PETITION - FREE COMMUNITY BMX / SKATEPARK

To: Council - 12 July 2012
Main Portfolio Area: Community Services
By: Sport & Leisure Officer
Classification: Unrestricted
Ward: Margate Wards

Summary: To report receipt of a Petition from Citizens of Thanet requesting a public skate park for community use. They state a need for one rather than a desire and hope the council would either provide land and maintain facility, or at best, fund, construct and maintain as the council would for any other leisure facility or general use area.

For Information

1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 The Council received a Petition containing 1247 signatures asking for a skate park to be built in Thanet:

PETITION – FROM CITIZENS OF THANET:

"We the undersigned as citizens of Thanet, Kent, support the development of a free public skate park within our County.

We recognise the need for and the benefits of a free public skate park and believe the Council at the very least provide suitable land and agree to maintain the skate park after construction, and at the most, fund, build, and maintain the BMX/ skate park just as it would a basketball court, tennis court or other public general use area."

1.2 After Democratic Services considered the petition that was submitted, I can confirm it contained 1247 valid signatures. We did not accept signatures that were not accompanied by an address as outlined within our petition scheme and hence 81 were rejected. In addition, democratic services did not accept the letter of support from St Saviours School as there were no accompanying signatures. However as previously discussed with the group, the Council accepted signatures which were accompanied by the name of a school.

1.3 Westgate mini skate park was built some years ago and was intended primarily for skateboards and scooters as preferred by local children consulted at that time. Ramsgate Swimming Pool also has a mini skate park area that is in need of serious refurbishment. Certainly the future is concrete bowls and ramps as at Deal and Seasalter. From a bike user point of view, the existing ramps at Westgate will be on the small side.
1.4 There are three separate lobbies for a concrete skate park – Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate. Skate park provision ranges from £32k to £500k so there are plenty of options.

1.5 Raising the top amount of funding for an iconic skate park would mean only one location somewhere with Jacky Bakers being the preferred location by officers due to it being central and not residential. We have some documents that quote for various sizes of a skate park (see appendices).

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 The Ramsgate lobby appear to be more organised and are co-ordinated via local police community support officers.

2.2 The Broadstairs lobby has the full support of the town council and is a hot topic at the moment due to the bandstand issues. TDC are resurfacing the old dis-used tennis courts at Memorial Recreation Ground so it can host our mobile skate park over the summer. This resurfacing will cost £12,800.

2.3 Parks & Outdoor spaces are funding the majority of this project (£6,800) with £3000 coming from community development fund and £2500 coming from Broadstairs Town Council. Young people will raise £500 towards this project too. This has occurred due to town council and young people’s involvement.

2.4 TDC Sport Matters will be funding mobile skate park sessions twice a week throughout the summer at a cost of £80 per session. 6 weeks x £160 = £960.

2.5 Our former leisure officer had a couple of exploratory meetings with local interest in Margate a while ago which were well attended by young people. Subsequently there was little actual support to form a community group and carry out the hard work to drive on and support funding bids etc. Mr Goodall was the exception.

2.6 Most funding bids these days need to be made through a voluntary community group so there has to be a commitment, support and staying power for such a project. PCSO’s have been very active in helping Mr Goodall get it to this point.

2.7 We can certainly offer technical and funding expertise support etc, but at the moment, we have no capital budget for this project. We would require a community group to lead and secure the funding with our support.

2.8 The sports facilities work that Martyn Cassell; Sport & Leisure Manager did last year with Sport England, indicate that there is only likely to be justification for one ‘super concrete’ skate park in the district.

2.9 However, a medium sized young person’s facility could be built and installed for £55k which includes a parkour facility. Parkour and skate parks are both very popular for young people.

2.10 Regarding our sports facilities strategy, the ideal location would be Jackey Bakers playing fields as it is close to Westwood Cross and most young people can access it with ease without the whole territory issue arising.
Another advantage is that it is not surrounded by houses and is in use most nights of the week with the current astro-turf pitch.

2.11 The issue is getting the money together and unfortunately the major capital projects in recent years that have taken up the time have been playgrounds, ball courts and the leisure centres. If there is enough support for a 'super park' then it would elevate it up to the top of our list of priorities.

2.12 Advantages of hosting a skate park / young persons space in Thanet.

1) Sense of ownership & pride of a local resource for the youth community
Gathering a group of creative individuals from many sections of the community can contribute to a sense of ownership of the space. This results in more respect from local users and lessens risk of vandalism whilst positively contributing to the leisure offer of the town.

2) A healthy & exciting challenge
The personal challenges offered by extreme sports create enjoyment through learning how to overcome obstacles and use energy creatively. In an encouraging social environment, this excitement is a positive way of promoting exercise and maintaining good health.

3) Existing urban architecture
Skate parks and parkour areas are designed to be sympathetic to the local environment, whilst giving an intriguing visual focus, and preserving other public spaces. The damage to town landscapes is mainly due to ‘grinding’ along kerbs, benches and low walls and this often occurs because skaters and BMX riders have no where else to go.

4) A safe and attractive place for young people to gather
Providing a positive space for young people is proven to be a constructive way to produce a happier and more vibrant community. These kinds of social and environmental strategies are a vital part of combating street crime and anti-social behaviour.

5) A sport growing in popularity
BMX riding is now an Olympic sport and skateboarding is also being seriously considered. These extreme sports have grown at an exponential rate since the 1970’s. These extreme sports along with parkour (which was heavily featured in the BLINK show and now has it’s own official governing body) are still a rapidly growing area that should be supported and actively encouraged.

6) A street culture based on respect
The skating and BMX culture is based on mutual respect, social networking, artistic expression and an appreciation of the built environment. It’s a way of life that can be learned early, and is proven to positively affect those who take part. This is particularly evident at skate parks, which are nurturing the potential for a more caring community.

7) Bringing the community together
We are all aware of the need to channel young people’s potential, and bring the community together. Time and time again creating a skate park has also helped create a more positive and diverse community, as young people, residents, local councils and MPs unite around a shared vision.
We wouldn’t want to build a skate park to stand alone, but have it compliment existing recreational facilities that are used by a variety of residents, young and old. A Skate & Parkour park would compliment our existing play areas at both Hartsdown dip and Jacky Bakers, along with the sports facilities like the football pitches at Jacky Bakers, tennis courts and basketball court at Memorial Recreation ground, and leisure centre and play area at the Hartsdown dip site.

3.0 Options

3.1 Council can decide to;

- Take the action requested in the petition
- Consider the petition at a Cabinet meeting
- Hold an inquiry into the matter
- Undertake research into the matter
- Hold a public meeting
- Hold a consultation
- Hold a meeting with petitioners
- Hold a meeting with potential funding partners
- Refer the petition to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

4.0 Corporate Implications

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The normal process for approval of a capital scheme is to submit a capital bid form to the Asset Management Group. This is required in order to score the project within the capital programme against key priorities and limited available resources.

4.1.2 Due to the lack of capital receipts being generated in the current economic climate the project is unlikely to be approved if funded from TDC capital resources.

4.1.3 There are two alternative funding streams available to fund the project.

4.1.4 A new fund from Sport England is being launched on 23rd July called “Inspired Facilities”. This fund allows for a local authority to bid for a grant of between £20k and £150k, although the authority is required to put in pound-for-pound match funding.

4.1.5 The authority could consider utilising the remaining Performance Reward Grant monies as match funding for the above or to fully fund the project should a bid be rejected.

4.1.6 There should be sufficient budgets within the repairs fund to maintain the skate park going forward, however there would be some small revenue budget pressures, such as insurance.

4.2 Legal

4.2.1 No issues with this from a legal perspective.
4.3 **Corporate**

4.3.1 Corporate plan theme 9 recognizes the importance of Sport and Leisure facilities in promoting healthy lifestyles for residents especially in upgrade options for outdoor facilities.

4.4 **Equity and Equalities**

4.4.1 None at this stage

5.0 **Recommendations**

5.1 That one of the options identified at paragraph 3.1 above be adopted.

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**Contact Officer:** James Gregory: Sport & Leisure Officer, Community Development, ext 7728

**Responsible to:** Martyn Cassell, Sport, Leisure & Interim Community Safety Manager, ext 7367

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**Annex List**

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Expert arguments for skate parks</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Design for skate and parkour park for Hartsdown Dip at a low cost of £55K</td>
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**Background Papers**

NONE

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**Corporate Consultation Undertaken**

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<td>Legal</td>
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<td>Communications</td>
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