
Subject:	DRAFT INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 4 July 2022
Report of:	Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report:	To seek permission to consult on the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy dated July 2022
Recommendation:	To approve the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy dated July 2022 attached at Appendix one for consultation.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Indoor Sports Facility Strategy examines the current and future supply and demand for nine types of indoor sports facilities across Dover District. The purpose of the study is to help guide potential decisions around rationalisation and investment, community use of school facilities, encouraging greater flexibility of facility usage and determine strategic objectives for the District. The study will also be used to highlight the links to public health and how provision of accessible indoor facilities contributes towards healthy living and well-being. It will help to underpin feasibility work on the proposed redevelopment of Tides Leisure Centre in Deal.
- 1.2 In addition, the Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan to 2040 and the NPPF requires planning policies on open space and recreation to 'be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport, and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate' This strategy will become a supporting document to the Local Plan 2040 to address this requirement.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council continues to work on improving accessible and affordable indoor leisure facilities across the district. The Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy 2016 is now out of date and in need of review. Many of its strategic objectives have been delivered, the most significant being the successful delivery of the new Dover District Leisure Centre which officially opened in March 2019.
- 2.2 The Council is also undertaking the review of the District Local Plan and it is timely that this strategy is reviewed to align with the development of wider district planning policy. Simultaneously, the Council is also investigating the potential redevelopment of Tides Leisure Centre in Deal, with aging pool provision that is reaching end of life.
- 2.3 In October 2022, Dover District Council commissioned The Sports Consultancy in partnership with GT Architects, Faithful & Goud and Hadron Consulting to review the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy. This work was undertaken in parallel with a reviewed feasibility and options appraisal study for Tides Leisure Centre.

- 2.4 The draft indoor sports facility strategy was undertaken using Sport England guidance to reflect current best practice guidance for the provision of indoor sports facilities. It focuses on sports halls, indoor swimming pools, health & fitness suites, indoor bowls, dance/aerobic studios, indoor tennis courts, squash & racquetball courts, gymnastics, boxing, and martial arts. It examines the age, quality, size, accessibility, community use, opening hours and type of management of each existing facility by way of a desktop review using data made available by Sport England through tools such as Facility Planning Models (FPM), Active Places and Active People Surveys. This information was supplemented by consultation with operators. Additional consultation with key stakeholders including Sport England, National Governing Bodies of Sport, local secondary schools and parish councils with indoor sports facilities, key local sport clubs, facility managers and neighbouring authorities was undertaken to complete a robust draft document.
- 2.5 The main objective is to provide a clear understanding of the current and future supply and demand issues to help improve provision in a way that meets the needs of current and potential users. It provides the evidence required to underpin the feasibility and options appraisal for Tides Leisure Centre. It will help the Council and other facility providers to direct future investment. It can also be used to provide supporting evidence towards any potential grant funding application to the Sport England in respect of Tides Leisure Centre.
- 2.6 The percentage of people in the District participating in physical activity at least 150 minutes a week in 2019 (pre-COVID) was 63.9%. This is the same as the Kent average and slightly higher than the England average. In terms of inactivity, i.e. less than 30 minutes a week, the percentage of inactive people in the district is 24.1 which is below the Kent and England averages. Availability of affordable and welcoming facilities at accessible locations helps to build participation in sport, thus improving quality of life as well as healthy living and well-being of the local community. Increased participation also delivers wider benefits in addition to the satisfaction and enjoyment gained by participants taking part in their chosen activity.
- 2.7 The District has a high rate of obesity levels in adults. The percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese in Dover District is 63.4% this is higher than the Southeast region (61.5%) and in line with the UK average of 63% of adults. Sport and physical activity can play its part in reducing health inequalities and obesity levels through encouraging more people to lead active lifestyles.
- 2.8 The percentage of children in Reception (age 4-5 years) classified as overweight in the Dover District is 25.4%, this is higher than the averages for the Southeast region and England. The district also has the 3rd highest prevalence of overweight children at Reception age in Kent. The percentage of children in Year 6 (age 10-11 years) classified as overweight or obese (including severe obesity) in the Dover District is 19.1%, this is higher than the Southeast region (16.8%) and marginally lower than the England average (20.2%).
- 2.9 The draft study supports the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 under Strategic Theme Two; Housing & Community “Work to build healthy, resilient and sustainable communities, where resident have good access to facilities and transport links to further their well-being which includes the action of “Continue to invest in leisure facilities across the District, complementing and building on the success of the Dover District Leisure Centre” in addition to “Worth with our health, well-being and leisure partners to support healthier and fitter communities.”

3. Key Findings

- I. There is a deficit in swimming pool water space of a 6 lane 25m pool. A feasibility and options appraisal study for the potential improvement and replacement of the existing Tides Leisure Centre is being undertaken
- II. Additional sports hall capacity, or greater access to existing education sites, is likely to be required at Whitfield, Aylesham and Dover Town Centre. The additional planned developments will generate a combined need for additional sports hall space equivalent to 2.4 badminton courts
- III. Health and fitness facilities - latent demand reports completed for Tides Leisure Centre show that a significant level of latent demand exists for that site. Other potential areas for improved health and fitness facilities are Aylesham and Sandwich.
- IV. There is no requirement for additional indoor bowls provision in the District. The District does however have a growing ageing population and this could improve future trends in participation. There is a need to support Betteshanger Indoor Bowls Club in maintaining current levels of participation.
- V. Squash and Racketball demands are meeting national requirements. A growing population may generate a need for further courts in the future. If court provision is reduced this would have a negative impact on squash and current users may find it difficult to secure bookings at alternative sites during peak times. Improved access to courts at Duke Of York's Military School may be a possible solution to increasing capacity in the district.
- VI. Due to the existing Tennis facilities in Deal and nearby Canterbury, Dover District is not identified by the LTA as having a lack in provision. Indoor tennis courts at Tides Leisure and Indoor Tennis Centre should be retained.
- VII. There is a requirement to increase the level of provision of dedicated multi-purpose studio space within the District. This is linked to the potential latent demand for health and fitness facilities, which also support the need for increased studio space for group exercise. The Council should support development of new community accessible dance and activity studios. The findings from this strategy support initial options for consideration by DDC, which include the provision of 1 or 2 aerobic/dance studios and a dedicated spin studio at a new Tides Leisure Centre to complement the expanded health&fitness offer.
- VIII. There is a requirement to investigate options for the development of a new dedicated gymnastics facilities in the District. There is unmet demand for membership of the clubs in the district due to existing waiting lists. However, it should be noted that these types of facilities can be developed as commercially viable businesses. Therefore, gymnastics should continue to be supported by access to community and educational sports halls, including DDC facilities at Dover District Leisure Centre and Tides Leisure Centre.
- IX. There is a requirement to investigate options for the development of new dedicated boxing and martial arts facilities in the District. There is unmet demand in the district, with strong growth in club membership in recent years. Boxing and martial arts clubs looking for dedicated facilities should be supported in doing so.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The proposed public consultation work will cover an 11 week period, this is considered to represent a reasonable balance between providing enough time for consultees to prepare their responses and the need to improve leisure facilities in a timely manner. This is 5 weeks longer than the statutory period required by the Statement of Community Involvement and this longer period is proposed to ensure that school facilities, Parish Council's and other indoor leisure providers have sufficient time to respond following the summer holiday period.
- 4.2 The draft strategy has been informed by analytical research that has been supplemented by engagement with key stakeholders such as leisure providers, NGB.s, key sports clubs and Sport England.

4.3 The council is now seeking to consult with additional stakeholders and the residents of the district to verify accuracy of information and to seek feedback from providers and users on the draft proposals. The public will be made aware of the consultation by means of advertisement in the local papers, an announcement on the Council's website, social media communications and posters in the Council's area offices.

4.4 On completion of the consultation, the intention is to report back to Cabinet, providing a summary of the responses received, commentary on those comments and suggested amendments to the strategy in response to the comments, if appropriate. The Council will consider the comments received when deciding whether to approve a final version Indoor Sports Facility Strategy. See Appendix 2 for further details on the consultation approach.

5.0 Identification of Options

5.1 Option One - To approve the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy attached at Appendix one for consultation

5.2 Option Two - Not to approve the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy attached at Appendix one for consultation.

6.0 Evaluation of Options

6.1 The preferred option is one, because it will provide the evidence required to underpin the feasibility and options appraisal for Tides Leisure Centre. It will help the Council and other facility providers to direct future investment. It will also be used to help support any potential grant funding application to Sport England for indoor facilities. It will contribute towards having affordable and accessible indoor sports facilities in Dover District and encouraging healthier living and well-being for our local communities. In addition, the document will inform the indoor sport requirements to meet the needs of future growth within the emerging Local Plan and projects and actions identified will be included within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which will enable developer contributions to be sought to fund new provision.

6.2 Option two is not preferred as it would present the following main risks:-

6.2.1 The Council would lack strategic evidence needed to help inform and underpin the proposed facility mix options for a proposed new redeveloped leisure centre in the Deal urban area.

6.2.2 The Council would lack strategic evidence needed to help any potential grant application to Sports England.

6.2.3 It could result in a lack of clear direction for the management of, and investment in Council indoor sport facilities.

6.2.4 It would not enable developer contributions to be sought to fund future growth requirements to meet the needs of the Local Plan.

7.0 Resource Implications

7.1 Once the strategy has been adopted there will be officer resource required to help facilitate the delivery of some of the items identified in the proposed action plan, particularly around liaison with schools and community facilities to widen public access to facilities. This role will also enable effective planning and delivery of new and enhanced provision alongside new development.

7.2 The proposed redevelopment of Tides Leisure Centre is a major key project for DDC to deliver. However, this project is being dealt with by separate cabinet report to provide details on the project and required levels of resource. This will be managed by the Strategic Development Lead (Leisure).

7.3 There are limited resource implications for the consultation approach, such as posters and adverts which can be funded from existing allocated budgets.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

8.1 The strategy identifies connections between the corporate plan and climate change plans of the council. It supports the requirements to investigate opportunities to reduce carbon consumption at leisure facilities in line with DDCs 2030 net zero carbon targets. Strategic Priority No.4 in the Action Plan identifies the need to provide advice and support to encourage other facility operators to explore opportunities for carbon reduction at their sites.

9.0 Corporate Implications

9.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comments (DL).

9.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make (HR)

9.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: 'The Equality Officer has been consulted during the development of the report and the equality impact assessment highlights a positive impact for some of the protected characteristic groups. Further consultation will identify the needs of those groups. Members are reminded that in discharging their responsibilities they are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>' (KMcE)

9.4 Comment from Climate Change & Energy Conservation Officer

9.5 Other Officers (as appropriate):

10.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Indoor Sports Strategy July 2022

Appendix 2 – Consultation Approach

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment Indoor Sports Facilities

Background Papers

Indoor Sports Facility Strategy 2016

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