

Meeting	Parks and Open Spaces Committee
Date	13 th July 2021
Report Title	Haydonleigh Skate Park
Agenda Reference	10
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Officer's Recommendations

1. To consider giving access to the Council's CCTV system with the Security Contractors to monitor the skate park, at no extra cost to the Council. The Council's CCTV policy to be updated accordingly and agreed at the next Finance & Policy Committee.
2. To monitor the situation and to consider closing the skate park at 7pm during the summer holidays (22nd July – 2nd September 2021) should the anti-social behaviour get worse.
3. To consider removing all shelters from the skate park (at a cost) and replacing with seats (no cover) to deter non-skate park users using the site. Replacements will be funded by grants and incur no cost to the Council.
4. To invite Councillors to volunteer to assist in ensuring the facility is a welcoming environment for the community to enjoy.

Background

Several reports of anti-social behaviour down at the skate park have been received. The anti-social behaviour includes graffiti, smoking, swearing, littering, breaking into the facility after closing time and when challenged, teenagers being verbally abusive to the security contractors. On many occasions the security provider has had to contact the police to be present to help with the behaviour and disperse the teenagers.

There have also been several complaints received from parents of younger children that they cannot enjoy the facility and that a small amount of the teenagers has also not been pleasant to the parents. Some of the teenagers have been helpful, helping new skaters to learn new tricks and fixing their scooters and skateboards.

This report details the efforts made thus far by all areas of the Council to ensure the safe running of the skate. Councillors are invited to consider the suggestions and offer further idea of how we can mitigate against the ongoing anti-social behaviour.

Parks & Open Spaces Team

Litter/ Maintenance: Daily visits (Mon-Fri) to open the facility, litter pick, check for any new unwanted graffiti, sweep any broken glass, and empty the public litter bins. There has not been an overwhelming demand to cope with this in the mornings and it is usually done first thing as part of the teams rounds.

Graffiti Removal: Painted over any unwanted graffiti and will keep an eye on any new cases of graffiti. This costs approx. £5.00 each visit, based on a 5L pot costing £50.00. A clear glazed varnish will be used to protect some of the professional graffiti, if damage does occur it should be easy to wash off, the cost of the glaze is £161.00 + VAT but it could be used sparingly.

Grounds Maintenance: Grass cut three weekly during the peak season and apple trees attended to as per the risk assessments for the site.



Youth Worker/ Youth Development

The Youth Worker was visiting frequently to make nervous or young skaters feel at ease that someone is there to intervene if the facility is not being used correctly. Daily visits around 3.30pm – 5pm were increased during recent weeks to investigate some of the behaviour and to engage with the skate park users. This engagement is to offer ideas and suggestions of how the antisocial behaviour however they had to be halted after a couple of visits due to the Youth Worker feeling intimidated. The Council is seeking advice from the PCSOs to ensure the Youth Worker is not lone worker and/or Councillors/POST Operatives attend the site with her during her visits.

The Youth Worker continued with visits on a Saturday morning, when families are around and will conduct a litter pick to keep the skate park looking nice at the weekends. It is suggested there is an earlier closing time and to remove the concrete tunnels as these are not being used for the purpose in which they were installed. It is suggested that if the concrete tunnels were removed the groups would not congregate for as long or seek shelter from the sun/rain. However, it is acknowledged this is penalising the authentic users of the park.

As part of the summer youth programme with BEST, their representatives could go down to the skate park with the Youth Worker to interact with the teenagers and to invite them along to the summer youth programme.

Official Opening

The Community Development Officer is finalising the official skate park opening, which was delayed due to COVID-19. We are investigating graffiti workshop sessions at this event and independently. We will continue to assess options and try to make the skate park the youth hub community it was hoping to achieve.

CCTV

Councillor V Manro has been monitoring the CCTV within the skate park and updating the Clerk & Deputy Clerk on any findings to share information with North Swindon Police. The Security Provider has offered to monitor the cameras for no extra cost under its CCTV SIA Licence. The legalities of this have been reviewed and advice has been sought, it seems to be a good solution that we can implement easily. Councillor S Heyes has suggested contacting Swindon Borough Council about its CCTV service to see if we can have live monitoring at a cost of approximately £2,500.00 for the installation and £30.00 per month for the monitoring of the cameras.

Security Provider

The Security Provider has built up a good rapport with some of the teenagers at the skate park since it reopened in September 2020. Since the skate park has reopened and some of the older children have left secondary school there seems to be an increase in anti-social behaviour and different types of teenagers hanging around the skate park. The security provider has advised that the teenagers are in a large group and do not respect the premises.

The security provider suggests that the skate park is monitored and that the group is split to only allow three of the group in at any one time, but this would incur additional expenditure and could be disruptive to other skate park users.

North Swindon Police

PCSO Lawrence has contacted the Youth Worker and has promised to include the skate park on his daily patrols. A site visit is due to take place imminently to discuss the issues and show police presence.

PCSOs Jackson & Hare met with members of the Council on Wednesday 7th July 2021 to discuss the ongoing issues at the skate park and see if the Council could identify some of the individuals.



Social media videos have been circulated bringing awareness to the issues at the skate park and regular patrols and police presence taking place.

A formal log is being done with the Call Centre at North Swindon Police should the Council require further statistics/ background information for future decisions.

Help is needed

All Councillors will be invited to assist ways to ensure this facility remains a welcoming environment for everyone in the community to enjoy.