

Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



Tuesday, 7th December, 2010

SPECIAL MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Dear Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room (Room G05), City Hall on Monday, 13th December, 2010 at 4.30 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully

PETER McNANEY

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters
 - (a) Apologies
 - (b) Minutes
2. Draft Playing Pitch Provision Strategy (Pages 1 - 60)

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Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee – Special Meeting
Subject:	Update on Playing Pitches Strategy
Date:	13 December 2010
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure

1.	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Members are aware that an ongoing process has been taking place to develop a Playing Pitches strategy and that reports were brought to Committee in December 2009 and June 2010.</p> <p>The report to Committee in December 2009 outlined the findings from the Strategic Leisure assessment of supply and demand for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ association football (soccer); ▪ Gaelic sports (football and hurling); ▪ camogie; ▪ cricket; ▪ rugby union; and ▪ hockey. <p>The report to Committee in June 2010 outlined further developments in the process and party group briefings were held in August 2010 to gain Members views on the developing strategy and prioritisation framework. The main points of discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The value of outdoor leisure provision in delivering a number of Council corporate objectives, including improved health and well-being; – The need to address the deficiencies in provision for some sporting codes, e.g. Gaelic sports and cricket; – Provide a robust indication of cost for proposed options with a prioritisation framework for investment to address the deficiencies in provision; – Develop partnerships with the education sector, governing bodies and other providers to ensure adequate provision is provided across the city and community access issues are addressed; – That any strategy is equality proofed and addresses the issue of under-represented groups such as women and people with disabilities.

	<p>Further party group briefings have been held in the first two weeks of December to seek Members' views on the draft strategy, in advance of the special meeting of the Committee.</p>
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<p>2.</p>	<p>Key Issues</p>
	<p>The objectives for the overall strategy are as follows:</p> <p>Objective 1 – Capital development and enhancement To prioritise and deliver a programme of capital development and enhancement investments to address identified deficiencies and to protect and enhance existing provision.</p> <p>Objective 2 – Management To implement and monitor a range of management options, working in partnership with community and statutory providers, so as to maximise the participation of people in sports team activity.</p> <p>Objective 3 – Sports development To develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise the participation of people in sports team activity, including under-represented groups such as females and those with disabilities. connectivity and shared space; and supporting new teams.</p> <p>It has been agreed that this strategy will be over a 10-year timeframe.</p> <p>A copy of the draft play pitches strategy is attached as appendix 1. A verbal summary on the strategy will be provided at the Committee meeting.</p> <p><u>Issues for consideration</u> There are a number of issues which Members may wish to consider specifically:</p> <p><u>City wide approach (5.4)</u> For the purposes of the final assessment, it was agreed with elected Members that provision levels would be on the basis of a city-wide assessment. This is due in part to different perceptions of the geographical boundaries within the city as well as the catchment radius of 5 miles, or 20 minute travel time for synthetic turf pitches. This is recommended by the Fields in Trust good practice guide 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play', considered to be the leading authority on issues related to outdoor leisure provision.</p> <p>Further analysis of the equality impacts will be undertaken in respect of the catchment areas for each of the proposed sites, as part of the prioritisation process. This will allow the Council to identify any site-specific mitigating actions and incorporate this into the new strategy.</p>

Baseline Assessment (9.2)

It is agreed that the baseline assessment is a sufficiently robust baseline on which to initiate the strategy. It is our intention to further substantiate the figures in 2 years (rather than the recommended 5 years) through an improved performance management framework.

Approach (9.2)

A multi-layered approach is proposed – investment; management; programming – which will ensure that the Council provides and supports the provision of high-quality, accessible, well-planned outdoor provision. This includes capital investment in new pitches and improving the quality of existing facilities.

Timeframe (9.3)

Given the scale of investment and the timescales for design, permissions and delivery, it is proposed that this strategy is over a 10-year time period. This is in line with the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy, currently in draft.

Partnership (9.4)

In line with the advice from the consultants, it is proposed that this strategy looks at the totality of provision with secured community access rather than just Council-owned. We will work vigorously with our partners across different sectors to protect and enhance playing pitch provision in the city, and within agreed travelling distances, beyond the Council's current boundaries.

Setting priorities for phase 1 (9.5)

It is therefore proposed that in phase 1 (Years 1-3), the Council will prioritise capital works in its own facilities but will be proactive in securing feasible partnership opportunities for medium and longer term investments.

Discussions with the education sector (9.6/7)

It is a priority to improve community access to education facilities. Meetings are ongoing with the education sector including the Department of Education, Belfast Education and Library Board and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

Mix of capital investment (10.10)

A proposed mix of investment is outlined for phase 1 and includes a combination of delivering new 2 pitches with ancillary facilities (part-funded); a series of upgrades (pitches and changing) and lower cost options (floodlighting and cricket squares). This option presents the maximum benefit to the Council and its partners, and reduces a number of the risks

Funding strategy (10.12)

It is necessary to develop a complete management and funding framework for this strategy which maximises the income, facilitates partnership working as well as ensuring provision is made for repairs and renewals.

Work is ongoing with officers from Finance and Resources in this regard.

Short list (10.14 and Appendix 2)

An initial short-list of Council owned sites has been made on the basis that there is either potential for new hybrid 3-G provision (Score 2) or replacement provision (Score 1). It is recommended that those sites which are too small, have planning restrictions or where the topography is prohibitive will not proceed to the full prioritisation stage.

The short-list in appendix 1 (31 sites) will now be scored on the basis of the matrix outlined below.

Capital prioritisation matrix (10.16)

The matrix has been developed in alignment with the sub-objectives under Objective 1 and the Council's existing capital prioritisation framework. It proposes a numerical assessment based on a number of criteria which is subsequently weighted. Each investment decision – both Council-owned and partner opportunities – will be assessed using the assessment criteria.

A proposed weighted score has also been included, denoting the Council's priority for each criterion. When the weighting is agreed, locations will be assessed against the matrix. The proposed weightings are:

- Need (25)
- Proximity (10)
- External Funding (25)
- Partnership (10)
- Intensification of use (20)
- Reputational Risk (10)

Following the scoring, a narrative on the risks, costs and benefits on each site will be developed. Each narrative will also include detail on the equality and good relations impacts of each investment location and mitigating actions required.

Next Steps

The next stage in the process is to undertake public consultation on the draft strategy. It is anticipated that the public consultation will be carried out from 10 January to 4 March 2011 to obtain the views of users and key stakeholders. A detailed timeline is attached as appendix 2.

It is proposed that this public consultation exercise will involve a series of meetings with key stakeholders and users and that this is independently facilitated. The draft strategy will also be available to download from the website.

It is proposed that an independent consultant be appointed to facilitate the consultation process and add rigour to the process. The anticipated total cost of this extensive consultation process is up to £10,000. This will include the printing of the draft strategy, venue hire, light refreshments and the fees for an independent facilitator.

	<p>It is proposed that Party Group Briefings be carried out in March 2011 to obtain Members' views on the feedback from public consultation and that a final draft strategy be brought to the Parks and Leisure Committee in April 2011.</p>
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3.	Resource Implications
	<p><u>Financial</u> Public consultation – it is estimated that this will be in the region of £10,000.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> No additional human resources known at this time.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None at this stage although the implementation of the strategy may have implications on the number and type of playing pitches provided by the council.</p>

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	<p>Denise Wheatley has been appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy. Officers have furnished her with a copy of the full Strategic Leisure report, committee papers and the draft of the strategy. Her initial feedback is that the process to date is in line with the statutory guidance. She will continue to offer advice and feedback to the Council throughout the consultation and EQIA process.</p> <p>It is recommended that a second public consultation is undertaken when the prioritisation process has been carried out and specific sites are identified. This consultation will take place when the final draft strategy has gained Council approval.</p>

5.	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) comment on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy; (ii) agree that public consultation is undertaken on the draft strategy and that a budget of £10,000 is allocated to this; and (iii) agree that Party Group Briefings are held in March 2011 to obtain Members feedback on the findings of the public consultation and the final draft strategy.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Subject to Council approval the Policy and Business Development Officer will commence the process for public consultation in January 2011 and the Director of Parks and Leisure will bring the final draft playing pitches strategy to April 2011 Committee.
7.	Key to Abbreviations
	EQIA: Equality Impact Assessment
8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Draft Playing Pitches Strategy Appendix 2: Consultation Timeline



Belfast City Council

Playing Pitches Strategy – Draft for consultation (13 December 2010)

2011 – 2021

Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The context for a new playing pitch strategy
- 3 Baseline assessment
- 4 Overview of current supply and demand
- 5 Assessment of findings
- 6 Recommended standards of provision
- 7 Implications for planning applications
- 8 Addressing the findings
- 9 A playing pitches strategy for Belfast
- 10 Steps to delivery
- 11 Equality statement
- 12 The way forward
- 13 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Long list of sites
Appendix 2 – Map of all pitches sites

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This document is available upon request in alternative formats.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The development of new residential areas, population growth and changing expectations of users of leisure facilities all have implications for the future provision of playing pitches. Specifically for the Council there is increasing pressure on existing pitch resources. A number of sports clubs require improved facilities to meet the criteria for participation in local, regional and national leagues. At the same time a number of planning applications are pending for the sale or relinquishing of some land currently accommodating sports pitches for other land uses.
- 1.2 This strategy is based upon an assessment of supply and demand for association football (soccer), Gaelic football, camogie, cricket, rugby union, and hockey, carried out by Strategic Leisure (SL) in late 2008. It takes account of the quantity, quality and access of facilities, using an eight stage assessment method developed by Sport England and CCPR¹ and endorsed by Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI).
- 1.3 Ensuring a strategic approach to the provision of high quality, accessible pitch provision is important in meeting the aims and objectives of several regional and local strategies. Specifically it responds to the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8). It also provides greater detail and context to the local need identified in the Sport NI Active Places research.
- 1.4 The Playing Pitches Strategy provides a framework for:
- Making informed planning decisions and measuring impact;
 - Targeting financial support and investment in facilities; and
 - Planning the delivery of sports development programmes.
- 1.5 The strategy is therefore necessary to:
- Protect facilities against development pressures, and specifically residential proposals on land in, and around, urban areas;
 - Identify an appropriate facility mix to best meet predicted population growth and changes to demand levels;
 - Provide sufficient information to inform planning decisions for sites where there are applications for change of use pending;
 - Provide a framework identifying priorities for investment and prioritisation of support for funding applications;
 - Address 'demand' pressures created as a result of specific sports development pressures e.g. mini soccer, move to use of artificial pitches by hockey; and
 - Inform future policies on the Council's role as a provider and enabler of pitch provision, and in particular provide a steer on leasing sites to established sports clubs – in the case

¹ CCPR – Central Council for Physical Recreation

of Belfast a number of pitch sites are under facility management arrangements involving key sports clubs.

- 1.6 Developing the strategy has included consultation with elected representatives, Council officers and governing bodies of sport. Consultation was also undertaken with a range of stakeholders, including Sport Northern Ireland. Additionally, local sports clubs and schools were surveyed as part of the research to collect views about quantity, quality and access to facilities. Research also included Strategic Leisure visiting all Council playing pitch sites and rating facilities for quality and access.

2 The Context for a new Playing Pitch Strategy

City context

- 2.1 Within the Belfast City Council area, there are 268,400 people, which is approximately 15% of the total Northern Ireland population. 19.4% of the population of Belfast is under 16 and 17.5% (pensioners male over 65 and female over 60).
- 2.2 Belfast has a poor record in terms of health compared to the rest of Northern Ireland. The death rate in the city from heart disease, strokes and cancer is one of the highest in Europe. The worst 10 (7 in top 10 in 2010 results) wards in Northern Ireland in terms of health deprivation are in Belfast. There are also wide pockets of health inequalities across the city and the gap in life expectancy is not reducing between the most affluent areas and the most deprived. About 20% of people remain sedentary, and there has been an increase in the proportion drinking above sensible limits.
- 2.3 While there has been considerable change within the city over the past 10 years, there remain certain physical and psychological barriers which make travel around parts of the city difficult. This results in people avoiding certain facilities based on the perception that they are unsafe and making the creation of shared spaces more difficult, thus limiting the options available in the provision of services such as playing pitches. We acknowledge this remains the case in the short term but it is the Council's aspiration to use the Playing Pitch Strategy to encourage and enable people to access facilities and opportunities across the city. Improved transport infrastructure and connectivity within and between sites is important to maximise access to playing pitches.

Boundary Commission Review of the city boundaries

- 2.4 While the recommendations of the Boundary Commission Review have not currently being enacted there are considerations which should be written into 'future-proof' a new pitches strategy. In the review of the boundaries for Belfast the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland, recognised that it has been some time since the boundaries were set for Belfast and as such they did not reflect the outward growth of the city.
- 2.5 The Commissioner who undertook the review concluded that the city's boundaries need to be revised to incorporate the existing boundaries plus parts of neighbouring Castlereagh, Lisburn City and North Down Districts. The Commissioner's recommendations are still being reviewed by the Northern Ireland Executive at the time of writing; however, it is highly likely that there will be some changes to the Council's boundary and any strategy must be flexible to respond to such changes.
- 2.6 The incorporation of the proposed areas within the city boundary will mean that any outdoor sports facilities such as pitches or changing facilities will become available. An initial investigation reveals that this change will result in approximately 33 additional sites that may be incorporated within the city boundary, of which approximately 21 sites will have some outdoor provision including pitches or changing facilities. There will also be an increased population and usage of facilities linked to the proposed changes.

Legal context

- 2.7 Under Article 10 of the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986, it states:

“Each District Council shall secure provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical and cultural activities and for that purpose may, either alone or together with another District Council or any other person -

- a) Establish, maintain and manage any such facilities;*
- b) Organise any such activities;*
- c) Assist, by financial contributions or otherwise, any person to establish, maintain and manage any such facilities or to organise any such activities;*
- d) Provide, or assist by financial contribution or otherwise in the provision of, leaders for such activities; and*
- e) Defray or contribute towards the expenses of any persons taking part in any such activities.*

A District Council shall, in carrying out its functions under paragraph 1 have regard to the facilities provided by other District Councils or by other persons.”

2.8 Further to this, in legal opinion provided to the Council by Mervyn A Morrow QC, it was highlighted that ‘adequate’ must mean sufficient to fulfil the reasonable requirements or wishes of the population which the Council serves. He considered that this is the requirements of the public at large and not with one particular section of it. Similarly, any decisions on provision must not be carried out in a piecemeal basis, but on the entire provision of recreational facilities, taking into consideration the patterns of division in the city.

Strategic context

2.9 A number of regional and local strategies and policies impact on the provision of playing pitches, either as influences or in terms of the overall objectives for sport and physical activity. The key strategies and policies considered in developing the Playing Pitch Strategy are summarised below. Specifically they include the following:

- **Sport Matters - The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation (2009-2019)** which has an overarching vision to promote ‘a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport’ and outlines how the Government’s targets for sport and physical activity are to be delivered under three areas – Participation, Performance and Place. The relevant high level targets are:

PL24	By 2015 to have amended public policy frameworks to protect and promote access to and sustainable use of publicly-owned land in Northern Ireland for sport and physical recreation;
PL25	By 2019 to ensure that 90% of the population have quality accredited, multi sports facilities, that have the capacity to meet demand, within 20 minutes travel time; and
PL26	By 2019 to ensure that all planning decisions follow Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation in relation to the provision of spaces for sport and physical recreation.

- **The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation (2007-2017)** which has an overarching vision to promote ‘a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport’

and outlines how the Government's targets for sport and physical activity are to be delivered – providing an appropriate portfolio of sports pitches to support a sustainable club structure is potentially a key component of this.

- **Sport Northern Ireland Active Places Research Report (2009)** which highlights a deficiency in pitch provision within Belfast city of 290 acres of playing pitches – equivalent to around 116 pitches. This deficiency has been calculated using a different method to that outlined in Section 3 of this report.
- **Planning Policy Statement 8, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation** which provides guidance on the protection and development of facilities, including intensive sports facility complexes and floodlighting.
- **Sport and Northern Ireland's Strategy for Young People (2002-2011)** which seeks to deliver the world's best system for young people to become involved stay involved and achieve in sport and delivering the UK's highest level of participation in sport by young people. Developing the contribution of voluntary sports clubs and securing access to school facilities is a key part of this.
- **Sport Northern Ireland's Quality Framework for Sports Clubs (consultation document)** which seeks to create a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport by creating a network of quality clubs. District Councils have a key role and the provision of quality facilities to enable clubs to develop is important.

- 2.10 A number of other strategies, plans and research have been considered. These include health driven strategies to tackle rising obesity levels, and specific strategies to develop the sports coaching infrastructure. Collectively these could result in more demand for pitch sports and a subsequent need for increases in the quantity and quality of pitch facilities to provide safe environments.
- 2.11 A number of other relevant developments are underway at the time of writing this report. For example, Sport Northern Ireland is leading on a sport and physical activity participation survey which will provide data on participation rates across the adult population. This will provide key data in targeting low participation rates. It is likely this research will be published in early 2011.
- 2.12 The **Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP)** is a development plan prepared under the provisions of Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the Northern Ireland Planning Service. The BMAP uses the National Playing Fields Association's Six Acre Standard to measure outdoor sports provision at ward level across the plan area. The BMAP assessment identified that the majority of wards across the city are deficient in outdoor sport. In 2004 the BMAP recorded a total provision of 274.42 hectares of outdoor sport within the city boundary² and within this a total deficit of 169.52 hectares of outdoor sports pitches within the city.
- 2.13 The **Belfast City Council Corporate Plan** outlines the Members' high level vision for the city and is a commitment to improving the quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in and visits Belfast. It defines the clear direction of the organisation as one which is working to provide quality services which will help make citizens healthier, more active and happy in the city which is environmentally appealing and in which they feel safe and welcome. Within the

² Equates to the Belfast City Council boundary

'Better support for people and communities' theme the Council has identified among its key objectives/priorities 'People are healthier and more active' and 'People have, and avail of, opportunities to improve their well-being'. The provision of quality sports facilities, including sports pitch provision is clearly an important element of this.

- 2.14 The playing pitches strategy will sit under the emerging **Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy** which has identified 4 key objectives:

Promoting participation – there are multiple opportunities to engage:

- by increasing community engagement with facilities through planning and appropriate management arrangements;
- by using non-traditional leisure venues such as community centres;
- by using our resources including grant-aid to promote activity, improve health and well-being and deliver core Council objectives;
- by improving our marketing and communications.

Building partnerships – given the economic environment, it is critical that we build collaborations with:

- other statutory providers (such as education and health) to develop joint programmes, open up existing assets and plan for the future;
- the community on effective management agreements and access;
- existing sports clubs on sports development;
- potentially the private sector, in planning and as a management option; and
- with the planning service to protect open spaces, to deliver integrated leisure provision and potentially promote planning gain clauses.

Resources and facilities for delivery – to develop a multi-layered, cost-effective approach to delivering leisure at:

- a neighbourhood or district level; and
- a city wide level.

Planning and performance management – there is a critical need to:

- begin planning for the services and facilities required to deliver the strategy in the short, medium and long term;
- to determine appropriate benchmarks against which to measure value for money and return on investment; and
- to monitor and manage our performance.

- 2.15 The **Parks and Leisure Departmental Plan** identified a number of themes directly related to the corporate themes. One of the departmental themes is improving participation and lifestyle through increased usage of the Council's sites and facilities and working towards helping people being healthier by making more active use of their leisure time. The development of this playing pitch strategy will help the department fulfil one of its key objectives: 'To provide strategic direction in the development and use of leisure and open space provision in the city and hence provide a vehicle for local place-shaping'.

- 2.16 Belfast City Council's **Strategy for Open Spaces 'Your City, Your Space'** (November 2005) outlines a vision which is 'to make good quality open space part of living in, working in and visiting Belfast'. This vision is underpinned by four strategic themes one of which is: Healthier Places – Providing a network of open spaces that can be enjoyed and that will help to improve the quality of life. One of the objectives within this theme is to: 'Increase the number of people who use open spaces as a form of leisure and recreation'. This theme has several actions

relating to pitches and multi sports facilities and will be incorporated into the new Active Belfast and Open Spaces strategy.

- 2.17 The **Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy** for the City of Belfast (March 2007) was developed by the Council, Sport N.I. and other partner organisations from the statutory and voluntary sector. Its vision is 'together, putting sport and physical recreation at the heart of Belfast'. To realise the vision five goals have been identified, one of which is: - 'Facilities – Developing effective use of the right facilities in the right places'.
- 2.18 The **Belfast Good Relations Plan** (2010) is underpinned by the values of:- 'A Shared City, A Peaceful City, A Welcoming City and An Open City'. One of the core ideas within the plan is 'the sustaining and expansion of public spaces, accessible to all, from which no citizen feels excluded and through which all citizens can travel freely.' One of the broad goals of the Good Relations Plan is 'securing shared city space' and a key element of success would be open access to all parts of the city.
- 2.19 A comprehensive set of **Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) Action Plans** have been developed, much of which have identified actions relating to sports provision and playing pitch sites in particular. A review of these completed by the Council in May 2009 identifies some issues, funding challenges and partners. A number of these actions, if pursued will have implications for the quantity, quality and accessibility of pitch supply and wider ancillary facilities.
- 2.20 In June 2006, the Department for Social Development launched its Renewing Communities programme which included a commitment to the development of **Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRF)** for each of the five areas of Belfast covered by Area Partnership Boards (East, North, South, West Belfast and Greater Shankill).
- 2.21 The Strategic Regeneration Frameworks aim to;
- To provide a strategic vision and context for guiding regeneration, planning and development.
 - To identify a portfolio of strategic regeneration activities, which could be delivered by the public/private sector.
 - To set investment priorities for the area and influence planning decisions.
 - To provide a clear comprehensive plan for action.
 - To link with existing and emerging policies, projects and initiatives.
- 2.22 All the SRFs make reference to leisure and recreation facilities or physical assets and are valuable documents in highlighting local priorities and key to informing regeneration priorities for the city.
- 2.23 A comprehensive set of **Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA) Action Plans** have been developed, much of which have identified actions relating to sports provision and playing pitch sites in particular. A review of these completed by the Council in May 2009 identifies some issues, funding challenges and partners. A number of these actions, if pursued will have implications for the quantity, quality and accessibility of pitch supply and wider ancillary facilities.

- 2.24 The Department of Education is currently finalising its strategy on the **Community Use of the School Site**. In this, they recognise that the school estate represents a significant public resource which could be more effectively used for the benefit of the community. This includes sports facilities and proposals on how the education sector might facilitate increased community access to these facilities, now and in the future.
- 2.25 The **NI Community Schools** initiative is a strategic partnership which has been enabled between the school, the community and the public/private sector in order to build our community capacity and develop individuals, families and groups within them. There are five schools within this initiative, all based within Belfast. These are Ashfield Girls High School, Girls Model School, Boys Model School, Grosvenor Grammar School and Orangefield Primary School. The sporting facilities, including pitches, at these schools have secured community access and need to be considered within future assessments of the supply of pitches and indeed other neighbourhood facilities.

3 Baseline assessment

- 3.1 This strategy is based upon an assessment of supply and demand for association football (soccer), Gaelic football, camogie, cricket, rugby union, and hockey, carried out by independent consultants in late 2008. The full research report completed by Strategic Leisure on behalf of the Council is available at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/pitches. A summary of the methodology and key findings is outlined below.
- 3.2 The consultants highlight that it is important to note that the quality assessment of pitches is a snapshot in time and is a visual assessment. As such pitch ratings may differ from what may be expected dependent upon when they were last used, weather conditions and the level and extent of informal use they are subjected too.
- 3.3 Likewise, they note that the baseline assessment of the quantity of pitches has a degree of changeability given that it is an assessment of the pitches in the city at one point in time dependent on variables such as pitches being 'rested', new secured community access arrangements emerging, and the opening of new playing surfaces. The number of pitches at a given site can fluctuate over short periods of time for reasons relating to management and maintenance - this means the findings of a count conducted in one season may differ from results of similar exercise conducted previously or in future seasons.
- 3.4 However, this is true of all assessments carried out for these purposes and this Sport England methodology is therefore considered the most reliable methodology, producing a robust evidence base upon which to develop a playing pitch strategy. On this basis, Sport NI has endorsed the methodology used in this study.
- 3.5 For the methodology to be robust a high response rate is required and additional work was carried out by Council officers to encourage clubs to respond. The final response rates were:
- Cricket – 53%
 - Camogie – 56%
 - Soccer – 62%
 - Rugby – 83%
 - Gaelic Games – 88%
 - Hockey – a response on behalf of all clubs was submitted by the Ulster Hockey Union.

The consultants were satisfied that this was a sufficiently high response rate and in line with required standards for the methodology to be effective.

Methodology

- 3.6 Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) and the Planning Service have traditionally used the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA, now Fields in Trust) recommended standards of provision to assess the adequacy of provision on a local level. Sport NI uses currently the Fields in Trust '6 Acre' Standard which does not recognise demand or quality.
- 3.7 The development of this strategy has used an alternative method that fully complements the Sport NI model and the facilities research presented in the research report 'Bridging the Gap' (2009). This strategy has been developed using the alternative model namely the guidance developed by Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) detailed in Towards a Level Playing Field. This moves away from the application of generic provision standards and advocates focused research to identify local demand and supply, factor in

qualitative factors and assess the adequacy of provision relating to quantity, quality and access for individual sports. This gives a more detailed city wide understanding of provision.

- 3.8 The methodology used has been endorsed by Sport NI who has recognised the methodology as being very similar and supporting the methodology they advocate for the development of generic Playing Pitch Strategies.
- 3.9 In accordance with the assessment methodology (detailed in “Toward a Level Playing Field”) the scope of the strategy is restricted to pitch based sports where a ‘team’ forms the key demand unit. The assessment is based on pitch requirements to meet regular demand from teams playing in organised competitive leagues.
- 3.10 The assessment of provision and the subsequent strategy covers:
 - Association Football (Soccer);
 - Gaelic Sport (Football, Hurling and Camogie);
 - Cricket;
 - Rugby Union; and
 - Hockey.
- 3.11 The study excludes other facility based outdoor sports such as tennis, bowls and athletics on the basis of the varying ‘types’ of demand for these sports (for example, individual, casual).

The Eight Stage Playing Pitch Model

- 3.12 The method has been applied to show the adequacy of facilities to meet existing demand for these sports. Additionally the model can be used to assess provision against a predicted set of circumstances, for example, future population projections. For this strategy we have used the model to assess future demand across the next five years. Ascertaining accurate supply and demand information is critical in producing a robust, accurate strategy, which is ‘owned’ by all stakeholders.
- 3.13 The methodology comprises an eight-stage approach, as summarised in figure 3.9. This involves a number of specific research tasks to build a comprehensive audit. A series of toolkits are used to analyse the data collected with the resulting assessment figures interpreted in consideration to the local context and results of stakeholder consultation.

Figure 3.9 - Playing Pitch Assessment Methodology

Stage	Description and Key Output
Stage 1	<p><u>Identification of the number of teams</u> Demand is established through a count of the number of teams for each sport using a variety of information sources, including pitch booking records, league handbooks, and a club survey. Latent demand and the impact of future population projections are also considered.</p>
Stage 2	<p><u>Calculating home games per team per week</u> In a ‘normal’ situation for all sports, the number of home games is calculated as 0.5 of the total number of teams, representing weekly ‘home’ and ‘away’ fixtures.</p>

Stage	Description and Key Output
Stage 3	<p><u>Assessing Total Number of Home Games per week</u> This is the product of Stages 1 and 2, and is therefore not independent. The resultant figure indicates how many games have to be accommodated in the study area in the average week.</p>
Stage 4	<p><u>Establishing Temporal Demand for Games</u> This stage assesses the proportion of total home games played on each day. The data is expressed as a percentage of total weekly demand. This stage will determine what percentage of all games are played on a Saturday for example.</p>
Stage 5	<p><u>Defining pitches used / required on each day</u> This is the product of Stages 3 and 4, and is not therefore independent. The resultant figure will indicate the pitches used/required on each day and time e.g. Saturday p.m.</p>
Stage 6	<p><u>Establishing pitches available</u> An accurate assessment of supply is produced which distinguishes between pitches for each sport and between ownership (public, private, voluntary and educational sites). In modelling the existing situation, only pitches currently available for the appropriate days/times will be relevant.</p>
Stage 7	<p><u>Assessing the Findings</u> The requirements to accommodate demand assessed at Stage 5 are then compared with the facilities as available at Stage 6. If the existing situation has been accurately modelled there should be either a good numerical fit between requirements and facilities available, or even 'surplus' provision on some days.</p>
Stage 8	<p><u>Identifying policy options and solutions</u> A range of policy options can be developed, such as new provision or pitch improvements, to help the problems identified at Stage 7. The method can then be used to further assess the impact of policy options, and contribute to the selection of the most cost-effective solution.</p>

Adapted from Toward a Level Playing Field – Sport England and CCPR (Page 11)

- 3.14 We have also used a number of data analysis tools which are additional to the core components of the 'Playing Pitch Model'. These include a Future Demand Estimator spreadsheet which we have developed to make use of a number of sources of information and primary research results.

4 Overview of current supply and demand

- 4.1 A detailed assessment of supply and demand was undertaken. A summary of the key findings is included below and the full detail is available in the report completed by Strategic Leisure. This includes peak demand times by sporting code, teams' expressed preference for home venues and demand from women's and junior teams.
- 4.2 The current supply of pitches was established through undertaking a series of data review, research and consultation exercises. This included a review of information held by the Council; site visits to pitches owned and managed by the Council; consultation with key stakeholders; a postal survey of all schools within the city boundary; and a postal survey to all identified sports clubs as agreed with the Council. For the assessment of demand, a series of research and consultation exercises was completed, including: a sports club questionnaire sent to identified clubs within the authority area and additional consultation focusing on non-respondents; a review of booking information; analysis of local league data (where publicly available); and consultation with governing bodies of sport; and assignment of teams to a preferred home venue.
- 4.3 Taking into account all types of ownership (i.e. Council, private and educational) there are a total of 276 playing pitches (on 97 sites) in the city, most of which have secured community use. Facilities are provided by the Council (through direct management and via long term facility management leases), by the education sector and privately – almost half of all pitches are in club ownership or management.
- 4.4 Playing pitch supply within the Belfast City Council administrative boundary is via a number of providers as summarised in Figure 4.4 below. This table includes all pitches identified:

Figure 4.4 - Supply overview (community use pitches)

Provider	Number of sites	Number of pitches	% of overall 'stock' (based on pitch numbers)
Belfast City Council	28 sites	128 pitches	46%
Private/Leased/Education	69 sites	148 pitches	54%
Total	97 sites	276 pitches	100%

- 4.5 The Council directly lets a number of pitch sites to local clubs. A number of these include sites let to clubs for self-management. It is likely that some of the public sites are also used as informal recreational space, and are available for use by any member of the public, including informal sports use and dog walking. The letting of pitches to individual clubs is an important issue, as in some cases this will prevent improvements or development on the site. (The figures above have excluded synthetic/shale pitches provided by the Council as they no longer comply to governing body guidelines).

- 4.6 The audit shows there is some community use of school sites across the city and these pitches are included in the audit figures above.
- 4.7 A separate report was also produced summarising the results of site visits and non-technical visual inspections of current pitches. This included an appraisal of changing room accommodation. It is important to note that the quality assessment of pitches is a snapshot in time and is a visual assessment and as such pitch ratings may differ from what may be expected dependent upon when they were last used, weather conditions and the level and extent of informal use they are subjected too.
- 4.8 Approximately 200 sports clubs have been identified, through consultation with governing bodies and the Council's current users, and collectively these clubs generate 900+ sports teams requiring pitch facilities to service league fixtures, cup games and training. However, pitch sport participation is dominated by male teams – female teams make up only 19% of the total number identified.
- 4.9 Gaelic football and soccer are the most popular sports in the city, particularly for boys. For every thousand 10 to 15 year olds around 18 junior boys' soccer teams are generated. In contrast, rugby, hockey and camogie experience significantly lower levels of demand.
- 4.10 The Council provide 107 grass soccer pitches, 16 Gaelic football/hurling pitches, 2 cricket wickets, 1 rugby pitch, 2 camogie and 7 synthetic /shale pitches. These are serviced by 24 built changing room facilities.
- 4.11 Hockey is now played on full size synthetic turf pitches (STPs) and as such this means that traditional grass or gravel pitches are not compliant to the requirements of the sport. The Council's supply of 5 shale pitches, on which hockey could potentially be played, therefore fall short of the required playing standards. Several of these pitches are currently not in use and would require work to be undertaken to make them playable.
- 4.12 Youth soccer (11-18 years) in Belfast is played in most cases on adult pitches. The rules from the governing body does not allow for adult and youth teams to play their games at the same time and therefore peak playing times for youth games is Saturday morning and adult games peak time is Saturday afternoon. This places pressure on the pitches as the season progresses.
- 4.13 An attempt was made to assess levels of latent demand in the city. This was predominantly conducted through consultation with sports clubs who were asked to identify issues with provision. A number of clubs expressed concern that the city needed a greater number of quality pitches, training facilities including the need for multi use synthetic pitches with floodlighting and ancillary facilities.
- 4.14 In discussions with various stakeholders, it became apparent that in some of those places where no demand has been identified as part of the assessment, that there is in fact anecdotal latent demand. However, this is difficult to quantify presently, despite considerable effort during the consultation process.
- 4.15 'Latent demand' can be described as demand for a pitch that is suppressed or is not met, due to a range of factors including:
- No pitch facilities in the local area;

- The team is unable to afford to rent a pitch or participate in leagues that require significant travel for away fixtures;
- There is a shortage of officials; and
- Schools restricting community use.

4.16 The demand audit also shows:

- The majority of current participants are male – only 19% of all identified teams are female;
- Gaelic football and soccer (association football) are the most popular pitch sports – together they account for around 74% of the teams identified; and
- Demand for pitches is spread across the whole week – Saturdays are the most popular day for weekend fixtures although peak demand for pitches is midweek for Gaelic sports.

Estimating future demand

4.17 Projecting changes to demand is not an exact science. It involves consideration to changes to population and the likely impact of any local plans or initiatives to increase participation and club membership. At the same time, arriving at a realistic estimate of future demand is critical in assessing the adequacy of current and planned provision to meet any growth or other changes to sports participation.

4.18 Team Generation Rates (TGRs) have also been considered in the assessment of future needs for playing pitch provision. A TGR is the ratio of the number of teams within a given area to the total population within a given age group from that same area. The groupings which have been used reflect age groups participating in the different sub-groups of each of the assessed sports (e.g. 6-9 year olds for Mini Soccer).

4.19 Identifying TGRs provides the means to:

- Compare participation in the assessed sports between the study area and other parts of the country where TGRs have formed part of Playing Pitch Strategy developments; and
- Assist in modelling future demand for pitches.

4.20 Because the Council is among the first to complete a comprehensive Playing Pitch Strategy we have only been able to compare the levels of demand with Strabane District Council and against the average TGR for England taken from the Sport England database. On the basis of similar assessments for authorities in England, the TGRs shown above suggest high levels of demand for junior boys' soccer and Gaelic football.

4.21 For this study we have used the Team Generation Rates for each sport and specific age group within. We have used future population projections alongside these to estimate the future number of teams. This assumes no growth in sports, so we have also modelled a number of additional scenarios to reflect the adequacy of pitch provision if demand were to grow by 5% and 10% respectively.

4.22 We have used midterm estimates published in 2007 for current population figures to calculate Team Generation Rates. Some assumptions have been made for the population for some age sub-groups. For population growth figures we have used the latest estimates available

from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) website for the 2014 population. Some assumptions have been made regarding growth within individual age groups.

- 4.23 The use of TGRs needs to be treated with caution. It is important to make use of them as a guide only and not at the expense of using qualitative evidence gathered as part of the study. Essentially, TGRs reflect the current situation and are based on current demand information. They may not include potential or latent demand where teams may not be able to develop due to lack of a suitable facility. There is more detail in the full research report on the TGR methodology.

Conclusions

- 4.24 As stated by the consultants, there are some limitations to the research. However, it is a recognised methodology used by other local authorities in planning the provision of playing pitches. It is also aligned to the Sport NI model with the additional assessment of quality of pitches; an addition which has been endorsed by Sport NI. The baseline assessment therefore provides a reliable baseline upon which to plan. However, it is our intention to re-assess the audit within 2 years, rather than the recommended 5 years.

5 Assessment of findings

- 5.1 A range of data was collected, analysed and interpreted for each sport, taking account of quality, quantity and access to provide a number of conclusions. These draw on an assessment of how adequate provision is across the city as a whole, taking account of estimated levels of current demand and existing pitch supply. Results were used to make recommendations for local standards of provision and priorities for future action.
- 5.2 Overall, the independent consultants highlighted that the Council’s approach to the supply of outdoor sports pitch provision on large multi-use, multi-sport sites is to be commended. Many of the local authorities in England are striving to provide similar large multi-purpose sites and reduce the need for the supply of single pitch sites that have limited sports development opportunity.
- 5.3 The research found adequate provision in terms of overall ‘amounts’ of playing pitches across the city if all the different types of pitches and ownership are considered. However there is a ‘mismatch’ between the type and location of surplus pitches and what and where the demand is for. In some sports where there is adequate or surplus provision when all types of ownership are considered, this will change to an inadequate provision if only Council provision is considered.
- 5.4 For the purposes of the final assessment, it was agreed with elected Members that provision levels would be on the basis of a city-wide assessment. This is due in part to different perceptions of the geographical boundaries within the city as well as the recommended catchment radius of 5 miles, or 20 minute travel time (by motor vehicle) for synthetic turf pitches. This is recommended by the Fields in Trust good practice guide ‘Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play’, considered to be the leading authority on issues related to outdoor leisure provision.
- 5.5 The baseline assessment did look at geographical access (i.e. proximity to quality facilities and average travel distances). The clubs consulted did not present an overall consensus on acceptable travel distances, or whether close proximity of facilities to local catchments was more important than high quality facilities. However, 79 clubs responded to the question as to whether they would be prepared to travel further to good facilities and 36 football clubs (86% of the total teams that responded) stated they are prepared to travel further.
- 5.6 The table below outlines the headline findings from the baseline assessment, on a sporting code basis. Further detail is contained in appendix 1.

Figure 5.5 - Sport by Sport Headline Findings

Sport	Headlines
Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A surplus of +43 soccer pitches against peak demand based on the assumption that youth soccer is played on adult pitches across the city and taking into account all pitches across the city under all types of management. • If only Council owned pitches are considered there is a deficiency of -1 pitch.

Sport	Headlines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some quality issues across the city – several sites are not served by changing facilities and mini soccer pitches are generally of poorer quality than adult soccer.
Gaelic Sports (Football/ hurling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shortage in pitch provision across the city of -38 pitches – this is alleviated through matches being played across several week days. • If non-Council owned pitches are removed from the assessment calculation, the supply shortage is significant at -64 pitches highlighting a reliance on private facilities to service demand. • Fewer quality issues across the city for Gaelic football than for some other sports assessed – however longer playing seasons and midweek games can impact on pitch quality.
Camogie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deficiency in dedicated camogie pitches to meet estimated demand – only 2 dedicated pitches have been identified through the audit completed. • 20% of the current demand is met by the current provision. • Clubs consulted rate provision positively although some facilities were rated as below average through the quality assessments completed.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shortage of provision of -4 pitches against overall demand. • If non-Council owned pitches are removed from the assessment calculation, the supply shortage increases to -14 pitches highlighting a reliance on private facilities to service demand. • Clubs perceive existing provision to be of a high quality – however, there is some indication that high quality provision is not necessarily in close proximity to club membership.
Rugby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly all provision is privately owned and there is a slight shortage against demand of -1 pitch. • If non-Council owned pitches are removed from the assessment calculation, the supply shortage increases to -24 pitches highlighting a reliance on private facilities to service demand. • There are few quality issues – most clubs rate the facilities they use positively.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There appears to be insufficient STP provision to meet the demands of hockey that equates to a shortage of -2 full sized STPs.

Sport	Headlines
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice and access to suitable facilities for hockey are limited – it is clear from the consultation that there is over-demand for a small number of key facilities. • An additional 2 full sized STPs would help alleviate demand issues but it is important to recognise that existing pitches will need refurbishing as they become worn.

Underrepresented groups

5.7 In 2007, the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) screened its ‘Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation in Northern Ireland, 2007-2017’ and it presented the following data in relation to under-represented groups:

- a 13% gap between the number of men and women participating in sport on a regular basis;
- an almost 50% gap between the number of people without a disability and those with a disability participating in sport on a regular basis;
- a 32% gap between the number of people under 60 years of age and over 60 years of age participating in sport on a regular basis; and
- an almost 30% gap between the number of people from higher and lower socio-economic groups participating in sport on a regular basis.

5.8 In line with DCAL’s findings, sports clubs were asked in the consultation questionnaire to identify how many members they had in each of the following categories:

- Junior boys (under 16)
- Junior girls (under 16)
- Senior men (16-45 years)
- Senior women (16-45 years)
- Veteran men (45 years+)
- Veteran women (45 years+)
- Non playing/associate
- Coaches.

5.9 Within each category they were asked to identify how many of these members were from an ethnic minority and how many had a disability. Some clubs did not provide this information, in particular Gaelic football/hurling and hockey. The findings are outlined below, along with some overarching strategic context for under-represented groups in sport.

Disability

5.10 Sport NI recognises that people with disabilities are frequently under-represented in terms of access to and/or participation in sporting activities. Northern Ireland experiences the highest prevalence of disability in the UK, with 20% of the population experiencing some form of disability.

5.11 Disability Sports NI (DSNI) estimates that only 10% - 15% of people with disabilities in

Northern Ireland regularly participate in sport or physical activity, a figure well below the participation levels for the population as a whole, yet there is an increasing demand from people with disabilities to take part in sport.

- 5.12 A report by the British Heart Foundation 'Couch kids: the nation's future... Four years on from our first report into childhood obesity and children still aren't getting the diet or exercise they need' in 2009 found that '*Children and young people with a disability take part in physical activity and sport less frequently and their experiences are less positive than their non-disabled peers and the proportion of those with a disability or severe illness participating in sport and exercise tends to be lower than for young people generally*'. (p12)
- 5.13 Within the consultation, of the 65 soccer clubs that responded a total of nine (14%) had members with a disability. Six of the clubs have junior boys with a disability and these make up 2.15% of the total junior boys membership of these particular clubs. Three of the clubs have senior men with a disability and these make up 2.16% of the total senior men membership of these particular clubs. One of the clubs has junior girls with a disability and these make up 16.67% of the total junior girls membership of these clubs. Two of the clubs have non playing/associate members with a disability and these make up 3.64% of the total membership of this category within these clubs.
- 5.14 One of the three camogie clubs that responded has a senior women member with a disability, which is 5% of their total membership in this category. None of the ladies Gaelic football teams that responded had a member with a disability.
- 5.15 Of the ten rugby clubs that responded two of them have members with a disability. One of the clubs has a senior men member with a disability which is 1.25% of their total membership in this category. Another club has a junior boys and junior girls tag rugby team and all their members have a learning disability.
- 5.16 Of the eight cricket clubs that responded two of them have members with a disability. In one of the clubs 8.33% of their veteran men members have a disability while in the other club 2.22% of their senior men members and 2.50% of their junior boys members have a disability.
- 5.17 The evidence gathered through the club consultation process confirms the evidence presented by Sports NI, Disability Sports NI and the British Heart Foundation that people with disabilities are underrepresented in terms of access to sport and physical activity.

Females

- 5.18 Research undertaken by Sport England in January 2006, entitled "Understanding participation in sport: What determines sports participation among 15-19 year old women?" found that:
- "There are increasing concerns to drive up young people's participation in sport and physical activity. The concern about levels of physical activity or inactivity among young people is noted in a recent review of adolescence (Coleman and Schofield 2005). Two key findings are reported. Firstly, among young people of secondary school age, boys are more likely to participate in sports and physical activity compared to girls. Secondly, the gap between the genders becomes more pronounced with advanced age within the teenage years."*
- 5.19 These findings are corroborated by a report by the British Heart Foundation entitled "Couch kids: the nation's future...Four years on from our first report into childhood obesity and children still aren't getting the diet or exercise they need" (2009). This found that:

“A consistent finding across all studies, both those using surveys and those using objective measurements, is that boys are more active than girls across the 2-15 years age range. The differences in activity levels between boys and girls are apparent even at an early age but the gap between the sexes is greatest in adolescence.”

5.20 It also found that:

“Studies using objective measurements have similarly found boys to be more physically active than girls, with differences observed both in the percentage of boys and girls meeting the 60 minute a day guideline and the time spent participating in physical activity. One study found that 42% of boys met the 60 minutes a day guideline as compared to only 11% of girls. Girls also spent 27% less time than boys participating in physical activity (45 minutes a day versus 57 minutes a day. Young people’s perceptions of their own levels of physical activity mirror these gender differences: 42% of boys and 29% of girls aged 11-15 years saw themselves as ‘very physically active’ compared to others and 10% of boys and 16% of girls said they were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ physically active. Physical activity levels of girls decrease with age, with a particular drop-off after the age of about 10 years.”

5.21 The independent consultants’ assessment of the supply and demand of playing pitches identified that pitch sport participation is dominated by male teams and female teams make up only 19% of the total number identified. Gaelic football and soccer are the most popular sports in the city, particularly for boys. For every thousand 10 to 15 year olds around 18 junior boys’ soccer teams are generated. In contrast, rugby, hockey and camogie experience significantly lower levels of demand.

5.22 Specific points raised by the various governing bodies through the consultation were:

- The Irish Football Association stated they would prefer availability of better quality pitches for women’s senior leagues and that women’s leagues may soon play on a Sunday as availability of facilities are limited on a Saturday; an issue with the poor quality of changing facilities across the city and issues around child protection due to the sharing of facilities.
- Antrim Ladies Gaelic Football Association said that access to facilities for women’s Gaelic football is dependent on club affiliation and varies across the clubs.
- Antrim Camogie Board said that they depend on the GAA to book pitches and that they believe that Camogie is not a key priority for GAA, hence a difficulty exists in finding pitches to play on.

Black and Ethnic Minority Groups

5.23 The findings from the club consultation was that a growing number of teams across all sports have members from a minority ethnic background. This is particularly true of cricket where all of the clubs who responded to the questionnaire have members from a minority ethnic background. One of the clubs is made up entirely of members from a minority ethnic background while in another club all of its senior men members and over half its non playing members are from a minority ethnic background.

5.24 Two of the rugby clubs and two of the ladies Gaelic football clubs also had members from a minority ethnic background as did 17 of the soccer clubs.

Conclusion

- 5.25 Following these consultation responses, and in line with the Council's Equality Scheme, further work to improve participation rates will be integrated into the objectives and the action plan as part of the final strategy.

Recommended Standards of Provision

- 6.1 Standards are set on the basis of required provision to meet both current needs and where estimations have been possible, future demand and growth anticipated within specific sports. Standards have been set in relation to quantity and quality, based on:
- Assessment results and the adequacy of current provision to meet known and estimated demand.
 - Anticipated changes to demand based on current participation rates
 - Current and desired quality of facilities.

Quantity Standards

- 6.2 Quantity standards have been set on the basis of the assessment results and estimations of future demand. The proposed standards reflect the assessment results and findings of local consultation. Standards have been set to reflect pitch requirements to meet peak demand and are proposed for all types of natural turf pitches assessed. For the purpose of setting standards, the assessment has been undertaken for each pitch sport and appropriate sub-categories where different types or specification of pitch are required. This specifically concerns soccer where mini teams require appropriately sized pitches.
- 6.3 The standards recommended are based on the actual number of pitches required to meet estimated future demand. It is also prudent to ensure that there is an adequate surplus to enable pitches to be taken out of use periodically for major renovation works. Advice from Sport and Landscape Development (a specialist natural turf consultancy) indicates that spare supply equating to 10% of the total required number of pitches would be prudent. This effectively allows every pitch to be taken out of use for a season once every ten years. This allows time for any essential renovation and re-instatement of drainage works. A number of recommendations are made later in the report in consideration to meeting standards of provision.

Quality Standards

- 6.4 Quality standards have been set on the basis of the quality assessment results and the categorisation of scored pitches using the electronic toolkit accompanying "Toward a Level Playing Field". The quality standard is based on all pitches being rated within the "Good" classification. In simple terms, the standard for playing pitch provision is "all pitches available for the community to use will be of a good standard".
- 6.5 Provision standards should be set and applied to identify deficiencies on provision. This has been done through the completion of quality assessments on pitches. For the purposes of this Strategy, quality assessments have only been completed for Council owned pitches.

Applying the Standards

- 6.6 In line with good practice, the standards of provision are based on the number of pitches required to accommodate an increase of 5% on current demand. In summary, the consultants outlined below the recommended standard provision for each sporting code and the implications of applying this standard in Belfast and possible solutions to the gaps identified:

Sport	Recommended Provision Standard	Applying this standard	Potential solutions
Soccer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 104 soccer pitches. • 8 mini soccer pitches. • All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surplus in soccer and mini soccer provision. • It has to be recognised that youth soccer is played on adult pitches across the city. • In addition to the traditional winter leagues the city also has a women's summer league. • 44% of Council pitches rated (44 of 99 pitches) do not meet quality standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the identified quality issues • Upgrade of existing grass soccer pitches to 3G pitches would allow year round play as 3G pitches do not require a 'resting' period which for grass soccer pitches is traditionally during the summer when the women's league takes place. • Install/improve changing facilities
Gaelic Football /Hurling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 pitches. • All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficiency of 38 pitches (all provision). • 14% of Council pitches rated (2 of 14 pitches) do not meet quality standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new pitches and/or upgrade of current grass pitches to 3G pitches which have greater playability than grass pitches and will assist in addressing the deficiency. • Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the identified quality issues • Install/improve changing facilities • Increase secured community access

Sport	Recommended Provision Standard	Applying this standard	Potential solutions
Camogie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 pitches. • All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficiency of 10 pitches (all provision). • Only 1 camogie pitch assessed – this was rated as 'below average'. The other pitch was not marked out/ under renovation at the time of audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new pitches and/or upgrade of current grass pitches to 3G pitches which have greater playability than grass pitches and will assist in addressing the deficiency. • Install/improve changing facilities • Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the identified quality issues
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 pitches. • All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficiency of 4 pitches (all provision). • 50% of Council pitches rated (1 of 2 pitches) do not meet quality standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new pitches • Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule which addresses the identified quality issues.
Rugby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 pitches. • All community accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply and demand are at capacity with any increase or closure of pitches leading to a deficiency. Any resting of pitches would also lead to a deficiency. • Only 1 rugby pitch quality assessed – this was rated as 'good'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place a rolling maintenance schedule to ensure that the quality of the pitches remain high • Install/improve changing facilities • Increase secured community access
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 STPs with access for hockey at peak times. • All community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficiency of 2 STPs suitable for league standard hockey (all provision). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of STPs suitable for league standard hockey to assist in addressing the deficiency.

Sport	Recommended Provision Standard	Applying this standard	Potential solutions
	accessible provision to be rated as (at least) 'good'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 1 sand based STP quality assessed – this was rated as 'average'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase secured community access

6.7 The consultants advocate that in order to meet the recommended standards the following additional provision or improvements are required:

- Improvements to 44 of the Council pitches rated;
- Access to 38 additional Gaelic football pitches and improvements to 2 of the Council pitches rated;
- Access to 4 additional cricket pitches and improvement to 1 of the 2 Council pitches rated;
- Access to 2 additional STPs for hockey (sand or water based) and improvements to existing facilities. (It should be noted that the existing Council STP will require upgrading in the near future);
- Access to 10 additional pitches for camogie – some demand could be met through existing Gaelic football/ hurling facilities;
- Access to an additional rugby pitch.

6.8 The analysis shows that latent demand, or more simply the unmet demand that occurs at peak times in several of the sports outlined above will require significant additional provision or the change of use from one sport type to another. This is not a straight forward replenish or replace scenario as it needs to consider the accessibility factors in Belfast. It also needs to be realistic in considering the actual cost and availability of land to create extra pitches and additional changing facilities.

6.9 It is apparent from the consultation with clubs that many have to travel to other areas to access the pitch type they need and therefore this impacts on the potential for club and team development. It may be that a fresh approach to provision is needed with regards to upgrading the current synthetic turf/shale pitches to a higher 3G standard.

Implications for Planning Applications

- 7.1 A key focus of the new strategy is the protection of facilities against development pressures, and specifically residential proposals on land in, and around, urban areas. It also seeks to provide sufficient information to inform planning decisions for sites where there are applications for change of use pending.
- 7.2 The Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8): Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (DOE, February 2004) advises on planning policies for the protection and provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development. It is also concerned with the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, and advises on addressing these issues in the development of local plans. The preparation of a Playing Pitch Strategy is therefore an integral part of informing local land use policies. Sport Northern Ireland supports the development of locally developed strategies and advocates the use of methodologies prescribed by Sport England (detailed in their Towards a Level Playing Field³ publication).
- 7.3 The findings of the assessment represent a robust approach to identifying needs at a city level. The assessment completed shows there is a deficiency in pitch provision for most sports. Even if the total 'area' of playing field land (existing provision included in the assessment) is considered there is an estimated modest surplus of pitches across the city of around 20-25 adult football pitches. The findings therefore support the overarching aims of Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8) Policy OS1 of not permitting any loss of playing pitch provision across the city. Where proposals will result in the loss of pitches on a specific site, it can be permitted if the community benefits being provided relate directly to the priorities identified within this Playing Pitch Strategy. Community benefits will therefore comprise of improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing provision where there is a demonstrable benefit to quantity – i.e. the improvements to quality will improve the carrying capacity of existing provision and increase accessibility.
- 7.4 Disposal of pitches should not be contemplated or permitted except in exceptional circumstance and only when the circumstance is fully detailed and based on sound, robust evidence. This should be developed as planning policy irrespective of whether there is a surplus of pitch provision. The exception being where the planning gain to upgrade other existing pitch based sport facilities will benefit the local community. It is important that the Council consider an audit of all recreational space in order to quantify the amount, type, quality and accessibility of open space and to explore the opportunities for improving access to sport pitch facilities.
- 7.5 Furthermore, PPS8 (page 12) acknowledges the role of Development Plans and local assessments of open space requirements in making informed decisions. Specifically PPS8 states:
- “Accordingly, in assessing open space provision and considering future land needs the Department (of the Environment) will seek to work closely with district councils and take account of any local recreational strategies they may have. Where appropriate, the Department will also liaise with other interested bodies such as the Sports Council⁴”.
- 7.6 This playing pitch assessment represents a robust local assessment and resulting facilities

³ Towards a Level Playing Field: A guide to the production of Playing Pitch Strategies (2003), Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation

⁴ Now Sport Northern Ireland

strategy for sports pitch provision. It considers quantity, quality and accessibility of Council facilities, uses local supply and demand data and is in keeping with best practice recognised by Sport Northern Ireland (the Sports Council). The methodology adopted provides a more robust assessment of local provision than a comparison of provision against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA, now Fields in Trust) standards of provision.

- 7.7 Sport NI has been consulted during the development of this strategy and they are comfortable with the use of the Sport England methodology as it complements the methodology advocated by Sport NI. Specifically it takes account of local demand across different sports and age groups and facility types. The resulting provision standards reflect the levels of provision required to satisfy local demand.
- 7.8 It is the opinion of the independent consultants that this strategy and baseline assessment complements any assessment results using the NPFA provision standards and provides the evidence to inform the assessment of all future planning decisions. This is in accordance with the statement in PPS8 (Page 15) that “The provisions of these policies (those stated in PPS8 and detailed below) will prevail unless there are other overriding or material considerations that outweigh them or justify a contrary decision”. The findings of the assessment represent overriding and material considerations.

Policy OS1 – Protection of Open Space

- 7.9 Policy OS1 (Page 16) states that:

“The Department will not permit development that would result in the loss of existing open space or land zoned for the provision of open space. The presumption against the loss of existing open space will apply irrespective of its physical condition and appearance.”

- 7.10 An exception will be permitted where it is clearly shown that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space.
- 7.11 An exception will also be permitted where it is demonstrated that the loss of open space will have no significant detrimental impact on the amenity, character or biodiversity of an area and where either the following circumstances occur:
- In the case of open space of 2 hectares or less, alternative provision is made by the developer which is at least as accessible to current users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness, safety and quality.
- 7.12 The Playing Pitch Strategy supports this exception – alternative provision must be located at least within the sub-analysis area and not result in additional accessibility deficiencies, provide either equivalent provision or specifically address quantitative deficiencies highlighted, and meet the quality standards set and adhere to all relevant National Governing Bodies and Sport Northern Ireland Guidance for new sports facilities – such as the need to keep junior and senior soccer to separate kick off times.
- In the case of playing fields and sports pitches within settlement limits, it is demonstrated by the developer that the retention and enhancement of the facility can only be achieved by the development of a small part of the existing open space –

limited to a maximum of 10% of the overall area – and this will have no adverse effect on the sporting potential of the facility. This exception will be exercised only once.

- 7.13 The Playing Pitch Strategy supports this exception where there is no detrimental impact on the quantity of pitch units accommodated on site i.e. if the 10% of the overall area does not equate to more than an area large enough to accommodate one mini soccer pitch with appropriate run-offs. There must be a demonstrable increase in quality and no detrimental impact on access.
- 7.14 The area based assessment completed highlights a overall deficiency in playing pitch provision. This overall deficiency comprises higher deficiency levels across certain sports and facility types. The assessment therefore supports the overarching aims of Policy OS1 of not permitting loss of playing pitch provision across the city. We therefore recommend adopting a policy of protection on all playing pitch sites subject to one or more of the following exceptions being met.
- 7.15 An exception will be permitted where it is clearly shown that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space. In the case of development proposals relating to playing pitch sites these community benefits should relate directly to the priorities identified within this Playing Pitch Strategy. Community benefits will therefore comprise of improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing provision where there is a demonstrable benefit to quantity – i.e. the improvements to quality will improve the carrying capacity of existing provision and increase accessibility.
- 7.16 Where existing ‘disused’ sports pitch sites of 2 hectares or less exist i.e. those sites defined as playing field land in planning terms, but without formal use for more than 5 years, it is recommended that a detailed site feasibility study be undertaken to assess viability of bringing them back into use. This should include a cost benefit analysis into improving the site offset against the cost of developing alternative new provision. The area analysis results contained within the analysis for each sport should also be used to test the appropriateness of bringing non community use sites such as school sites into use or whether ‘disposal’ of surplus provision once all sports demand is met and use of the capital receipt to upgrade the provision elsewhere is more applicable.
- 7.17 In relation to the implementation of the strategy, including the issues outlined above, the Council is seeking early engagement with the Planning Service to identify opportunities for collaboration in the implementation of this strategy and in the protection of key city assets.

Addressing the findings

8.1 The findings present a major challenge in terms of the provision of playing pitches in the city, which the consultants acknowledged cannot be met fully in the short term or by the Council alone. The Council is also acutely aware of the economically constrained circumstances which the Council and many of its partners are now facing. Added to this, there is limited availability of open space suitable for acquisition and considerable time-lag in delivering new or improved pitches, even once authority to proceed is granted. This is due to factors including:

- **Design** – in order to complete a full site analysis and consultation with local residents and users, etc. this process can take up to 3 months, depending on factors such as contamination;
- **Planning approval** – the process for planning permission is currently taking between 6-8 months; and
- **Construction phase** – constrained by seasonal factors, such as temperature and rain. This is true also for grass pitches which take up to a year to be match-ready.

8.2 However, all stakeholders acknowledged the value of outdoor leisure provision in delivering a number of Council corporate objectives, including improved health and well-being.

8.3 In the baseline assessment, the consultants outlined a number of the policy options considered for addressing the gaps and deficiencies highlighted in the application of the recommended local standards of provision.

Final Recommendations by Strategic Leisure

8.4 In conclusion, and following consideration of the various policy options, the independent consultants made a series of recommendations for the Council and its partners to consider:

- 8.4.1 Given the findings of the assessment and the reliance on non-Council facilities there is a need to strengthen and develop partnership working with private providers, Governing Bodies and neighbouring authorities. Addressing the deficiencies recorded cannot be the sole responsibility of any one agency / organisation.
- 8.4.2 Explore and develop closer partnership working with the Belfast Education and Library Board and explore the role of school facilities to support mini and junior sport and potentially provide additional community accessible facilities.
- 8.4.3 Explore and develop closer partnership working with private providers with sports fields, to gain access for community use, such as the initiative to develop the Soccer Dome 5-a-side 3G facility.
- 8.4.4 Update the supply and demand information collated as part of the study on an annual basis as part of evaluating action and delivery. A full playing pitch assessment should be repeated every 5 years or as near as possible to fit in with area planning process and any proposed boundary changes for the city.
- 8.4.5 Endeavour to influence the Education and Library Board and the Planning Service to

ensure that Community use agreements, to an agreed specification are required from future school redevelopment schemes.

- 8.4.6 Develop regular consultation with pitch users to establish trend data in relation to satisfaction, ratings of quality and common pitch issues. This is partially undertaken via the pitch booking forms administered by the Council to users of public football pitches, and through the development of a sports forum.
- 8.4.7 Explore with the relevant Governing Bodies and clubs the potential to play some fixtures on Synthetic Turf Pitches – particularly mini and youth soccer. The consultation identified a willingness from sports such as rugby and GAA to use 3G pitches. This recommendation is dependent on securing appropriate access to STP facilities, but priority should be for new 3rd Generation (3G) facilities to allow out of season training. Greater use of 3G could facilitate soccer and therefore release soccer pitches to be re-designated to other sports. It is important to recognise that demand for GAA pitches may not be in the area where there is an excess of soccer pitches. This option would need to be further explored and would require consultation with local users.
- 8.4.8 Develop as a minimum at least one full sized multi-purpose floodlit 3G Pitch with links to appropriate changing facilities in each of the four areas. Give consideration to incrementally developing floodlit full sized sand based STPs. This will enable increased games on peak days and allow for the facilities to be used though out the year for multi sport training purposes. It will also facilitate latent demand for both Gaelic sport and hockey.
- 8.4.9 Develop sites that provide a multi use facility that caters for a range of sports and allows for adult and junior and male and female sports to take place at the same time. This will need investment in changing facilities that cater for the different age groups and gender.
- 8.4.10 Condition surveys on changing facilities should be undertaken at regular intervals to identify any remedial work that may be required, identify any additional disability access requirements and provide an estimated lifespan for the building.
- 8.4.11 Use the findings of the assessment together with the quality findings to prioritise investment in facilities such as grass pitches and changing facilities.
- 8.4.12 Review fees and charges levied for pitches – consider increases to charges to higher quality facilities.

Conclusion

- 8.5 Over the course of a number of months, elected Members and officers have considered the findings of the independent consultants' report and scrutinised the implications for going forward. The following strategy is based on those discussions.
- 8.6 It is commonly agreed however, that critical to the success of a playing pitch strategy for Belfast, is a set of robust partnerships across a number of sectors, with a shared vision for the future of outdoor leisure provision.

A Playing Pitch Strategy for Belfast

- 9.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that the future provision of pitches meets the needs of the city and is protected for future generations. We believe it is absolutely vital that all partners work together to address the issues highlighted in this strategy and, in our role as city leaders, we will engage proactively in discussions with our partners in the statutory, private and community sectors. This will enable us to maximise participation of people in physical activity, including under-represented groups such as females and those with disabilities.
- 9.2 In the context of the baseline assessment and following careful consideration of the policy options recommended, the Council is proposing a multi-layered approach which will ensure that the Council provides and supports the provision of high-quality, accessible, well-planned outdoor provision. It is agreed that the baseline assessment is a sufficiently robust baseline on which to initiate the strategy and it is our intention to further substantiate the figures in years to come through an improved performance management framework.
- 9.3 Given the scale of investment and the timescales for design, permissions and delivery, it is proposed that this strategy is over a 10-year time period. This is in line with the Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy, currently in draft.
- 9.4 Given the short to medium term financial constraints and the move towards increased partnership working, this strategy looks at the totality of provision with secured community access rather than just Council-owned. We will work vigorously with our partners across different sectors to protect and enhance playing pitch provision in the city, and within agreed travelling distances, beyond the Council's current boundaries.
- 9.5 It is therefore proposed that in phase 1 (Years 1-3), the Council will prioritise capital works in its own facilities but will be proactive in securing feasible partnership opportunities for medium and longer term investments. Critical to this, is also early discussions with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland so as to minimise delays in the implementation of the capital aspect of this strategy.
- 9.6 Working with the schools sector in particular is in line with the spirit of the Belfast City Council motion of 1 September 2010, which states:
- "This Council: welcomes the debate at the NI Assembly on 11 May concerning access to schools; supports the Assembly resolution to bring forward a strategy to make the facilities of schools more available for community use; recognises that this provides the Council with an opportunity to enhance the future delivery of its own services; and to this end, agrees to liaise with the Assembly Working Group tasked with the development of the strategy."*
- 9.7 We also recognise the important role that further and higher education sector plays in the promotion of team sports and the provision of playing pitches and it is our intention to work alongside them too.
- 9.8 In line with the Council's corporate vision, the vision for the action plan is to improve the quality of life for now and future generations through the provision and programming of outdoor leisure venues. The playing pitches strategy will sit under the emerging Active Belfast and Open Spaces Strategy.
- 9.9 The aim of the strategy is:

- **To contribute to improved health and well-being in Belfast by enabling adequate outdoor sports facilities and, working with partners, seek to maximise the provision and use of safe, accessible and quality outdoor leisure facilities.**

9.10 The overarching objectives for the Playing Pitch Strategy are as follows:

Objective 1 – Capital investment

To deliver and, working in partnership, enable a programme of capital development, enhancement and maintenance investments which address identified deficiencies and protect existing provision.

Objective 2 – Management

To implement and monitor a range of management options with community and statutory partners, so as to maximise the participation of people in sports team activity.

Objective 3 – Sports development

Working in partnership to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise the participation of people in team sports activity, including under-represented groups such as females and those with disabilities.

9.11 A number of sub-objectives have been identified, based on the commissioned research and consultation. These will enable the Council to direct resources to those activities producing the greatest net benefits for the city.

9.12 The sub-objectives for **Objective 1 – Capital Investment** are as follows:

9.12.1 To invest in additional outdoor leisure facilities which addresses the shortfall in city supply and intensifies use;

9.12.2 To invest in the enhancement of existing provision to intensify use and improve the quality of outdoor leisure provision;

9.12.3 To invest in the quality of changing facilities at outdoor leisure provision, increasing provision for women and children;

9.12.4 To commence discussions with Sport NI to develop partnership arrangements for assets planning, management and secured community access;

9.12.5 To work with education partners (schools, higher and further education) to deliver increased access to outdoor leisure facilities through secured community access agreements and investment in ancillary facilities such as floodlighting;

9.12.6 To work with sports governing bodies partners and other interested parties to deliver increased access to outdoor leisure facilities;

9.12.7 To promote opportunities for shared space through multi-sport facilities;

9.12.8 To create a repairs and renewals fund for the refurbishment of playing pitches and a rolling maintenance programme based on regular conditions survey;

9.12.9 To commence discussions with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland.

- 9.13 The sub-objectives for **Objective 2 – Management** are as follows:
- 9.13.1 To complete the review of existing Facility Management Agreements (FMAs);
 - 9.13.2 To develop a monitoring and evaluation framework of the usage of all pitches;
 - 9.13.3 To undertake a review of the current fees and charges;
 - 9.13.4 To rollout a programme of Shared Space training to all clubs across Belfast;
 - 9.13.5 To update the supply and demand information collated every 2 years to fit in with area planning process and any proposed boundary changes for the city;
 - 9.13.6 To explore potential partnerships with other providers of playing pitches in Belfast including the private sector and sporting clubs;
 - 9.13.7 To work with transport providers and DRD to maximise connectivity between pitches, inc. cycle and pedestrian paths;
 - 9.13.8 Develop regular consultation with pitch users to establish trend data in relation to satisfaction, ratings of quality and common pitch issues.
- 9.14 The sub-objectives for **Objective 3 – Sports Development** are as follows:
- 9.14.1 To work with Sport NI and community-based partners, including the Active Communities programme to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise the participation of people in team sports activity;
 - 9.14.2 To align the funding provided through Support for Sport to the priorities identified around pitches;
 - 9.14.3 To ensure the leisure development programme is aligned to Playing Pitches Strategy inc. Club Mark programme and annual sports conference;
 - 9.14.4 To work with Sport NI and community-based partners, including the Active Communities programme, to deliver increased access to and improved connectivity between outdoor leisure facilities;
 - 9.14.5 To develop an inclusion programme to promote access to outdoor leisure venues by females and those with disabilities;
 - 9.14.6 To develop a training programme for all clubs using BCC pitches and obtaining BCC funding in line with the Pitches Strategy vision;
 - 9.14.7 To deliver a programme of high-profile events to promote outdoor leisure venues as accessible, safe and welcoming;
 - 9.14.8 To provide programmes at outdoor facilities which improve access for people from those neighbourhoods with high levels of health deprivation.
- 9.15 An action plan to deliver these sub-objectives will be drafted following consideration of feedback from public consultation.

10 Steps to delivery

Financial considerations

- 10.1 As already stated, the findings present a major challenge in terms of the provision of playing pitches in the city, which the consultants acknowledged cannot be met fully in the short term or by the Council alone. The Council is also acutely aware of the economically constrained circumstances which the Council and many of its partners are now facing.
- 10.2 In relation to the delivery of Objective 2 – Management and Objective 3 – Sports Development, the costs for these programmes are relatively less significant and could be largely accommodated within existing revenue budgets and aligning business plans with the objectives of the Playing Pitch Strategy. These 2 objectives will be integrated into the business planning.
- 10.3 The installation of a hybrid 3rd generation (3-G) playing pitch, cross-marked for different sporting codes, costs approximately £1,000,000. Standard changing facilities cost an additional £600,000. The installation of floodlighting costs between in the region of £80 – £100,000 depending on standard required and installation costs.
- 10.4 These figures are based on standard construction costs; more accurate costings will only be available at the scheme design stage, when any construction complications would be identified.
- 10.5 Given the potential scale of investment to deliver Objective 1 – Capital Investment, the options available to the Council are outlined overleaf:

Option	
1.	Do nothing beyond protection of existing resources – includes refurbishment of grass pitches and maintenance of existing 3-G surfaces
2.	Lower cost/high impact investments – e.g. upgrade of existing changing facilities; installation of cricket squares; partnership opportunities; provision of floodlighting
3.	Upgrade of existing Council-owned grass pitches to 3G surfaces – single use or multi sports (dependent on site dimensions)
4.	Development of new 3G pitches – multi sports use as preference which allow for the intensification of use
5.	Combination of above – a series of investments in existing and new provision across all sporting codes, with initial focus on Council-owned facilities.

Option	Benefits	Risk	Costs per unit
<p>1. Do nothing beyond protection of existing resources – includes refurbishment of grass pitches and maintenance of existing 3-G surfaces</p>	<p>Zero capital cost</p> <p>Additional time to collect robust data and build engagement across sporting codes for future investment decisions</p> <p>Improved and sustainable facilities for future use</p>	<p>Does not address historical deficiencies in city provision and identified social need at a city and neighbourhood level</p> <p>Significant reputational risk</p> <p>Significant risk of non-compliance with statutory obligations (S75 and Recreation Order)</p> <p>Diminished opportunity to deliver corporate ‘quality of life’ agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Current funding and partnership opportunities missed (e.g. SEUPB)</p> <p>No potential to intensify use or significantly increase revenue</p> <p>Limited playing season/requires ‘rest’ periods</p>	<p>£0 capital</p> <p>Annual revenue budget for grounds maintenance</p> <p>On average 3G carpets have to be replaced every 7-10 years, this is dependent on the level of use.</p>
<p>2. Lower cost/high impact investments – e.g. upgrade of existing changing facilities; installation of cricket squares; partnership opportunities; provision of floodlighting</p>	<p>Reduced net capital cost to Council</p> <p>Good strategic fit with corporate ‘quality of life’ agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Improvement activity in each area of city, addressing social need at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Improves playing experience and improved facilities for females and children</p>	<p>Degree of reputational risk in that council not taking the lead in additional provision for some sporting codes</p> <p>May require a long term lease to a sporting club/governing body</p> <p>Partner may not want to allow wider community use of the facility</p> <p>Some sporting codes do not have potential</p>	<p>Less than £10,000 per 3-G cricket square</p> <p>£300,000 per changing facility</p> <p>£80-100,000 floodlighting</p> <p>Partnership opps</p>

Option	Benefits	Risk	Costs per unit
	<p>Some impact on deficiencies in sporting codes through new provision (cricket) and increased community access to existing provision (e.g. school sites)</p> <p>Guaranteed usage through governing bodies and community organisations, including sports development activities</p> <p>Improved compliance in terms of Section 75 considerations</p>	<p>to enter into partnership arrangements i.e. dependent on funding availability</p> <p>Risks associated with working in partnership</p>	<p>- £variable</p>
<p>3. Upgrade of grass pitches to 3G surfaces – single use or multi sports (dependent on site dimensions)</p>	<p>Potential to intensify use and provide new opportunities for play</p> <p>Good strategic fit with corporate ‘quality of life’ agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Improved compliance with statutory equality and Recreation Order obligations</p>	<p>Limited impact on historical deficiencies in city and therefore remaining reputational/statutory non-compliance risks</p> <p>Capital funding to be sourced and provision made for whole life cycle costs through revenue</p> <p>Displacement of current users during build period</p>	<p>From £500,000 to £1.6m</p>
<p>4. Development of new 3G pitches – multi sports use as preference</p>	<p>Potential to significantly intensify use and provide new opportunities across sporting codes</p> <p>Increased strategic fit with corporate ‘quality of life’ agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Increased compliance with statutory equality and Recreation Order obligations</p>	<p>Capital funding to be sourced</p> <p>Land availability limited and planning considerations</p> <p>Considerable time-lag to delivery</p>	<p>From £1m to £1.6m + land acquisition costs on non-BCC sites</p>

Option	Benefits	Risk	Costs per unit
	Partnership and funding opportunities increased (e.g. SNI; SEUPB)		
5. Combination of above	<p>Potential to significantly intensify use and provide new opportunities across sporting codes</p> <p>Phased improvement activity in each area of city, addressing social need</p> <p>Considerable strategic fit with corporate 'quality of life' agenda at a neighbourhood level</p> <p>Significant compliance with statutory equality and Recreation Order obligations</p> <p>Partnership and funding opportunities maximised (e.g. SNI; SEUPB)</p> <p>Improves playing experience and improved facilities for females and children</p> <p>Improved and sustainable facilities for future use</p> <p>Reduced deficiencies in sporting codes through new provision (cricket) and increased community access to existing provision (e.g. school sites)</p> <p>Reduced displacement for current users and increased playing times/locations</p>	<p>Capital funding to be sourced</p> <p>Risks associated with working in partnership</p>	<p>Level of funding to be determined by Council</p>

- 10.6 Through ongoing consultation with various stakeholders, and consideration by elected representatives, it is agreed that no one clear policy option which will provide the solutions to addressing pitch deficiencies and issues highlighted in Belfast. It is clear that a combination of some of the traditional options, together with more innovative solutions is required.
- 10.7 In appraising the above options in line with the sub-objectives under Objective 1 – Capital Investment, it is considered that option 5 delivers against the maximum delivery against the sub-objectives.

Objective 1 – Capital Investment Sub-objectives	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
1.1 To invest in additional outdoor leisure facilities which addresses the shortfall in city supply and intensifies use		√	√	√	√
1.2 To invest in the enhancement of existing provision to intensify use and improve the quality of outdoor leisure provision			√	√	√
1.3 To invest in the quality of changing facilities at outdoor leisure provision, increasing provision for women and children				√	√
1.4 To commence discussions with Sport NI to develop partnership arrangements for assets planning, management and secured community access		√	√	√	√
1.5 To work with education partners (schools, higher and further education) to deliver increased access to outdoor leisure facilities		√	√	√	√
1.6 To work with sports governing bodies partners and other interested parties to deliver increased access to outdoor leisure facilities	√	√	√	√	√
1.7 To promote opportunities for shared space through multi-sport facilities		√	√		√
1.8 To create a repairs and renewals fund for the refurbishment of playing pitches and a rolling maintenance programme	√	√	√	√	√
1.9 To commence discussions with the Planning Service for Northern Ireland.		√	√	√	√
Total	2	7	8	8	9

- 10.8 Therefore, the proposal for phase Years 1-3 is option 5, that is, a combination of delivering

new 2 pitches with ancillary facilities (part-funded); a series of upgrades (pitches and changing) and lower cost options (floodlighting and cricket squares). This option presents the maximum benefit to the Council and its partners, and reduces a number of the risks.

10.9 As well as continuing to investigate the potential for the acquisition of new sites, it would also be advisable to make immediate provision for lower-cost/high impact investments at partner-owned locations, such as the installation of floodlighting, which would secure increased community access. Requests from external partners could be assessed on a regular basis against the criteria set out in the strategy.

10.10 The approximate cost for this combination approach is as follows:

Action	Number	Cost to BCC
New pitch + ancillary facilities	2	Up to 3,200,000 <i>Level of partner funding tbd</i>
Pitch upgrades to 3-G Hybrid	3	Up to 4,800,000 <i>Level of partner funding tbd</i>
Changing facilities upgrade	4	1,200,000
Floodlighting (to secure/increase community access at educational sites)	4	750,000
Cricket square installations/upgrade <i>(Revenue costs)</i>	2	20,000
Total		£9,950,000 Capital £20,000 Revenue

10.11 On the basis of affordability, in the current indicative capital programme, an uncommitted allowance up to £10,000,000 has been included for the Playing Pitch Strategy. In preliminary discussions, a number of external funding sources have been identified and need to be confirmed.

10.12 The current pricing policy for the hire of pitches would also need to be reviewed in order to maximise the income generated from new pitches, as well ensure that repairs and renewal costs were covered over their life-time.

10.13 It is therefore recommended that a full funding strategy is developed outlining a number of options including partnership with the private sector.

Prioritisation framework

10.14 Given the likely availability of funding, it is clear that a prioritisation framework needs to be developed in order to determine the priority for investment options outlined above.

10.15 A list of available Council-owned locations has been considered and a short-list has been developed based on the likelihood of deliverability and known planning restrictions. This short-list of 31 sites will now be prioritised on the basis of the matrix below.

10.16 The matrix has been developed in alignment with the sub-objectives under Objective 1 and the Council's existing capital prioritisation framework. It uses a numerical assessment based on a number of criteria which is subsequently weighted. Each investment decision – both Council-owned and partner opportunities – will be assessed using the assessment criteria.

10.17 A weighted score has also been included, denoting the Council's priority for each criterion.

Assessment Criteria	Description	Score
Need (25)	High – addresses shortfall identified in baseline assessment	3
	Medium – addresses quality issues identified in baseline assessment in Council-owned facilities.	2
	Low – addresses quality issues identified in baseline assessment in other facilities.	1
	None	0
Proximity (10)	High need – no facilities within 0.75 mile radius/10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access	3
	Medium need – single-sport/no 3-G facilities within 0.75 mile radius/10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access	2
	Low need – within 0.75 mile radius/10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access but limited access in evenings/weekend	1
	No need – facilities within 0.75 mile radius/10-15 minute walking distance with secured community access and availability	0
External Funding (25)	60% - 100% external funding	3
	31% - 59% external funding	2
	1% - 30% external funding	1
	0%	0
Partnership (10)	Partnership with additional resources and secured community access	3
	Partnership with additional resources and limited community access	2
	Partnership with no additional resources and community access	1
	No partner identified	0
Intensification of use (20)	Site supports multi-purpose pitch facility – more than 2 sporting codes	3
	Site supports dual-purpose pitch facility – up to 2 sporting codes	2
	Installation of floodlighting/improved changing facilities	1
	Site supports single sport pitch facility	0
Reputational Risk (10)	High – If not progressed immediately could have severe impact (on more than one of) time-bound funding, detrimental press coverage, service provision.	3
	Medium – could impact on one of the above.	2
	Low – minor manageable impact/no real significance	1
	None	0

- 10.18 Following this prioritisation, a narrative on the risks, costs and benefits on each site will be developed. Each narrative will also include detail on the equality and good relations impacts of each investment location and mitigating actions required to address any adverse impacts.
- 10.19 This prioritisation process is in line with the Council's standards, as well as to Green Book standard. It has initially identified risks and benefits and will proceed to determine whole life-cycle costs for each short-listed location, all of which is essential information for the internal Gates Process and will expedite any further external economic appraisal processes.
- 10.20 Finally, this will be presented as a programme of activity and a strategic business case will be developed, based on the information gathered in these earlier stages.

11 Equality Statement

- 11.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.
- 11.2 The Act also requires the Council, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 11.3 The Council's Equality Scheme, which details how the Council will fulfil its duties, was approved in April 2001. A part of that Equality Scheme was the production of a Good Relations Strategy. The Council's Good Relations Strategy was prepared and adopted in February 2003; it was commended as a model of good practice in the Shared Future document by the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister.
- 11.4 Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006) (DDO), from 1 January 2007, public authorities, when carrying out their functions must have due regard to the need to:
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- 11.5 These duties are referred to as the 'disability duties'. Council's Equality Toolkit and Reference Guide provide details on accessibility to services through event management, travel and accessibility, amongst others.
- 11.6 The Council has taken the decision that a full EQIA of the draft strategy will be carried out in compliance with the Council's responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in accordance with Equality Commission guidelines. The EQIA will primarily address the following needs:
- the need to identify an audit trail in terms of the criteria used to determine the options which will be submitted to the Parks and Leisure Committee, showing that each option has been developed on the basis of clear, objective criteria;
 - the need to demonstrate that the different needs of people in the various Section 75 categories have been taken into account in the development of options and that the options represent the best means of promoting equality of opportunity and/or good relations;
 - the need to demonstrate that best practice has been followed in terms of the EQIA process, with particular attention to the quality of data and research used and a robust approach to consultation; and
 - the need to identify equality impacts as accurately as possible and ensure that all potential mitigating actions have been considered to alleviate any adverse differential impacts, particularly in relation to the programming aspect of the strategy.

- 11.7 Denise Wheatley from Policy Arc Limited has been appointed to externally verify the equality dimensions to the development of the strategy. This draft strategy has been issued for consultation, in line with the Council's equality obligations.

12 The way forward

- 12.1 Belfast City Council has produced this playing pitch strategy to ensure there is a strategic approach to the provision of high quality and accessible pitches. The prioritisation framework will be used to identify sites for potential development and an action plan will be developed for the implementation of this work over a ten year period.
- 12.2 Monitoring and evaluation is a crucial part of delivering this playing pitches strategy and the Council will build a monitoring and evaluation schedule into the action plan. As part of this process we will reassess the baseline audit within 2 years of the implementation of the strategy as opposed to the recommended 5 years.

13 Appendices

Appendix 1

	Department	Site Name	Typology	Potential for 3-G facility 2 = new provision 1 = replacement 0 = no potential
1.	Development	North Foreshore		2
2.	Parks	Botanic Gardens (lower)	City	2
3.	Parks	Alderman Thomas Patton Memorial Park	District	2
4.	Parks	Clement Wilson Park	Local	2
5.	Parks	Glencairn Park	Local	2
6.	Parks	North Link Playing Fields	Local	2
7.	Parks	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	2
8.	Parks	Ballygomartin Road South (Newhill)		2
9.	Development	Hannahstown Road Site		2
10.	Development	Monagh Wood Site		2
11.	Parks	Beechvale Farm		2
12.	Development	Colin Glen Site		2
13.	Parks	Falls Park	District	2
14.	Parks	Slievegallion Drive Open Space	Local	2
15.	Development	Glen Road Site		2
16.	Parks	City of Belfast Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
17.	Parks	Ormeau Park (Shale pitch at Ozone)	City	1
18.	Leisure	Avoniel Leisure Centre	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
19.	Parks	Orangefield Playing Fields	District	1
20.	Parks	Belmont Park	Local	1
21.	Parks	Cherryvale Playing Fields	Local	1
22.	Parks	Marrowbone Millennium Park	Local	1
23.	Parks	Woodlands Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
24.	Parks	Waterworks	District	1
25.	Parks	Cliftonville Playing Fields	Local	1
26.	Parks	Musgrave Park	District	1
27.	Parks	Suffolk Playing Fields	Local	1
28.	Parks	Ulidia Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
29.	Parks	Ballysillan Playing Fields	District	1
30.	Parks	Blanchflower Park	Pitches/Playing Fields	1
31.	Parks	King George V Playing Fields	Local	1
32.	Leisure	Andersontown Leisure Centre	Pitches/Playing Fields	0
33.	Parks	Grove Playing Fields	District	0
34.	Parks	Victoria Park	District	0
35.	Parks	Woodvale Park	District	0
36.	Parks	Alexandra Park	Local	0

	Department	Site Name	Typology	Potential for 3-G facility 2 = new provision 1 = replacement 0 = no potential
37.	Parks	Clarawood Millennium Park	Local	0
38.	Parks	Clarendon Park Playing Fields	Local	0
39.	Parks	Dixon Park Playing Fields	Local	0
40.	Parks	Dunville Park	Local	0
41.	Parks	Greenville Park	Local	0
42.	Parks	Hammer Development Playground	Local	0
43.	Parks	Lenadoon Millennium Park	Local	0
44.	Parks	Loughside Park	Local	0
45.	Parks	Shore Road Playing Fields	Local	0
46.	Parks	Strangford Avenue Playing Fields	Local	0
47.	Parks	Wedderburn Park	Local	0
48.	Parks	Ballygomartin Road North		0
49.	Leisure	Ballysillan Leisure Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
50.	Leisure	Grosvenor Recreation Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
51.	Leisure	Olympia Leisure Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
52.	Leisure	Whiterock Leisure Centre	3G Pitches/Playing Fields	0
53.	Development	Duncrue Industrial Estate		0
54.	Development	Gasworks Site		0
55.	Leisure	Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre	Playground	0
56.	Leisure	Beechmount Leisure Centre		0
57.	Leisure	Loughside Recreation Centre		0
58.	Leisure	Maysfield Leisure Centre		0
59.	Parks	Barnett Demesne	Countryside	0
60.	Parks	Cavehill Country Park	Countryside	0
61.	Parks	Lagan Lands East	Countryside	0
62.	Parks	Lagan Meadows	Countryside	0
63.	Parks	Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park	Countryside	0
64.	Parks	Crescent Open Space	Local	0
65.	Parks	Drumglass Park	Local	0
66.	Parks	Forthriver Linear Park	Local	0
67.	Parks	Glenbank Park	Local	0
68.	Parks	King William Park	Local	0
69.	Parks	Knocknagoney Linear Park	Local	0
70.	Parks	Ligoniel Park	Local	0
71.	Parks	Loop River	Local	0
72.	Parks	Lyons Park	Local	0
73.	Parks	Northwood Linear Park	Local	0

	Department	Site Name	Typology	Potential for 3-G facility 2 = new provision 1 = replacement 0 = no potential
74.	Parks	Queen Mary's Gardens	Local	0
75.	Parks	Springfield Park	Local	0
76.	Parks	Springhill Millennium Park	Local	0
77.	Parks	Loughside Playing Fields	Pitches/Playing Fields	0
78.	Parks	Mary Peter's Track	Pitches/Playing Fields	0
79.	Parks	Annadale Embankment		0
80.	Parks	Ballymacarrett Walkway		0
81.	Parks	Ballysillan Road Open Space		0
82.	Parks	Benmore Square Open Space		0
83.	Parks	Blythefield Open Space		0
84.	Parks	Britton's Lane Open Space		0
85.	Parks	Brooke Crescent/Drive		0
86.	Parks	City of Belfast Golf Course		0
87.	Parks	Connswater Walkway		0
88.	Parks	Dromara Street Open Space		0
89.	Parks	Erinvale Drive Open Space		0
90.	Parks	Flora Street Walkway		0
91.	Parks	Garnerville Open Space		0
92.	Parks	Glenarm Square Open Space		0
93.	Parks	Half Moon Lake		0
94.	Parks	Holylands Open Space		0
95.	Parks	Jubilee Gardens		0
96.	Parks	Ladybrook Park		0
97.	Parks	Lower Oldpark Road Grass Area		0
98.	Parks	Lyric Wood		0
99.	Parks	Manderson Street Gardens		0
100.	Parks	Orchardville Crescent		0
101.	Parks	Orlock Square Open Space		0
102.	Parks	Parkgate Gardens Open Space		0
103.	Parks	Pomona Avenue Open Space		0
104.	Parks	River Terrace		0
105.	Parks	Sharman Road Open Space		0
106.	Parks	Shore Road Open Space		0
107.	Parks	St. Michael's Park		0
108.	Parks	Stranmillis Car Park Open Space		0
109.	Parks	Strathmore Open Space		0
110.	Parks	Thornhill Parade Open Space		0
111.	Parks	Wandsworth Road Open Space		0
112.	Parks	West Kirk Open Space		0

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