategy has been produced in accordance with the Sport England Playing Pitch
        Strategy Guidance. The guidance is very rigid in its approach and strategies that
        deviate from this are not viewed favourably by the national governing bodies (NGBs)
        for the major pitch sports. The NGBs and Sport England are required to sign off the
        strategy.

   3.2. The aim of the strategy is to make sure that there is an adequate supply of good
        quality, accessible grass and artificial pitches in the borough to meet current and
        future demands for formal pitch sports.

   3.3. The strategy covers all the main pitch sports – football, hockey, lacrosse, rounders,
        rugby league and rugby union. It is boroughwide and looks at pitches in council
        ownership, on school sites, owned by sports clubs and other providers.

   3.4. In total over 300 pitches have been reviewed and assessed and consultation has
        been undertaken with over 500 playing teams, education establishments, leagues and
        governing bodies.

   3.5. The strategy is set in the context of the council’s corporate plans and sets out how the
        Playing Pitch Strategy can help deliver the corporate objectives. It also looks at the
        changing national picture and priorities for sports and physical activity.
Background

3.6. Sports Participation and physical activity levels are below the regional and national averages with people in Rochdale taking less than the recommended levels of activity with attendant health consequences. There is potential to use the borough’s playing pitches to increase activity levels and deliver health benefits. How this might be achieved is outside of the scope of a playing pitch strategy and would need to be considered as part of a Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy. This is not currently in place in Rochdale and would fall under the remit of public health.

3.7. Overall the findings suggest that the borough has a good supply of pitches and has sufficient capacity to meet current and future demand.

3.8. The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and proposed housing and employment growth in the borough will impact upon the demand for playing pitches but it is too early to predict what this impact might be.

3.9. The strategy proposes a model whereby there is a sports hub in each township area – these hubs are at Heywood Sports Village, Bowlee Playing Fields, Littleborough Sports Centre and at Firgrove. Where these hubs don’t currently offer the full range of sports and facilities it is proposed that they are supported by key school sites to supplement the offer. If demand in the borough increases as a result if the Spatial Framework proposals then these hub sites will be prioritised for investment.

3.10. A hierarchy of sites is proposed to help channel resources and investment.

4. Alternatives considered

4.1. There is no alternative action

5. Financial Implications

5.1. A number of sites within the borough require improvement and investment. The extent of this investment is has not been quantified at this stage.

5.2. There are resources available through S106 contributions. The strategy will help to prioritise how these contributions could be spent and ensure that appropriate amounts are collected from new developments.

5.3. The Playing Pitch Strategy enables the council and clubs within the borough to seek funding from the NGBs. The Rugby Football League is already supporting the development of an additional pitch at Mayfield and the Rugby Football Union is investing in the new club house and changing facilities at Littleborough (Rakewood) Rugby Club.
5.4. The FA has indicated that there is limited funding available and that it is unlikely to make a significant investment in the borough as there is already a good supply of pitches and facilities. It has asked that we review the supply of artificial grass pitches in the borough (AGPs) and has asked that we consider a model where all training and 50% of competitive play takes place on AGPs. We are waiting for feedback on this exercise and don't know what the funding implications might be.

5.5. The Strategy has identified a number of sites that could be considered to be surplus to requirements and is recommending that they be released for alternative uses or development. This could generate significant capital receipts for the council

6. **Legal Implications**
   
   We are not aware of any legal implications. There is no legal requirement for the council to produce a playing pitch strategy.

7. **Personnel Implications**
   
   7.1. The council is required to ensure that the strategy is implemented and is kept up to date. Sport England and the sports' governing bodies expect the Council to undertake an annual review. A resource will need to be identified to carry out this work.
   
   7.2. Should there be any HR implications arising from the report consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Personnel Policy Framework.

8. **Corporate Priorities**
   
   8.1. The Playing Pitch Strategy will help with the delivery of PLACE priorities within the Council’s Corporate plan.

9. **Risk Assessment Implications**
   
   9.1. There is a risk that without an adopted strategy the council would not be able to collect developer contributions (S106)
   
   9.2. There is a risk that without an adopted strategy Sport England and the Sports Governing Bodies will not consider applications for external funding from the council or from any sports club within the borough

10. **Equalities Impacts**
    
    10.1. Workforce Equality Impacts Assessment
    
    10.1.1. There are no workforce equality issues arising from this report.
    
    10.2. Equality/Community Impact Assessments
    
    10.2.1. There are no equality/community issues arising from this report.

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