

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	4 December 2017
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Business Operations
Subject	-	Development of sports and recreation facilities at Sidley Recreation Ground, Bexhill

Recommendation to COUNCIL: The 2017/18 Capital Programme be increased by £300,000, to meet the costs of creating a new skate park and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), subject to planning permission and improved BMX facilities at Sidley Recreation Ground, £99,970 of which will later be reimbursed through S106 contributions, capital receipts and other financial contributions through grant applications/donations.

AND

It be **RESOLVED:** That the Council enter into a partnership agreement with the new community interest company incorporating Bexhill Burners BMX Club for the on-going management, maintenance and improvement of the BMX track at Sidley Recreation Ground, with potential to extend to management of the new skate park and MUGA.

Service Manager: Brenda Mason
Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Jenkins

Introduction

1. The development of the former Bexhill High School site to create a new leisure destination is unlikely to have sufficient space to accommodate a skate park. The current skate park has been in place on land leased from East Sussex County Council since 2003 (Minute CB14/33 refers). The design and construction of skate facilities has evolved since this time and furthermore, the facility is coming to the end of its serviceable life, so relocating the equipment is not a viable option. This report requests that Members consider the construction of a new skate facility at Sidley Recreation Ground, alongside the construction of a multi-use games area and improvements to the BMX track at this location.

New Skate Park

2. Sidley Recreation Ground is accessible to a large catchment of children and young people. It has the available space to accommodate a replacement skate facility designed to facilitate a much improved user experience. A facility constructed in concrete will give a durable surface finish that can sustain intensive use and consequently requires less maintenance.
3. The facility would be professionally designed by experienced specialists with input from skate park users at all key stages and will take into account the

potential acoustic impact of the facility. Planning permission will be sought prior to any contract being awarded for the construction. This process will ensure that the finished construction is safe for users in practical terms and does not have an adverse effect on those residing in the surrounding properties.

4. A minimum budget of c£150,000 is needed to provide a facility of an appropriate size and quality including provision for an acoustic survey and the corresponding mitigation measures. The facility will not be of the scale of that at White Rock in Hastings nor the recently completed Lewes Skate Park, but as a minimum will be comparable to those at Hampden Park in Eastbourne and the Tony Tack Memorial Skate Park in Hailsham. An indicative drawing is shown in Appendix 1.
5. Officers will seek to secure funding from organisations such as the Heart of Sidley and Sports England in order to supplement Council funding.

Multi-Use Games Area

6. At present there is no multi-use games area (MUGA) in Bexhill, the nearest one available for free public use being in Battle, which is owned and maintained by Battle Town Council. It is proposed that a hard-surfaced MUGA with facilities for basketball and football be provided close to the new skate facility at Sidley Recreation Ground creating a cluster of complementary facilities promoting active and healthy lifestyles. Appendix 2 shows how these facilities may be located and their approximate footprint.
7. Both facilities will be open access and although the MUGA will be contained within a fence, it will not be locked in the normal course of operation. Neither facility will be floodlit and therefore they will only be usable during daylight hours. As with the skate facility, noise mitigation will be integral to the design of the MUGA and permission will be sought as part of the same planning application as the skate facility.
8. The MUGA and a hard-surfaced path linking it to the skate park and the existing access from Canada Way will be funded through the Section 106 agreement with Bovis for the Northeast Bexhill development which makes specific allowance for £99,970 to be used for '*new and/or improvement of non-turf surfaced outdoor play and recreation facilities for children and young people including multi use games areas, skate parks, BMX tracks, youth shelters or equivalent non-turf play areas in Bexhill.*' Receipt of the Section 106 funding is in installments corresponding with agreed construction and occupancy phases. The full amount will not be received before October 2022 and therefore it is proposed that existing capital receipts will be used in the interim.

BMX Track

9. A long-established and well used BMX track currently lies adjacent to the proposed skate park and MUGA. Options for the track's future management including a service contract and different lengths of lease were explored in 2013. Cabinet approved that a 25 year lease be granted to the Bexhill Burners BMX Club (BBBC) for the exclusive use, management and

maintenance of the BMX track at Sidley Recreation Ground (CB13/37 refers). This has not been achieved due to issues of capacity, and finance with changes in the club's committee. Subsequent efforts for an interim partnership arrangement have also been unsuccessful. The club has however continued to raise funds for track repairs and run training weekly sessions for youngsters at the track in conjunction with a qualified coach.

10. A Community Interest Company (CIC) absorbing BBBC is being set up with a view to entering a partnership arrangement with the council whereby the CIC would be responsible for specified track maintenance tasks and the development of its community use. The Council would benefit from the CIC's expertise and links including to The Source in Hastings who are keen to support this approach. The CIC has a business plan for the on-going sustainable operation of the track subject to planned improvements being implemented including a small extension of the track area as shown in Appendix 3 and laying a permanent surface on parts of the track to overcome the need for regular surface renewal. In the longer term, the CIC could potentially also have involvement in the on-going operation of the skate facility and MUGA.
11. The track improvements together with a new stake park would create a cluster of wheeled sports facilities which with committed monies from the capital programme available as partnership funding could be a very attractive proposition to external funders. Officers will work with the CIC to investigate funding opportunities and prepare bids.

Conclusion

12. The skate park facility at Bexhill Down falls short of the aspirations of the skateboarding community and due to its age it is challenging to maintain it in a serviceable condition. The development of the Bexhill High School site provides the opportunity to relocate and develop a new facility for young people at Sidley Recreation Ground.
13. A new skate park at Sidley Recreation Ground designed professionally with the input of the community and alongside an improved BMX track will increase user satisfaction, enable participation in both sports to grow and reduce the on-going maintenance burden on the council. Working with the emerging CIC and other key stakeholders will maximise the potential to secure external funding.
14. The addition of a MUGA will provide an all-weather surface for informal sporting activities to take place free of charge throughout the year; an opportunity that is not currently available anywhere in Bexhill at present.
15. Together, the facilities will bring into use an under-utilised area of Sidley Recreation Ground and will significantly increase the recreational value of the open space to the local community and the wider town.
16. At this moment it is not known whether the Council can secure any external contributions from funding bodies or the local community. Therefore, apart from the contribution of just under £100,000 from S106 monies, the Council will have to commit up to £200,000 of its own resources to deliver the project.

17. Members have agreed to fund other similar projects in Rother through the Community Grants programme. The basis of such funding has been that match funding or at least a contribution to the project is obtained from other sources. Members may therefore wish to consider a similar arrangement for this project.

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director of Business Operations

Risk Assessment Statement

There is a risk that some residents may not be supportive of the new facilities due to concerns about the potential for detrimental outcomes including noise and anti-social behaviour. A considered approach to design and compliance with the Planning process will reduce the possibility of such concerns to be realised.

Sidley Recreation Ground is subject to a Deed of Dedication safeguarding its public recreational use under the Fields in Trust's (FIT) QEII Playing Fields scheme. The proposed new facilities would significantly increase the recreational value of the site and FIT have confirmed that there is no conflict with the Deed of Dedication. The introduction of a long term lease instead of the proposed management agreement for any of the new or existing facilities would require public open space to be disposed of and could meet with objection from Fields in Trust.

There is a risk that the s106 monies needed to fund the MUGA will not be received in the future.