
REPORT TO:	COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 6
DATE OF MEETING:	29 th August 2002	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	COMMUNITY SCRUTINY	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Councillor Ken Harrington (Chair Community Scrutiny)	DOC: Playequip.doc
SUBJECT:	PLAY EQUIPMENT	REF: myfiles/committees/community/playequip.doc
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: CS10

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 The Committee is recommended to:

Receive this report from the Community Scrutiny Committee and adopt the recommendations set out in Section 5 as the basis of a way forward for the management, maintenance and provision of play equipment in the District and for the provision of facilities for young people.

2.0 Purpose of Report

Introduction

- 2.1 The Community Scrutiny Committee discussed issues relating to leisure facilities for young people at its meeting on 17th June and requested a further report specifically on the issues relating to play equipment and the provision of a bmx/skateboarding facility which was further considered at the meeting on 21st July 2002.
- 2.2 Contributions were received from Chris Mason (Facilities and Development Manager), Stuart Batchelor (Community and Leisure Development Manager), John Birkett (Planning Services Manager) and Maureen Evans (Derbyshire County Council Youth Team Leader).

Matters discussed

- 2.3 At the first meeting, the Committee explored with officers:
- The general background of leisure facilities and their management, and the cultural strategy.
 - What were the issues, where were the gaps in provision and to consider options for the future.

A further report was requested to provide more details on specific issues arising from these discussions.

- 2.4 At the second meeting, the Committee took 'stock' of this information and held a round table discussion with officers on play equipment, planning policies and requests for facilities for teenagers.

Background

Play Equipment

- 2.5 The District Council inspects/maintains some 250 items of play equipment throughout the District on 44 sites only 8 of which are managed directly by this Council. At the other sites the situation is somewhat confusing. From this Council's viewpoint equipment on parish council sites belongs to the parish councils and they have responsibility for its day to day management. However, some Parish Councils take the view that equipment installed on their sites by the District Council is not the parishes' responsibility. The Council endeavours to undertake annual surveys of all this equipment.
- 2.6 Some of the equipment stock is over 30 years old and the existing strategy is to endeavour to replace or renovate whole sites rather than safety surface or try to update old equipment. The Council has had some success in Parish Partnership arrangements to achieve this but other Parish Councils are again reluctant to enter into such agreements.
- 2.7 The Council still has large amounts of play equipment that does not conform to the latest standards for design and installation. Under Health and Safety legislation risk assessments of play equipment should be carried out. A Service Development proposal to carry out a risk assessment at all sites has been approved and is to be carried out this year and is likely to highlight some of these issues and may require the removal of equipment considered to be unsafe. Some Parish Councils have been advised to have equipment removed as a result of previous inspections and surveys.
- 2.8 Other factors are also placing increasing demands on the service. Public expectation and awareness of safety issues is increasing all the time, whilst providing and maintaining safety surfaces together with increasing levels of vandalism places greater pressure on revenue budgets that have remained static for some time.
- 2.9 Over recent years Best Value indicators relating to play equipment provision show that only 14% of the District's play areas conform to Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) standards compared to a District Council average of 34%.

Facilities for Young People

- 2.10 There is a growing unsatisfied demand for specific provision for teenagers. These requests are being made to a variety of agencies and individuals including Members, Area Meetings, the Youth Service (by way of a locally established Youth Forum), the Police and Parish Councils. Making formal provision for teenagers is also a major issue for strategic partnerships, particularly the Crime and Disorder Partnership. The demand is predominately for BMX, skateboarding and rollerblading facilities.

- 2.11 The Youth Service has provided transport for young people to visit the skateboarding facility at Derby Storm. At the subsequent meeting of the Youth Forum youngsters had requested a lower level of equipment be provided locally to provide practice facilities for the regional facility at Derby.
- 2.12 Although no strategic study has been undertaken to ascertain the true level of demand or indeed how it could be undertaken but it is considered that these activities are not passing 'fads' that will disappear.
- 2.13 A series of sites in the Council's ownership were considered. It was felt that, subject to legal conditions upon the use of the site presently leased to the Ski Centre, the Woodhouse Street Car Park would best suit as a location for such a facility.

The key issues

2.14 The main issues arising are considered to be :

- Confusion over responsibilities with Parish Councils and whether the District Council should continue to offer an inspection and maintenance service for facilities on land in parish councils' ownership.
- Problems in completing actions identified from previous inspection reports (lack of resources and non co-operation from Parish Councils).
- Need to update and review previous consultants' report in the light of higher standards.
- A traditional resource problem in carrying out the required inspections and completing repairs by the DSO.
- Service Development proposals for increased budgets to carry out repairs more efficiently and to undertake essential repair work to safety surfacing have not been approved by Members.
- Risk assessments to be undertaken this year are likely to identify a large amount of work to be undertaken and/or removal of play equipment.
- Increasing requests for new facilities, especially for teenagers, at a time when the existing stock of equipment is in such a poor state. There is a specific demand for a BMX/Skateboarding facility.
- Need for consultation with young people about the provision and design of facilities.

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 It was considered that the responsibility for the ownership and maintenance of equipment be resolved with the Parish Councils and comprehensively documented as a matter of priority. Other resource issues in respect of play equipment replacement, improvements to Leap standards will need to be addressed in the longer term whilst results of the Risk assessments should be the subject of a further report to the Committee.
- 3.2 There is a groundswell of opinion that there is a need for a BMX/skateboarding facility. The car park off Woodhouse Street was considered to be the most practicable of the sites considered in this Council's ownership or control. It was considered that the principle of the provision, design and funding of such a facility at

this location be put before the Youth Forum and Crime and Disorder Partnership to seek their comments.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 In terms of capital, to modernise all of the District's existing sites to LEAP standards would cost somewhere in the order of £400-£500k. The current revenue implications of managing the play sites would be approximately £26,000 (£20,000 to improve the repair service and £6,000 to carry out immediate repairs to safety surfacing)

4.2 A local skateboarding/rollerblading facility is likely to cost in the region of £40,000, with more meaningful facilities double that figure.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that:

- Dialogue be undertaken and agreements documented with the Parish Councils to determine the ownership and maintenance responsibility of all play equipment.
- Investigation be carried out regarding the potential of the Woodhouse Street Car Park site for the provision of a BMX/Skateboarding facility including its design and funding in consultation with the Youth Forum and the Crime and Disorder Partnership.

6.0 Background Papers

Community Scrutiny Committee	17 th June 2002
Community Scrutiny Committee	29 th July 2002