

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

13

meeting date: 7 SEPTEMBER 2010
title: PLAY FACILITIES IN LONGRIDGE
submitted by: JOHN C HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To ask members to consider a range of options in relation to the Longridge Skatepark and proposed adventure play facility.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions/objectives
Under the Council's ambition of 'making people's lives safer and healthier', the report reflects the following objectives:

- to reduce the level and perception of crime and disorder
- to increase opportunities for people to access cultural activities
- to improve outcome for children and young people

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Longridge Skatepark

2.11 The idea of locating a skatepark in Longridge came from agencies and individuals who met at Longridge Crime and Disorder Working Group back in 2002.

2.12 The project was identified as having many benefits for the community, not just those who use the facility, as it would provide a facility for young people to burn off their excess energy. The knock-on benefits for the wider community would be fewer youths hanging around, less disruption to shoppers from skaters using shopping areas for their sport, and a safe area for skaters to perform in.

2.13 A number of potential sites were identified, and much work was done towards developing a scheme on land at St Cecilia's RC High School. This work was to prove abortive, as Lancashire County Council would not sanction the go-ahead, mainly because of concerns whether the land in question might be required by the Education Authority for future school site expansion. Undeterred, the Skatepark group ploughed on, and a new site was identified on Kestor Lane Playing fields that is in the council's ownership.

2.14 Many fundraising events took place, and there was great support from the Longridge people, skaters and non-skaters alike, and from Longridge Town Council and the Longridge News. Eventually, the dream became a reality as the facility started to take shape and was eventually opened by former Police Inspector Bob Ford on Saturday 8 April 2006. The site has been managed by a group of willing volunteers including skaters, local residents, police and council officers.

- 2.15 Monitoring and maintenance have been key concerns for the group, and a number of competitions have been organized in accordance with conditions imposed by funding organizations. The skatepark was the victim of graffiti soon after opening, but this negative was turned into a positive by way of a local competition to provide 'graffiti boards' for the park.
- 2.16 There has always been an issue with planned maintenance, as the facility was not provided by RVBC but by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and managed by a sub-group of willing volunteers. There has never been a dedicated budget provided by the CDRP, and funding for Crime and Disorder has been significantly cut back in recent years.
- 2.17 What has also inevitably happened over the years since the skatepark was opened is that those individuals who were initially enthusiastic have now moved on to other interests, and the management has become more and more problematic.
- 2.18 In order to ensure that the skatepark continues to operate, in the interim, the Borough Council is currently providing a basic inspection/maintenance regime until a longer term solution can be found. We have made it clear, however, that it was never our intention to adopt it on a permanent basis.
- 2.19 An approach has, therefore, been made to the Town Council to ask if they would take responsibility for the skatepark.

2.2 Adventure Play Facility

- 2.21 Members will recall that, as part of a bid to the Big Lottery Children's Play Fund, three projects were identified in the Ribble Valley:
 - Mobile Skate park
 - Calderstones Woodland Play Facility
 - Longridge Adventure Play Facility
- 2.22 We are now in the last year of the funding with only the Longridge project left to be delivered.
- 2.23 In order to fulfil the Big Lottery requirement of local consultation, the Council's Community Development Manager presented the scheme to a meeting of Longridge Town Council. At the meeting, it was agreed, in principle, that the Town Council would take the lead on the development of the facility and take responsibility for its future management/maintenance. A draft agreement has been produced and is currently subject to consultations with the Town Council.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Our conversations with both the Longridge Partnership and Town Council so far have been extremely positive, and reflects the joint working on grounds maintenance currently undertaken.
- 3.2 As the range of locally delivered services increases, there has been further recognition that the partnership should be involved in wider aspects such as the two facilities highlighted in this report.

3.3 The main reservation is with the ongoing cost of maintenance. Whilst there is general acceptance of such costs as a result of the capital injection relating to the new play area, the Town Council is seeking some assurance over the future costs of the skatepark.

3.4 Our experience under the interim arrangements is that, over the first three years of its life, the costs have been minimal. This is mainly due to its robust construction which, although looking tired through graffiti, is still structurally sound.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – the total budget for the Adventure Play Facility is £93,500. This is made up from £78,500 from Big Lottery and £15,000 from the capital programme. The skatepark was built with funding from a variety of sources – Sport England, Longridge Town Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council, Community Safety Partnership, and local fund raising (£60,000 in total). There is still a small budget held by the steering group (probably around £1,000) that could be given over to the Town Council to help with future maintenance costs. The Borough Council has no specific revenue budget associated with the skatepark.
- Technical/Legal – if the Town Council and/or the Longridge Partnership were minded to take responsibility for the new play area and existing skatepark, then separate leases will need to be drawn up. This is because the play area needs to have a separate agreement because of the Big Lottery terms and conditions.
- Political – Although there is still some detail to work through, the report shows a willingness on the part of the Borough and Town Councils.
- Reputational – It is important that, whatever the final outcome, both partners are seen to be championing the development of facilities for many people in Longridge.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Notes the content of the report and welcomes the positive approach from the Longridge Partnership/Town Council.

5.2 Formally asks the most appropriate organization to take responsibility for the future development/management of the two facilities, and draws up leases that reflect this.

5.3 Offers support, where possible, in any future developments of the two facilities.



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