

DEPUTATION PROPOSAL FOR CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
CABINET MEMBER MEETING

In its latest incarnation, the site now occupied by Withdean Stadium is of course home to our local football team, Brighton & Hove Albion. Soon though, the Albion will have left. The issue of what happens next is of great relevance to the city generally but to the residents of Withdean in particular.

From its beginnings as Marshall's Playing Fields to the launch of the finest tennis centre outside Wimbledon and from the building of the stadium for athletics to becoming the home of the Albion, the site has evolved constantly. There was once even a zoo on the site along with a miniature railway.

Having requested the views of the residents of the entirety of Withdean Ward on what should happen to Withdean Stadium when the Albion leave, Cllrs Ann & Ken Norman and I received an overwhelmingly positive response on the issue of youth facilities; in particular, on the installation of a skateboard park on the site.

Many of the replies which we received related to the removal of the ugly but necessary additions which are in place to facilitate the Albion's stay. Such additions include fence barriers, the south stand, the hospitality suite and a number of smaller portacabins. These issues are all being dealt with by Brighton & Hove City Council – but the removal of the hospitality suite and smaller portacabins is of particular relevance.

The most passionate of the replies submitted to us led to me meeting a group of wonderful young men who are keen to be able to skate close to where they live. Skateboard parks on the Level and by the Lagoon have been tremendously successful and there is clear demand for a similar facility in this part of the city. Bearing in mind the imminent move of the Albion and the inevitable masterplan which will be drawn up for the stadium, now seems an entirely appropriate moment to consider bringing skateboarding to Withdean.

Concerns about noise and safety must be taken into account. It would be wrong to suggest that any proposal does not have both pros and cons. Compared to building other sporting facilities which would be used by the number expected to use a skating facility, the cost is not high. However, there would of course be financial implication to building a ramp at a time when funding is an issue.

The proposal is therefore in its most simple form at this stage. We are proposing that an area should be set aside where the hospitality suite is currently located (or in the position of the smaller portacabins) for skateboarding. This deputation is not about a ramp or other facilities. It is just asking that a clear area be put aside for skateboarding.

We would attempt to raise funds for a ramp in other ways in due course and would hope that the council will look upon such attempts favourably. These are issues for another day though.

At this time, we are simply requesting that a small area is set aside for skateboarders, which can be used as a practice area in the meantime, which can one day be considered for a ramp.

ROBERT NEMETH
Osborne Villas,Hove

STAN WILLIAMS
Eldred Avenue, Brighton

