

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport
2.	Date:	2nd December 2009
3.	Title:	Possible new BMX track at Barnsley Road, Thorpe Hesley
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

Following receipt in March 2009 of a petition asking for a BMX track to be provided in Thorpe Hesley, investigations have taken place to assess the feasibility of such a scheme. A summary of findings is presented here.

6. Recommendations

- That Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport notes the content of this report
- That no further development of the proposal takes place unless a means to maintain and manage a BMX track can be identified
- That a reply is sent to the lead petitioner explaining the Cabinet Member's decision.

7. Proposals and Details

In March 2009 a petition was submitted on behalf of 207 children in Thorpe Hesley who felt that a BMX track was needed within the village, possibly at Barnsley Road, to help meet local demand for improved recreational facilities for children. It was noted that the village lacked adequate children's play facilities. It was also suggested that a BMX track would help to tackle childhood obesity in Rotherham North Assembly Area that has the lowest life expectancy for males and females in the borough.

There are few dedicated BMX tracks in Rotherham. However, the borough's principal facility of this sort is located at Little Common Lane in Kimberworth, also in Rotherham North Assembly Area, approximately 3.5 km from Thorpe Hesley. However, it is understood that parents of young children are unwilling to allow them to travel to Kimberworth.

The Play Pathfinder programme identified the Barnsley Road site as a location for a new equipped children's play area, planned for installation during 2009-10. However, there has been some uncertainty over the summer months about the suitability of the site following representations from local residents who are concerned about existing nuisance behaviour issues in the area. Any progress would also be dependent on how new play facilities could be accommodated alongside existing playing pitches. Consequently, a decision on whether such a facility could be developed on the site, and where, was not resolved until the Play Pathfinder Project Board confirmed in September 2009 that the play area should go ahead, subject to existing football pitches being relocated.

The outcome of the above deliberations has been awaited in considering how to take forward the BMX track proposal. Whilst there is a further area that could be used to the north side of a hedge running across the site, the concerns expressed by residents about anti-social behaviour must be considered.

A BMX track would bring additional maintenance needs. Depending on the preferred design, these would be likely to include strimming of vegetation on slopes, weed control, litter picking, checking the track itself, routine maintenance of the track surface and reactive repairs. It should be noted that the revenue budget available within Culture and Leisure for grounds maintenance and play area maintenance is constrained, and it would therefore not be possible to ensure adequate standards of maintenance if the Service were responsible for a new BMX track.

Other management issues can arise, particularly around anti-social behaviour and conflict between different user groups. Where a facility such as this is provided, the SNT should have a key role to play in helping to manage any such issues in these cases. The BMX track in Kimberworth was managed by a community club for several years after its opening. Sadly, it has become increasingly difficult for the club to sustain the level of funding needed to maintain the site adequately.

Development of a BMX track would be subject to planning consent.

8. Finance

The capital cost of developing a BMX track would depend on its size and specification. However, based on the cost of the facility at Kimberworth, it is estimated that it could cost in the region of £50,000. Culture and Leisure Service does not have a budget for such schemes, and it would therefore be necessary to identify and pursue external funding. It is also likely that initial funding would be required to enable an outline scheme to be designed and costed to support a main funding bid for implementation of the scheme. It is estimated that this would be likely to cost up to £5,000. Again, funding would have to be identified to allow this to be progressed.

It is difficult to estimate the revenue cost implications of managing and maintaining a BMX track without an outline scheme being available. However, it is likely to amount to between £5,000 and £10,000 per year. Current Culture and Leisure budgets for grounds maintenance and play area maintenance are limited, and are already needed to meet commitments arising from the Play Pathfinder programme. Therefore, maintenance of a new BMX track could not be carried out by Culture and Leisure at this time.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There are known to have been anti-social behaviour issues on the proposed site, and these might affect the sustainability of a new BMX track.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Provision of a BMX track would meet the following priority:

- **Rotherham Alive** by creating a significant new opportunity for children and young people living in Thorpe Hesley to enjoy active recreation.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Planning, Legal and Financial Services have been consulted in the writing of this report..

Contact Name : *Phil Gill – Green Spaces Manager*
Extension 2430, e-mail Philip.gill@rotherham.gov.uk