

## **SKATEBOARDING**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report examines the issue of skateboarding across the District and makes a series of proposals in connection with this. In addition, it also picks up the specific issues in connection with Rayleigh Town Centre.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In June 2001, Members raised the issue of skateboarding in Rayleigh High Street at Community Safety Sub-Committee (minute 179/01). Members asked that Officers write to Rayleigh Town Council and seek a meeting with the Town Council and other appropriate organisations to consider a skateboarding facility within King George's Playing Field. The Minute was subsequently expanded at Community Services Committee to look at the provision of signage and bye-laws, where appropriate, to prohibit the activity. Also, Parish Councils and the Town Council were to be approached with a view to measuring the general concern around this issue and to sound out views about the provision of skateboarding facilities, subject to finance being available (Minute 212/01).
- 2.2 This report updates Members on progress and the feedback received to date.

### **3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 Skateboarding Across the District: General Provision
- 3.2 Specific skateboarding facilities currently exist at Clements Hall, Hawkwell and Pooles Lane Recreation Ground, Hullbridge. The installation of facilities at both venues has not been without concern and comment from local residents. Whilst both are sited in recreation areas and have attracted considerable support from the youth in those areas, the use/activities around both continue to attract comments from some local residents in terms of noise, nuisance and disturbance. The situation at Hullbridge has been picked up by the Community Safety Sub-Committee who are looking to meet with the Parish, the Youth Service and the Police, to consider the way forward.
- 3.3 Local residents concerns around the possible impact of providing a skateboarding facility are perhaps behind the comments of Canewdon Parish Council, who having progressed a new skateboarding project so far (with the support of the District Council) to the point where it could be implemented are now placing conditions upon its provision (see item 20).

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- 3.4 Nonetheless, from the feedback received from the Parishes and the Town Council, skateboarding is perceived as an issue across the District and one where further specific provision would be welcome.
- 3.5 Hawkwell Parish make reference to the provision at Clements Hall, although reporting that skateboarding still occurs in some of the car parks in the Parish, whilst Hockley refers to past initiatives and advises that at present skateboarding is not the subject of complaint.
- 3.6 Ashingdon Parish Council report that it has received a petition from local youths, with letters from supporting parents, seeking provision of a skateboard facility at Ashingdon Playing Fields. Similarly, Great Wakering Parish Council express the demand for a skateboarding facility in its area on the Great Wakering Recreation Ground.
- 3.7 Rayleigh Town Council, in parallel to this Council's own decision making process, has already decided to press ahead with the provision of a new skateboarding facility in King George's Playing Fields, Rayleigh, for which planning consent will be required. No details have as yet been submitted to the District Council, although it is known that the Town Council will be seeking a funding contribution from the District Council. Clearly, any joint Member level meeting would benefit from having details of what is proposed, together with funding details, and also the benefit of any related decisions, e.g. bye-laws, other provision, etc. arising from tonight's meeting.
- 3.8 Given the feedback received from the Parishes/Town Council on skateboarding and, recognising the further provision that may yet be made to improve facilities in the District – at Canewdon and in Rayleigh, Members may nonetheless wish to consider planning additional provision across the District, to be financed from contributions from the Council's playspace rolling improvement programme, Parish funding and grant aid, e.g. Cory Environmental Trust.
- 3.9 As Members will see from the Canewdon report, the cost of such provision is not cheap, with skateboard facilities now costing between £35,000 and £60,000, depending upon size and the range of facilities on offer.
- 3.10 If say, 50% of the Playspace Rolling programme was allocated to such provision, e.g. £25,000 per year – then subject to appropriate Parish and other grant funding being available, it is anticipated that a minimum of one purpose-built facility could be provided per year.
- 3.11 Clearly, if such an approach was considered appropriate, Members should not underestimate the lead-in time required to develop suitable schemes, particularly given the possible requirement for planning

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consent and difficulties around siting, supervision, residents' concerns, etc. that are likely to emerge. Members also need to be aware that matters around the siting of the existing Council facilities may require some additional resourcing. Furthermore, Members should recognise the state of development of both the Canewdon and Rayleigh projects, with one the subject of a report to Committee this evening, and the other still in the course of development.

- 3.12 It is anticipated that any outstanding matters related to the existing provision should be resolved within this financial year. Similarly, the question as to whether a facility will be provided at Canewdon will be determined, along with the details and progression of any scheme promoted by Rayleigh Town Council within the same timeframe. In the circumstances therefore, it is suggested that 50% of the Playspace Rolling programme be allocated for skateboard provision for 2002/2003, with priority being given to schemes at Great Wakering and Ashingdon, areas where there is known to be an existing demand and where sites have already been identified by the Parish for possible provision.
- 3.13 Bye-Laws on Skateboarding
- 3.14 If the above represents some pro-active steps that the Authority can adopt in addressing this issue, Officers have also investigated the possibility of introducing regulation by way of bye-laws.
- 3.15 Contact has been made with the Home Office and a firm response obtained to see how bye-laws could be applied. The advice is that a bye-law can be used to address problems like this under specific models dealing with good rule and government and pleasure grounds, public walks and open spaces.
- 3.16 However, advice is tempered by section 235(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 which states that "Councils should make bye-laws under this power only when the issue they wish to address is not already covered by general legislation or a local Act and when it is not possible for them or another authority to make bye-laws or take any other action under any other provision".
- 3.17 The Home Office further advises that skateboarding can be prohibited only in specific places such as shopping precincts and pedestrianised areas where there is an evident hazard to pedestrians. At the last meeting of Community Services Committee, there was some discussion around whether a bye-law would be appropriate for Rayleigh High Street, given the problems caused by skateboarders mixing with vehicular and pedestrian traffic. On the basis of the advice now received, such a blanket approach to Rayleigh Town Centre or other town centres would not be possible. It would be possible, however, to target specific areas within the town centre, e.g. around

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the Mill Hall, or other areas where there may be specific problems, e.g. local shopping parades.

- 3.18 The promulgation of a bye-law would require preliminary approval from the Home Office and would then have to be subject of public consultation. The Council would have to be able to demonstrate that the nuisance it seeks to address merits criminal sanctions, that it addresses a specific local problem and measures are available to enforce the bye-law.
- 3.19 In initial discussions with the Police around this issue, they have advised that their preference would be for the skateboarding problems which have arisen to be addressed by more practical/engineering measures, such as street furniture or engineering works designed to discourage the activity. However, such solutions may, depending on their siting and design, represent further challenges to skateboarders and can impede, rather than aid, pedestrian access.
- 3.20 Given the advice outlined above, it is suggested that Members might like to consider the introduction of a bye-law for specific areas, to be determined in consultation with the police. Subject to Member approval to the areas identified and consideration of their enforcement, preliminary approval of the Home Office can then be sought. It is recommended that the issue of signage be considered within the context of any bye-law provision.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 In summary, this report suggests a twin track approach to skateboarding, with new purpose-built provision being secured across the District, to be funded in part from the Playspace Rolling programme, and at the same time bye-laws being sought and introduced in specific areas, where it can be identified that there is a particular local problem.

#### **5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Youth nuisance is a particular concern across the District. The provision of new purpose-built skateboarding facilities offers the opportunity to respond to the needs of young people in a positive fashion. That said, it is important that any new facility is carefully sited and is only provided after considerable consultation with both local residents and the local young people themselves.
- 5.2 The provision of bye-laws, subject to enforceability, offers the opportunity to minimise the problems around skateboarding which occur in specific areas across the District.

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**6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The provision of new skateboarding facilities is discussed in the report. It is suggested that a sum of £25,000 could be set aside from the Playspace Rolling Programme of £50,000 from 2002/2003. In addition, the staff resources in the design and consultation process around the implementation of any new schemes should not be underestimated.
- 6.2 With regard to the promulgation of bye-laws, these would involve publicity and consultation costs estimated at approximately £3,000, and staffing time to undertake the procedural and legal process. In addition, consideration would need to be given to the cost of investigation and enforcement.

**7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 As contained in the report. The Council has a responsibility for the enforcement of its bye-laws.

**8 RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (i) the establishment of a programme of new purpose-built skateboarding provision, to be funded in part from the Playspace Rolling Programme, but with contributions also from the appropriate Parish/Town Council and appropriate grant aid; such provision to be made from 2002/2003 and to equate to £25,000 per annum.
  - (ii) the development of a suitable bye-law initiative, targeting specific sites and addressing the particular issue of enforcement, for further consideration by Members prior to submission to the Home Office for preliminary approval. (CD(FES))(HLS)

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**Background Papers:**

Email from Great Wakering Parish Council	– 20 <sup>th</sup> September 2001
Email from Hawkwell Parish Council	– 8 <sup>th</sup> August 2001
Letter from Hockley Parish Council	– 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2001
Email from Canewdon Parish Council	– 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2001
Email from Rawreth Parish Council	– 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2001
Letter from Ashingdon Parish Council	– 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2001 23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2001

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