

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005

Subject: Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Responsible Officer: Anna Robinson, Director of Strategy

Contact Officer: Trina Taylor, Sport and Leisure Strategist

Portfolio Holder: Education and Lifelong Learning  
Planning, Development and Housing  
Environment and Transport

Key Decision: No

Status: Public

## **Section 1: Summary**

### **Decision Required**

Cabinet is asked to approve the Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy in order that consultation and engagement with residents, community groups, key stakeholders and internal departments can commence, in line with audit commission and PPG17 planning requirements.

The Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy is a working document that will, following consultation, be brought back to Cabinet for approval. Effective consultation and engagement will lead to a widely owned Strategy that delivers the objectives of Harrow's overarching Cultural Strategy.

### **Reason for report**

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has recently updated the Planning Policy Guidance to local authorities on sport, recreation and open spaces. The revised

guidance advises that local authorities should take account of the community's need for recreational space, having regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies and resisting pressures for development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest.

The guidance requires Councils to undertake an assessment of need and an audit of provision for these aspects of the borough.

In August 2004, Strategic Leisure Limited was engaged to undertake a study on supply and demand for open space, sport and recreational activities in Harrow.

In April 2005 a draft Sport, Recreation and Open Space assessment was received from Strategic Leisure Limited. This assessment has formed the basis of an Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy.

The Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy supports Harrow's corporate priorities:

- Strengthening Harrow's Communities
- Valuing Harrow's Customers
- Harrow - a true learning community

## **Benefits**

The Council recognises that participation in positive sport and recreation activities by individuals and groups has multiple benefits in respect of quality of life for individuals and the community.

Benefits arising from the development and approval of the Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy include:

- Identifies key areas that need investment
- Identifies shortfalls and surpluses in provision
- Takes account of the priorities identified by residents and community groups
- Meets the requirement of the office of the deputy prime minister for all local authorities to undertake an assessment and audit of sports and leisure need and provision
- More appropriately targeted resources

## **Cost of Proposals**

The Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy contains a list of prioritised actions against the proposed strategies.

There are clearly considerable cost implications in respect of these actions. For the purpose of consultation all prioritised actions from the Strategic Leisure study have been retained in the document.

Further to the proposed consultation and community engagement exercises it is intended to refine the priorities within the parameters of the Council's medium term budget strategy to ensure maximum benefits from finite resources.

All costs will be contained to existing Urban Living budgets.

## **Risks**

The risks associated with this report are:

- There are limited resources (people and finance) available to achieve all of the actions submitted. The actions will need to be further prioritised and reduced through the consultation period
- The role of the voluntary sector and our partners is paramount to the effective implementation of the strategy. It is therefore essential that there is extensive community ownership of the strategy and actions involving contributions from local groups and volunteers.
- The costs of the proposals in the strategy are likely to be in excess of budget availability and effective prioritisation will be needed
- The estimated consultation period is 6 months to ensure effective engagement

## **Implications if recommendations rejected**

The Council will not meet PPG17 requirements to have a strategy that meets the sports and recreational needs of residents.

The Council will not meet PPG17 and audit commission requirements in relation to community engagement on sports and leisure and there will be a lack of community ownership, which will reduce participation and contributions from the community.

There will be no clear direction or strategic planning for the future investment and management of sport, recreation and open space.

## Section 2: Report

### Brief History

Strategic Leisure Limited was appointed in August 2004 to undertake a PPG17-compliant assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities. The objective of the study was to identify gaps in provision, and need for enhancement, development or replacement of current facilities. The study covers provision in the public, educational (primarily Local Education Authority Schools), commercial and voluntary sectors. The study's results have been assessed borough-wide and within the three areas, West, Central and East of the new Harrow project, having regard for nearby provision in adjoining boroughs.

In order to assess the adequacy of open space, sport and recreation provision, Strategic Leisure Limited considered the different types of provision and its primary role and function. This led to an assessment of the quality, quantity and accessibility of each site and facility.

### 2.2 Classification of Sites and Facilities

The Planning Policy Guidance (17) Companion Guide, Harrow Unitary Development Plan and the London Plan provides guidance on the key categories of open space, sport and recreation provision. From these guidelines ten categories have been assigned to reflect the local provision.

**Table 1 – Classifications**

Indoor Sports Facilities	These are formal facilities designed and used for sporting activity, such as indoor swimming pools, gymnastics facilities, indoor bowls, fitness suites and indoor sports halls that are used for sports such as badminton, basketball and indoor tennis.
Community Centres/Halls	Twenty-eight community centres/halls have been identified in Harrow by Strategic Leisure, of which half currently hire out space for sport and leisure activities. It is recognised that this list of community centres/halls needs refinement and further information will be gathered through the community engagement exercise.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Outdoor Sports Facilities are defined as delineated spaces, which are used for football, rugby, cricket, hockey, tennis, basketball, athletics, outdoor bowls and golf. Outdoor pitches includes artificial and synthetic turf
Sport and Physical Activity	Sport and Physical Activity includes community and sport development through creative programming and planned activities, focusing on key performance targets. This can be achieved through the creation and support of effective partnerships between external agencies and the Council.

Provision for children and young people	These are areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and informal kick about areas.
Parks and Gardens	The classification of parks and gardens is, accessible, high quality opportunities for informal and formal recreation and community events, including woodlands, wildlife conservation, bio diversity, ecological, and environmental education awareness. Open space that was identified by Strategic Leisure as semi natural open space has been included within the parks and gardens classification.
Green Chains	Green chains are linked open spaces, which often follow a river or other linear feature such as a former railway line. Green Chains can be used as informal recreation sites for walking, cycling or horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel alternatives.
Green Belt	The Green Belt is protected open space that provides opportunities for informal recreational activities, such as walking and horse riding. This area also provides habitats for wildlife conservation, bio diversity and is a resource that can be used to enhance awareness of the environment
Allotments	Allotments provide the opportunity for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
Nature conservation sites (small local parks under 2 hectares)	These are sites of specialist nature supporting wildlife/natural habitats/rare flora and fauna,

### 2.3 Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy

The Interim Sport and Leisure Strategy outlines the qualitative and quantitative findings of each classification. These findings build a picture of Harrow's current sport and leisure deficiencies and surpluses. The proposed strategies and actions outlined directly flow from the findings to provide direction on the future use of resources to best meet the sports and leisure needs of residents

Due to the large number and extensive knowledge of the community sport and leisure groups in Harrow it is expected that the consultation and engagement processes on the Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy will make a significant contribution to the final strategy.

## 2.4 Process and Timeframe

On Cabinet approval of the interim Sport and Leisure Strategy, community and stakeholder involvement will be undertaken over a six-month period utilising the principles of the draft community engagement strategy.

Consultation and engagement techniques will include:

- Focus groups with community groups
- Involvement by key stakeholder forums
- Information Stalls
- Newsletters to inform residents and stakeholders on progress and to seek proposals and feedback
- Participatory Appraisal – trained local people to undertake consultation with target groups

### Options considered

N/A

### Consultation

To date consultation on the Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy has been undertaken with the Portfolio Holders and key internal departments. All elected members are also invited to a presentation on the key findings of the Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Strategy.

### Future Consultation

1. Internal departmental consultation	August/ September 2005
2. Cultural Strategy Forum	September 2005
3. Key Stakeholders and community groups	September/October 2005
4. Target Groups	October - December 2005
5. Residents	October/November/December 2005

### Financial Implications

The current report is for consultation only and costs will be met from existing resources.

A further report detailing cost implications will be produced as the strategy develops.

### Legal Implications

None at this stage

### Equalities Impact

This decision contributes to the corporate Race Equality Scheme by promoting sport and leisure activities.

## **Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents**

### Appendix

Interim Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy – circulated to members of Cabinet only and can be viewed on the Council's website – [www.harrow.gov.uk](http://www.harrow.gov.uk)

### Background papers

Strategic Leisure Limited - Draft Sport, Recreation and Open Space Assessment:

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020 8424 6831