

Subject:	Skatepark
From:	Claire Wilding
Date:	4/12/23
For information and decision	
<p><b>Summary of decisions or actions requested:</b></p> <p>The skatepark consultation had 46 responses, almost all were positive about the general idea of a skatepark extension. However we are struggling to find enough people to play an active role to make the project viable, and there are some fairly technical decisions to be made about skatepark design.</p> <p>I propose that over the next few months we should concentrate on improving the existing skatepark, by completing work to cut back overgrown trees and bushes and improve safety and visibility. (Please note we do not intend to cut back or remove mature trees, however there is a lot of hazel coppice that has not been cut for years, and along with other shrubs has now created a high, dense thicket).</p> <p>We should revisit the idea of the extension after the election and review whether we have enough people on the Council and in the community who will be able to take an active role.</p> <p><b>The Council is asked to agree a budget virement of £1,200 so that cutting back overgrown trees and bushes around the skatepark can take place this winter.</b></p>	
<p><b>Financial implications:</b> Expenditure of £1.2K which would be moved across from unspent hedge cutting and town maintenance budget lines.</p>	
<p><b>Communications:</b> We should give a low key update in the next Chronicle article, and then consider after the election whether we want a big push to get more people involved.</p>	

### **Maintenance and repairs**

We recently had repairs made to the worst areas of damaged surface, which has improved safety and usability. However the repairs weren't as extensive as we would have liked, so we need to plan for more work over the next couple of years. We should try to repair what we can through volunteers and/or our usual contractors, as using a specialist skatepark company is expensive, and may not always be necessary (particularly for areas that aren't actively skated on, e.g. cracks where the surface joins a wall).

We have not made much progress on cutting back overgrown bushes and creating the second entrance, and we think this is too big a job for volunteers. There is £1K for the

skatepark in next year's budget, however, due to nesting season we would have to wait for autumn/winter 2024 for any major work on trees and hedges.

Lisa has established that it is more cost effective to do all the cutting back in one go, because we will need to hire a wood chipper to dispose of the green waste. Lisa has obtained a quote for the work (£1.2 K) and has suggested that a budget virement would be possible so that we can bring the work forward to Jan/Feb 2024, i.e. this financial year. This would involve using unspent money from hedge cutting and town maintenance.

We continue to have problems with broken glass and litter, although this has improved a bit, and we have some active volunteers who are very good at clearing up mess that does occur.

### **Skatepark extension**

The consultation on the skatepark extension received 46 responses which were overwhelmingly supportive of the general idea. One respondent opposed the skatepark expansion because they felt we should get litter and vandalism under control first, the remainder were in favour, though there were some concerns about car parking. There were responses from skatepark users (adults and young people), near neighbours and parents of skatepark users.

A number of comments were made on the detail of the design, including: that a half bowl or full bowl would be a better alternative, the design did not incorporate sufficient run up space, and the new elements did not flow well.

The next steps in the project, if it is to go ahead, are to finalise the design, seek planning permission, obtain quotes and apply for grants. Our preference would be to hire a contractor who would deal with the design questions as part of their brief, since we do not have the expertise. However this gets us into a "chicken and egg" problem whereby we can't apply for planning permission until we have the design, we cannot appoint a contractor until we have funding, and we cannot get funding until we have planning permission. Lisa is contacting WODC planning to understand what flex there might be within planning permission as this might provide a way through.

One difficulty is that we are struggling to find enough people to make up a task and finish/project group. Lisa and I do not want to drive the project by ourselves given our lack of expert knowledge (and time). Clearly it is quite a large project.

My top priority at this stage is to improve the existing skate park, and therefore I am proposing that we concentrate for now on cutting back the overgrown bushes and creating the second entrance. We can put the extension on the back burner for now and reconsider after the next election whether there is sufficient interest in the Town Council and the community and whether there are enough people willing to take on a role and drive the project forward.