

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 27 June 2022

Title: Skate Park – The Leys

Contact Officer: Project Officer - Nicky Cayley

Background

An updated skatepark is one of the Council's project aspirations for the forthcoming year. The Project Officer has met with four companies on site for initial discussions and has subsequently carried out a survey and drawn up a tender.

Current Situation

Focus for Tender

Having met with contractors, it was very clear that the Town Council will need to raise in the region of £100, 000 - £150, 000 in addition to the allocated budget in order to realise the project. The most likely source of funding is a grant scheme such as The Big Lottery Fund (Sport England's current funding pots all require crowdfunding which is not something that a Town Council is able to do).

If the Council is to be successful in getting a substantial grant, the application will need to stand out from all of the other skatepark applications. The Council is disadvantaged in that Witney as a whole is not a deprived area and it already has a skatepark – compared to an inner-city area with high levels of deprivation and no skatepark at all. It is worth noting though, that according to the West Oxfordshire District Summary 2021 from Oxfordshire County Council, Witney East and South are both in the 40% most deprived areas nationally. However, the project needs a "USP" (Unique Selling Point"). This is more important as there is not a high level of community involvement.

As discussed at the Full Council meeting of 11 April, there is a growing campaign led by Make Space for Girls to address gender inequality in parks and open spaces. According to Sport England in a survey of 130,000 children aged 5 – 16, the gender divide increases as girls reach ages 10 and 11. Make Space for Girls allowed the Town Council to use its survey to canvass local opinion from teenage girls. In the results, the girls use words such as "happy" and "excited" when describing how they felt going to the park as young children. 40% of girls responding the survey strongly agreed that they now hardly ever go to their local park and 40% agreed. Over 40% of respondents also agreed with the statement that adults expected teenage boys to play in parks more than teenage girls. The survey results also indicated that girls felt intimidated by boys in their local park and whilst almost 60% of respondents used to

participate in wheeled sports when they were young, 50% of girls reported that they no longer participate in wheeled sports.

Research carried out by Women In Sport in 2021 reported: -

Less positively, half of the girls (51%) surveyed by Women in Sport were concerned that they were losing their fitness and 45% worried that it would be hard to get back into the habit of sport and exercise after the pandemic. Many have lost confidence in their sporting ability (41%) and many more are worried about being in large groups again (40%).

Two of the three resulting recommendations were: -

- More opportunities to be provided both in and out of school for girls to take part in sport and physical activity that meets their needs
- Action by local authorities to ensure outdoor spaces are safe and accessible to girls

The Project Officer would like to strongly recommend that one of the main focus points of the tender is provision for girls. The tender has been written with this in mind. Inclusivity for girls, however, should not exclude boys from the skatepark but the aim should create a space where they can co-exist. Further information on lack of provision for girls can be found at the following links:-

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/mar/07/uk-girls-lose-interest-in-sport-as-teenagers-women-in-sport-survey>

<https://www.womeninsport.org/research-and-advice/our-publications/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-teenage-girls-lives-and-physical-activity/>

<https://inews.co.uk/news/parks-designed-women-girls-safety-campaign-make-space-for-girls-1204606>

<https://rowntreepark.org.uk/girls-and-public-parks-the-right-to-equal-play/>

Members can see results of the Town Council's survey here:-

https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-h571j7ivOuCniko3_2B9RK_2Fg_3D_3D/

The Project Officer has also been in touch with Thames Valley Police concerning the possibility of removing the fence along the front of the skatepark to improve safety for users. The initial feedback is that the police would be in support of this, but a site meeting is being organised with Inspector Ball and some of the local team.

Tender Document

The draft tender document is attached to this report for consideration. It makes it clear to potential contractors that the project cannot go ahead unless additional funding is raised. At the initial meetings with the Project Officer, the contractors confirmed that this is not unusual and they would be prepared to give support to funding applications.

The tender document also requires that the successful contractor carries out two consultations with local users – one specifically focusing on provision for girls.

The tender has been left fairly open – the idea being that the contractors put forward their solutions to the issues listed, rather than the Council being prescriptive. Any proposal can be fine-tuned subject to local consultation and Council approval. The consultation carried out earlier by Ramp Up The Leys will be shared with the successful contractor.

Members will also note that the tender refers to the project as a “Wheeled Sports Facility”. The previous working party was referred to as a “Wheeled Sports” Working party and officers have observed that the current park is heavily used by scooter riders. It also enables the park to be more inclusive to various activities, and age ranges. Some skate parks have banned scooter riding but as long as the right materials are used (such as steel edging) they should not cause any true damage. It would also require constant supervision if they were banned.

The tender will be sent to all the contractors that the Project Officer has met with and also advertised on the government portal Find A Tender.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

As mentioned previously, whilst concrete is the best option for a wheeled sports park, it is not environmentally friendly. The Council may therefore wish to consider ways of offsetting this.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

There is some reputational risk associated with this if the project is publicised at the outset and the Council is not successful in raising grant funding.

Financial implications

The Council currently holds funding of £102, 000 for this project. The anticipated cost is between £150, 000 - £250, 000. The Council should consider a guide price to enter on the tender for contractors to work to.

Outstanding finance will need to be raised via grant funding.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Approval of the tender document as presented and its focus on provision for girls;
2. The cost of the project that will be entered on the tender;
3. When the tender should be sent out/published.