

Committee(s): Communications & Corporate Affairs Sub Committee Policy & Resources Committee	Dated: 10/12/2025 11/12/2025
Subject: The Square Mile Sport Strategy (2023-30) – Update and Phase 2 Delivery	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes 	Vibrant Thriving Destination, Diverse Engaged Communities, Dynamic Economic Growth, Providing Excellent Services & Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Yes
If so, how much?	£250,000
What is the source of Funding?	Transformation Funding
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Paul Wright, Remembrancer
Report author:	Sam Hutchings, Head of Sport Strategy and Engagement

Summary

This report sets out the progress that has been made in delivering the City Corporation's Sport Strategy – A Global City of Sport. Outlining the vision and the five priorities agreed under the strategy, this report provides details on the various events and initiatives that have been achieved so far. Also, looking to the future, a summary of key work streams has been identified for each of the five sport strategy priorities. The report also provides details of the current governance arrangements and remit of the sport strategy, providing an opportunity for Members to consider if any changes should be made to this. The funding and resource proposals for delivering the remainder of the sport strategy over the next four years are also outlined. Members are asked to note funding is agreed from the Transformation Fund to cover the costs of delivering the first year (i.e. 2026/27) of the next phase of the Sport Strategy.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- (i) Note the progress in taking forward the priorities of the Sport Strategy (see para 4)
- (ii) Endorse the outline for delivering Phase 2 of the Strategy (see para 5).

- (iii) Agree to continue with the current governance arrangements for delivering the Sport Strategy, but that additionally in future the Sport Sounding Board be consulted on all corporate-wide sport events and initiatives that have a strategic significance (see para 6).
- (iv) Note that £250,000 has been allocated from the Transformation Fund towards costs of delivering the sport strategy during 2026/27 on the basis that a clear income generating business case will be developed to cover funding beyond this period.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2023, Members agreed to [A Global City of Sport: A Sport Strategy for the Square Mile \(2023-30\)](#) which sets out a vision and five sport themes / priorities for the City Corporation over the next seven years. The Vision is to make the City of London a leading global city of sport, through valued and exceptional sport facilities, events and engagement. The five priorities are:
 - INVEST in sport facilities
 - ACTIVATE our streets / spaces
 - CELEBRATE the impact of sport
 - ATTRACT more high-quality sport events
 - SUPPORT community sport
2. The delivery of the strategy is monitored by the Sport Sounding Board which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Lead Member for Sport. As well as chairing these meetings, the Lead Member supports the City's engagement on sport and has helped oversee an ambitious sport facility and event programme. The Head of Sport, along with the Sport Strategy Officer and the Community Sport Officer, make up the Sport Team which works with departments across the organisation to deliver on the five priorities. At each meeting of the Sounding Board Members receive a report on progress on delivering the priorities and hear proposals on new initiatives that align with these aspirations.

Phase 1: Delivery Success (2023-26)

3. Owing to resource constraints when approving the new strategy, Members agreed that it should be delivered in two phases. The first phase would allow the strategy to get up-and-running through seed funding from the Policy Initiatives Fund. During this period, additional staff (the Sport Strategy Officer and the Community Sport Officer) were appointed to take forward the five priorities and plans for moving to the next 'delivery' phase would be put in place.
4. Progress on delivering the five priorities is set out below:
 - i) **INVEST in facilities** – ensuring they are fit-for-purpose, commercially viable and meet stakeholder needs.
 - Current Facilities – following the approval of the Sport Strategy in 2023, Members agreed to allocate £10m from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to cover the costs of refurbishing Golden Lane Leisure Centre. Work is due to begin at the end of 2026, and it is envisaged that the site will reopen

to the public in summer 2027. The procurement of a new operator is underway as the current contract is due to expire at the same time as the Centre's closure next year.

- New Site Options – we continue to work with colleagues to ensure sport and fitness is considered as an integral part of appropriate new developments. This is reflected in the City Plan 2040. A recently identified site in the east of the City, where demand for facilities is greatest, includes proposals for a large community space dedicated to sport and wellbeing. We are supporting colleagues in developing the case to evidence and justify this need. This could offer an exciting opportunity for the City Corporation to provide unique and attractive sport facilities in a purpose-built space within a new development, whilst also potentially offering affordable workspace for international and domestic sports organisations.

ii) **ACTIVATE spaces** - encouraging accessible sport and physical activity that is free to use and open to all:

- Outdoor Facilities – plans to introduce an outdoor gym at Old Waterman's Walk are progressing, having passed through the Gateways 1 and 2 process. We are now awaiting confirmation of the budget to move forward with the next stages, including site appraisal, securing approvals for work on the City Walkway, and submitting our recommended supplier to procurement. Due to delays with approvals, implementation is now anticipated in early 2026.
- Urban Sports – architects have been appointed to undertake an updated feasibility study for Blackfriars Undercroft which includes options for a skatepark and other sport uses. We have engaged a specialist skateboard contractor to support this work and they have provided a range of options for consideration. A way forward for this public space will be determined in the new year.
- Pop-up Activations – the Sport Team is currently looking into some options around the introduction of temporary sport facilities across the Square Mile which could be installed in publicly accessible spaces, such as Padel courts and an ice-skating rink. We are actively engaging with operators and colleagues from across the organisation to understand the operational constraints and financial potential of these as an effective income source for the wider strategy.

iii) **CELEBRATE impact** – continuing to deliver a focused sport engagement programme that brings long term benefits to our stakeholders.

- Sport Diplomacy – the Head of Sport has joined a cross-Government and industry working group that seeks to maximise UK diplomatic and trade outcomes through sport. As part of this, we worked with partners including UK Sport, UK Government and the Greater London Authority to organise successful business visits to Paris for the Olympic & Paralympic Games in 2024.
- Major Sport Events – the City Corporation recently hosted World Rugby for a series of high-profile events at Guildhall, including a community rugby activation alongside its General Assembly. These events took place at a

time when England was hosting the Women's Rugby World Cup and provided a great opportunity to strengthen the City of London's position as a trusted partner for major sporting organisations.

- **Sport & Business** – we continue to create opportunities for sport and business to connect and discuss shared challenges and opportunities. Recent examples include hosting the Global Sport Agora for the fourth time at Guildhall as well as an event co-hosted with the Office for Investment, which brought together key stakeholders to explore UK and Australian sport investment.
- **Grassroots Sport** – the City Corporation continues to support grassroots sport by providing space for events and networking in the Square Mile. A number of events celebrating grassroots sports have taken place in Guildhall over the last few months, including the London Sport Awards, the London FA Awards and the London Youth Games Workforce Celebrations.
- **Celebrating Success** – a number of sport-related freedom ceremonies have taken place recently in support of our sport engagement objectives, including those awarded to Barry Hearn (boxing), Michael Watson (boxing), and Daniel Levy (football). We are also exploring the possibility of a joint ceremony to celebrate the recent successes of England's Lionesses in the Women's Euros and the Red Roses in the Women's Rugby World Cup.

iv) **ATTRACT events** - enticing more quality mass participation (MPEs) and high-profile spectator sport events (SSEs) onto City streets and public spaces:

- **New Events** – following the success of last year's Summer of Sport in the City, we partnered with Central London Alliance and other BIDS to deliver the [London Sports Festival](#) across the City this summer. Highlights included a 6-week padel court at St Pauls cathedral, table tennis at Paternoster Square and a full-size basketball court in Guildhall Yard. Over 12,000 people participated in the activations, which generally received very positive feedback.
- **Existing Events** – the sport team continues to work with colleagues to support existing mass participation event organisers with their ambitions to use the Square Mile as a backdrop for their high-profile events. For example, the City Corporation supports the Square Mile Relay each year by providing Guildhall Yard at no charge and, in return, receives logo recognition and a staff team space in the popular relay event.

v) **SUPPORT community** - helping to establish more sport clubs, classes and activities for local residents and workers in the Square Mile, with a particular focus on activities for young people and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

- **Young People** – Throughout the summer, a variety of sports sessions were delivered for young people across the city, featuring football, tennis, BoxFit, and volleyball. In September this year, Guildhall Yard hosted a Rugby Taster Day in partnership with the RFU, World Rugby, and Rosslyn Park FC. The morning welcomed four City of London schools and the Richard Cloudesley School, with 77 students enjoying rugby skills and games.

- Older People - As part of the London Sport Festival, we provided a series of adult-focused sessions that were held in the green spaces including Christchurch Greyfriars, Barber-Surgeons' Garden, Finsbury Circus, and Postman's Park. Activities included Tai Chi, HulaFit, and DanceFit, attracting a number of local residents and workers. We also delivered boxing and taekwondo taster day in Guildhall Yard, featuring a full-size boxing ring and professional coaching.
- Accessible & Inclusive Sport – Sport sessions for young people with SEND were held at Golden Lane Leisure Centre and Artizan Library, alongside an inclusive Open Sports Day at the Mansell Street Estate MUGA. We have also worked with Positive Action Through Creativity (PAC) a charity that has successfully received CIL Neighbourhood Fund for a 12-month programme of exercise and health activity for women from the Bangladeshi and other minority communities who live in the Square Mile.

Phase 2: Maximise Impact (2026-2030)

5. The next phase of delivering the sport strategy is about maximising outcomes for the benefit of all our stakeholders and we are ambitious about what we can deliver. These objectives, aligned with the priorities outlined in the sport strategy, include:

i) INVEST in facilities:

- Current Facilities – we will work with colleagues across the organisation to provide guidance on the refurbishment works, setup and procurement process for Golden Lane Leisure Centre.
- New Site Options – we will support ambitions to build a new world class sport facility and affordable office space for sport organisations in a new development in the Square Mile. A potential new development, on the eastern side of the City, has already been identified for this purpose. We are also exploring other sites across the Square Mile which may provide permanent facilities for sport, such as basements and rooftops.

ii) ACTIVATE spaces:

- Outdoor Activities – we will continue to find new locations for outdoor gyms across the Square Mile, as part of an urban gym network, and finalise the instalment of a new facility at Old Watermen's Walk.
- Urban Sports – we will take forward plans to explore the installation of a skate park and other urban sport facilities at a suitable location, potentially Blackfriars Undercroft.
- Pop-up Activations – we will seek to find publicly accessible spaces such as squares, gardens and car parks, that lend themselves to being used for pop-up temporary sport activities, such as padel tennis, 3X3 basketball and ice skating.

iii) CELEBRATE impact:

- Sport Diplomacy – we will support the Government's new sport diplomacy strategy, expected to be launched early next year, which will set out clear intentions for the UK to maximise potential benefits from soft power influence

and trade through sport, including engagement around the Milan Winter Games and the FIFA Men's World Cup next year.

- Major Sport Events – we will work with partners to celebrate and showcase major sport events taking place in the UK, by offering up venues for specific engagement around the competitions. A number of domestic hosted major sport events are in the pipeline over the next few years, including the ITTF Table Tennis Team World Championships, T20 Women's Cricket World Cup and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow next year. In 2028, England will host the Men's Euro football competition.
- Sport & Business – plans are underway to introduce a new sport festival concept (Square Mile Sports Week) to the City which would help showcase London as a global sports destination and bring business and sport closer together to discuss shared issues. We will continue to convene events, like this and the Global Sport Agora, that seek to enhance dialogue between business and sport.
- Grassroots Sport – alongside partners such as London Sport, London Youth Games & the London FA, we will continue to support grassroots sport by providing space for events and networking in our corporate venues such as Guildhall.
- Celebrating Success – we will continue to use the City freedom as a way to celebrate success in sport, particularly looking at the recent success of women's sport in England by the Lionesses and Red Roses.

iv) ATTRACT events:

- New Events – we will work with external event organisers on new and exciting mass participation events that can take place across the Square Mile and seek to attract increased visitors and revenue for the City of London. Discussions are already underway on plans to bring the London Nocturne cycling event back to the City next year which, if approved, will take place over a Friday and Saturday in June and involve a variety of spectator races aimed at workers and visitors. We are also working with an external partner to deliver a sport business festival – the Square Mile Sports Week – which is aiming to be up and running by 2027.
- Existing Events – we will continue to work with partners such as London Marathon Events to help support their aims around existing events and also maximise return for the City of London. A separate partnership agreement is being developed on this to formalise this relationship. We also expect to see the ongoing development of the London Sport Festival, working with Central London Alliance and BIDs to support these aims.

v) SUPPORT community:

- Sport Development – in line with aspirations to bring sport development back in-house under the new leisure operating arrangements and ensure greater accountability on our sport provision, the Head of Sport is working with officers to explore how this function could operate ahead of the procurement for a new contract being taken forward next year.

- Inclusive Sport – we will continue to develop links with local schools and academies linked to the City Corporation. Working with partners, such as the London Youth Games, we will also look to develop a programme of sport activity specifically targeted at younger people that take place during school holidays. We will seek to expand our series of adult-focused sessions that were held in the green spaces involving activities such as Tai Chi, HulaFit, and DanceFit. We are also keen to initiate a new City of London Boxing Club within the Square Mile, working with a high-profile partner to help deliver boxing and martial arts training to local residents and workers.
- Accessible Sport – we will ensure all our community focused sport activities are fully accessible and seek to target specific under-represented resident groups where possible to ensure our sport classes and events are inclusive and welcoming.

Delivery Oversight

6. As agreed by Members when approving the new strategy, regular updates have been provided on progress in delivering the priorities of the sport strategy. In addition, aspects relating to the governance and remit of the strategy have been considered as follows:
 - Governance – under its terms of reference, agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee, the Communications & Corporate Affairs Sub Committee (CCAS) has responsibility for the ‘governance of Sport Engagement (with power to act)’. In practice this means that CCAS receives regular updates on sport engagement (i.e. celebrating sport) as well as annual reports on sport strategy delivery. In addition, a Sport Sounding Board (SSB) – involving Members from relevant committees and those with an interest in sport – meets quarterly to oversee progress on delivery and is chaired by the Lead Member for Sport (appointed by the Policy & Resources Committee). The governance arrangements work well, ensuring streamlined decision making and inclusive corporate oversight. Therefore no changes to current governance structures for sport are currently recommended.
 - Remit – the current focus of the sport strategy is rightfully on the Square Mile, to ensure our residents and workers needs are met in relation to sport and leisure provision. However, there is sometimes a clear crossover of interest in relation to sport facilities and activities provided outside the Square Mile, such as on our open spaces and educational institutions. Members may feel that the remit of the SSB could be widened to help coordinate the delivery of specific high profile sport events and facilities that have a strategic and corporate significance. However, it should be noted that any significant change to the current position could require additional resources to deliver and impact other committee’s responsibilities. It is therefore suggested that, for the time being, the SSB should provide a consultative role in supporting corporate wide sport events and initiatives taking place outside the Square Mile that have a strategic significance.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

7. Strategic implications – the new sport strategy aligns closely with the aspirations of the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan 2024-29, by: making the Square Mile a

‘Vibrant Thriving Destination’ through high quality sport related events and facilities, supporting ‘Diverse Engaged Communities’ through an inclusive, effective and focussed community sport programme, ‘Providing Excellent Services’ through sport initiatives that help people to lead healthy lives, supporting ‘Dynamic Economic Growth’ through closer integration between the sport and business sector and delivering ‘Flourishing Public Spaces’ through developing permanent and pop-up sport facilities and activations that are open and accessible to all our stakeholders.

8. Resource implications – There are no anticipated major resource implications if future funding proposals are approved, but if there are any required staffing changes that become apparent these will need to be carried out in accordance with relevant HR procedures.
9. Financial implications – so far most of the costs of delivering the sport strategy, including two new staffing posts, have been met from the Policy Initiatives Fund (PIF). In 2023, Members agreed to provide £175,000 from PIF for the first 3 years of delivery (i.e. until 2025/6). Going forward into Phase 2 the costs of delivering the sport strategy initially will be met as follows:
 - £250,000 from the Transformation Fund will be allocated to deliver the first year of Phase 2 of the Sport Strategy using the following proposed funding model:

COST OF SERVICE	2026/27
	£'000
Staffing (Sport Team)	250
Sport Engagement Budget	75
Community Sport Budget	75
Income Generation Development	35
TOTAL COST	435

PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL	2026/27
Local Risk Budget	110
CILNF Application (for community sport)	75
Transition Fund Allocation	250
TOTAL FUNDING	435

- An application will be made to the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund to meet the annual costs of delivering community focused sport events and initiatives across the Square Mile for the remainder of the strategy (i.e. approx. £75,000 per year).

- Efforts will be made to understand the income generating potential of sport over the next year to help cover the costs involved in delivering the sport strategy priorities in future years. These include seeking sponsorship opportunities / naming rights for new facilities and events, as well as drawing in potential revenue streams from specific bookable sports on permanent and temporary facilities (e.g. ice skating, padel tennis etc).
- The Head of Sport is working with the internal Income Generation team and an external consultancy to determine the projected value of this offer to help cover future delivery of the sport strategy. Subject to this, a business case will be prepared to project future income generation potential from City Corporation owned sport facilities and events and will be presented back to Members for endorsement by March 2027.
- Internal pots will also be tapped into, such as CIL, Destination City Fund and On Street Parking Reserve, to cover relevant one-off costs associated with new sport facilities and events across the Square Mile.

10. Legal implications - None

11. Risk implications – there is a significant reputational risk of the City Corporation not committing to funding and therefore delivering the remainder of the agreed sport strategy.

12. Equalities implications – In line with our Public Sector Equality Duty 2010, proposals set out within the strategy are intended to have a positive impact on people protected by existing equality legislation – age, disability, gender, race etc. Sport naturally breaks down barriers and encourages social cohesion. Efforts will be made to support events and initiatives that have a positive impact on diversity and equality.

13. Climate implications – Owing to the nature of sport and physical activity, objectives are likely to reinforce climate goals and the need to reduce the organisation’s carbon footprint. Particularly by encouraging active travel options and by using outdoor facilities which do not require energy supplies.

14. Security implications – Any planned new high profile sport events and activations would need to be assessed appropriately for potential security risks.

Conclusion

15. This report provides an update on delivering our new sport strategy – A Global City of Sport. It highlights the various events and initiatives that have been delivered to date and also aspects relating to delivery of the next phase of the strategy. It proposes a number of objectives for delivering Phase 2 of the strategy and sets out funding arrangements to help resource this and ensure ongoing success.

Background Papers:

[A Global City of Sport: A Sport Strategy for the Square Mile \(2023-30\)](#)

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