



GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL INDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2016- 2028

STRATEGY MARCH 2016

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

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GLOSSARY

APS	(Sport England) Active People Survey
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
FPM	(Sport England) Facilities Planning Model
GBC	Gravesham Borough Council
GCLL	Gravesham Community Leisure Limited
KCC	Kent County Council
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
LDP	Local Development Plan
NGB	National governing body (of sport)
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office of National statistics
SE	Sport England

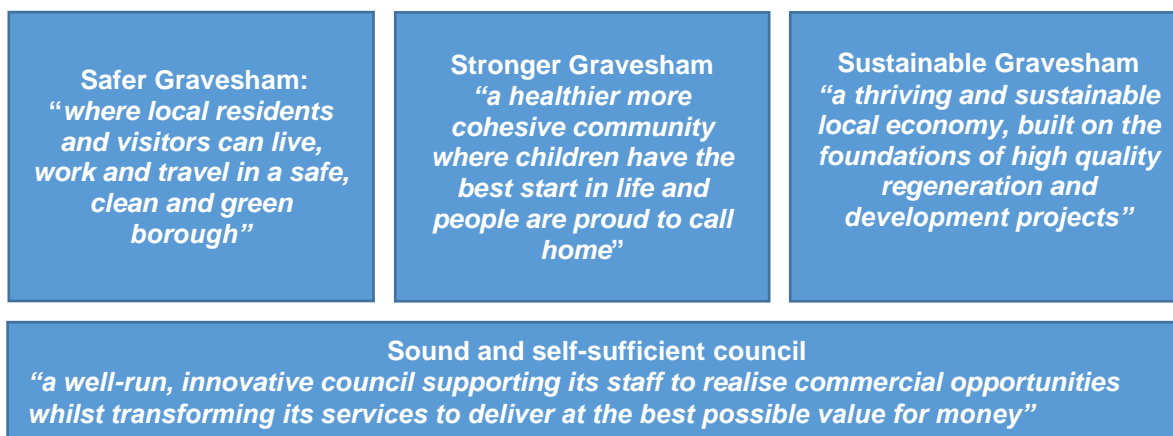
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INTRODUCTION

As the commissioning body for the Strategy, Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) has identified a number of priorities which align to its Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019. This focuses on a safer, stronger, sustainable Gravesham. It encompasses three primary community focused objectives each with their own portfolio of activities and initiatives; together these objectives work with each other to the benefit of the local community.

Figure 1: Overview of GBC Corporate Plan



Given the challenge of reduced government funding, to be successful in realising its vision, each core community objective will be underpinned and delivered by an ambitious final objective; the creation of a sound and self-sufficient council.

Partners

This is a plan for the Borough. Whilst GBC is the key driver, it is expected that plans and actions emanating from it will be delivered through partnership with and between other key stakeholders and be predicated upon them accepting and taking responsibility for different aspects of its implementation. The partnership approach to Strategy delivery is necessary to make best use of the assets and resources available to drive the development of sport and leisure in Gravesham. This Strategy has involved, and taken account of, consultation with a range of agencies and will require input from, for example, Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL), specific national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board, local clubs, Kent Sport and Physical Activity Service (Kent Sport), Sport England, businesses and Gravesham schools.

Key strategic outcomes

The core message running through local strategic documentation is the importance of sport and physical activity to the wider economy, standard of living and its general cross cutting benefit. The key strategic outcomes themes are considered to be:

- ◀ The health and wellbeing of the borough’s residents is improved and maintained through participation in physical activity. This includes developing a lifelong interest in sport and physical activity among young people and ensuring that older people remain active for longer.

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- ◀ Opportunities are made available to/for all Gravesham residents to take part in physical activity to contribute positively to their health and wellbeing.
- ◀ There is an appropriate response to increasing pressure on resources within GBC and Kent County Council (KCC) as local government finance is put under further pressure.
- ◀ GBC works with partners to ensure that facilities and infrastructure are provided to support and enhance sustainable communities in the Borough.
- ◀ Facilities and programmes of activity will continue to contribute to reducing health inequalities across the Borough for all age groups.
- ◀ Informed planning ensures that increases in population (particularly at the Ebbsfleet and London Paramount developments) are planned for as they are likely to put major pressure on local sports and leisure facilities.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Gravesham is located on the south bank of the River Thames approximately 32km (20m) east of London. It has an urban rural split; the rural area to the south and east of the borough, makes up 78% of the whole authority area and is virtually all Green Belt. Gravesend's current population is estimated to be 105,261 (Midyear estimate 2014).

The Gravesend and Northfleet Urban Area is the main location for housing and employment in the borough; where most planned future growth is focused. This includes the proposed Ebbsfleet Garden City and London Paramount entertainment resort. Ebbsfleet has recently been designated (1st March 2016) as one of the ten NHS-supported 'healthy new towns' across the country, covering more than 76,000 new homes with potential capacity for approximately 170,000 residents. The NHS will help shape the way these new sites develop, so as to test creative solutions for the health and care challenges of the 21st century, including obesity, dementia and community cohesion.

In addition to attracting more residents these schemes will lead to a significant increase in the working population. KCC's housing led forecast suggests that the population is likely to grow to 113,000 by 2028 and 115,200 by 2033. These major developments, along with others such as the Heritage Quarter and the land north of Coldharbour Road will increase pressure on sports and recreation facilities in the Borough.

Gravesham has levels of deprivation and affluence that closely mirror national averages: 30.5% of its population falls within areas covered by the country's three most deprived cohorts (national proportion: 30%). Conversely, 22.7% live in the three least deprived groupings (national proportion: 30%). The situation with regard to health is better; just over one in seven of Gravesham's population (14.5%) reside within areas covered by the three most deprived cohorts (national proportion: 30%).

The projected increase in the general age of the population in Gravesham will place increasing pressure on a range of services. The importance of ensuring that this cohort remains or gets more active (with a view to sustaining and improving the general health of the local population) will become increasingly relevant. It is, thus, incumbent on operational staff at local sports facilities to ensure that facility programming and access - at the right times - is considered as part of the Borough's sport and physical activity offer.

Four Opportunity Areas in the urban area are identified in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy to provide resilience and flexibility whilst showing where most change within the Borough will occur over the plan period. The Opportunity Areas that will accommodate the

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largest volume (and numbers) of proposed new housing are Northfleet Embankment and Swanscombe Peninsula East (in the longer term) followed by Gravesend Town Centre (although this is higher in the shorter term). Consideration will need to be given, via programming and management arrangements, to ensuring that any local increase in population is catered for within the current level of sporting infrastructure available and whether there will be a local requirement for more or improved quality.

In common with other indicators, the ethnic composition of Gravesham is not dissimilar to the national average; nearly 83% of the local population is classified as White (slightly lower than the England rate of 85.4%). The next largest population group (by self-classification) is Asian, at 10.4% this is higher than the national equivalent (7.8%).

There will be continuous change in the age structure of the resident population up until 2028 with increases in all age groups expected. KCC's housing growth forecast indicates up to c.31.4% increase in the 65+ age group with 7.1% and 27.3% increases for the 0-14 years and 55-64 age groups respectively. The 15-24 and 25-54 age groups decrease by 0.8% and 0.7% respectively. This may have a negative impact on demand for indoor sports facilities (or at least traditional uses thereof) at peak times but may also lead to an increase in demand during the day time; as experience shows that older people tend, comparatively, to make more use of facilities during the day than in evening periods.

Sport England segmentation indicates that participation and sports club membership is just above national/regional averages; whilst, sports tuition is just below. In common with many other areas, gym, swimming and cycling are among the most popular activities and are known to cut across age groups and gender. In Gravesham, nearly one in nine adults goes to the gym at least once a month, with nearly one in 10 cycling and/or swimming.

This Strategy also addresses how developing partnerships may improve the opportunity to invest in facilities and, in particular, proposals to improve the Guru Nanak Sports Hall and the potential development at Fleet Leisure, as well as the ongoing relationship with GCLL both of which will provide opportunities for the community. It is noted that a partnership approach is needed to produce the best facilities and ensure maximum efficiencies for facilities management and to ensure that facilities are protected and/or enhanced via the new development (in line with national planning policy). It thus looks to address a range of fundamental challenges; and assesses how sports facilities can be used to meet the needs of, or associated with:

- ◀ A numerically challenging and changing population, which is economically stable but one which has an age profile increasingly dominated by older age groups.
- ◀ The limited accessibility of facilities, especially during the day time, because the majority of sports halls, in particular, are located on school sites.
- ◀ No or limited ambition from the major NGBs to invest time and effort in developing clubs and programmes of activity in the area.
- ◀ The requirements of the projected increase in house building and economic activity, particularly in Ebbsfleet and London Paramount.
- ◀ Health partners' ambitions to address physical inactivity and obesity levels.
- ◀ A growing and active 'grey market' which is time rich, especially during the day.

Planning

NPPF paragraph 74 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ◀ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- ◀ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- ◀ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

It is, thus, essential that GBC, as the local planning authority, retains oversight with regard to all potential facility developments. This includes policies and potential supplementary planning documents setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development. It also includes the Council's approach to ensuring that community use of new facilities is agreed at the outset so as to ensure that they contribute to the wider sport and physical activity aspirations of the Council and its partners. The approach taken to this is pivotal to strategy delivery over coming years.

ASSESSMENT REPORT CONCLUSIONS

The following section summarises the key findings of the Needs Assessment Report. These enable key conclusions to be drawn:

Population numbers are projected to rise steeply to 2028. Significant changes are, also expected in the age structure of the population within the Borough based on trends identified in ONS 2011 projections. There will be an increasingly older population (65+) and an increase in the 0-15 year old age groups. This last fact is likely to lead to changes in demand for all indoor sports facilities. Experience shows that older people tend to make more use of facilities during the day than during evening periods. Consideration will, therefore, need to be given to alternative programming and what motivates older people to take part in sport and physical activities.

Sports halls

There are 13 sports halls 3+ badminton courts in size in the borough. In line with Sport England's methodology these are accounted for as they are generally considered to be of greatest value – where they have sufficient height to allow games such as badminton to be played. Of these, 11 are situated on education/school sites. Sport England's FPM indicates adequate supply of sports halls.

The quality is variable, reflecting the age of some, although investment has occurred in school stock since 2010. They are, in the main, considered to be fit for purpose.

Cobham Hall School is the location of the largest indoor sports hall which has eight badminton courts. Cascades Leisure Centre had c. £1million invested in it in 2010, with the main hall reduced from six to three courts to accommodate a significant increase in the fitness offer.

Over the Strategy period investment will be required in the existing sports hall stock to ensure that it remains in good condition.

Approximately 78% of Gravesham residents live within a 20 walk time of the sports hall, suggesting good accessibility. Because most sports halls are located on school sites, community access is limited during the school day. Their availability is also dependent on the approach taken by each school to the provision of access for the community.

There is little evidence to suggest that many existing of the Borough's voluntary clubs have the potential to raise participation rates significantly in sports hall based activity. Consultation with NGBs indicates that Gravesham is not really on their radar in the context of the work they do to drive increases in participation. This may alter when the housing and population growth resulting from developments at Ebbsfleet Garden City, London Paramount and other areas occurs.

Current proposals at Ifield School and Guru Nanak for increased sports hall space, should they be successful, will lead to an increase in community accessible sports hall space with Guru Nanak best placed to offer additional opportunity during daytime hours when an increasingly elderly population is more likely to wish to use such facilities.

Based upon the variable approaches taken to sports hall management and differential levels of occupancy it is clear that access to schools' sports facilities should be underpinned and protected via specific community use agreements where possible. Consideration should also be given to joining up programmes of activity with key village halls/community centres, if increases in physical activity participation are to be achieved.

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Swimming pools

The Strategy covers swimming pools that are over 20 metres in length, in line with Sport England's methodology. The audit identified six pools on five sites, some were 'discounted' from subsequent modelling because of their size/accessibility. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) cites five pools on four sites (it omits Ifield School which is 20m long). It does, however, identify a shortfall in supply which is the equivalent of a six lane 25m pool.

The main venue is Cygnet Leisure Centre which has a 6 lane 25m pool plus a diving pool. It faces capacity issues when all sectors of the community compete for water space at peak demand times. Cascades; a leisure pool, does offer some swimming lessons and water classes, but is limited in the context of fitness swimming and/or club use. It also feels dated and 'tired' for 21st Century physical activity opportunity.

All Borough residents live within a 20 minute drive-time of a swimming pool although only half are located within 20 minutes' walk time.

Gravesend and Northfleet Swimming Club is keen to secure more training time at Cygnet Leisure Centre as its current occupancy at North Kent College (Body Matters) is in the process of being reduced. Cost is a key challenge for the Club (and it is also keen to gain access at times it considers to be more appropriate to the age groups with which it wishes to work).

Anticipated growth in the local population and the increased number and proportion of older and younger people is likely to raise the pressure on swimming provision. The limitations in respect of pool space are particularly noticeable in the north of Gravesend, mainly due to population density in that area. The fact that the proportion of local residents that is older will increase does not necessarily signal to a reduction in demand (as it may do in other sports) as many identify swimming as a key physical activity opportunity. In addition, there will still be demand from younger people via both the Learn to Swim programme and recreational activity.

Should the population increase in line with KCC housing based population forecasts the level of under-provision will rise by just over 2 lanes by 2028. It is, thus, likely that further investment in pool stock will be required over the Strategy period.

Health and fitness

There are five health and fitness suites with 20+ stations within Gravesham; all are available to the community thus providing a total of 259 stations. The largest is at Cascades Leisure Centre (140 stations plus studio space). The more densely populated areas of the borough are well catered for in terms of the number of venues and stations available, but people resident in the more rural areas of the borough must travel to gain access.

The two GBC health and fitness suites are rated as good, the offer at Cascades Leisure Centre was extended following investment made in 2010. There are three commercial health and fitness facilities, one at Meopham Tennis and Fitness Centre (rated below average due to its need to extend the facility) and two private gyms located in Gravesend.

Membership data from Cascades and Cygnet indicates membership at the two is very even. Neither appears to attract many members from areas of higher health deprivation and, given the relationship between inactivity and ill health, GBC and partners may wish to consider how people from these areas might be encouraged to take up (and make use of) membership options.

Cascades and Cygnet leisure centres show similar traits in respect of age and gender usage, in every age group (apart from 0-15s) where they have more female than male members. The best represented age group is those aged 30-44 years

Based upon standard 'UK market penetration rates' demand in the peak period would necessitate supply of 290 stations. This will grow to 350 stations by 2028, if penetration rates grow at 1% and 380 in 2033 if they grow to 14% (in line with expected demand). This suggests a shortfall of c. 120 stations. Demand is likely to be greater in the North of the Borough given the impending population growth. If Fleet leisure development is realised, this deficiency could be offset by up to 50 stations. The issue remains as to whether these facilities are or will become accessible to harder to reach groups; those which arguably have the most to gain from increased physical activity. It should be noted that it is not uncommon for private operators to extend into

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this market as it can be profitable.

Cycling

There is a specialist cycling facility within the borough, Cyclopark, located on the outskirts of Gravesend. It offers a range of cycling opportunities including a road cycling circuit, mountain bike trails, BMX floodlit race track, a skate park with ramps and obstacles as well as play areas, sports zone and two cycling country trails.

It has reportedly attracted over 300,000 visitors since its opening in 2012 and APS data indicates that cycling participation has increased significantly in Gravesham since then. Operated by a Trust, it has a funding and management agreement with KCC for the next 21 years.

Cyclopark draws its membership from across the country, although c.37% of its members reside within five miles of the facility. More men use the facility, in all age groups, than women.

Cyclopark is looking to develop its offer to include an open water facility which will lend itself to the development of triathlons, biathlons and open water swimming participation, events and competitions.

Indoor bowls

There is no indoor bowls facility within Gravesham. There are, however, 10 indoor facilities supplying 75 rinks within 20 minutes' drive time of Gravesham (according to Sport England's Active Places).

National, regional and local (county data) indicates that participation in bowls is declining steadily (although it did rise slightly in 2012/13). This is occurring despite the fact that the proportion of the population aged over 65 is rising. No consultees indicated unmet demand for carpet or short mat bowls although this cannot be ruled out in the future due to the projected increase in 65+ year olds in the Borough.

Squash courts

The assessment report identifies six squash courts at two sites in Gravesham; a further five are located within two miles of the local authority boundary, south of the River Thames. National figures indicate a steady decline in participation in squash although Sport England APS9 figures did signal a recent rise in overall participation levels.

The supply of courts available is sufficient to meet current levels of demand. Although England Squash is focused on rebuilding the popularity of squash, Gravesham is not considered to be a priority area for focused development in the South East. Further, there is likely to be increasing pressure on court space as it offers a level of flexibility and the space can be used for a range of exercise and fitness classes (which can be financially advantageous to leisure operators i.e. more bodies paying and utilising facilities).

Village halls and community centres

Village halls and community centres can be important recreational facilities, especially in rural areas that may lack access to purpose built sport facilities. The Needs Assessment report identifies 40 such facilities across the Borough. As local venues, they are generally built to service the needs of the immediate population and given that 83.5% of the population lives within 800m of such a facility, they offer the potential to link to strategic goals of increasing physical activity to more of the population. It may well be that the Council and stakeholders will wish to consider which of these facilities could be used to better effect to support processes designed to engage harder to reach groups.

Summary

GBC:

- ◀ Recognises the importance of the current leisure facility stock to the health and well-being of its residents
- ◀ Understands the requirement to take account of this in its planning to meet future needs.
- ◀ Appreciates the importance of working with partners to maintain and extend the facility base in the Authority.
- ◀ Appreciates the need to ensure coordinated programming within its own facilities to maximise levels of physical activity opportunity and increase levels of participation
- ◀ Recognises the need to work with and via GCLL to achieve this.

The situation is complex; a range of providers service the sporting and physical activity needs of the local population including private leisure operators and schools. Both via its relationship with GCLL and independently GBC has a good relationship with many of these.

With regard to specific facilities the Assessment Report confirms the following:

- ◀ The key indoor sports halls are to be found in the main population areas. The quality is variable but it is incumbent on GBC and partners (such as GCLL) to drive community access and encourage schools to plan strategically.
- ◀ The Borough offers a full range of swimming opportunity with learner, main, diving and leisure pools all available. The pool at Cygnet Leisure Centre is under significant pressure at peak times with different community groups vying for available space. The leisure water is busy at different times but is not as flexible. Both these venues are ageing.
- ◀ There is a range of health and fitness providers across the Borough; the main issues relates to whether facilities are accessible to/affordable for the whole community, given the importance of keeping people active.
- ◀ The Cyclopark is relatively new and participation levels in cycling in Gravesham have reportedly increased since its opening in 2012. The Trust operating this facility is keen to develop the site to include other sports such as triathlon.
- ◀ Squash is provided for within Gravesham and even if demand were to increase, the current supply of courts will suffice.
- ◀ There is no indoor bowls facility within Gravesham although there are 10 within 20 minutes' drive of the Authority boundary. Despite the changing population profile in Gravesham, there does not appear to be any residual demand for indoor facilities.
- ◀ There is a thriving gymnastics club in Gravesham (MEAPA) which currently has over 800 members.
- ◀ Planned population growth is expected to be significant, especially in the north of the Borough; as a result of developments at Ebbsfleet and London Paramount. This is likely to impact on the current sports and leisure facilities leading to demand for more.
- ◀ There are plans to develop a leisure facility at Fleet Leisure (which will include a health and fitness element – understood to be c.50 stations); a sports hall at Ifield School; and a new sports facility catering for indoor sports including basketball at Guru Nanak

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following key strategic priorities should be considered in delivering this strategy:

- ◀ Recognition that facilities are an important contributor to the quality of life in the Borough.
- ◀ The need to ensure that GBC owned facilities contribute to reducing health inequalities and are fully accessible to, and used by, people from harder to reach communities
- ◀ The need to retain the financial viability of Cascades and Cygnet leisure centres in the short to medium term - given likely increases in maintenance costs over coming years.
- ◀ In the context of the uncertain lifespan of Cygnet, in particular, and Cascades in general, consider the value of developing one larger sports facility or two smaller but different types of facilities which will accommodate indoor sports in Gravesham.
- ◀ To support other developments (via planning and officer expertise) which will underpin increased levels of sport and physical activity in the wider borough community. (These include the 4-court sports hall at Ifield School and the proposed open water facility at Cyclopark).
- ◀ GBC, via its Leisure Partnership, must continue to develop and maintain relationships with a range of leisure providers/partners which offer potential to make facilities more accessible to the community especially during the day (these include a range of schools).
- ◀ GCLL, on behalf of GBC, must continue to monitor usage of its own stock and where possible develop relationships with other partners to ensure that facilities remain genuinely available to (and attract take up from) all sections of the local community.
- ◀ The need to consider whether and how community centres/village and church halls can offer more in making sport and physical activity accessible to people living in the more rural parts of the community and among harder to reach groups.
- ◀ To improve the breadth, depth and quality of data collected (and shared) and the associated monitoring and analysis of facility usage to inform future marketing, promotion, programming and pricing.
- ◀ To ensure that any new school build (including primary schools) should consider how sports facilities can be made available (via access and management) for wider community use.

Planning

The results of the needs assessment and recommendations of the Strategy should be considered in the future Local Plan policy making review and infrastructure delivery plans. It is, therefore, important that GBC, as the local planning authority uses the findings of the needs assessment and strategy to inform development of any new appropriate planning policy setting out its approach to securing sport and recreational facilities via new housing and other development where appropriate.

It should also consider the potential role of supplementary planning documents in helping to provide and enhance such facilities and as guidance to form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to include provision and/or enhancement of appropriate indoor facilities.

STRATEGY VISION AND OBJECTIVES

“To work with partners to create high quality, sustainable leisure and sports facilities which meet community need, increase participation, help tackle health issues and provide accessible, inclusive activities for Gravesham residents as part of an active lifestyle.”

This builds upon the conclusions identified in the Assessment Report (January 2016). It provides a framework within which a clear, coherent way forward for the management and delivery of leisure and sports facilities in Gravesham can be identified. The primary focus is to enable residents to gain access to leisure facilities of which they can be proud. It is also vital to ensure that facilities support sport and physical activity programmes that lead to increases in regular participation, taking account of the projected changes in age profile of the population in the Borough up until 2028.

Strategic objectives

The above vision is based upon a clear, achievable framework of strategic objectives (not in any priority) and summarised in the boxes below. The three main themes of the strategy – to *protect, enhance and provide* reflect Gravesham’s priorities and also emanate from Sport England’s planning aim and objectives for sport. It is recommended that GBC and its partners adopt the following strategic objectives (as policy) to enable the above vision to be achieved:

Objective 1: Protect

Protect the current stock of facilities in order to meet the sport and physical activity needs of the local residents by introducing a hierarchy of use with defined roles and functions for different facility types which will be supported by appropriate investment.

Objective 2: Enhance

Enhance the borough-wide approach to programming and management at all sites with a view to improving sports development aspirations and increasing physical activity outcomes, based on identified strategic need

Objective 3: Provide

Provide a coherent range of good quality, accessible facilities reflecting the hierarchy and serving key current and future communities across Gravesham.

Facility hierarchy

GBC and partners will consider how to ensure that the network of leisure and sports facilities across the Borough works to maximum benefit and that, where possible, each facility performs a specific role and function in the drive to increase participation in sport and physical activity and contribute to wider community health and well-being.

As such there is a need to develop a sports facility hierarchy in Gravesham in which specific venues have distinct roles and functions; carry differing levels of community importance, operational weight and related staffing.

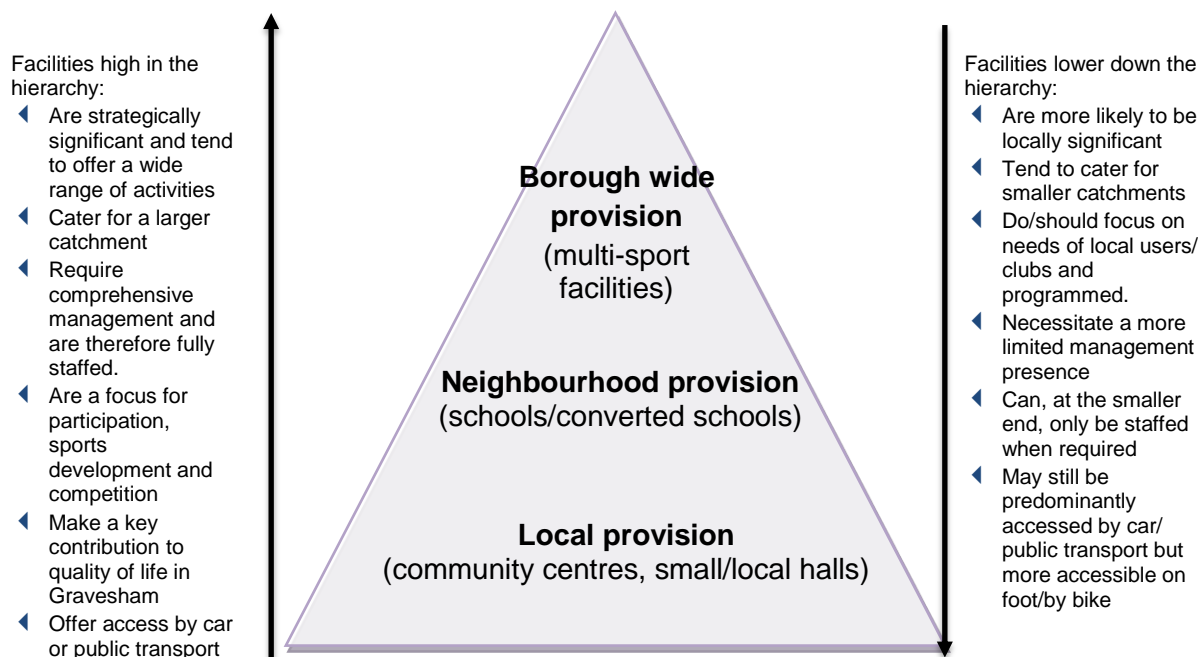
In parallel, it is important that facilities have a defined function from a user perspective. Hence borough wide and key community facilities deliver orchestrated physical activity geared to

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extended participation (hubs and spokes approach) and improving health whilst key neighbourhood facilities offer accredited clubs opportunities to develop their sports.

Broad principles are illustrated in the hierarchy diagram shown below, whilst key principles are as shown in the Table 1.

Figure 2 Facility hierarchy – core principles



It is worth noting that facilities identified in local provision are generally smaller than those identified within the scope of this commission. They are, however, often valuable assets for a specific local area or community offering either a range of recreation/participation opportunities or, in some instances, offering beginner to performance opportunities.

Proposed facility hierarchy – site designation and definition

Designation	Role and function
Key provision: borough or county significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A borough or sub-county area significant facility and the primary performance venue for a single or select number of priority sports. • Venue with the potential to host county, borough and local events and draw in people from surrounding rural areas. • Venue that provides a wide a range of opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in sport and physical activity, contributing significantly to the quality of life of borough residents. • A venue that provides and programmes opportunities for local people to try new activities, develop their skills and progress to a higher performance level. • A core venue for training and development of teachers, coaches, volunteers, officials and others in key sports organisations.

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Designation	Role and function
Dedicated provision: education or multi sports hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to quality of life of residents within the community, and provides a range of opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. • Generally a combination of stand-alone community facilities and dual use sports facilities on school sites. • Venues with potential to host borough or town-wide and local events. • Provides a base for provision of opportunity (delivered by a range of providers) for local people to develop their skills and try new activities. • Core venue for health and fitness activity in/across Gravesham. • Core venue to accommodate Gravesham's Learn to Swim and sports instruction programmes (where a pool is available). • Provides options for a range of sports organisations to develop skills, participate and compete within their chosen activity. • Supports the voluntary sector to raise standards with respect to coaching, coach education, administration and volunteer development in chosen sport. • Use reflects demographic profile of the local community and draws in people from the more immediately adjacent rural areas. • Improves quality of PE and school sport opportunity for young people attending the school upon whose site it is based.
Local provision Community centres and village halls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where this is within the vicinity of a 'community sports facility' it should seek to complement the programming and opportunities offered to the locality. • Tend to be stand-alone small informal/sports facilities which operate independently and are found in villages or distinct urban community settings. • Contributes to quality of life of the locality, accommodating a small range of opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. • Provides opportunity – often for just for one or two dedicated sports organisations to participate, train and compete (e.g. boxing, martial arts). • Programming can be set out, or have evolved to, appeal to a specific demographic e.g. older people or community groups.

Facility development

The following section identifies major investment requirements over the life of this Strategy. It describes what is needed in order to 'protect', 'enhance' and 'provide' sport and leisure facilities for the residents of Gravesham and enable the Council to meet its wider objectives. It first considers Cygnet and Cascades leisure centres as key facilities in the borough. It also considers potential options/scenarios to consider when these facilities come to the end of their useful life.

Cygnet Leisure Centre: is the main swimming facility in the borough. It faces capacity issues at peak demand times. It offers a relatively modern 86 station fitness suite which competes effectively with local private sector competition. The optimum number of stations on site (from an income generation/ membership perspective) would reportedly be 120 (this is borne out by the market penetration assessment). The sports hall hosts a range of sports and programme time is allocated equally to block bookings and pay and play activity.

The building fabric has not had significant investment since 1990. The façade is dated, the roof leaks and pipework is corroding (the estimated cost of rectifying just the pipework is, as reported by GCLL, is between £1-1.5million). Its situation is further complicated by the fact that

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its infrastructure is linked to that of Northfleet Sports and Youth Centre; there are no management, programming or pricing linkages or arrangement between the two.

Cascades Leisure Centre: provides the leisure water offer in Gravesham plus a significant health and fitness facility. Built in 1988 and refurbished in 2003, it benefitted from significant investment in 2010, when fitness suite was increased in size to 120 stations. Various parts of the building look tired and outdated. While the health and fitness offer is above average the building as a whole will require significant investment to bring it up to modern standards.

The FPM and KKP's assessment report indicates a current shortfall of the equivalent of a six lane 25m swimming pool (or the equivalent thereof) with no particular shortfall for sports halls. Sports hall demand is modelled to grow by a two courts and the pool requirement by an additional two lanes up until 2028.

The potential population growth (particularly in the North West of the authority) will potentially lead to increased demand for facilities which will exacerbate current undersupply of especially in swimming provision but also in sports halls, due to the lack of opportunity provided on education sites. Options available to the Borough include (not in any order of priority):

Option 1: Maintain the status quo

Continue to maintain both sites, with GCLL managing facilities on behalf of the Council. Maintenance costs are, however, likely to increase significantly over the next 5-10 years as the building fabric deteriorates further. It is unlikely that Cascades and Cygnet leisure centres will be able to accommodate significant increases in physical activity from the projected new population. Thus, while costs are likely to increase it may not be feasible to accommodate a parallel increase in the number of paying customers. Contingency plans will be required for Cygnet, in particular, due to the parlous state of the pool pipework.

Option 2: Commission a feasibility study and master-plan for a new single flagship leisure facility for Gravesham to replace both Cascades and the Cygnet leisure centres.

This should, at minimum (and reflecting assessed current provision shortfalls) incorporate swimming pool(s), sports hall, health and fitness and related studios (see suggested specification elements below). It should also take account of:

- ◀ Growing and anticipated new populations in the Authority and changing usage trends.
- ◀ The need for service that is more proactively geared to (and accountable for) attracting/retaining members and participants from Gravesham's deprived local areas.
- ◀ The need to substantially reduce net service subsidy levels.
- ◀ A need for substantially improved quality, scale and capacity of swimming opportunity.
- ◀ The need to be environmentally friendly to operate.
- ◀ Possible options to develop the venue in partnership with other agencies.
- ◀ Venue locations that will best service the whole Gravesham population bearing in mind the population density shift to the north west of the Borough will engender.

The suggested core specification for consideration, based upon the needs analysis and related consultation up to 2028 includes the following:

- ◀ 8 lane, 25m swimming pool.
- ◀ Large teaching pool.

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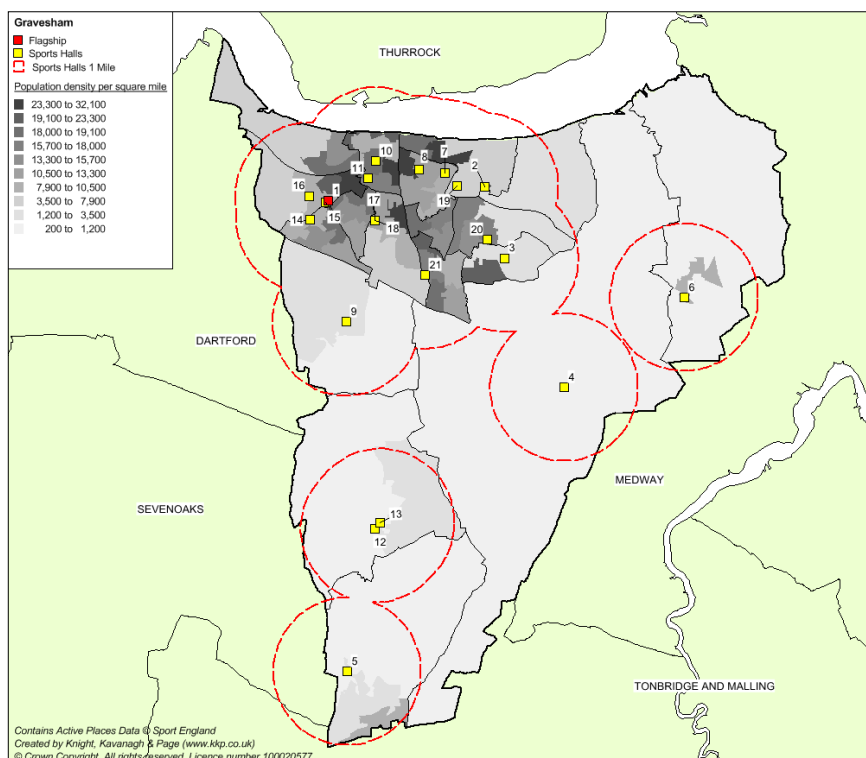
- ◀ Minimum 4 court sports hall. Pending the success or otherwise of both efforts to improve levels of consistent access to school sites across the Authority and the development of the proposed sports halls (with the requisite guaranteed community access) at Ifield School and the Guru Nanak Centre, this could be larger.
- ◀ (Say) 200 station gym
- ◀ Substantial and flexible studios/community rooms to accommodate classes, spinning, combat sports, yoga, children's parties etc.
- ◀ The requisite wet and dry changing accommodation plus, potentially, specifically provided separate fitness change.

The study might also consider, for example:

- ◀ The option to develop (say) a 20m x 12m teaching pool with moveable floor; geared to accommodation of a full and comprehensive lesson programme.
- ◀ The feasibility of retaining some level of diving provision (based upon installing a teaching pool with a moveable floor enabling provision of the deeper water needed).
- ◀ The option to extend the main pool to 10 lanes x 27m with moveable booms enabling substantially greater programming flexibility.

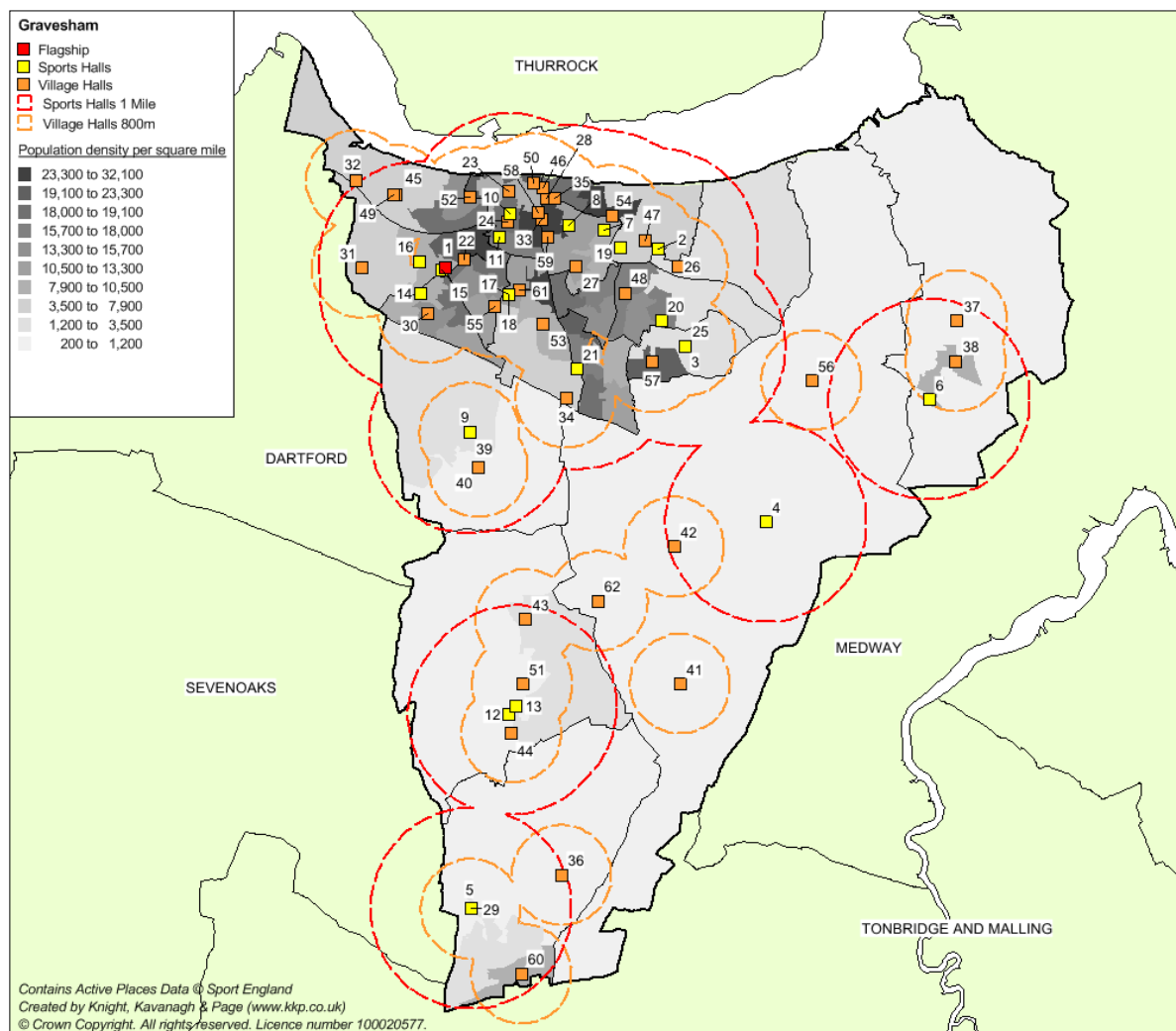
Figure 3 indicates an example of sports hall and swimming distribution for Key and Dedicated Provision (sports halls and swimming pools only). Figure 4 takes account of all provision including Local Provision. For the purposes of pictorial representation we have also indicated radial catchments of 1 mile for Dedicated Provision and 800m for Local Provision. The Flagship facility is expected to draw in users from over 20 minute drive time catchment which includes all of Gravesham residents and beyond.

Figure 3: Key and Dedicated Provision



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Figure 4: Key, Dedicated and Local provision



Key: Flagship (if a venue has more than one facility (hall) then it is listed more than once (e.g. Mayfield Grammar has two, one court halls),

Map Ref	Flagship	Courts
1	Cygnets Leisure Centre	4
Map Ref	Sport halls	Courts
2	Body Matters Sport & Fitness Centre (Gravesend Campus)	4
3	Cascades Leisure Centre	3
4	Cobham Hall School	8
5	Culverstone Community Centre	1
6	Gads Hill School	4
7	Gravesend Grammar School	4
8	Guru Nanak Football Club	2
9	Istead Rise Community Centre	2

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Map Ref	Flagship	Courts
10	Mayfield Grammar School - Gravesend	1
11	Mayfield Grammar School - Gravesend	1
12	Meopham Fitness And Tennis Centre	4
13	Meopham School	1
14	Northfleet School For Girls	4
15	Northfleet Sports & Youth Centre	4
16	Northfleet Technology College	4
17	Saint Georges Church Of England School	4
18	Saint Georges Church Of England School	1
19	St Johns Catholic Comprehensive School	4
20	Thamesview School	4
21	The Ifield School	1
Map Ref	Village halls	Town
22	All Saints Parish Centre	Northfleet
23	Asda Community Room	Gravesend
24	British Red Cross Hall	Gravesend
25	Cascades	Gravesend
26	Chalk Parish Hall	Gravesend
27	Christ Church Hall	Gravesend
28	Conservative Club	Gravesend
29	Culverstone Community Centre	Culverstone Green
30	Dene Holm Church Hall	Northfleet
31	Eastgate Centre	Northfleet
32	Ebbsfleet Rainbow Centre	Northfleet
33	Emmanuel Baptist Church	Gravesend
34	Gerald Miskin Memorial Hall	Gravesend
35	Gravesend Methodist Church Hall	Gravesend
36	Harvel Village Hall	Harvel
37	Higham Memorial Hall	Higham
38	Higham Village Club	Higham
39	Istead Rise Community Centre	Istead Rise
40	Istead Rise Memorial Hall	Istead Rise
41	Luddesdown Village Hall	Luddesdown
42	The Meadow Room	Cobham
43	Meopham Scout Hall	Meopham
44	Meopham Village Hall	Meopham
45	Northfleet Veterans Club	Northfleet
46	Old Town Hall	Gravesend
47	Riverside Community Centre	Gravesend
48	St Aidan's Church Hall	Gravesend
49	St Botolph's Church Hall	Northfleet
50	St George's Church Hall	Gravesend
51	St John's Church Hall	Meopham
52	St Mark's Church Hall	Northfleet
53	St Paul's United Reform Church Hall	Gravesend
54	St Peter and St Pauls Church Hall	Gravesend

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Map Ref	Flagship	Courts
55	Shears Green Community Centre	Northfleet
56	Shorne Village Hall	Shorne
57	The Christopher Centre	Gravesend
58	Woodville Halls Kent Room	Gravesend
59	Veterans Club	Gravesend
60	Vigo Village Hall	Vigo
61	St Mary's Church Hall	Gravesend
62	St Mary's Church Room	Cobham

Enhancing facility management and operation

In delivering the above GBC needs to consider how it will work with partners to:

- ◀ Ensure that the current stock of facilities (which has a proven need), remains open and accessible to the general public.
- ◀ Work through GCLL, as the key leisure operator in the Borough, to develop a process that brings together as many operators of local sports facilities as possible.
- ◀ Where possible support developments at Cyclopark to help increase participation locally and draw in activity from a wider area (thereby supporting inward investment).
- ◀ Develop an agreed approach and a Gravesham definition of community use to which all partners sign up and agree to implement, with a view to recognising the importance of making well organised collectively programmed community use the norm in sports halls across the Authority and, for example, attracting people from older age groups into facilities.

In delivering this GBC and partners will need to consider the following:

- ◀ How GCLL and partners might engineer an holistic approach to strategic programming across sites, including smaller but strategically placed community/village halls in order to increase and improve provision.
- ◀ How (reflecting the community use standard cited above) relationships are developed and maintained with schools across the Borough, seeking to 'even out' the range of presently disparate management arrangements currently in place.
- ◀ How to ensure that price is progressively tackled as a barrier to participation; especially for young people, older people and economically challenged residents.
- ◀ How developments in Ebbsfleet and London Paramount can complement current and projected future demand for sport and physical activity.
- ◀ How GBC can influence and support developments such as at Guru Nanak and Ifield School to ensure, at minimum, community access to any facilities/community space provided.

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ACTION PLAN

The following actions are relative to the overall management and programming of key facilities in Gravesham. All actions identified below should take account of accessibility issues (hearing, visual and wheelchair access).

Strategic function/aim	Challenges	Recommended actions	Facilities	Time-scale	Partners	Importance
Borough wide programming Provide	Ensure holistic approach to programming across all facilities leading to improved access for all sections of the community.	Consider current programming across the Borough Define the role of each facility within the wider community use offer across Gravesham. Develop a site by site action plan for improving programming across the Borough	All	Short	Schools & community centres	High
Community use agreements Provide	Increasing the availability of the current stock of sports halls to more sections of the community.	Working through GCLL, identify available time (especially during the day) to extend community use. Consider this on a site by site basis with a view to increasing opportunities for the ageing population.	All sites	Short	Schools	High
Sports halls Provide	Improving access to facilities during the day time given the current reliance on educational facilities for indoor activity	On a site by site basis consider different solutions to extending day time access, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Key holder access to specific sports groups ◀ Designing in good access to new facilities ◀ Working with schools to accommodate community based organisations 	Level 2 facilities	Short	Schools	Medium
Incorporating Level 3 facilities into the broader activity portfolio Provide	Develop an improved understanding of the importance of Level 3 facilities with regard to the physical activity offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Identify a project coordinator to lead on this element of work (partner agency) ◀ Review Level 3 facilities to see which are able to increase physical activity. ◀ Consider how they fit into the wider programming offer. ◀ Identify improvements to Level 3 facilities (ensuring that they are fit for purpose). 	Level 3 facilities	Medium	Parish councils Community groups Private facilities	Medium
Planning Protect, Enhance,	To recognise the importance of this study and ensure recommendations are acted	◀ GBC to adopt the recommendations in this Study and ensure that they are encapsulated in planning policy documents (Local Plans) and other relevant GBC strategies		Short	Planning & Leisure Team	High

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Strategic function/aim	Challenges	Recommended actions	Facilities	Time-scale	Partners	Importance
Provide	upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop priorities to assist GBC to identify developments that could be funded through CIL and other sources of funding, informing the regulation 123 List and identification of infrastructure requirements within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. . 				
Monitor and review	Keeping the Facilities Strategy relevant and up to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a light touch review of the study annually; Undertake a complete review within 5 years of its implementation. 		Medium	GBC	High

The following actions relative to each of the Borough's key facilities is identified below:

Facility	Management	Challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)	Objective
Cygnets Leisure Centre	Trust	Potential incurrence of increased maintenance cost for pools as they age. Investment in the swimming pool and changing facilities required to bring it up to a higher standard fit for 21 st Century use. Consideration of how this facility fits into wider community programming and talent development across the Borough.	Continued investment in current facilities to maintain them to the best standard possible. Commission feasibility to consider what the best facility mix and preferred location (s) is/are for facilities in Gravesham. Balance strategic borough role against needs of local and projected new residents by coherent, pragmatic programming/pricing.	GBC with GCLL	Medium	High	Enhance Provide
		Ensuring needs of different market segments (especially the hard to reach) are met given the high demand for wet and dry facilities.	Regular analysis of membership data to identify who is gaining access to which facilities. Consideration of incentives to get the least active, more active	GCLL	Short	High	Provide
Cascades Leisure Centre (Key provision)	Trust	Potential incurrence of increased maintenance cost for the facility, in general, as it ages. How this facility fits into wider programming and talent development across the Borough	Ensure all sports (including minority sports) are considered as part of the programming mix.	GCLL	Short	High	Enhance

GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL INDOOR SPORT FACILITIES STRATEGY

Facility	Management	Challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)	Objective
Cyclopark (Dedicated provision)	Trust	Opened in 2012, it is still establishing itself on the local and national scene. Management is keen to build on its relatively successful start and has plans to develop an open water facility on site. If successful, this will be unusual offering the only closed triathlon circuit in the country. The main challenge is in attracting funding and in ensuring that plans are financially viable (for a relatively small Trust) moving forward	GBC to, where possible, to support developments via the planning function and leisure expertise, as Cyclopark looks to establish itself both locally and within the regional and national context.	Cyclopark Trust	Medium	Medium	Enhance
Meopham Fitness and Tennis Centre (Dedicated provision)	Commercial	Operated by Serco on behalf of a local sports trust, it offers significant community access, although it is used extensively (but not exclusively by the School) during the day. It has a small, cramped health and fitness offer with management looking to invest. A key challenge will occur if the School is redeveloped (which is reportedly overdue). The proposed sports hall may impact negatively on its financial sustainability.	Define the role of the facility within the wider community use offer in Gravesham. Work with a range of partners including Meopham School, GBC and Sport England to develop a solution.	Serco and local Trust	Medium	Medium	Provide and Protect
Cobham Hall	Trust	Built in 1989, this facility was unable to be assessed. It does offer limited use of its facilities to community associations. The key challenge is to engage with the school and determine whether the facilities can contribute to the wider sports development programme across the Borough.	GCLL to develop communication with the School and explore its potential to contribute to the strategic drive to maintain and increase sport/physical activity. In particular, to get it to offer a minimum level of community use and/or possible keyholder access for sports specific groups as part of a coordinated sports development offer in the Borough.	GCLL	Medium	Medium	Provide
North Kent College (Body Matters) (Dedicated provision)	Education	Built in 1996 and refurbished in 2010, this site was not assessed because no access was granted. The main challenge which needs to be addressed is how (and if) this site can contribute to the wider sports development programme for the Borough for both swimming and sports hall sports.	Define the role of the facility within the wider community use offer in Gravesham. Consider who will engage with the College in order to determine how it could contribute more positively to the sports and physical activity agenda from a strategic viewpoint.	GBC	Medium	Medium	Provide

GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL INDOOR SPORT FACILITIES STRATEGY

Facility	Management	Challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)	Objective
Gads Hill School (Dedicated provision)	Education	This School offers no community use in its sports hall, despite being assessed as good quality. The key challenge is therefore to engage with it to identify how it might contribute to a wider sports development offer across the Borough, especially as it has expressed interest in developing community use.	GCLL to engage with the School raise awareness of its potential role in catering for sport/ physical activity. In particular, to consider offering a minimum level of community use and/or whether key holder access might be offered to sport-specific groups as part of the proposed coordinated sports development offer across the Borough.	GCLL and School	Medium	Medium	Provide
Gravesend Grammar School (Dedicated provision)	Education	Built in 1947 and refurbished in 2009, it is of above average standard and offers 20+ hours community use per week. The main challenge is to increase this level; It has aspirations to improve the quality of outdoor facilities including the quality of its cricket pitch, building an IRB compliant rugby AGP and improving the current sand AGP. It hopes to sell off some land to developers in order to finance this.	Explore how School can become better aware (and part of) the strategic drive to increase sport/physical activity. Define role of the facility within the wider community use offer in Gravesham and consider its aspiration to develop as a sports hub.	GBC and School	Short	Medium	Provide
Northfleet School for Girls (Dedicated provision)	Education	Built in 2009, this sports hall has been assessed as good and offers over 20 hours a week for community use. Ensuring that facility programming at the school is part of a coordinated approach to sport development across the Borough.	Define the role of the facility within the wider community use offer across Gravesham. Establish closer links with the School and help coordinate what it delivers within the context of the wider sporting offer made across the Borough	GCLL School	Short	Medium	Provide
Northfleet Sport and Youth Centre (Dedicated provision)	Kent County Council	Built in 1973, refurbished in 2005 it is of below average standard. It offers access to a clearly defined section of the population but does not coordinate programming or pricing with Cygnet LC despite proximity and shared infrastructure. The challenge is coordinating programming within a Borough approach and gauging KCC's view on its longevity given pressures on County finances..	Develop links with the youth and community service to understand the sport and physical activity offer and link it in to the wider sport and physical activity offer across Gravesham.	GBC and GCLL	Medium	Medium	Protect and Provide

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Facility	Management	Challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)	Objective
Northfleet Technology College (Dedicated provision)	Education	Built in 2011, the sports hall is considered to be good quality and offers over 20 hours of community use, which encompasses a range of sports. The main challenge is to understand how this sports offer fits into the wider sports development offer across Gravesham.	Improve communication with the College to better understand how the sporting offer links (or could do) with the wider sports development offer across Gravesham.	GCLL	Medium	Low	Provide
St George's CofE School (Dedicated provision)	Education	Built in 1978, it is used by community associations and appears to contribute to the wider sport development offer. The main challenge is to identify how it contributes and how to improve the offer.	Define role of the facility within the wider Borough community use offer. Engage with School to explore how it might extend its community use offer more effectively.	GCLL	Short	Medium	Protect and Provide
St Johns Catholic Comprehensive School (Dedicated provision)	Private	Built in 2011 this sports hall is in good condition and offers 20+ hours of community use each week. It is one of the few facilities that offers indoor football as an activity. The key challenge is to identify how it contributes to the wider sports development programme across Gravesham and consider whether this can be extended.	Define the role of the facility within the wider community use offer across Gravesham. Engage with it to explore how it might offer community use at no added cost to the school budget.	GCLL	Medium	Medium	Protect and Enhance
Thamesview School (Dedicated provision)	School	Built in 2010 it is in good condition and offers 20+ hours of community use per week. It also offers indoor football. The key challenge is to identify how it contributes to the sports development programme across Gravesham and how this can be extended.	Define the role of the facility within the wider community use offer across Gravesham. Engage with it to explore how it might offer community use at no added cost to the school budget	GCLL	Medium	Medium	Protect and Enhance
Smaller community facilities (Local provision)	Various	The quality and availability of community facilities is variable. The spread throughout the Borough should enable physical activity to be made accessible to those living in rural areas if programming of them is commensurate with the wider principles of this strategy. Communication with management at some of these varies but they can (and do) offer complementary programmes of activity.	A commitment to understanding the sporting offer at these sites needs to be agreed. This should link to integrating/supporting community use of these into the wider Gravesham network. The potential to start with sites already hosting activity is recommended.	GBC, Health and Wellbeing Board	Short	Medium	Provide

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Sport specific recommendations

Sport	Challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale	Objective
Badminton	There is limited badminton activity in the Borough. There is a need for leadership of local badminton development in the Borough and more effective liaison with Badminton England; plus the concurrent raising of the local profile of the sport.	Identify a local volunteer lead with the drive and desire to increase participation in badminton across the Borough. Liaise with schools to improve badminton access and consider alternative sports hall access methods e.g. keyholder access. Consider which venues are best prepared to deliver 'Smash Up' and other badminton programmes.	GCLL/Kent Sport/ Schools	Medium	Provide and Enhance
Basketball	Gravesham is a current focus area for the NGB, with a planning application in place for a new indoor sports facility specifically designed to incorporate two basketball courts.	GBC to support the Planning Application for Guru Nanak to move forward with its plans to develop a basketball centre In Gravesend, on the understanding that it is available for wider community access.	Guru Nanak/GBC/ GCLL	Short	Provide
Cycling	Since Cyclopark opened in 2012 participation in cycling has increased in Gravesham. Operated by a small trust reliant upon volunteers, it will be necessary to support Cyclopark as it establishes itself as a viable business. A key challenge is future management and ongoing maintenance costs.	Kent Sport /GBC/British Cycling to maintain communication with Cyclopark to offer advice and resources to help expand the programme and link to wider cycling initiatives. Support Cyclopark managers to investigate the feasibility of developing an open water facility with a view to developing an off road triathlon venue (potentially the first of its kind in England).	Cyclopark/ GBC/British Cycling	Medium	Provide
Gymnastics	There are two key gymnastics clubs in Gravesham MEAPA and Istead Rise. MEAPA has a dedicated facility and 800 members with a waiting list of over 300. Istead Rise is a smaller club based in a non-dedicated facility (c.80 members). The key issue is that neither is presently able to increase capacity; this is stymying increases in participation.	GBC in partnership with British Gymnastics should look favourably and offer appropriate support and expertise to support MEAPA's aspiration to expand. It has achieved planning permission to extend its current facility to allow growth and is currently looking at fundraising options to finance its plans.	British Gymnastics/ local gymnastics clubs and GCLL	Medium	Enhance and Provide
Indoor cricket	Key challenges facing indoor cricket are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Demand exceeds available supply for both adult and junior cricket. ◀ Access to indoor facilities is vital as it allows for the development of cricketers all year round and prevents loss of interest. It also limits the extent to which children and young people have to re learn game skills from one year to the next. ◀ Neither Gravesham nor Dartford can host the 	Local clubs and the local Cricket Academy need to work together to formulate a plan which could extend indoor use and ensure that girls are encouraged into the programme. This should be undertaken within the context of a wider sports development programme for the Borough	Gravesham indoor cricket Academy	Medium	Enhance

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Sport	Challenges	Recommended actions	Lead agency	Timescale	Objective
	Kent indoor cricket competition due to the lack of suitable facilities, in the form of a viewing area in a sports hall, which is especially important to both scorers and spectators.				
Swimming/ other aquatic sports	Ensuring that the needs of different clubs and the community are satisfied via effective programming and pricing at both local authority pools.	Maintain dialogue between GCLL, ASA, different user groups and clubs to ensure that users' needs are considered in the context of the wider swimming programme. Ensure that the ASA and local clubs are fully consulted as part of any feasibility study commissioned.	GCLL, ASA and local groups	Medium	Provide