

Football Investment Strategy

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

Strategic Priority : Healthy City, Learning City

Corporate Improvement Objectives: CIO1: Delivering Customer Focused Services, CIO3: Efficient and Effective Council

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a draft of the emerging Football Investment Strategy and to receive feedback from Members as part of the consultative process for the document.

1.2 Sunderland's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2005-2010 sets out how Sunderland's Local Strategic Partnership would contribute to the achievement of this vision, through the development of sport and physical activity opportunities across the city.

1.3 The Corporate Improvement Plan 2007-2008 articulates Sport and Leisure's commitment to residents stating that "in Sunderland everyone will have access to quality sport and physical activity opportunities to improve their health and well-being at first class community based facilities."

2. Background

2.1 The Football Association (FA) has developed a new national Strategy and a new strategic approach, encouraging local authorities to work alongside the Football Foundation in developing a clear area strategy that sets out key priorities for investment.

2.2 The new National Strategy has clear targets and milestones up to and beyond 2012 and it is expected that these will be reflected in resultant Local Area Plans (or Football Investment Strategy).

2.3 Participation in football within the city remains popular, despite significant challenges with the current quality of provision. It is identified in the 2003/2004 Playing Pitch Strategy, that the quality of some of the pitches and ancillary facilities is an issue and need improvement.

2.4 For some time now, the annual MORI survey results in Sunderland identify dissatisfaction with parks and grass roots facilities, of which many pavilions and pitches are a part. As a kick start to the improvement process, Phase 1 funds were allocated (£200,000) from the Strategic Investment Programme in 2008/2009 to tackle some of the immediate problems and a further allocation has been set aside to support a portfolio of citywide developments and funding applications.

2.5 In order to ensure that incremental changes are delivered in an appropriate priority order, it is important that a citywide framework is adopted to drive forward development work, from a 'capital' and 'people' perspective.

2.6 A key priority for the city remains to target a 1% increase in sport and physical activity participation year on year. Within this framework, stakeholders need to also ensure that participation levels are maintained and improved. The quality of the Council's pavilions and pitches can inform this measure significantly. Improved and higher quality football pitches enable a

more consistent carrying capacity, despite the changing weather patterns. Well-designed and maintained pavilions enable a variety of teams to play, at any one time on a range of pitches and also ensure players of different ages, gender and abilities have the right amenities for their needs. They also ensure a welcoming environment for travelling teams who visit Sunderland.

3. Football Investment Strategy

3.1 In order to inform Phase 2 developments, the Council commissioned Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) to develop a Football Investment Strategy (or a Local Area Plan) and a prioritised action plan for future investment. The first stage of developing this strategy involved an analysis of current football provision. The resultant Strategy will underpin a single citywide portfolio of projects that will be a priority for future investment and assist in supporting funding applications to the Football Foundation.

3.2 Whilst focused on formal football, due to the versatile nature of many facilities, the work also took into account other types of facilities within the scope including, outdoor team sport facilities, artificial turf pitches, formal and informal kick-a-bout areas.

3.3 The Football Investment Strategy is required to make a clear 'statement' for football investment in Sunderland, including public, private and school provision. It was required to establish clear approach to what, where and why, which includes the establishment of local standards for playing fields and ancillary facilities, illustrating how the investment can be brought to fruition. The Strategy is in partnership with Durham FA and is essential in order for the City to lever in Football Foundation funding, amongst other partnership opportunities through BSF and community based funding. The document is also an essential requirement for the City's Building Schools for the Future(BSF) 'readiness to deliver' requirements.

3.4 The process of developing the Strategy has taken longer than anticipated due to the interest shown by many stakeholder groups. The consultants have followed a formal methodology in line with Sport England's 'Towards a Level Playing Field' guidance. This requires a full assessment of supply and demand.

3.5 In terms of establishing demand both now and in the future, there has been thorough consultative approach which has taken much longer than expected due to the significant interest and range of interested parties. Consultees have included football league secretaries, local clubs, schools, the university and college. Demand has also been established through use of Durham FA's county level data and performance management information.

In terms of establishing supply, the consultants have completed a full assessment of current facilities both in terms of quantity and quality, and considered those facilities already planned and funded for development.

3.6 As part of the consultative process to date, all elected Members have been given the opportunity to inform the strategy on an area basis through workshops organised by KKP.

3.7 Most recently, all elected members were asked to review the new proposed tiered model of provision, which seeks to define area based approach to facilities which helps to address the fundamentals of football development citywide. The strategy finishes with a set of investment priorities which helps to transform current provision towards the new tiered model, which aims to providing improved quality and quantity of participation, at all levels of the football pathway, for all ages and disabilities city wide.

3.8 Priorities for investment are outlined in the final part of the draft strategy. To ensure the most appropriate projects are prioritised it is important that clear criteria are used to identify the

projects which meet the needs of each area and the city as a whole, as identified in the assessment report.

- 3.9 Six key factors have been identified to ensure a project responds to the challenges detailed, is achievable and has a high impact. These are:

Cost

In terms of value for money, and the impact of investment, the cost of any one improvement needs to be considered. For this factor, the weighting is such that projects of lower cost will be considered more positively than those for high cost. This will help ensure that funds, both internal and externally, have the greatest impact.

Playing Capacity

This strategy is driven at encouraging and enabling more people to play football. The 'playing capacity' of a site is critical. For example, two high quality pitches carry more games than 2 poor quality pitches or a site with 10 pitches as opposed to 3. Therefore, a site with a higher playing capacity (ie. Tier A) will have a higher rating to a site with a lower capacity (ie. Tier E). This will help ensure selected projects affect the highest amount of people.

Football Development

This factor is inextricably linked to any project. It is essential the correct development approach is taken to ensure the growth and sustainability of football. For this factor, a site which is a hub for a Charter Standard Club will have a higher priority than a site which does not. This will ensure that football development is at the heart of any project. This is essential for Football Foundation and related government funding

Match Funding

Using non City Council or Football Foundation match funding, will help to stretch the FIS fund, allowing more projects to be achieved. This factor will see projects that have match funding scoring higher than those that do not.

Facility Development

The assessment report identifies key deficits for ancillary facilities in the city and this was a major issue in MORI satisfaction surveys. Projects that address deficits in ancillary facilities will be viewed positively ensuring investment is based on evidence of need.

Multi Sport Venue

Where more than one sport will benefit from the development works, this increases the number of people affected and increases usage and participation in physical activity. Therefore, a development which benefits more than one sport will be considered more positively than a single site sport. Such projects may also be able to attract funds from other sources than football foundation.

- 3.10 It should be noted that due to the current quality and quantity of facilities and land availability, short term needs, for which initial funding needs to be prioritised, are greater in some areas of the city than others. However, over the life of the Strategy, the investment will raise standards citywide to provide every resident with fair access and opportunity regardless of locality.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the content of this report and supporting presentation and provide feedback on the draft Football Investment Strategy.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 The following background papers were relied upon to compile this report
- Draft Football Investment Strategy 2009

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