

# DRUG STORE



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Councillor Keith Driver - Neighbourhoods and Community Safety portfolio holder  
Leader of the Council, all Councilors, MP Norwich South, MP Norwich North  
City Hall, St. Peter's Street  
Norwich NR2 1NH

Ref: NCC4  
18<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Cllr Driver, Cllr Arthur and all Norwich City Councillors,

In relation to the proposed ban on skateboarding and other social activities under section 235 of the Local Government Act 1972, and in light of the letter from Cllr Brenda Arthur received today, there are a number of factors that cause us great concern about this matter, and we have set them out in this letter. This is in addition to the response sent in the letter reference NCC3 sent earlier today.

## **1. Denial of Honest Democratic Representation and Process**

It is our understanding that the Norwich City Council Labour group is intending to stick together in order to push this proposal through by 'majority vote' despite individual opinions, and despite public opinion being clearly opposed to the ban. The seeming 'political party before public opinion' behaviour that appears to be being exercised is deeply worrying.

Is this your idea of democracy - a handful of individuals forcing their view on the majority who DO NOT support their view? Do you recognise the irony in your alleged intention to protect the war memorial dedicated to those who fought for our freedom by creating a by-law that removes freedom?

## **2. Inadequate, Flawed and Misleading Consultation Process**

The portfolio holder, and supporters of the ban, have not provided a clear and accessible consultation process and failed in engaging relevant stakeholders and the public in a matter that will ultimately affect them in a legal capacity. This failing has led to the local skateboarding community providing information and consultation themselves resulting in a significant opposition from the public to the proposed ban. No contact has been made with the Norwich skate scene by the councillors supporting the ban, despite claims to the contrary made by them.

General public consultation has been severely lacking resulting in the public been misinformed and without a clear understanding of the issues involved. Independent polls show the public do not support a ban. The portfolio holder has not sought to understand skateboarding culture – the fastest growing activity among young people.

### **3. Misleading and Distorting Information**

The councillors supporting the ban have used the war memorial and war veterans as emotional collateral for their campaign to gather public support without providing fact-based supportive evidence for claims against skateboarders.

This is evident in the panel discussion held by Mustard TV, aired on Thurs 6<sup>th</sup> November, at which no councillor made themselves available to attend.

Leader of the Council, Brenda Arthur stated in the June report that she had 'seen people on the corner of City Hall actually been nearly knocked over by skateboarders'.

The claims made by supporters of the ban have been misleading and are unsupported there is no evidence of the claims in the public domain.

Claims that damage to the war memorial have been made by skateboarders are unsubstantiated and no qualified independent survey and analysis has been provided by Norwich City Council.

### **4. Dismissal of Public Opinion and Opposition**

The Norwich City Council website states '*Norwich City Council welcomes petitions and recognises they are one way that people can let us know their concerns.*'

Yet you appear to be actively ignoring your own remit and worse still, ignoring the concerns of people you say you wish to 'recognise'.

The petition opposing the ban on skating in Norwich has gathered well in excess of 5,000 signatures in little over 2 weeks. The maximum number of signatures for petitions on the Norwich City Council website is 73 gathered over 2 months.

### **5. Misrepresentation and Negative Propaganda and Attitude**

It has been noted that certain councillors seem to find this matter humorous and are dealing with the skate community in a condescending manner and ridiculing and patronising us. This causes us great concern. Is decision making on behalf of the citizens and visitors of Norwich a laughing matter to them?

#### **Requests:**

Given the many claims set out in We request the portfolio holder for the ban, Councillor Keith Driver, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brenda Arthur, provide the following by no later than 1pm Friday the 21st November 2014:

- All documents regarding complaints made to Norwich City Council since 2009 pertaining to skateboards, BMX, rollerblades, scooters whether in written or electronic communications.
- All minutes of council meetings relating to the proposed ban on skateboards.

- All surveys, studies, tests and analysis on the war memorial relating to refurbishment, repair, and relating skateboarders or similar activity.
- All documents on public consultation relating to the proposed ban.

Given the reply received today from Cllr Arthur which sets out some the items detailed in this letter, and given the high profile of this matter and national attention it is galvanising, and given the decision meeting scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> November, we will assume these items will be easily accessible and we won't be made to make a Freedom of Information (FOI) request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**Proposed solution:**

In the meantime we propose a simple solution which save time and public money; The cancelling and discontinuing of the proposed by-law to ban skateboarders and other similar social physical activities from Norwich City Centre, to be replaced by the implementation of a fine of £100 for anyone seen skating the war memorial. We seriously doubt that anyone has skated the war memorial but this fine will be a sufficient deterrent to anyone who would ever contemplate it.

We look forward to your response and the hope a mutual resolution can be achieved that does not require the draconian measures of bringing in by-laws and legal restrictions to the citizens of Norwich, and in particular, young people who Norwich City Council should be seeking to engage, welcome and inspire instead of ostracise, exclude and marginalise.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Avery  
Drug Store

Paul Richards  
On behalf of Long Live Southbank