



Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Report of: The Task and Finish Group
Date: March 2006
Open

Skateboarding Scrutiny Review

1. Introduction

- 1.1 These are the findings of the Skateboarding Task and Finish Group, which was established by the Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel to undertake an in-depth review into the District's current and potential skateboarding facilities.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Panel's original Skateboarding report and recommendations were submitted to Cabinet at its meeting on 16th December 2004. (*CM.416 from the Minutes of the Panel's meeting on 11th November 2004 refers to the Recommendations in detail*). The Cabinet agreed there had been insufficient information in the original Skateboarding report. A more in depth Scrutiny had been requested so it was referred to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to consider at its meeting on 26th January 2005, which requested that further consultation be undertaken by the Panel. (*Minute CM.686 refers*). Consequently, the Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel considered the issue at its meeting on 10th March 2005. (*Minute CM.813 refers*). It was noted that the original Task and Finish Group had been short of time and had been unable to look at the issue in great depth, thus a strategic overview had been undertaken.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel on 14th July 2005, Members completed a scoping form. The Panel agreed to form two Task and Finish Groups, one to concentrate on Skateboarding and the other to look at the District's Youth Provision in general.

2.3 With regard to Skateboarding, the consensus of the Panel was to identify the need for a skate-park in the District in order for future funding to be secured. The Task and Finish Group would need to investigate the popularity and actual demand for skateboarding, what size skate-park would be needed and what the end-users' requirements would be.

2.4 The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services had indicated that there was no formal deadline for the Panel to report back to Cabinet with its proposed recommendations. This would enable the two Task and Finish Groups to have plenty of time to investigate each issue carefully and present two reports to a future Cabinet meeting.

3. The Review

3.1 The following Members comprise the Skateboarding Task and Finish Group:

- Councillor Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis
- Councillor Mrs P V Hayward
- Councillor Mrs R L Lewis
- Councillor M J Shellie
- Councillor K J Stokes

3.2 At the Group's first meeting on 22nd July 2005, the Group:

- Elected a Chairman (Councillor K J Stokes)
- Agreed its terms of reference, as follows:
 - a) To identify Skateboarding requirements within the District
 - b) To analyse the current usage of Skateboard facilities at Borrington Road/Shawhedge Road/Brinton Park
 - c) To ascertain whether demand for Skateboarding within the District is increasing or decreasing
 - d) To research national trends
 - e) To identify the future role of 'The Fun Box' (mobile skateboarding unit)

3.3 The Group met a further 4 times on 6th September 2005, 3rd November 2005, 2nd December 2005, and 25th January 2006.

3.4 During the course of the review the Group scrutinised a range of issues with a view to ascertaining the current and potential future of skateboarding facilities within the District. The subject was approached from the perspectives of various participants, including a group of young people who attended a meeting.

3.5 A number of written submissions were considered and the Group looked at the practices of other local authorities. Details of the names of the participants are listed in Appendix 1 attached to this report.

3.6 SKATEBOARDING - GENERAL

3.6.1 At the start of the Review, the Cultural Services Manager reported back on trends and usage figures. Members were informed that based on the information available, between 5% and 10% of young people used skateparks. There had been no apparent decline in figures over the past 2 years. Members had been interested to note that anti-social behaviour was apparently reduced in some areas that had skateboarding facilities.

3.6.2 The Cultural Services Manager had also contacted officers at Bromsgrove District Council, Worcester City Council and Birmingham City Council. Both Councils had reported that in the last 4/5 years the skateboarding usage figures had remained 'steady'.

3.7 CURRENT SKATE PARK FACILITIES

3.7.1 Skate Parks currently in use throughout the District were situated at:

- Brinton Park, Kidderminster
- Borrington Road, Kidderminster (*Funded by Wyre Forest Community Housing*)
- Shaw Hedge Road Play Area, Bewdley (*Funded by Wyre Forest Community Housing and Opportunity Bewdley*)
- Adjacent to the Village Hall, Cookley. (*Funded by Cookley Sports and Social Club*)
- Members noted that there was a half-pipe at the Walshes Estate in Stourport-on-Severn.

3.8 TRIBE ENTERPRISES LTD.

3.8.1 As part of the exercise, Members considered a study undertaken by Tribe Enterprises Ltd in February 2003 that had assessed the most suitable locations for permanent Skateboarding facilities in the District. These included sites at Springhill Park, Kidderminster; Stourport Sports Club, the Memorial Park, Lickhill Road, the car park at Stourport Sports Centre and the Riverside at Stourport.

3.9 THE FUN BOX

3.9.1 During the Review, Members agreed that The Fun Box should be considered as a separate issue as part of the Scrutiny exercise.

3.9.2 The Council using Communities Against Drugs (CAD) money purchased the Fun Box in 2003 at a cost of approximately £28,940. It was intended

as a short-term solution to the lack of skateboarding provision - it was not envisaged as a long-term solution.

- 3.9.3 The Fun Box was not cost effective to manage in terms of time and operationally. It cost approximately £350 each time it was erected and dismantled. Between 12 and 20 youngsters used it on a regular basis.
- 3.9.4 The Cultural Services Manager contacted the relevant Government Department on behalf of the Task and Finish Group to get permission to sell the Fun Box, as this was a condition of the grant. The Council was advised that the Fun Box could be sold. It would be worth approximately £10,000 if sold.
- 3.9.5 The Group also considered that an alternative to selling the equipment would be to permanently erect the equipment in an area where it had previously proved popular, although this would be unlikely as it was not made of a suitable material, would be subject to vandalism.
- 3.9.6 The Fun Box events at Stourport-on-Severn (Areley Kings Village Hall car park, Stourport Basketball Court, and Lickhill Middle School) during the 2005 summer holidays had proved the most popular. However, the usage figures overall had proved disappointing, even though the Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services Division had actively promoted the Fun Box prior to the holidays.

3.9.7 Sladen C.E. Middle School

At a later meeting, the Group considered Sladen School, which could have community use when it closes as a school in 2007. The Fun Box could be set up permanently in the assembly hall and instead of the Fun Box going to different places, people from different places could be taken by bus to the Fun Box. This could potentially be a much cheaper option than transporting the equipment. In the summer the Fun Box could still be transported, as it was appreciated that the Fun Box had always proved popular for events, for example at 'The Party in the Park'.

3.10 FUNDING

- 3.10.1 During the course of the Review the Cultural Services Manager was pleased to advise the Group on the Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA) Target 8 grant. The Council had reached its targets and therefore had received the reward grant, which consisted of 50% capital and 50% revenue. The Capital element of the funding could be used for recommendations from the Youth Provision Task and Finish Group and/or the Skateboarding Task and Finish Group and amounted to approximately £70,000.
- 3.10.2 The Cultural Services Manager has made an application for £5,000 from Stourport Forward towards the total project costs.

3.11 MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

3.11.1 The meeting with the users of the skateboard facilities combined the Members of the Task and Finish Group with the Youth Strategy Skateboarding Sub-Group and relevant officers of the Council. Over 20 young people attended the meeting.

3.11.2 Out of the Skateboarding Group, 10 young people used the Fun Box on a regular basis.

3.11.3 The Skateboarding Group was asked what sort of equipment they would like and they gave the following options:

- Different sorts of mini ramps
- Small half and quarter pipes
- Jump boxes
- A good grind box
- Flat back banks
- A facility made of concrete
- Larger spaces between the equipment.

3.11.4 It was anticipated that users would have significant involvement in the facilities and 'own' the project. Up to 10 young people would be involved as a Skateboard User Group. The Group would give input into the design and layout of the site. It was important to involve the police and other interested parties.

3.11.5 Members had previously watched a DVD from Birmingham City Council on the establishment of Kings Norton Skate Park, which had involved representatives from the Council, various organisations and a group of young local people who were able to contribute their ideas and actively participate in the project.

3.11.6 One Member suggested that the young people could possibly make a DVD similar to the one done by Birmingham City Council. The Cultural Services Manager explained that this was expensive but the Group could ask media students from Kidderminster College to take part. (One member of the Group was currently studying media studies).

3.12 POTENTIAL LOCATION - Stourport-on-Severn

3.12.1 Members of the Task and Finish Group agreed that as Stourport-on-Severn currently did not have a skateboarding facility, it should be a priority. There should be a major Skate Park similar to the one built in Brinton Park, Kidderminster, which should be centrally located so that there would be no territorial or rivalry issues.

3.12.2 Further to 3.6.1 above, the Cultural Services Manager advised that according to the 2001 Census, there were approximately 2,788 young people aged between 8 and 20 who lived in the Stourport-on-Severn area. If 10% of that figure used skateparks, this would equate to approximately 279 young people.

3.12.3 Clearly a facility situated in Stourport-on-Severn would attract youngsters not only from the wards in that area (Areley Kings, Mitton and Lickhill) but other outlying areas.

3.12.4 Members noted that all of the young people who attended the Skateboarding meeting on 25th January 2006 came from Stourport-on-Severn or its rural outskirts, apart from one of the Crewmembers of the Fun Box who lived in Birmingham.

3.12.5 It was acknowledged that the Riverside would be an ideal place for a skatepark, but that it would be likely to cause some controversy with local residents who might oppose it.

3.12.6 The Cultural Services Manager advised that the Council would have to consult with local residents but did not feel that there would be many objections as the skate park would be further away from residents than, for example, the trampoline. She explained that the suggested area adjacent to the paddling pool was bigger than that at Brinton Park.

3.12.7 The Cultural Services Manager was aware of the issues surrounding possible flooding, but assured the Group that the equipment would not be damaged in the event of flooding, and that the Environment Agency had been consulted.

3.12.5 One of the Police officers gave other examples of why the area by the paddling pool would be preferable. These were:

- Lighting from the bridge would help to illuminate the skateboarding area.
- The site would be visible from the road
- Fencing was suggested as this would keep children and dogs off the facilities and to prevent potential hazards

Others present listed the following reasons:

- Wyre Forest District Council officers would sweep and clean the area.
- There were no trees nearby which meant there was no danger that leaves and debris would collect on the surfaces.

- The Riverside was a neutral venue and would be easy to maintain. It is also close to the toilets.
- CCTV had been planned for the bottom of Bridge Street.

3.12.6 The skateboarders requested the Cultural Services Manager look into the option of using concrete instead of tarmac. This was because concrete ramps that are well made are perfect for outdoor use, with minimum maintenance costs. The concrete could also be moulded and uniquely designed to form a collection of bowls, ramps and obstacles to meet the local users' requirements. The Cultural Services Manager explained that the cost of the base would have to come out of any allocated money but that she would look into the option.

3.13 FUTURE PLANS

3.13.1 The Cultural Services Manager explained that a final report would take place in May/June to Cabinet and a meeting would then be convened for officers and Members to meet with the young people from the meeting. She anticipated that the new skatepark would be in place by Easter 2007, if funding were allocated to the project.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The Cabinet, at its meeting on 24th November 2005, delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services to allocate the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) capital grant, once he had considered the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

4.2 The Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel is recommended to make the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet:

- 1. A skate park be provided at Stourport Riverside to be located near the paddling pool, subject to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services agreeing funding for the project.**
- 2. To note an application is to be made to Stourport Forward for the sum of £5,000.**
- 3. Officers approach Stourport Town Council for additional funding.**
- 4. The representative group of young people (who met on 25th January 2006) be consulted as part of the project process.**

5. The young people representatives be encouraged to produce a DVD of the development of the project (as per the Kings Norton, Birmingham project).
6. The Fun Box continue to be made available in popular locations and for events, and that the option of it being stored and used in Sladen School be explored when applicable.
7. Similarly an option of providing transport from rural locations to the Fun Box when located at Sladen School be explored as an alternative to taking the Fun Box into rural areas.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services:

Funding be allocated from the Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA) target and capital grant (up to approximately £70,000) for the provision of a skatepark near to the paddling pool at Stourport-on-Severn Riverside. (*Minute number CAB.140 of the Cabinet's meeting of 24th November 2006 refers*).

5. Background Papers

Previous Minute Extracts:

- Tribe Enterprises Ltd - Skate Park Report and Recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council (2003)
- 'Youthink' Survey dated October 2004, which gives a wide perspective of young people's thinking on a number of quality life issues
- C&LS P&S Panel - 11th November 2004 (*Minute CM.416 refers*)
- Cabinet - 16th December 2004 (*Minute CM.580 refers*)
- C&LS P&S Panel - 6th January 2005 (*Minute CM.612 refers*)
- Cabinet Scrutiny Committee - 26th January 2005 (*Minute CM.686 refers*).
- C&LS P&S Panel - 10th March 2005. (*Minute CM.813 refers*)
- C&LS P&S Panel - 8th September 2005 (*Briefing Paper from the Acting Scrutiny Officer*)
- C&LS P&S Panel - (*Minute CLS.13.a refers*)
- DVD from Birmingham City Council on the establishment of Kings Norton Skate Park
- Location plans identifying current skate parks
- Tribe Enterprises Ltd - Skate Park Report and Recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council (2003)
- 'Youthink' Survey dated October 2004, which gives a wide perspective of young people's thinking on a number of quality life issues

Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel-09/03/06

APPENDIX 1

SKATEBOARDING SCRUTINY REVIEW: PARTICIPANTS

Officers:

Cultural Services Manager, Acting Scrutiny Officer, Assistant Development Officer , Media and Marketing Officer.

External Participants:

- Councillor Fran Oborski, Chairman of the Wyre Forest Youth Strategy and Skateboarding Sub-Group Group.
- Liz Durnell, Programme Manager, Stourport Forward.
- Peter Banford, The Community Housing Group (formerly Wyre Forest Community Housing)
 - PC Andrew Brookes-Davis, Beat Officer from Stourport-on-Severn.
 - PC J Harris (Stourport-on-Severn Beat Officer,
 - PC Nigel Barter, Beat Officer from Bewdley.
 - PC J Sinclair (Community Safety Officer),
 - Mrs Steph Cutler (Senior Play Worker, St Wulstans After School Club)
 - Sue Smart (Wyre Forest Schools Sports Co-ordinator
 - Ben Cutler, Fun Box Crewmember
 - Thomas Horton, Fun Box Crewmember

Users of the Fun Box/the District's Skateboarding facilities:

Robert Phillips
Josh Longley
Sam Heighway
Craig Organ
Damian Round
Dan Prior
Joe Sheldon
Alex Yeomans
Matthew Bradbury
Sam Coxon
Scott Stevens
Matt Hill
Sam Roberts
Yusuf Bassir