
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 22 January 2014
Subject: Draft Leisure Strategy incorporating leisure facilities, recreation and open space, and playing pitch strategies
Report of: Cllr Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services
Summary: The report provides an overview of the Leisure Strategy Technical Guidance documents proposed Planning policy standards and leisure facilities, open space and playing pitch requirements for comment prior to consideration by Executive on 18 March 2014.

Advising Officer: Marcel Coiffait, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Jill Dickinson, Head of Leisure Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. The Leisure Strategy will support the following Council priorities;
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
 - Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
 - Great universal services – leisure.
 - Value for money – freezing council tax.

Financial:

2. The Leisure Strategy will be used to guide investment priorities including CBC capital investment for sites and facilities within the Council's ownership. In addition, the capital programme, approved at Executive in February 2013, includes funds for Leisure Strategy Implementation.
3. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence base required to secure both Section 106 contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and the respective chapter action plans will identify priorities for use of these contributions once secured.

Legal:

4. N.A

Risk Management:

5. The following risks have been identified, which are considered in more detail below:

- Failure to deliver the Council's priorities
- Reputational risks
- Risk to customer satisfaction

The strategy identifies significant facility requirements in both quantity and quality terms. The cost of addressing these requirements is considerable. Central Bedfordshire Council's role in the delivery of these requirements is primarily as the provider of Planning policy to secure new/improved facilities or developer contributions required to mitigate the impact of new development. CBC also has a facilitation role in advising asset owners regarding external funding to assist in the delivery of provision within their ownership.

6. The Leisure Strategy, part of the Council's Medium Term Plan, is planned for Executive to consider for adoption on 18 March 2014. The proposed policy and facility standards in the Strategy have been developed and tested with member and stakeholder consultation.

The project has been managed in line with Prince 2 methodology with a Project Board comprising Assistant Director, Executive Members and a range of internal and external stakeholders.

7. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have been developed in partnership with Sport England using the most up to date and relevant methodology and research tools for each chapter in order to develop a robust, defensible evidence base and policy standards for leisure provision.

8. The pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire establishes the requirement to provide good quality, accessible sport, leisure and open space facilities. The Leisure Strategy sets standards and facility requirements which seek to address the needs identified for each type of facility. The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the procedures required for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) however, until the Development Strategy is adopted the Leisure Strategy can only be adopted as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes and will attract some weight in decisions reached on planning applications

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

9. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

10. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

11. The Leisure Strategy aims to promote equality of opportunity, and make sport and physical activity a regular part of life for all.

Public Health

12. Leisure facilities are a key community health resource. The Leisure Strategy aims to ensure there are sustainable and high quality sport, leisure and open space facilities across the Council's area which allow local communities to engage in regular physical activity to help prevent ill health, generate long term improvements in overall levels of health and wellbeing and thereby reduce the costs to society for the NHS and social care.

Community Safety:

13. Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act the Council has a statutory duty to do all that is reasonable to prevent crime and disorder within its areas. Leisure facilities and the activities that they offer provide positive opportunities, particularly to young people, who may otherwise engage in activities that may be considered criminal or anti-social.

The siting and design process for future leisure facilities will incorporate an assessment of the potential community safety implications generated by the facility.

Sustainability:

14. The Leisure Strategy will seek to provide or facilitate new or improved facilities through the planning process, so that our customers participate in sport, recreation and physical activity through a network of good quality accessible and readily available sport, leisure and open space facilities, reducing the need for customers to travel to other local authority areas to participate in these activities.

New leisure facilities will, as far as economically practicable, be designed to be as energy efficient as possible.

The strategy also identifies standards for informal open space and country parks which will help protect the natural environment, support biodiversity and mitigate the impact of climate change.

Procurement:

15. Procurement of consultants to support CBC in developing all chapters of the Leisure Strategy was undertaken via a Sport England framework compliant with CBC procurement rules.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to:-

- 1. Following formal consultation required for adoption as Technical Guidance, approve the minor amendments to the adopted Leisure Strategy Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy.**
- 2. Comment on the process and proposed policy standards and facility recommendations of the draft Leisure Strategy, Chapters 2 and 3.**
- 3. Recommend that Executive consider adoption of the Leisure Strategy (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) for Central Bedfordshire and as Technical Guidance for development management purposes.**

Purpose of the Report

16. On 18 March 2014 the Executive will consider the Leisure Strategy (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) for adoption as Technical Guidance to inform the emerging Development Strategy. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Leisure Strategy development and to seek approval for:
- the minor amendments made to Chapter 1 which resulted from the formal Planning consultation undertaken in October/ November 2013
 - the policy standards and facility requirements identified in Chapters 2 and 3
 - the Overarching Strategy Document

Purpose of the Leisure Strategy

17. The primary purpose and function of the Leisure Strategy is as a Planning policy document providing the evidence base and policy standards to secure new or improved indoor and outdoor sports facilities and recreational open space provision required as a result of new housing development to mitigate the additional demand placed upon those facilities by the increased population.

The facility requirements identified in the Strategy are not intended to be provided directly by Central Bedfordshire Council, with the exception of the approved capital projects for major public leisure centres within Central Bedfordshire Council's ownership. The remaining smaller facilities are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council, consequently the responsibility for delivery of the identified needs remains with the facility owners.

18. In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in the Strategy can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, countryside organization, sports clubs etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership, or to help deliver their aims and objectives concerning indoor sports provision / improvement.

To support the delivery of the strategy Central Bedfordshire Council will also provide facility owners with guidance on external funding sources and will facilitate / advise, where appropriate, the improvement / creation projects of those facility providers.

19. The Leisure Strategy is part of the Medium Term Operational Plan and will provide:
- a comprehensive picture of sport, leisure and open space facilities and opportunities within Central Bedfordshire up to 2031
 - an up-to-date evidence base which will be used to guide the provision of sport, leisure and open space facilities required as part of new development, and to secure the necessary funds from Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy to deliver the infrastructure requirements
 - to provide the strategic direction for the delivery of CBC-owned indoor leisure facilities and countryside sites for CBC capital investment proposals

Planning Status, Structure and Scope

20. The Leisure Strategy comprises four chapters, three are facility-based chapters which examine a range of indoor, built facilities, recreational open spaces and outdoor playing pitches; and a fourth chapter which seeks to marry the facilities currently available, and those identified as being required, with the types of physical activities needed to support Central Bedfordshire's residents in pursuing healthy, active lifestyles now and in the future.

21. Planning Status

The Leisure Strategy has been produced to provide a streamlined and comprehensive guide to the provision of facilities across the whole of CBC. It is intended to replace a number of older documents which were produced by the former legacy Local Authorities. At the time the project was initiated it was envisaged that the document would be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and tied in with the new planning framework for the area which would also have been updated. However, for various reasons the new Development Strategy is still currently in preparation. This means that the relevant chapters of the Leisure Strategy cannot yet be adopted as SPD. Although they will not hold the same weight as adopted standards they will hold some weight if adopted as interim technical guidance and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. As the document has been produced in accordance with the requirements for SPD it can become SPD once the Development Strategy has been adopted.

22. Structure and Scope

The chapters have been developed on a phased basis and their respective status is as follows:

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy (indoor sport and leisure centres, comprising a range of sport and leisure activities)

- Approved by Executive on 8 January 2013 as the Leisure Facilities Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.
- In order for Chapter 1 to be formally adopted as Technical Guidance for planning purposes it has been subject to the required formal consultation. Minor amendments have been made to the chapter to reflect the relevant consultation responses.
- To approve the minor amendments to the adoption Leisure Facilities Strategy following formal consultation

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy (a defined range of green spaces, providing formal and informal recreational facilities)

- In order for Chapter 2 to be formally adopted as Technical Guidance for planning purposes it has been subject to the required formal consultation
- Draft strategy complete December 2013
- To be considered for approval as the Recreation and Open Space Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes by Executive on 18 March 2014

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy (outdoor formal, grass and artificially-surfaced sports playing pitches).

- In order for Chapter 3 to be formally adopted as Technical Guidance for planning purposes it has been subject to the required formal consultation
- Draft strategy complete December 2013
- To be considered for approval as the Playing Pitch Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes by Executive on 18 March 2014

The consultation comments for Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are detailed in the Consultation Responses Statement which is attached at Appendix C.

Chapter 4: Physical Activity (a defined range of physical activity classes, sports, exercises etc. undertaken indoors and outdoor)

- Approved by Executive on 24 September 2013 and will not be adopted as Technical Guidance

Methodology

23. Each chapter of the Leisure Strategy has undergone the following stages of development:

Stage 1 Audit & Assessment:

- The relevant methodology and research tools for each chapter, directed the gathering of facility evidence from existing data and new research
- Population growth and housing growth forecasts and other socio economic and demographic data was used to assess the potential impacts of growth on each of the facilities
- Facility inspections and stakeholder feedback were combined with the audit evidence to detail the current and future provision required to meet the sport, leisure and open space needs of Central Bedfordshire residents

24. **Evidence Gathering and Consultation:**

At each stage of the process, a range of consultees were invited to comment on current and future requirements as set out in the Communications Plan, these included:

- national and local organisations
- governing bodies of sport
- town and parish councils
- leisure operators
- facility users
- sports clubs

25. **Stage 2 Issues & Options:**

- From the audit and assessment of each chapter the key issues affecting provision now and in the future were identified
- These key issues and a range of options to address the issues were presented for consultation

In addition to other consultations, workshops were held to refine the preferred options with CBC members in April 2012 and June 2013.

26. **Stage 3 Strategy:**
- The preferred options were identified and developed into policies on provision standards and future facility requirements
27. **Stage 4 Adoption:**
- Chapters 1, 2 and 3 have undergone the formal consultation required for Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adoption, however, until the Development Strategy is adopted, they will be adopted as Technical Guidance and will attract some weight in decisions reached on planning applications.
28. **Stage 5 Action Plans:**
- Following adoption by Executive, an action plan will be developed for each chapter, detailing the priorities for delivery of the facility requirements identified.

Policy Standards and Facility Requirements

29. The Leisure Strategy Summary Document (Appendix A) sets out the policy standards and facility priorities for each chapter. The main themes can be summarised as follows:

Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy

Chapter 1 was adopted by Executive in January 2013. Further consultation has confirmed the strategic priorities approved at that time; these can be found in Appendix A, page 21.

30. Chapter 2: the Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Chapter 2 sets standards for provision of new or improved recreational open space facilities within the nine open space typologies, the standards for each open space type are detailed in Appendix A, page 21. The standards in order of application are:

- Accessibility - consultation established Central Bedfordshire residents' expected travel times to each open space type
- Quantity – to support the accessibility standards, the quantity standard was calculated, providing a quantity of provision per 1000 people required to meet each accessibility standard
- Quality - to ensure the content and quality of provision meets customer expectations, quality criteria is provided for each open space type

Following approval of the open space standards, the recreation and open space Graphical Information System (GIS) layer will be finalised to show all sites with their respective accessibility catchments. In addition, the standards for each open space type will be calculated for each parish in Central Bedfordshire and these will be detailed in the Parish Schedules. An example of a parish schedule is attached at Appendix B. Further consultation with facility providers will be undertaken to establish the local delivery priorities which will inform the action plan and the securing of new facilities and s106 developer contributions.

31. **Chapter 3: the Playing Pitch Strategy**

Chapter 3 has been developed using the Sport England 'Towards a Level Playing Field: A Manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy (2003)' guidance, together with the emerging revised methodology set out in Sport England's Playing Pitch Guidance (due for publication in 2014).

The guidance places greater emphasis on:

- site specific issues which include assessing the quality of facilities and recording the availability of each pitch
- involving National Governing Bodies of Sport and Sport England, to ensure that local priorities are matched with regional issues and priorities
- rather than setting a quantity standard for outdoor sports provision, area and sport specific requirements are detailed which identify priorities reflecting both the planning policy requirements and those of the individual sports clubs

32. The overarching priorities for the future delivery of sports pitch facilities across Central Bedfordshire are:

- Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand
- Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet current and future demand
- Promote increased participation and sustainable club development

33. The priorities for each sport are shown in the Leisure Strategy Document in Appendix A (from page 46), the main themes can be summarised as follows:

- Protect all current facilities
- Increase the amount of pitches available (especially football)
- Ensure the amount or quality of facilities is not limiting participation
- Monitor supply, demand and participation to ensure facilities keep pace with population growth
- Ensure quality of existing facilities can accommodate demand – quality improvements
- Support initiatives which encourage participation
- Support dual use of school facilities and partnerships where appropriate

Consultation Issues

34. The Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 were published for six weeks consultation in October/November 2013 in accordance with the requirements for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The responses to the consultation have been assessed and responded to in the Consultation Responses Statement which is published on the council's web site.

35. The consultation responses revealed a number of key themes, these can be summarised as:

- The production of a leisure strategy comprising the range of indoor and outdoor facilities was welcomed
- There is strong support for the overarching aims and objectives of the strategy from respondents to the online survey

- Consultees accepted the robust methodologies employed and the setting of standards for open space provision
- The reliance upon school pitch facilities, and the securing of community use was a key issue
- Adoption of the Leisure Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document was questioned as the Development Strategy adoption has been delayed

Conclusion and Next Steps

36. The report seeks to provide an overview of the approach and evidence resulting from the Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 and summaries the recommended policy standards and facility requirements for comment prior to Executive considering it on 18 March 2014.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Leisure Strategy Summary Document

Appendix B: Example of a parish schedule (not attached)

This appendix is contained in the appendices to Chapter 2 of the draft Strategy which is available online at the following link:-

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Chapter%202%20Recreation%20%26%20Open%20Space%20Strategy%20Appendices%20Final%20Draft_tcm6-51036.pdf#False

Appendix C: Consultation Responses Statement (not attached - to follow)

(Due to their size appendices B and C have not been attached to the report. Hard copies have been sent to Members of the Committee only and are available on the Council's website at the following page:-

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/leisure/sports-clubs-andcentres/leisure-strategy.aspx>

Background papers and their location: (open to public inspection)

Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3, the Leisure Strategy Summary Document and the Consultation Responses Statement can be found at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk