

10.1 Play, Active Recreation and Sport (PARS) Plan with Sport Waikato

Report To:	Council
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, 27 August 2025
Author:	Phil Parker
Author Title:	Parks and Reserves Manager
Authorised by:	Executive Manager Delivery

Purpose

To seek Council approval of the Play, Active Recreation and Sport (PARS) Plan, which provides a strategic framework to guide investment and support for play, active recreation, and sport in the South Waikato District.

Recommendation

That the Council:

- a. Receives and notes the Play, Active Recreation and Sport (PARS) Plan with Sport Waikato Report (Resolve # 2025-267)
- b. Approves the South Waikato Play, Active Recreation and Sport (PARS) Plan 2024-34 (Attachment 1).

Executive Summary

The PARS Plan (Attachment 1) guides play, active recreation, and sport in the South Waikato District, focusing on increasing participation and improving community wellbeing.

With high levels of disability and deprivation, safe, accessible spaces and well-maintained sport facilities are critical. Local clubs face funding and volunteer pressures, highlighting opportunities for collaboration and shared resources.

The Plan emphasises evidence-based decisions, asset optimisation, and partnerships to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and culturally relevant opportunities for all.

Context

The PARS Plan provides guidance for organisations supporting play, active recreation, and sport in the South Waikato District. It establishes a strategic framework for investment, using national, regional, and local evidence to identify priorities that enhance participation and improve community experiences. South Waikato District Council and Sport Waikato lead the delivery of the Plan, ensuring coordinated pathways, with a formal review every three years.

Key contextual points for the district include:

- Social challenges: Over half of youth and nearly two-thirds of adults have disabilities, with many living in areas of high deprivation.
- Importance of physical activity: Play, active recreation, and sport are essential for community wellbeing.

- Accessible spaces: There is strong demand for well-maintained parks, walkways, and aquatic facilities for families to be active together.
- Sport's cultural role: Traditional sport remains central to the community and supports both local engagement and economic growth.
- Club and organisation pressures: Funding and volunteer shortages create financial strain.
- Changing participation trends: Time and financial constraints shape how people engage in physical activity.

Discussion

The District's rivers, walkways, footpaths, parks, and reserves are critical for safe, accessible active recreation. While active recreation is growing in popularity, traditional sport remains important, requiring well-maintained, fit-for-purpose facilities.

Local clubs and organisations are feeling economic pressures, highlighting the need to explore collaborative solutions such as shared facilities and pooled resources. Innovative funding approaches and networked optimisation - including schools and private facilities - can improve sustainability and service coverage.

Community initiatives should connect people to the natural environment, reflect the cultural identities of Pacific Island communities and other groups, and incorporate pūrākau/ancient legends of local iwi and mana whenua.

Swimming is the second most popular activity, emphasizing the need for safe aquatic facilities, natural swimming spots, and water safety programmes.

Future planning should continue evidence-based decision-making, asset optimisation, and partnerships to increase participation levels. Collaborative and innovative approaches to play, active recreation, and sport provision can support wellbeing outcomes while aligning with the strategic priorities of South Waikato District and Sport Waikato.

Options

There are two options for consideration:

1. Option A: Approve the PARS Plan
2. Option B: Decline the PARS Plan.

The recommended option is Option A.

Linkage to Strategic Plan Priorities

Vibrant Culture

Healthy proud and connected community

Durable infrastructure

Consultation

N/A

Financial Considerations

This report doesn't have direct significant financial implications but will be used to inform the next LTP budgeting process.

Risks

N/A

Significance & Engagement Policy

This report does not trigger the Significance and Engagement Policy.