

Cheltenham Borough Council**Social and Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee****3 July 2003****Outdoor Play and Recreation Provision and Development
(including Skateboarding and Wheeled Sports)****Report of the Assistant Director Green Environment****1. Summary and recommendation**

- 1.1 This report updates members on the progress made since the last report to Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny on 6 January 2003 concerning the provision of skateboarding and outdoor recreational and play facilities for children and young people within Cheltenham.
- 1.2 **I therefore recommend that the committee notes the progress made as set out in this report**

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The integration of play and recreational opportunities is crucial to improving service delivery in this area and it is important that there is clear and shared understanding between elected members, officers and service users of where we stand at present in terms of existing facilities, available resources, and where the council is with its improvement programme for outdoor play areas and youth adult facilities. This Report updates members on the current position.

3. National Context and Strategic Framework

- 3.1 Audit Commission research into public opinion shows clearly that providing facilities for young people is among the key quality of life issues in Britain at the present time. This is borne out by Cheltenham's own research in this area and feedback received through the community planning process. The continuing provision, development and improvement of facilities for young people will also play a key part within the public space diagnostic of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) that will take place in June 2004.
- 3.2 The Urban Policy Unit within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has been tasked with a brief to regenerate the urban environment in order to improve people's quality of life. ODPM are keen to enable better access for young people and disabled children to public spaces and places and this is an area that Cheltenham will need to address as part of its own Equal Opportunities policy and working.

- 3.3 The green and public spaces agenda connects with inclusive play opportunities as a way in to understanding and promoting social cohesion. This is articulated to some extent in the Living Places report and PPG17, both of which are influential references in relation to work that has been undertaken by the council in respect of its own Playing Pitch Strategy and the emerging Green Space Strategy.
- 3.4 The emerging community plan sets out a vision of how the borough can develop and improve over the next 20 years. The plan is the result of extensive consultation with residents, organisations, businesses, community partnerships, voluntary sector agencies and community groups, which has identified the importance of the green environment and outdoor recreation to supporting the well-being of the town. The plan identifies a role for the council to protect and maintain the things that make the town distinctive and special, such as parks, gardens, open vistas, trees and its countryside setting as well as providing opportunities for all our communities to participate in a variety of physical activities, both formally and informally, through having access to affordable sports and recreational facilities.

4. The Current Provision of Facilities within the Town

The council has 46 play areas and 11 youth adult facilities spread across the town. (see attached schedule and plan, within Appendix 1 for locations, contents, and allocated funding). Two of these facilities, one off Prestbury Road and the other off Salisbury Avenue, are owned by local parish councils, but are jointly managed with the Borough Council. Play areas mainly consist of a fenced, dog free area with equipment intended for toddlers and children below the age of 14. For the purposes of classification the council, like many other authorities, has adopted the National Playing Fields Association "Six Acre Standard" document to guide in the provision of new play sites, and categorising of its existing sites (this is explained further in appendix 1). However, it is also clear from the analysis of the distribution of these facilities that there are gaps in play provision within areas at Swindon Village, Hesters Way, Wymans Brook, Leckhampton and Charlton Kings.

- 4.1 Turning to youth adult facilities, these consist of combined goal ends with basket ball hoops, or a skate facility, or a teenage "hang out" shelter. Youth adult facilities are a fairly recent innovation going back over the last ten years or so which explains why there are considerably fewer youth adult sites than there are play areas. Recent practice has been to develop a youth adult facility wherever a play area refurbishment is proposed, and therefore broaden the appeal of a facility to a wider age group. Details of how this area of provision is developing feature later on in this report.
- 4.3 It goes without saying, if the public are to use outdoor playing space they must first know what facilities exist, where they are and how to find them. Secondly, they must know they are safe to use and thirdly they must be able to access them. Many of the town's outdoor playing spaces are located behind houses or down uninviting alleyways and it is unlikely that visitors, newcomers or the less adventurous would discover these unless they are better signed, marketed and entrance ways enhanced.
- 4.4 Public surveys indicate that people do not always feel safe within parks and open spaces. Fears are both real and perceived, although real physical attacks or provocation are rare. However, this is a real problem that needs to be addressed if all members of the community are to use outdoor recreational areas and play and facilities for young people. There is increased demand for the presence of staff within parks and for improved lighting. An increase in organised public events may also increase people's confidence through improved knowledge.

- 4.5 Another real difficulty is that physical barriers can inhibit users. In particular children and young people can be inhibited from accessing safely outdoor playing space and facilities in other communities. Examples include safer road crossings, cycle ways and bridges. It is important therefore that these barriers are identified and overcome where possible, particularly when additional outdoor playing space and facilities can not be established within

5 Skateboarding and Youth Adult Facilities

- 5.1 Following on from the last report “ Skateboarding and Wheeled Sport Policy and Programme - Review of Progress” 6th January 2003, the following work has taken place with regards to youth adult facilities:

5.2 Activity : Dirt Biking

Sites : Daisy Bank Field, Leckhampton & Brizen Recreation Field

Development : The green environment division has supported the development of two dirt biking areas. Both have been constructed in designated areas by local youngsters under close supervision of the Green Environment Officers. These areas are under constant review, and have to be inspected on a monthly basis in line with the procedure for outdoor play areas. Facilities that are planned in this way allow the council to formally recognise them and plan for routine inspection, which is not possible when youngsters develop jumps in a random and ad-hoc way as has happened in the past. This has led to conflict when the council has had no option, but to remove them.

Site : Benhall Open Space.

Development : The council has been approached by local children who ride their bikes in Benhall woods - there is a known conflict at this location between dirt bikers and pedestrians. An area out in the open, and adjacent to the play area has been suggested as a trial area to develop dirt jumps similar to those at Leckhampton and Brizen. Further discussions with local ward members and the Benhall Residents Association is planned in order to move this proposal forward.

5.3 Activity: Skate Boarding

Site: Welch Road Playing Field

Development : Capital funds are allocated to the provision of a Skate Facility as part of the overall improvement scheme for Welch Road Playing Field. A representative from the Ramp User Group has drawn up a suggested scheme which is to be put forward for consultation with potential users of the facility.

The Ramp User Group also indicated that they would like to see some improvements to the Pittville facility and again, have been forthcoming with a suggested proposal.

Site : Beeches Playing Field

Development : Final plans that have been produced in connection with the public realm improvement project known as “Centrepiece” in Charlton Kings include for the provision of a skateboard facility on the Beeches playing field. The scheme will soon be out to tender, after which it is hoped that this element can be progressed as part of the overall improvement programme. Results from extensive consultation that have taken place at all levels around this project reflect strong support for such a facility in this location.

Site : Town Centre

Development : A skate facility based in the Chelt Walk Park, between Jessop Avenue and the River Chelt was discussed with the Ramp User Group as a possible town centre site, but concern was expressed as to whether it would draw skaters away from the town centre sufficiently. More work needs to be done determining whether skateboarders in the town centre would use it, and the Ramp User Group is prepared to assist with some consultation through the town centre skateboard shops. A questionnaire is currently being developed to gauge opinion on this.

The intention is to use this work to develop a prioritised list of wheeled sport facilities that will form part of a general improvement programme for youth and adult facilities funded from the council’s section 106 fund. This in turn can be built into the play area work programme below.

Site : KGV Playing Field and Montpellier Gardens

Development : Plans are afoot to install skateboard “grind rails”; one adjacent to the existing basket ball facility at KGV, and the other as a temporary facility in the vicinity of the Montpellier Bandstand. The later would provide a focus for skate boarders who currently frequent this area, and may also serve to reduce wear and tear on the bandstand.

5.4 Activity : Football and Basket Ball

Site : Salisbury Avenue

Development : A goal end incorporating football and basketball has been installed with specialist surfaces at this location. The work was carried out in conjunction with Leckhampton Parish Council, and is already in use.

Site : Welch Road Playing Field

Development : A goal end is proposed as part of a general improvement programme for which extensive consultations have taken place. This element of the scheme is imminent.

6 The Current Work Programme

- 6.1 In developing the work programme, where practical, the principle of maximising external funding to support the implementation of the action plan been applied. This will enable the limited resources from the council's own budget to be maximised as it can often be a source of match funding to lever in external resources. The bulk of the current programme is being funded from payments made to the council as part of section 106 Agreements related to planning applications. As these agreements are related to specific planning applications, this means that 'play space sums' are site specific. However youth adult sums are non site specific, as young people often travel to sites across the town. In addition to planning related funding, other funding sources are currently being investigated with other partnerships such as the "Surestart" Programme which is aimed at improving the health of children under 5.
- 6.2 In drawing up the current work plan officers have used a number of criteria to develop a prioritised list including :
- Health and Safety needs,
 - play value,
 - accessibility,
 - life expectancy of equipment.
- 6.3 To achieve successful public spaces, public input and support for development of new facilities through public consultation is vital. This is undertaken through established techniques: approaching schools, instigating community events, and staging mobile open days utilising the council's park ranger team. This priority list has then been matched against the current funding available to the council. Where there are funding gaps, initial budget estimates have been identified based on outline costing. As with all new schemes the revenue consequences are taken into account, by assessing knock-on effect on resources currently available to maintain new improved facilities to a safe and tidy standard. The tables below summarise the current programme based on current available resources.

Table 1- Play Area Improvement Programme-2003 /2004

Site	Priority	Description	Status	Total Funds Available £
Hillview Play Area Site No 20	H	Play area improvement.	Complete	10,227
Winston Churchill Site No 46	H	Play area partial improvement.	Complete by 30/06/03	9,749
Benhall Site No 5	H	Play area improvement	Complete by 30/06/03	15,614
Hatherley Park Site No 19	M	Play area improvement	Complete by 30/09/03	23,689
Salisbury Avenue Site No 38	M	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/07/03	21,132

Clyde Crescent Site No 13	H	New Play Area	Complete by 31/07/03	41,000
Welch Road Site No 44	H	Play area and youth adult facilities.	Complete by 30/10/03	90,304
KGV Site No 23	H	Play area improvement.	Complete by 28/02/2004	39,173
Arle Farm Site No 2	H	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/03/04	55,000

Table 2- 2004 / 2006 Programme- Funding Available

Site	Priority	Description	Status	Total Funds Available £
New Chelt Walk Site No 29	H	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/07/04	36,210
Elmfield Playing Field Site No 15	H	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/07/04	27,890
Sandford Park Play Area Site No 40	H	Play Area Improvement	Complete by 31/10/04	7,759
Pates Avenue Play Area Site No 32	M	Play area improvement	Complete by 31/10/04	20,263
Honeybourne Line Site No 21	M	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/10/04	9,587
Lansdown Crescent Site No 24	M	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/03/05	9,946
Fairview Play Area Site No 17	L	Play area and green space improvement.	Complete by 31/03/05	15,879
George Reddings Way Site No 18	L	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/10/05	5,045
Montpellier Gardens Site No 27	L	Play area improvement in line with Heritage Lottery Bid for garden restoration	Complete by 31/10/05	120,412
Caernarvon Park Site No 9	L	Play area improvement.	Complete by 31/03/05	1,729

Prestbury Playing Field Play Area Site No 35	L	Play area improvement	Complete by 31/03/06	2,231
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Table 3- High priority play area sites for which no, or insufficient funds exist

Site	Priority	Description	Status	Total Funds Available £
Beeches Site No 4	H	Play area improvement	Target 31/03/05	13,373
Swindon Village Site No 43	H	New play area	Target 31/03/05	1,375
Winston Churchill Gardens Site No 46	H	Play area improvement	Target 31/03/06	
Pittville Park	H	Partial refurbishment of play area and extend.	Target 31/03/07	

Table 4- Potential Sites for Future Youth Adult Facilities-current budget stands at £42 000 taking into account current commitments

Town Centre		Possible new site at New Chelt walk Park.	Target 31/03/04	15,000
Pittville Park. Site No 33		Skate park improvements	Target 31/07/04	15,000
Elmfield Playing Field Site No 15		Football, basketball, skateboard	Target 31/10/04	30,000
Benhall Open Space Site No 5		Football, basketball, dirt biking.	Target 31/03/05	20,000
Beeches Playing Field Site No 4		Football, skateboard	Target 31/03/05	20,000
Swindon Village Playing Field Site No 43		Football and basket ball, skateboard	Target 31/03/05	30,000
Priors Farm Playing Field Site No 36		Football, basketball	Target 31/03/05	20,000

Further work with the Ramp User Group, and local site discussions with youngsters will determine better the priority of sites, and what equipment the facilities should accommodate.

7 Project Management and Organisation

- 7.1 The above programme outlines improvement projects which are intended to be carried out over the coming 5 years based principally on the priority rating of the site and the capacity of Green Environment Division to undertake each site as a separate project. The development of potential youth adult sites is dependant upon receipt of further section 106 payments, and wherever possible it is desirable to implement these schemes in line with play area projects where they are planned on the same site.
- 7.2 Play area sites which are classified priority but which have insufficient, or no funding are not at this stage considered unsafe to use. All sites currently meet the general requirements of BS EN 1176, however they are probably nearing the end of their useful life expectancy. Where money is not forthcoming from section 106 sources it is intended to draw down from the council's capital programme for which a rolling programme has previously been approved.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This report clearly identifies a major piece of ongoing work with some significant sums of money allocated from developer contributions. It is important that the work programme develops in this area to ensure that allocated sums are spent, and that play areas, and youth adult sites are constantly reviewed to ensure that we are addressing the priority sites and meeting local demand for outdoor play provision, The aspirations of the council's recently launched "Play Strategy" are incorporated.
- 8.2 Resource implications, both in terms of delivering the programme, and maintaining the new facilities should be closely monitored, and where necessary consideration should be given to using the section 106 fund to ensure that adequate resources are in place to meet these commitments. Finally, all sites should be promoted locally to advertise what is on offer and where to find it. A leaflet, and the council's expanding web site offer simple opportunities for this.

9 Implications

- 9.1 **Financial** There will be financial implications, however it is intended that these will be identified and brought forward as a planned and costed series of proposals. The funding options can then be appraised and would include the identification of developer contributions through Section 106 monies, sponsorship, grant aid or lottery support, and consideration within the Council's revenue and capital programme for 2004/2005.
- 9.2 **Legal** The Council has a legal duty as part of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act to address the issue of community safety, crime and the fear of crime.

- 9.3 **Personnel** There will be organisational implications arising from this report as the work needed to co-ordinate and implement the recommendations in the short, medium and long-term has not been incorporated within the present resource and service plans for the Parks and Landscape and Sport and Play divisions.
- 9.4 **Equal opportunities, social justice and anti-poverty** The recommendations arising from this report will address issues of social justice and equal opportunities.
- 9.5 **Environmental** It is also recognised that there may be potential issues of environmental disturbance arising from the recommendations of this report and that these should be appraised as part of a risk assessment within the public consultation process.
- It should be noted that the recommendations will also help to protect the infrastructure and built fabric of the town.

Background papers

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Accountability

Councillor Lloyd Surgenor

Cabinet Deputy for Public and Environmental
Protection

Scrutiny Function

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Community and
Social)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Environment)