

Community & Sport – A Cricket Case Study

A report from Overview & Scrutiny





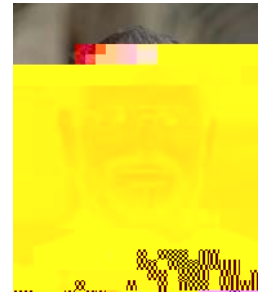
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Preface

By Cllr John Alden

Chairman, Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee



As the Committee was concerned about the low participation rate in sport, we decided to look at the delivery of cricket, being a sport played by all ages and all communities.

Had we chosen any other sport, it is likely that we would have come to similar conclusions.

It is appreciated that there has been a reduction in public funding for the provision of sports facilities, but research has shown that there is a substantial amount of goodwill within the population to help assist in the delivery of cricket and we therefore believe that with a combination of this effort, our cricket provision can be increased and improved.

It is worth mentioning that one of the major UK supermarket chains send their staff on cricket training days as they see this as one of the many ways that their abilities can be improved for the benefit of the business.

I hope that this Overview will help the delivery of cricket facilities within the city and as a consequence generate an increase in participation, resulting in a healthier population.

I would like to thank the Members of the Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their support and especially the Members of the sub-group, Councillors Paula Smith, Muhammad Afzal and Des Hughes. Thanks also go to those members of cricket clubs who wrote to us or enabled us to visit their sites and to the Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership and the Warwickshire County Cricket Board who contributed to our research. We gained considerable insight into the issues around facilities for cricket from the draft Playing Pitch Strategy prepared for the City Council by consultants Scott Wilson. My thanks also goes to Sue Griffith and Baseema Begum who supported the Overview and drafted this report, and to Emma Williamson and her team who helped edit and proof read it.



Summary of Suggested Actions

1. That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture support the Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership to:

complete their preparation of the single sport plan, the 'state of play' report for cricket in the city and submit that report to the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee for consultation by March 2012;

work with Sporting Equals on ways to enhance cricket participation in the city, particularly in the pr

implementation of the priority action list as set out in the Strategy by March 2012.

7. That the Committee receives a report back in six months time regarding any achievements in securing funding for facilities at Perry Hall Playing Fields.
8. The Cabinet Member should submit a progress report to the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee by March 2012 on existing and proposed CAT projects for community sports facilities across the city.



1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Leisure, Sport & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been concerned for some time about the low participation rates in sport in the city, with less than 20% of adults taking part in active sport and recreation. Regular reports brought to this Committee by the Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership have set out the benefits of increasing participation in terms of mental and physical health, creating stronger and safer communities, benefits to children and young people and strengthening the economy.

1.1.2 The Committee became aware that, following the Government's June 2010 Emergency Budget, the extent of the reductions in public spending meant that the whole way we think of public services would need to change. Members appreciated that the Council's support to sports development would have to change towards an enabling

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- 1.2.2 Members of the sub-group were: Cllr Paula Smith, Cllr John Alden, Cllr Muhammad Afzal and Cllr Des Hughes. The Chairmanship of the sub-group was initially held by Cllr Paula Smith, but following family bereavement it was passed to Cllr John Alden. Members of the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee were, in addition, Cllr Philip Parkin, Cllr David Pears, Cllr Margaret Waddington, Cllr Roger Harmer and Cllr Mahmood Hussain.



2 Background

2.1 The Need to Promote Sport and Physical Activity in Birmingham

2.1.1

- 2.1.4 Low participation in sport has been shown to have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of residents. Evidence provided by the Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership stated that:



2.1.8

Big Society

2.2.3 The Big Society is a Government agenda that seeks to shift power from politicians to people. The main themes are:

Devolving power to communities and local government;

A greater role in public services for voluntary and community organisations;

Supporting the voluntary and community sector.

2.2.4

A relationship manager provided by the City Council to promote partnership working and ensure that links with the Council are strengthened.

- 3.1.6 In addition each Constituency has a Sports Partnership which brings together Council and community policies and activities within each Constituency. The partnerships produce sports plans for their areas and these are crucial in developing involvement and increasing participation.

3.2 Clubs and Leagues

- 3.2.1 There are 29 affiliated clubs in the city, including 16 in the north of the city and 13 in the south. The priority of the WCCB is to support and develop the affiliated clubs in the city:

WCCB works in Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire to develop cricket and invests about £700k annually in cricket development across all of those areas. We also work with partners to raise other funding. Our main work is focussed on supporting established, private affiliated clubs, schools, educating & developing coaches, disability cricket, women and girls cricket and the development of excellence – finding and developing talented players.

- 3.2.2 A considerable amount of cricket is played within the Birmingham Parks League (BPL). It was founded in 1893, as the Birmingham Publics Parks Cricket Association (BPPCA). It is a major provider of grass roots cricket in Birmingham consisting of 56 teams on Sunday and 24 teams on Saturday – a total of 80 teams playing cricket at the weekend. It has over 1500 players registered



3.2.4 Whilst the WCCB told us that they do not have financial resources to commit to the Parks the Birmingham Cricket League (BCL) would like to improve their contact with the WCCB:

We are looking to work more closely with the County Cricket Board in future – however we also recognise the scope of these interactions is limited as we operate in two different spheres. In some way, it is easier for the board to work with private clubs who own their own pitches than it is to work with a grass roots organisation like ourselves.

3.2.5

3.3 Playing Pitches

- 3.3.1 Playing pitches are provided in public parks and open spaces by the City Council and some unattached school playing fields are available for community use. Playing Pitches have an important role to play in meeting the overall priorities and objectives for community sport: a high quality, accessible supply of facilities is key to delivering the desirable increase in sport and physical activity and to meet the development priorities of a number of sports.
- 3.3.2 Much of the evidence we received on playing pitches came from the draft Playing Pitch Strategy, presented to Members, having been drawn up by specialist consultants. The Strategy was developed to protect pitches against development pressures; identify opportunities to respond to increased demand from a growing population; provide a framework for identifying priorities for investment and provide a steer to the Council in its role as a provider and enabler of pitch provision and in particular provide a steer on leasing sites to established sports clubs.
- 3.3.3 Members of the Cricket Review Group visited several playing fields across the city in October 2010 to see some of the issues for themselves.

Demand and Supply

- 3.3.4 The Strategy identified a significant increase in demand since the previous Playing Pitch Strategy. The 2003 Strategy identified demand equating to 850 teams (across all the sports assessed); the audit compiled for this Strategy identified in excess of 1,900 teams. However, whereas demand has more than doubled, supply has remained largely static.
- 3.3.5 The current supply of public and private sites for the use of cricket within the city is as follows:

Ownership/Management	Number of Sites	Number of Pitches	% (of sites) in Community Use
Birmingham City Council*	205	514	96%**
Private Providers	57	118	89%
Further/Higher Education	14	54	57%

* includes education and leisure pitches ** not all sites currently have pitches operational

- 3.3.6 In addition there are indications that latent demand for cricket exists across the city. Most notably



realise the current harsh prevailing financial realities and so we recognise that opportunities to grow will be limited.

3.3.7 In addition to this, feedback from clubs also suggests there is some suppressed demand. Over half (56%) of all clubs responding to the survey conducted for the Strategy reported 'lack of appropriate facilities' as a key issue for them. All of these clubs have plans to recruit more members. Cricket expects a 1% year on year growth in the number of participants.

3.3.8 The Strategy reported that:

On the basis of the assessment and additional evidence collected, it is clear that current quantity of cricket pitches is at best adequate, but in reality is at capacity and showing clear signs of an inability to meet demand.

3.3.9 In addition, supply is not necessarily in areas of highest demand. The Chairman of the BCL stated that:

The distribution of pitches is not uniform. The majority of our pitches are at Perry Hall. We have no pitches in Small Heath, Bordesley Green, Alum Rock, Sparkhill and Sparkbrook. I believe that if we had access to city Education Owned Pitches (which are suitable for cricket) this could help to meet the demand as well as make the distribution of cricket availability more uniform.

3.3.10 Some private clubs make their facilities available to visiting clubs. The survey found that there may be capacity at some clubs with their own grounds who only run a limited number of teams that could be used by other clubs, but local league organisers reported issues with the cost of hiring these facilities.

Quality of Pitches

3.3.11

We urge the City Council to support and encourage cricket in the city as much as possible bearing in mind its limited financial resources. Particular attention should be paid to improving the quality of the playing surfaces provided, which should in turn, improve the standard of cricket.

- 3.3.14 Two venues were specifically mentioned. Perry Hall Park, the main venue for the BCL, do not have a changing room or toilet facilities. Handsworth Cricket Club is the only club within the Premier Cricket League which plays on a Council owned/maintained pitch:

It is imperative that the quality of the ground is maintained, then improved, to enable the Club to fulfil the criteria demanded by the League and its National Governing Body and there are a variety of penalties available to the Management Board if these criteria are not fulfilled, including relegation back to a Feeder League.

- 3.3.15 Grounds maintenance often emerges as a key issue in any pitch assessment. However, not all the negative views are attributable to grounds maintenance specifications or quality of service. In many cases, because public pitches are often located within publicly accessible open space, there is a 'quality ceiling' i.e. they are open to unofficial sporting use and other recreational use. Informal football use for example can damage sensitive cricket pitches especially the wicket area. At the Ackers in the constituency of Yardley, a new pitch has been written off due to informal



despite the presence of changing rooms at a large proportion of sites, clubs report some quality issues.

3.3.20

sufficient quality to meet the demands of community sport in addition to school use. School facilities with community use may not always be open or accessible during school holidays, a peak time for the cricket season. Some schools have converted natural wickets to artificial surfaces which potentially meets the school's own needs, but not the standards of local leagues.

- 3.3.27 The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme would have generated significant opportunities to use the capital investment to improve playing pitches. However following the cancellation of much of the programme, opportunities are more limited. The Playing Pitch Strategy identifies opportunities at George Dixon International School, which is still within the BSF programme. It suggests that the current cricket provision should be retained as part of the school's re-development and facilities providing community use supported.
- 3.3.28 Waverley School, Small Heath is also being rebuilt under the BSF programme. The Playing Pitch Strategy suggests that the masterplan should include cricket facilities, since this is potentially a key site for additional club use in an area of high demand from the community. It has been suggested that the new school could be open for hire by community groups to use, however it would be up to the groups using the site to pay for maintenance or apply for grant funding to enable maintenance and work to be carried out. This would mean for instance a cricket square would need to meet the Birmingham Cricket League standard for groups wishing to participate in the league.
- 3.3.29 It is also suggested in the Strategy that Shenley Court Academy could include the provision of a new cricket square as a long term possibility, but this would require partnership working with the Academy sponsors. The cricket facilities here are currently used only by the school.
- 3.3.30 Many primary and secondary schools have playing fields immediately adjacent to the school, however many years ago the Council purchased additional land for the use of those schools in heavily built up areas of the city without their own playing fields. There are now 33 sites across the city owned by the portfolio for CYP&F which are classified as 'unattached playing fields'. The use of these sites by schools has diminished over the last ten years or so due to lack of changing facilities, increases in pupil transport costs, increases in the popularity of non-traditional pitch based sports and the provision of indoor sports halls.
- 3.3.31 Unattached playing fields are mostly available for community use. Information received in January 2011 from officers of CYP&F, Transforming Education Asset Management Team, stated:
- Our policy is to encourage use by community through normal booking procedure as long as schools are not adversely affected - their use must have priority. We would welcome community discussions about increasing use for any sport on our fields as long as we could protect future schools' use.
- 3.3.32 The grounds maintenance is carried out by the Leisure, Sport and Culture's Ground Maintenance Contractors, with a sum being transferred to that portfolio from the CYP&F portfolio.



3.3.33 However one of the factors affecting the future use of CYP&F land is the need to provide additional reception and primary school places due to a dramatic increase in the birth rate across the city, especially in the central areas. Cabinet approved the expansion of 24 primary schools in November 2010. The future use of CYP&F land, including unattached playing fields will be detailed in the new Land Strategy being prepared.

4 Community Organisation of Sport

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Sport has seen a long tradition of community organisations of different types where people come together to play and organise sport. Indeed, sport is the largest single segment in the voluntary and community sector representing 25% of all volunteering. Traditional approaches at a local level include local community sports clubs e.g. tennis, football and cricket, with most of these accessible to all, and some owning their own assets.
- 4.1.2 Community sports centres run by the Council provide support for a range of community activities especially in areas where traditional sports clubs are few and facilities and access to them is limited. Sports Centres can also organise and support activities in other community locations e.g. coaching sessions in schools, and fitness sessions in community and health settings.

4.2 Community Asset Transfer

- 4.2.1 Members discussed the importance of volunteering and encouraging casual cricketers to think about forming clubs which would then be eligible for more funding. Several Members referred to clubs in their area of the city and the important social role that they played, especially with regard to involving young people in healthy sporting activities. We found that, in relation to cricket, voluntary groups broadly welcome the idea but expressed concerns about how equipped they were to take on more responsibility, given that the availability of public funds has reduced.
- 4.2.2 One approach being promoted is community asset transfer, where public assets are taken out of City Council control and allocated or sold to local groups. Views on this were mixed. The Birmingham Parks League in their written evidence said that:

- 4.3.2 Following the public meeting of interested parties in October 2010, three clubs were selected to form the Community Sports Hub in Perry Barr. These clubs will promote cricket, tennis, football and boxing. A Business Plan is being drawn up to enable the release of the capital receipt realised from the sale of part of the site. This money is likely to attract match funding from Sport England and the sport governing bodies, such as the Football Association, England and Wales Cricket Board, the Lawn Tennis Association and the Boxing Federation.
- 4.3.3 The details of the lease between the Holford Drive Community Sports Hub and the Council have yet to be agreed. The methodology of calculating leasehold payments which recognises the 'worth' to the community of the Community Sports Hub was agreed at the Cabinet meeting held on 14th March 2011. This concept of 'Valuing Worth' is crucial to enable rental levels to be set at a level that the community can afford.
- 4.3.4 Committee Members visited three other sites where groups were keen to negotiate leases with the Council to enable Community Sports Hubs to be developed. Members were disappointed at the lack of progress at Spring Lane, Erdington, Belchers Lane, Bordesley Green and Green Lane, Small Heath.
- 4.3.5 The major advantage at Holford Drive is the capital receipt available to the project resulting from the sale of part of the site. Similar capital injections are not available at the other sites, although some might be forthcoming at Belchers Lane should the car parking proposal go ahead. At all the sites, the nature and cost of the lease with the Council seems to be the key to progress. The work being undertaken on 'Valuing Worth' is fundamental here as it should enable the Council to move away from rents set at commercial rates and towards leases that recognise the importance of the sports hub projects to the life of the community.



5 Conclusions and Suggested Actions

5.1 Increasing participation

- 5.1.1 Increasing the levels of exercise of people in Birmingham must be a priority as the benefits of increasing participation are well documented in terms of mental and physical health, creating stronger and safer communities, benefits to children and young people and strengthening the economy.
- 5.1.2 We were very concerned that Birmingham's participation rates in sport and physical activity are amongst the lowest of all the Core Cities and note the costs to Birmingham's NHS. The fact that the areas of the city with the lowest participation rates correlate to the areas of deprivation is even more a cause for concern.
- 5.1.3 Research has shown that there is a demand for team sports in those areas of the city where participation is lowest. Cricket is inclusive, drawing together people from all cultures and backgrounds. Analysis suggests that across the central areas of the city, there are nearly twice as many people wishing to play cricket than the number actually playing.
- 5.1.4 Partnerships are key to increasing participation, particularly as the role of the voluntary sector increases. We were impressed by the work of the Birmingham Sports and Physical Activity Partnership (BSPAP). Not only does it co-ordinate the public and voluntary sectors at the strategic level, but also at the local level through its Constituency Sports Networks. The new structure recently put in place by the BSPAP of the Birmingham Cricket Partnership, a state of play report and a Cricket Relationship Manager, is crucial to the development of the cricket participation in the city. We welcome this new structure and hope that it is successful.
- 5.1.5 The scope and quality of the draft Strategy when it was presented to the Committee was also welcomed. It provided conclusions and suggestions for the future based on a wide ranging survey across the city (the response rate was 93% of affiliated clubs (26 of 28 identified) and 46 of the 80 (58%) Birmingham Parks League teams).

Suggested Actions

1. That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture support the Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership to:
 - complete their preparation of the single sport plan, the 'state of play' report for cricket in the city and submit that report to the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee for consultation by March 2012;

work with Sporting Equals on ways to enhance cricket participation in the city, particularly in the priority areas of Perry Barr, Erdington, Ladywood and Hodge Hill.

2. That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture discuss with the Be Active programme coordinators the potential of cricket to increase sports participation in the priority areas of the city where sports participation rates are especially low.
3. That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture supports the role of the Cricket Relationship Manager as a crucial link between the City Council and the local Governing Body for Cricket – the Warwickshire County Cricket Board (WCCB). A report on the success and achievements (and any difficulties) should be presented to the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee by March 2012. The report should include the views of the WCCB.

5.2 Community Organisation

- 5.2.1 Community involvement is key. This is evidenced by the strong involvement in cricket: there is a tremendous history of club cricket in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. Today there are 29 cricket clubs in the city affiliated to the English Cricket Board and strong grass roots cricket participation is facilitated by the Birmingham Parks League. These groups are very active not only in cricket matches, but also in training and youth development.
- 5.2.2 There is a tension here, with a perception of “two tier” provision. However, though the affiliated clubs often have more financial support, we have seen how a group of players who started within the Parks League can develop to a highly successfulort, we half3t459 Td(b.1336Be,)T0- 1.628 0 Td&v



leases to community organisations, as this will restrict any future use. For example, some school land may need to be retained for possible future school expansions.

- 5.3.9 However, we hope that the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families will continue to support the community use of school playing fields and we recognise that to enable cricket to be played at a high standard, additional resources will need to be found to maintain the pitches. We feel that specific sites can be looked at in more detail within the context of the Playing Pitch Strategy and we urge the Cabinet Member to continue the involvement of his directorate in the corporate working group already referred to.
- 5.3.10 Where there are unattached playing fields that are not required for school expansion, we strongly support the development of community sports hubs with Community Asset Transfer (CAT) where appropriate. This is especially important in the central areas of the city where sports participation is low, demand for cricket is high and public open space scarce.

Suggested Actions

- 5. That the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture finalise the Playing Pitch Strategy and consider its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document to the new Core Strategy by March 2012.**
- 6. That the City Council corporate working group, set up to work on developing the Playing Pitch Strategy, should be retained to work across Directorates on the next stages of the strategy and to monitor its implementation. This group should report back to the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee on the implementation of the priority action list as set out in the Strategy by March 2012.**
- 7. That the Committee receives a report back in six months time regarding any achievements in securing funding for facilities at Perry Hall Playing Fields.**
- 8. The Cabinet Member should submit a progress report to the Leisure, Sport and Culture O&S Committee by March 2012 on existing and proposed CAT projects for community sports facilities across the city.**



Appendix 1: Site Visits

Introduction

Councillors P Smith, J Alden, M Afzal and D Hughes -

creating access and parking and constructing a pavilion, enabling the site to be fully used by the community. At present the site is used by five youth and kids' football teams in the winter, the Birmingham Parks Cricket league in the summer and some school use. The eastern edge of the area suffers from some contamination. There are no public changing rooms – the local school use a container located in the north east corner of the site, which is unavailable for community access despite requests for community access by the users.

However the local community have worked hard to promote community use of the site and Members met on site representatives of a local charity working with young people who are often marginalised and considered by others hard to reach. They heard that a charity wants to run kids and youth football teams at the site, if improvements to it can be made. Other clubs want to join a partnership to run a cricket club and a tennis club at the site. They were told that the community were been dismayed that it was taking so long to facilitate community access, despite a portion of the site having been sold. They found the bureaucratic processes and procedures very frustrating.

The concept of a Community Sports Hub for several sports was proposed for this site about two years ago and has been supported by both the Cabinet Members for Leisure and Children, Young People and Families. Members heard that an advertisement had just been placed in the local press by the Perry Barr Constituency Office:

Invitation to submit Expressions of Interest in forming a Community Sports Hub to manage, operate and promote the use of the Holford Drive Playing Fields for sporting, school and community activities. The Council is interested in the idea of working together with local groups and interested parties and to hear their views on how to establish a local organisation to manage, develop and promote the long term use of the site. Interested parties and local organisations that wish to express an interest to be part of the future set up at Holford Drive should register an Expression of Interest with Perry Barr Constituency Office.⁴

More information about this site and the Community Sports Hub is included in the main part of this report.

Perry Hall Playing Fields



This site appears high on the list of priorities for funding applications within the Playing Pitch Strategy (for example to the Cricket Foundation the funding arm of the English Cricket Board) to secure capital to provide changing rooms and toilets. However running costs may be a future difficulty for the Council.

Spring Lane Playing Fields, Erdington

This site is owned by CYP&F Portfolio. It is used by Birmingham Parks Cricket League and is the home of many local football teams, mostly youth teams 14-21. There is still some use by a school. There was a rugby club on the site at one time with changing rooms in the south east corner of the site, but these were demolished. There are no changing rooms at the current time. Members were met on site by representatives from a local, very successful football club who want to use the site for their junior football teams in the winter and cricket in the summer. They want to develop a community sports hub and secure a long lease to enable funding applications - they have drawn up a business plan. The club has undertaken a skills audit and has a significant number of practical trades that support the building of a clubhouse. However they were frustrated by the bureaucracy of the Council and have been quoted by CYP&F the commercial rental value which they cannot afford.

The Asset Management Team of CYP&F report that: Spring Lane playing field is a very large field and at 37 acres is by far the biggest in our portfolio. There were recent improvement to pitches to improve playing surface and drainage and this was funded by s106 money, the cricket pitch was upgraded to. If a team were interested in the field they possibly would not be interested in the whole field as it is just too big, for one team. Birmingham Property Services could look into the possibility of letting half of the field. One advantage of such a large field is that if a team wanted a particular type of pitch laid out there is plenty of room for this and thus in the bottom half of the field there are Gaelic football pitches, however these are no longer used .

Belchers Lane Playing Fields, Bordesley Green

This site is located next to Heartlands Hospital and is owned by the CYP&F Portfolio. The only entrance to the site is in the south west corner. The site was declared surplus to education requirements a long time ago and was transferred to the Regeneration Portfolio. Planning permission was granted, and has subsequently lapsed, for a medical park in conjunction with the adjacent Heartlands Hospital. Planning discussions are now being held regarding the hospital's desire to use part of the site for car parking. This development if agreed would lead to planning gain which could be used for a sports pavilion. However there are problems with access. The site would be ideal for cricket and junior football. Members heard that there is significant community interest from local groups in using the site, including local cricket leagues, an Asian led sports organisation and the local schools. No community access is available at the moment and the site is just mown by the Council. The site is on the priority list for action.

