

**COMHAIRLE CONTAE FHINE GALL
FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY, SPORTS AND CULTURE STRATEGIC POLICY
COMMITTEE**

THURSDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2025

ITEM NO 06

Motion: Councillor J. Humphreys - Replacement and Upgrade of Sports Facility Audit

“That this Committee recommends to the full Council that the Chief Executive begin the process of replacing the current Sports Facilities Audit, the new audit should take a broader view covering not just outdoor pitches, but also swimming facilities, indoor sports, and wider community recreational infrastructure, this work should be completed in advance of the next County Development Plan, so that zoning, land use and investment decisions are based on a proper evidence base that reflects where the council is at now, and where it is going, the updated audit should:

- 1) Move away from UK-based benchmarks like Fields in Trust, which are not part of WHO or EU planning frameworks and don't reflect modern thinking around inclusion, accessibility or long-term public need;
- 2) Look to European planning models, where infrastructure is planned over 25–50 years, and access is what's measured;
- 3) Include real indicators of pressure, such as waiting lists, club oversubscription, changing demographics, and access gaps for particular age groups or communities;
- 4) Recognise public access to swimming and indoor sport are essential
- 5) Support the planning of integrated, multi-use community spaces, as set out in Fingal's Culture & Creativity Strategy and Active Together plan
- 6) Identify and protect sites for future facilities, particularly in highgrowth areas where infrastructure is already struggling to keep pace.”

Report:

The Sports Audit was undertaken by KPMG on behalf of the council. The draft audit was presented to the members in May and the consultant is currently dealing with a number of queries raised. The final report will be presented to Area Committees later this year.

1) Move away from UK-based benchmarks like Fields in Trust, which are not part of WHO or EU planning frameworks and don't reflect modern thinking around inclusion, accessibility or long-term public need;

The Fields in Trust method has been identified as a well-established and well-regarded measurement for open space provision, including active recreation provision, going back several decades by the Fingal Sports Department/Parks & Green Infrastructure Division. This methodology employs a sport-agnostic methodology for identifying an appropriate benchmark that is applicable to pitch-based sports, allowing for benchmarking recommendations across a wider pitch sports category. The level of provision outlined in this model is in alignment with the adopted provisions of the County Development Plan.

2) Look to European planning models, where infrastructure is planned over 25–50 years, and access is what's measured;

As part of the audit, sports facility demand models were reviewed from the UK, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Growth patterns were assessed to 2029, the end year of the current Fingal County Development Plan.

3) Include real indicators of pressure, such as waiting lists, club oversubscription, changing demographics, and access gaps for particular age groups or communities;

The audit assesses changing demographics, including concentrations of younger and older people, as well as areas of high historic and anticipated population growth, using these as indicators of heightened pressure on facilities. Levels of club subscription and waiting lists were highlighted by respondents to the public consultation survey conducted as part of the audit along with stakeholder meetings with Fingal's co-funded officers.

4) Recognise public access to swimming and indoor sport are essential

Distinctions between different types of swimming pool and indoor facility (including those requiring paid access or membership fees) were made in the individual settlement profiles and LEA-scale summaries. On a county scale, access was measured on the basis of distance and demand, noting that localised access could vary based on type of facility.

5) Support the planning of integrated, multi-use community spaces, as set out in Fingal's Culture & Creativity Strategy and Active Together plan

The audit highlighted the particular benefits of community centres. Feedback was received on community centres as part of the public consultation, identifying these facilities as particularly valuable due to their multi-functional nature, including their particular value to young people and teenagers. Given the unique importance of community centres, their connection to FCC through the Fingal Community Facilities Network and the wide range of uses they offer, a recommendation was made that a more detailed examination be undertaken as part of a community facilities audit in order to give them the appropriate level of attention.

6) Identify and protect sites for future facilities, particularly in high-growth areas where infrastructure is already struggling to keep pace.

The audit placed special attention on high growth areas, identifying where heightened demand could be anticipated to be placed on local facilities and where further support could be required. Locations such as St Catherine's Park were identified as suitable sites for future facility development and have been identified by Parks & Green Infrastructure Division.

Source of Report:

David Storey, Director of Services for Environment, Climate Action, Active Travel and Sport Department