



Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	14 March 2024
Subject:	Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Dipti Patel, Corporate Director – Place
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jean Lammiman, Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix 2: Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the objectives, strategic recommendations, and action plan detailed in the Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037 and seeks approval for the Strategy and its implementation.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Approve the adoption of the Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037, including the priority projects Action Plan outlined in Section 4 of the Strategy and the longer-term projects detailed in Appendix 2 of the Strategy.
2. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture, to proceed with the implementation of the Action Plan provided by the Strategy and to take any action necessary.

Reason:

The Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037 will provide the strategic direction to improve Harrow's sports infrastructure and inform future investment in facilities. The Strategy will help to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Harrow by providing better access to sports facilities and increasing residents' participation in sport and physical activity.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The London Borough of Harrow has conducted a review of its indoor and outdoor sports facilities, and an analysis of need in the borough in consultation with local sports clubs and schools, Sport England, sports' National Governing Bodies, leisure operators, and facility managers. The 5 key objectives of the Strategy are outlined below:

- a) Improving health and well-being and reducing health inequalities by increasing participation in sport and physical activity in the borough ensuring facilities for indoor and outdoor sports are of the appropriate quality and are available and accessible.
- b) To provide an evidence base and clear priorities for improving present provision and supporting/providing justification for new provision to inform spatial planning policy, including the development of Harrow's new Local Plan, and responses to future planning applications, capital investment plans and external funding bids for new and/or enhanced sports facilities.
- c) To inform the most efficient management and maintenance of playing pitch provision.
- d) Development of an Action Plan and a list of key priorities which will help to meet any current deficiencies and provide for future demands.
- e) To identify potential alternatives to the supply of provision e.g., educational sites.

1.2 The new Strategy supports the Council's vision of 'Restoring Pride in Harrow' and the Corporate Priorities:

- A Council that puts residents first
- A borough that is clean and safe
- A place where those in need are supported

The new facilities strategy will provide the strategic direction to improve Harrow's sports infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and assist in establishing how best to meet the current and future health and wellbeing needs of Harrow's residents. This will help to ensure that Harrow is a place where residents want to spend their time.

2. Background

2.1 The new Strategy has been produced in line with Sport England's latest guidance and forms the updated evidence base to Harrow's previous Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy 2018 and the Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy 2012 which are now out of date. Each authority in the country is encouraged to produce this evidence base to inform future decisions regarding the demand and supply of existing and new playing pitches and built facilities in a given area. A number of projects have been achieved since the previous strategies were developed:

- 8 new fine turf cricket pitches in the area and one additional non-turf pitch
- New full sized 3G artificial turf pitches have been provided at Bannister Sports Centre (partially funded by a grant award from the Premier League and the FA Facilities Fund of £400k), The Hive London and the Tithe Farm Sports and Social Club, as well as small-sided provision at Harrow High School and Centenary Sixes
- Improvements to natural turf pitches at Bannister Sports Centre and Headstone Manor Recreation Ground
- New bike pump track at Kenton Recreation Ground
- Refurbishment of 25 tennis courts across 8 parks, and the introduction of an online booking system across 36 tennis courts at 13 parks following the award of a grant from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) of £587k.

2.2 The Vision for the new Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy (IOSFS) is to ‘facilitate the creation of a sporting infrastructure across Harrow that provides residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds with the opportunity to be active and participate in indoor and outdoor sports and recreational activities.’

Any projects taken forward or supported will be assessed against the Council’s Corporate Priorities as well as the 5 key objectives as detailed in Section 1.1 of this report above.

2.3 Information on the supply of facilities contained in the Strategy has been generated through standard facility audits. Information on the demand for facilities has been generated from surveys of current and potential users including local sports clubs as well as affiliation data provided by the relevant governing bodies of sport and facility booking records where available. To understand the current landscape of clubs in Harrow, the demand and issues facing each specific sport covered within the Strategy, data was collected from a survey which was distributed to the sports clubs in the borough – 60 individual sports clubs responded to the invitation to complete the survey, with these clubs being compiled of both indoor and outdoor sports. A summary of the results of the club survey is detailed on pages 13-17 of the Strategy. There was also engagement with schools that had sports facilities available for community use and those that have facilities that may have the potential for community use. The latest version of the Strategy which has been signed off by Sport England the relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs) was also circulated to those sports clubs that responded to the club survey and to the schools previously engaged with seeking any further feedback.

2.4 The study area covered the whole of Harrow, but the cross-borough boundary use of facilities has also been taken into account when considering future needs for each particular sport in terms of facilities, but also community sporting needs for Harrow residents. Demographic information, health, deprivation, and sports participation trends were also reviewed in the development of the Strategy. The Census 2021 shows that Harrow’s population is significantly higher than the predicted figures at 261,300 people, an increase of 9.3% since the 2011 Census. This increase of population indicates that the current provision of facilities for sport and physical activity in Harrow will be under pressure. Harrow performs well in comparison to the

regional and national averages for ten out of eleven of the Department of Health key health indicators, but the percentage of physically active adults is worse than the regional and national average.

2.5 The development of the Strategy has been managed by the IOSFS Steering Group which included a representative from Sport England, NGBs for key sports, and representatives from the Council's Culture and Leisure Department, Parks, Planning, and Public Health.

2.5 The following indoor and outdoor sports facility types were included in the assessment:

I. Indoor

- Swimming Pools
- Sports Halls
- Health and Fitness Suites
- Squash Courts
- Indoor Tennis Centres
- Climbing Walls/Centres
- Gymnastic Centres
- Indoor Bowls

II. Outdoor

- Athletics Tracks
- Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)
- Cricket pitches and outdoor nets
- Outdoor playing pitches
- Bowls greens and Petanque
- Tennis and Netball Courts
- Urban/Extreme sports (i.e., BMX facilities)
- Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and informal facilities i.e., outdoor gym equipment

3. Current Situation

3.1 Key findings of the Assessment of Need studies for the four major playing pitch sports (cricket, football, hockey, and rugby) played in Harrow are as follows:

- For playing pitches in Harrow there will be a requirement to provide additional playing and training capacity for all 4 of the major sports, whilst maintaining capacity currently provided for minority pitch sports of Gaelic Football and American Football.
- The main characteristic of the current playing pitch supply is the substantial reduction in the number of natural turf sites and pitches with community availability and use for football over the last 10 years. This has, however, been offset to a large degree by an increase in the supply of Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs).
- There has been a growth in the number of pitches available for cricket, the transfer of use of a former rugby pitch to accommodate demand for American Football, and development of the first rugby compliant AGP.
- The main change in demand since the last assessment is the continued growth in playing pitch sports at community clubs by children (including

girls), and in demand among adults to play recreational pitch sports outside the traditional sports club model.

- Fall in the number of adult men's teams in football, but growth of interest in American and Gaelic football.
- Over 40% of grass football pitches in the borough are of poor quality.

3.2 The key findings of the analysis of facility supply, demand and accessibility factors for indoor sports facilities (built facilities) by sport facility type are as follows:

- *Indoor Swimming Pools* – A high-level of Harrow's existing and projected future demand for swimming pools can be met by the existing supply available in the study area. There is, however, an over-riding need to replace or modernise the existing pool stock within Harrow, particularly the borough's ageing public pools. The borough's pools are estimated to be full in all 3 modelling runs undertaken using the Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM). More than half the total demand for swimming is met by pools located outside the borough.
- *Sports Halls* – The demand for sports halls exceeds the accessible supply of sports halls which is consistent with London as a whole. 49% of demand is met outside the borough and 51% is retained within Harrow.
- *Health and Fitness Facilities* – The distribution of health and fitness facilities across the borough is good with all residents within a 3-mile radius of a facility.
- *Squash Courts* – The level of overall supply does not meet the England squash benchmark quantitative guidance standard. Sport England's Active Lives Survey 2020/21 indicates a decrease in adult demand for squash nationally over the last three years.
- *Gymnastics and Trampolining Facilities* – Overall Sport England's most recent Active Lives Survey findings indicates no significant change in adult demand for gymnastics and trampolining nationally. However, there is huge demand for provision at Harrow School of Gymnastics that they are unable to meet compared to other clubs.
- *Athletics Facilities* – The athletics facilities at Bannister Sports Centre can meet the needs for athletics/running demand in Harrow.
- *Tennis Facilities* – The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) feels that there is a strong stock of tennis facilities across both the Harrow parks and the club infrastructure to meet future demand. There had been recent investment by the LTA in all 13 park sites.
- *Netball* – the majority of courts are on education sites, with just the courts at Harrow Leisure Centre and Aspire Leisure Centre on non-educational sites.
- *Cycling, BMX and Skate Park Provision* – British Cycling's assessment is that there is a sufficient supply of significant cycling facilities which are accessible to Harrow residents.
- *Bowls Provision* – England Bowls has not identified a need for any additional facilities in the study area but improvements to the quality of greens and ancillary facilities is needed.
- *Boxing Provision* – England Boxing has not identified any facility need and feels that clubs in the area are able to meet current demand.

4. Options Considered

4.1 Option A: To adopt the Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037. By adopting the strategy, the Council will have a strategic direction to improve Harrow's sports infrastructure. The strategy will inform future investment in facilities and provide an evidence base and clear priorities to inform spatial planning policy and external funding bids. The Strategy will help to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Harrow by providing better access to sports facilities and increasing residents' participation in sport and physical activity.

This option is recommended.

4.2 Option B: To continue the current situation and not adopt the Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037. Under this option the Council would not have a strategic plan to ensure indoor and outdoor sports facilities meet the future community needs of the borough, with no evidence base to inform spatial planning policy and external funding bids. Sport England have signed off the Strategy and whilst not all Local Authorities formally adopt their strategies, failure to do so will weaken the position to secure Sport England support when bidding for funds.

This option is not recommended.

5. Why a Change is Needed

5.1 Section 3 of the Strategy (pages 96-99) sets out a number of overarching strategic recommendations aimed at ensuring the on-going provision of high quality, accessible playing pitches and built sport facilities and can meet the needs and demands of the borough's current and future populations. The recommendations respond to the facility needs highlighted in Section 2 i.e., the Playing Pitch Strategy (part 1) and the Built Facilities Strategy (part 2).

a) Planning Policy

- The need to protect and enhance the existing scale of facility provision for key facility types – pools, sports, halls, artificial and natural turf playing pitches, gymnastics centres and health and fitness facilities - remains similar to the findings of the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy in 2018 and the Outdoor Sports Strategy Background paper of 2012.
- Given the evidence presented, the principles established in the current Local Plan Policies with respect to community, sport and recreation facilities – i.e. DM46 (re: new provision), DM47(re: retention of existing provision) and DM48 (re: enhancing outdoor facilities) - need to be maintained.

b) Protect

- The firm conclusion of the Strategy is that there is an identified need to retain the existing overall quantity of sports facilities within the borough whilst recognising that the distribution of facilities may change (for

example, through closure of sites of poor quality or of limited value for community sport offset by new provision).

- It is therefore recommended that the broad approach and principles established in existing policies in respect of the protection of existing provision be carried forward into the new Local Plan. Specifically, the new Local Plan should establish a policy framework to resist granting planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss, or would prejudice the use, of a sports facility unless:
 - The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision for that specific sport(s) in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- It is also recommended that the Council continue to work with strategic sports partners (Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of sport) to seek agreements to secure access for community sport at those sites in the borough where there is existing access, but long-term access is currently unsecured.
- It is recommended the Council continue to seek to influence the design and specification of any new education sports facilities and extensions to existing facilities to ensure their suitability for both education and community use (i.e., provided to Sport England and/or the relevant sport's national governing body design dimensions and standards as opposed to education dimensions and standards).
- It is further recommended that the Council negotiates secure affordable community access as a condition of planning consent (via formal Community Use Agreements) for applications from education providers.

c) *Enhance and Provide*

- It is recommended that the Local Planning Authority continue to seek the advice of appropriate sport national governing bodies whenever pre-planning proposals or planning applications involving new sports facilities are brought forward or new S106 Agreements for sports facilities are drafted.
- Harrow has a number of multi-sport sites which serve a wide range of sport and activity. The Playing Pitch Strategy process of consultation and analysis has highlighted a number of important improvements and potential investment needs across these sites for outdoor sport. Taking a holistic approach for all sports on site could help secure more funding or open up opportunities for more funding that could benefit a range of sports. However, the co-ordination of these opportunities (alongside the National Governing Bodies and resident sports clubs) with indoor and built facilities will remain a key priority for the Council. Whilst the specific actions and timings are dealt with in the action plan given the importance of these sites to the leading sports within the overall Indoor and Outdoor Strategy, opportunities to provide a more diverse and wider reaching range of facilities for sport and physical activity on current sites will be pursued by the Council.

5.2 As detailed in Section 2 (part 1), Playing Pitch Strategy, to meet forecast future needs to 2037, it is recommended that the following new provision should be considered subject to the availability of suitable space and feasibility assessment:

- Up to three new fine turf cricket pitches (the need is greatest in the southwest of the borough)
 - New provision of two football pitches at Bannister Sports Centre
 - New provision of changing pavilions for winter playing pitch sports at Saddlers Mead Open Space
 - New provision of changing pavilion close to ATP at Orley Farm School
 - New provision of a 3G ATP to World Rugby compliant specification at The Hive Football Complex.
 - New provision of 2 additional 3G ATPs should Whitmore High School/Avanti House be unable to register their 3G ATPs or are unavailable for FA match play.
- 5.3 The Action Plan as detailed at Figure 4.1 (Playing Pitches), and 4.2 (Built Facilities), pages 102-103 of the Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy (That Strategy is in Appendix 2 of this report), presents the priority projects in alphabetical order. Further longer-term projects are listed in Appendix H, figures H1 and H2, pages 2-5 of the Harrow Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy (That Strategy is in Appendix 2 of this report). The action plan is a guide to how facilities might be developed, pending funding confirmation and planning permission where necessary, where and whom they might be developed by to meet identified demand, exploit opportunities that may arise and provide sustainable management and operational models often through engaging with either voluntary or commercial partners. Several project proposals within the strategy are subject to design and cost analysis and for some projects feasibility testing and options appraisals. Sites included in the Action Plan include educational sites, Council sites, parks, and private sites. A Project Team will meet monthly to progress the delivery of the Action Plan. The Project Team will be attended by relevant Council officers from the Place, People, and Resources Directorates.

5.4 The immediate priority for Harrow, as with many local authorities at the time of this strategy, is to protect and continue to maintain the current level of facilities to ensure no loss of provision during the current challenging time for local authorities. The current pressures on public sector budgets alongside increasing operational costs and capital costs (for maintenance and new facilities) means the London Borough of Harrow must plan prudently for future needs.

5.5 The Council has a major project to consider in the future replacement of Harrow Leisure Centre subject to funding, as well as considering the longevity of Hatch End Swimming Pool. These two facilities will require considerable planning and development to ensure they can be delivered and provide the right facility mix for residents across the area.

5.6 It is recommended that the Council's Strategy Steering Group should review and update the Action Plan and priority projects annually during the strategy period. The Steering Group will include project team members, supported by external members which will include National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of the relevant sports, Sport England and Harrow's Voluntary and Community Sector.

6. Ward Councillor Comments

6.1 N/A – the recommendations in this report affect all wards.

7. Performance Issues

7.1 Sport England's latest Active Lives Survey results (Nov 2021-Nov 2022) show that more adult residents of the borough (aged 16+) are physically 'inactive' (30%) compared to the national average (25.8%) and the regional average (25%), as well as a lower-level percentage (59.8%) being classed as 'active' than the regional (64.2%) and national averages (63.1%).

7.2 The last available data from the Sport England Active Lives Children Survey for Harrow is for the 2022-23 academic year. The level of activity of children in Harrow is better than the regional and national picture. 29.9% of children are 'less active' in Harrow compared to 32.5% of children in London and 30.2% of children in England. There are also more 'active' children in Harrow (51.5%) in comparison to the regional (45.7%) and national (47%) average.

8. Environmental Implications

8.1 Delivering some of the actions listed in the Action Plan of the Strategy will result in improvements to the quality of indoor sports facilities including having more energy efficient and sustainable buildings. This will support the Council's 'Living Harrow: The London Borough of Harrow's Climate and Nature Strategy, 2023-30' to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

9. Risk Management Implications

9.1 Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? **No**

9.2 Separate risk register in place? **No** – Separate risk registers will be developed for the delivery of discrete projects.

9.3 The relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below. **n/a**

9.4 The following key risks should be taken into account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
<p>1. The Action Plan is not deliverable due to a lack of funding being available and an inability to secure external funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Action Plan is a guide to how facilities might be developed pending funding confirmation. ▪ The delivery of the strategic recommendations of the strategy is likely to require capital investment. Each proposed project will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that it is financially viable and is subject to a funding bid in accordance with the Council’s annual budget process. ▪ External funding opportunities will be explored to minimise the need for Council borrowing. By adopting the strategy, the Council will be able to maximise its potential to secure grant funding. 	AMBER
<p>2. Suitable Project Management arrangements are not in place to ensure that the actions in the Action Plan are progressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Project Team will be established that will meet monthly. The Project Team will be attended by relevant Council Departments including Sport and Leisure, Parks, and Public Health ▪ Specific Project Management arrangements will be put in place for specific projects as required involving key Council Officers and other stakeholders. 	AMBER
<p>3. The audit of sports facilities becomes out of date, including changes in national priorities, and the demand for facilities by the local community changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy Steering Group will meet annually to review and update the Action Plan and priority projects during the strategy period. 	GREEN

4. Procurement Implications

10.1 There are no procurement implications for the proposed adoption of the Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities Strategy, 2024-2037. Future Procurement for Council projects that will contribute to the delivery of the Strategy Action Plan will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (which will be replaced by Procurement Act 2023 coming into force in October 2024).

5. Legal Implications

10.1 Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 gives the Council the statutory power, but not duty, to provide such recreational facilities as it thinks fit, including indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

Legal implications will arise from the delivery of the strategy and Action Plan, including under public procurement, property, planning and highways legislation.

12. Financial Implications

12.1 The Action Plan as detailed at Figure 4.1 (Playing Pitches) and 4.2 (Built Facilities) (pages 102-103) of the Strategy presents the priority projects, with further longer-term projects listed in Appendix H. The Action Plan is a guide to how facilities might be developed pending funding confirmation. A number of project proposals are subject to design and cost analysis and for some projects, such as future plans for Harrow Leisure Centre and Hatch End Pool, feasibility testing and options appraisals.

12.2 The delivery of the strategy is likely to require capital investment to meet its objectives. Each proposed project will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that it is financially viable and is subject to a funding bid in accordance with the Council's annual budget process. External funding opportunities will be explored to minimise the need for council borrowing.

13. Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

13. 1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been conducted (Appendix 1). The EqIA identified that the recommended option would have a positive impact on all ages, races and ethnicities, sexes, and those with a disability. The proposed strategy would provide the Council with a strategic plan to ensure that indoor and outdoor sports facilities meet the future community needs of all these protected characteristics. No specific negative impact has been identified for any of the protected characteristics.

14. Council Priorities

14.1 The decision sought will support the Council's Vision and Corporate Priorities. The new facilities strategy will provide the strategic direction to improve Harrow's sports infrastructure supporting the Council's Vision to 'Restore Pride in Harrow.' The implementation of the Action Plan will help deliver improved sporting facilities that residents need supporting the delivery of the priorities of 'A Council that puts residents first' and 'A borough that is clean and safe'. The delivery of the sporting facilities detailed in the Action Plan will help improve the health and well-being of residents supporting the delivery of the priority of 'A place where those in need are supported'.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Statutory Officer: Comie Campbell
Signed on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 16/01/24

Statutory Officer: Stephen Dorrian
Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 15/01/24

Chief Officer: Dipti Patel
Signed off by the Corporate Director
Date: 12/02/24

Head of Procurement: Nimesh Mehta
Signed by the Head of Procurement
Date: 12/01/24

Head of Internal Audit: Neale Burns
Signed on behalf of the Head of Internal Audit
Date: 31.01.24

Has the Portfolio Holder(s) been consulted? Yes

Mandatory Checks

Ward Councillors notified: NO, as it impacts on all Wards

EqIA carried out: YES

EqIA cleared by: Jennifer Rock

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Tim Bryan – Head of Service, Culture and Leisure. Tel. 07917076800. Email: tim.bryan@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Call-in waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee: No