

Cheltenham Borough Council

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th January 2003

Skateboarding and Wheeled Sport Policy and Programme - Review of Progress

Report of the Assistant Director Green Environment

1. Summary and recommendation

- 1.1 This report reviews progress to date and future actions for the improvement and further development of skateboarding and wheeled sports facilities within the town following the adoption by Cabinet of a policy for these sports on 30 April 2002.
- 1.2 I therefore recommend that the Committee notes the report.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 At their meeting on 30 April 2002 Cabinet recognised that skateboarding and associated wheeled activity sports such as roller blading and biking are established and growing modern sports, in their own right, that can address issues of health, well being, quality of life and social inclusion.
- 2.2 One of the objectives of the policy adopted by Cabinet was to identify a series of short, medium and long-term actions to take forward skateboarding and wheeled sports in consultation with user groups and other stakeholders.

3. Progress

Short-term

- 3.1 The short-term and on-going actions included the identification and installation of smaller, low-key equipment in order to develop a series of neighbourhood facilities across the town. This will form the basis of a programme of enhancements to existing sites that can be delivered, relatively quickly, with appropriate public consultation and participation. This will address the short-term concerns and tensions expressed by businesses and people within the town centre and the neighbourhood areas of the town and the concerns of skateboarders and young people that the Council has not been able to respond quickly enough to cater for the increasing demand in this activity.
- 3.2 The first of these sites was opened recently at Brizen recreation ground and has been well received by local user groups. This particular site has been a good example of close partnership working between Cheltenham Borough Council, Leckhampton Parish Council who both contributed funding and the local ramp user group. A key benefit of working in this way with the ramp user group has been a significant reduction in the perception of a problem within the town centre areas.

- 3.3 Through the work of the public space regeneration project within Charlton Kings (now known as 'Centrepiece' and covering the Churchpiece and adjoining areas of public space), the opportunity for a low-key provision in the area of the Beeches playing field has been identified and this will be the subject of further local consultation as the programme of public space improvements for the area is developed.
- 3.4 The identification of further sites is still being worked up in conjunction with the group and it is anticipated that this will sit within the work currently being undertaken in order to continue rolling out a comprehensive range of play and youth/adult facilities across the town. It will also be useful in producing an analysis of 'where is what' and 'what is where' for these facilities in the town and in the geographical and ward areas they serve, and in helping to promote and publicise the whereabouts and the range of facilities that are in existence.

Medium-term

- 3.5 The medium term action of improving the facility at Pittville park was achieved considerably sooner than anticipated as a result of a successful fund raising event which ensured the achievement of the additional £5000 that was required to carry out the work. The design of the equipment was carried out in conjunction with the Ramp user group and implemented in accordance with their advice. This culminated in a successful opening of the facility which received positive publicity for the work that is being carried out by the council in close consultation with the user group.
- 3.6 Action concerning the future use of the existing BMX track at St. Peters is still being appraised in terms of its suitability as a location, including a costed range of options produced in conjunction with the Ramp User Group to develop skateboarding and biking opportunities within this defined area.
- 3.7 The Stage 1 submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, for the enhancement of Montpellier Gardens, is presently awaiting determination from the HLF trustees. However, some local consultation has recently been carried out by the local Friends group (Friends of Montpellier Gardens and Bandstand) and this indicated that local residents were not in favour of a skateboard facility within the restoration plan proposals. However there may still be opportunities to examine a low key scheme for rollerblading and skating to take place, within the context of the restoration objectives for the gardens.
- 3.8 The formulation of a comprehensive and integrated planning brief and marketing proposal for the Midwinter site has proved to be a more complicated project than was originally envisaged and this has resulted in a delay in bringing the site forward to the market. This should now take place within the spring of 2003 and the brief includes a provision for skateboard facilities.

Long-term

- 3.9 The long-term aim of producing an integrated approach to outdoor recreational provision is being addressed through work that has recently been undertaken by a working group of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Environment) in its review of the Playing Pitch Strategy and reported to Overview and Scrutiny (Environment) at its meeting of 16 December 2002. This endorses the approach advocated by the revised version of Planning Policy Guidance 17 in providing a holistic approach to the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities. This will be considered in further detail as part of a report to Cabinet on 21 January 2003 on the development of a comprehensive greenspace strategy for Cheltenham.

- 3.10 In addition work has started to develop an integrated approach to children's and young people's play through the development of a play policy by the Health and Well Being service unit. This will seek to feed and co-ordinate with the work already referred to above and in particular to the future development of the Community Plan for Cheltenham.

4. Implications

- 4.1 **Financial** There will be capital and revenue implications arising from this report. These will be quantified as part of the business and service plans for the Green Environment and Health and Well Being divisions and brought forward as part of the future budget process for 2004/2005.
- 4.2 **Legal** The Council has a legal duty when exercising any of its functions under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.
- 4.3 **Human Resources** There will be future implications in respect of human resources to carry out an enhanced programme of sporting provision and these will be assessed and identified as part of the business and service plans for the Green Environment and Health and Well Being portfolios.
- 4.4 **Equal opportunities, social justice and anti-poverty** Sport makes a major contribution to society in policy areas such as health, education, quality of life, tackling crime and addressing social inclusion. The recommendations arising from this report will also address issues of social justice and equal opportunities.
- 4.5 **Environmental** An effective policy for skateboarding and wheeled sports can help to promote sporting opportunities and provide clear local guidance within the overall context of the Council's policies concerning land use, outdoor recreation, culture and the environment.

Background Papers

Report of Skateboard Working Group to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Social and Environment) on 18 March 2002

Cabinet report 30 April 2002 on Skateboarding

PPG 17 for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (revised 2002)

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