
Subject: **ADOPTION OF INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY 2023-2040**

Meeting and Date: **Cabinet – 3 April 2023**

Report of: **Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Place and Environment)**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property**

Decision Type: **Key Decision**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Purpose of the report: Cabinet is requested to consider representations received during consultation on the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy. A small number of changes to the strategy are proposed, in response to representations received, and adopt the final version of the Strategy

Recommendation: (a) To approve the proposed responses to the representations received, as shown in Appendix 1.

(b) To approve and adopt the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy, as amended, attached at Appendix 2.

1. Summary

1.1 The Indoor Sports Facility Strategy (ISFS) 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. 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. Further development of this project is subject to the findings of detailed feasibility study, and dependant on the project being affordable and financially viable. Fundamentally, it will provide robust and up to date evidence to support the Local Plan to 2040 to determine what facilities are needed in certain areas of the district and where there are opportunities for new provision. This will enable the council to seek developer contributions from qualifying new developments.

1.2 Key findings from the updated ISFS included the following requirements:

- i. There is a deficit in swimming pool water space of a 6 lane 25m pool.
- 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. There is no requirement for additional indoor bowls, squash and racketball provision in the District. A growing population may generate a need for further provision in the future. Indoor tennis courts at Tides Leisure and Indoor Tennis Centre should be retained.
- iv. 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.

- v. There is a requirement to investigate options for the development of a new dedicated gymnastics and boxing and martial arts facilities in the District.

1.3 Cabinet approved public consultation upon the draft Indoor Sports Facility Strategy on 4 July 2022, which was duly undertaken across an eleven-week period. Appendix 1 to this report provides details of the representations received and proposed responses and changes made to the strategy document. No significant changes are required to the draft strategy. Appendix 2 comprises a final draft of the strategy incorporating amendments arising from the consultation for adoption. It is not considered that further consultation is required because the changes are considered minor and do not fundamentally alter the actions from the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Members will recall the ISFS 2016 is out of date and the Council appointed consultants to undertake its review, which commenced in October 2021. This timing aligned with the development of wider district planning policy work to support the emerging Local Plan. Simultaneously, the Council was also investigating the potential redevelopment of Tides Leisure Centre in Deal, with aging pool provision that is reaching end of life.

2.2 The preparation of the draft indoor sports facility strategy was undertaken by 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 stakeholders such as operators and facility providers. 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.

2.3 Public consultation on the draft ISFS ran for eleven weeks between 18 July and 30 September 2022, significantly longer than the period required or set out by the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The consultation was advertised in local newspapers, via social media and alerts were sent to everyone who had registered an interest in leisure projects through the Council's 'Keep Me Posted' initiative. In addition, a total of around 1,500 consultees were directly invited to comment, including Cllrs, members of parish and town councils, local community groups and schools, leisure providers and sports clubs, and also all consultees registered to the Local Plan consultation portal. The draft document was available to view on the Council's website throughout the consultation period and promoted via social media communications and posters in the Council's area offices.

2.4 Consultees were required to respond to key questions:

- a) Are the priorities in the draft Strategy the right ones?
- b) If not, explain what could have been done differently?
- c) Are the outcomes in the draft Strategy the right ones?
- d) If not, please explain what could be done differently?
- e) Are there any other comments you would like to make on the draft strategy?

- f) If you are a sports facility provider and have needs for requirements /plans for enhanced facilities, please provide more detail.
- 2.5 The Council received representations from 28 organisations and individuals. A summary of the comments made and proposed responses to each representation are set out in the analysis table at Appendix 1. Consideration should be given to all the representations in the analysis table, and to the factual corrections and clarifications that are proposed in response. However, it is possible to pick out some common themes raised with examples of minor edits recommended to the draft strategy. These are set out below.
- 2.6 Swimming priorities within the draft action plan generated the most responses with almost a quarter of representatives commenting on this. Strategic Priority 15 of the Action Plan highlights the Council's approach to the redevelopment of Tides Leisure Pool. It states the Council should “progress proposals for the redevelopment of a new swimming pool to address unmet demand. Subject to the findings of detailed feasibility study, and dependant on the project being affordable and financially viable, proceed with the development of a new leisure centre”. Members of the public expressed overwhelming support for the inclusion of swim lane provision. Representations suggested varying pool water needs e.g. from 8 to 6 lanes to the need for a 33m or 50m pool as well as others supporting the continuation of a leisure pool provision. Provision of a 4 to 6 lane pool and a leisure pool is being investigated as part of the detailed feasibility and options appraisal work. The viability of such a proposal is being considered and it is anticipated a separate report on the redevelopment proposals for Tides Leisure Centre will be presented to cabinet in early summer 2023 There are some recommended minor edits to the draft strategy to acknowledge that any new pool provision should complement existing and to also recognise the importance of meeting unmet demand.
- 2.7 Feedback was received from several sports clubs. It is recognised that most of the dedicated sports facilities in gymnastics are run by charities and are non- profitable organisations as was mentioned by Dover Gymnastics Club and a minor edit has been made to the draft strategy to acknowledge this. Walmer Lawn Tennis Club and Deal Aycro Gymnastic Clubs both expressed support for the priorities in the action plan, however, each expressed concern for the continuity of service in connection with redevelopment proposals for Tides Leisure Centre. The Council will take early communication on this matter into consideration in the separate report on Tides Leisure Centre project.
- 2.8 Other minor changes to the draft strategy include updating data records associated to Sandwich Technology School in tabulated data sheets to ensure accuracy. In addition, at the time of writing this report Dover Boys Grammar School has recently opened a new sports hall. This has been added to the mapping and tables while the school considers what level of community use can be achieved.
- 2.9 There were several other comments made which have been noted and responded to in Appendix 1, but have not led to a change required to the ISFS. These include comments around specific sites that may be suitable for meeting future Indoor Sport’s needs, how the Local Plan should consider the locations of future needs and around how developer contributions contribute to the delivery of facilities and whether that is effective.
- 2.10 A summary of the main amendments to the draft ISFS following consultation is presented below:
- a) At 5.4.4, and 5.5. text has been edited to acknowledge that any new pool provision should complement existing, as such, the word ‘complement’ has been added.

- b) Add Strategic Priority 18 under Swimming Pool Priorities to recognise the importance of meeting unmet demand. Add “To seek developer contributions to meet pool water deficiencies across the district” “DDC to work with developers to secure contributions to meet remaining pool water deficiencies across the district, subject to feasibility, demonstrating need and financial viability, in the future.”
 - c) At 5.37.1, remove wording to suggest gymnastic clubs can be developed as commercially viable businesses and replace with “these facilities can be developed as financially viable organisations”.
 - d) At 5.16.4 add text to recognise the contribution made by facilities in Thanet to the north east of Dover. Add “Also, Thanet Indoor Bowling Centre includes 8 rinks and meets the needs of some residents to the north of the district”.
 - e) At tables 5.9.2, 5.9.8, 5.12.2, 5.19.2 and 5.27.1 amend Sandwich Leisure Centre year built to read “1991” and Sandwich Technology School original year built to read “1991” and ownership type to read “Academy”.
 - f) At table 5.9.2 Add “Dover Grammar School for Boys” to show a four courts sports hall under supply information for sports halls. With footnote to read “It should be noted that the 4 court sports hall at Dover Grammar School for boys opened in 2022, during completion of this strategy, and has not been included in Sport England’s Facility Planning model report. This site provides an opportunity to increase the supply of facilities in the district subject to availability to community clubs and user groups.”
 - g) Paragraph 5.9.12 and Strategic Priority ID20 was amended to clarify the current position around the S106 agreement in place for Aylesham for new sports hall and facilities, and to confirm the final project is yet to be determined and defined.
- 2.11 It should also be noted that the Strategy has been updated to report on the consultation approach set out above and to reference the latest stage of Local Plan preparation. A final version of the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy proposed for adoption is attached at Appendix 2, incorporating the suggested changes set out above and in Appendix 1.
- 2.12 Adoption of the ISFS as the Council’s future strategy for indoor sport is important as it identified where there are current and future gaps in provision and will enable the delivery of projects to meet the needs of residents. The projects identified within the ISFS have been included within the emerging Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which supports the Local Plan and new policy within it which enables the collection of developer contributions towards sports facilities from major developments through the Section 106 process. Adoption of this strategy now, enables DDC to commence collection of financial contributions now towards future projects and maintenance of facilities which are meeting the needs of new development. It will be essential to keep this ISFS up to date and reviewed every five years, as part of the IDP to ensure S106 contributions are being collected and spent on the correct indoor sports provision.
- 3. Identification of Options**
- 3.1 Option one: To approve and adopt the final Indoor Sports Facility Strategy 2023-2040, attached at Appendix 2, incorporating amendments that respond to representations received during the public consultation.
- 3.2 Option two: Not to approve or adopt the final Indoor Sports Facility Strategy 2023-2040 attached at Appendix 2.
- 4. Evaluation of Options**
- 4.1 Option one is preferable because it will allow the Council to adopt an up-to-date Indoor Sports Facility Strategy that can help to shape future provision in a way that meets the needs of current and potential users. It will also help to underpin the facility mix options for a new redeveloped leisure centre in Deal and provide supporting evidence to seek

developer contributions towards facilities and for any potential external funding opportunities.

- 4.2 If option two is selected, the Council will be left without an action plan to address the need for indoor sport provision in the district. There would be no formal evidence to support facility mix options for a new redeveloped leisure centre in Deal and the council will not meet the criteria required to potentially apply for external funding opportunities. There would also be limited opportunity to seek developer contributions towards future identified projects.

5. **Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There will be officer resource required to help facilitate the delivery of some projects identified in the proposed action plan.
- 5.2 The proposed redevelopment of the leisure centre in Deal is a major key project under consideration for DDC. This project will be reported to Members in more detail and the resource implications as appropriate in 2023.

6. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 There are no negative environmental or climate change implications as a consequence of this decision being taken. However, one of the Strategic priorities (ID4) identified is to 'Investigate and implement opportunities to reduce carbon consumption at leisure facilities owned by DDC and provide advice and support to encourage other facility operators to explore opportunities for carbon reduction at their sites'.

7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy have been consulted in the writing of this report and have no further comment to add (AC)
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: The Equality Officer has been consulted during the development of the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and an equality impact assessment highlights a positive impact for some of the protected characteristic 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>
- 7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Consultation Analysis Table

Appendix 2 – Final Indoor Sport Facility Strategy 2023-2040

9. **Background Papers**

Indoor Sports Facility Strategy 2016

Sport England Facility Planning Model Standard Report for Halls and Pools 2022

Sport England Facility Planning Model Bespoke Pool Report 2022

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