

## Agenda Item 4

### For decision – Proposal for new Skatepark in Mary Baily

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#### Summary

The existing Skatepark is nearing the end of its life and there is an opportunity to relocate within the Mary Baily park to a location that is not next to residences and build a new modern facility with much greater engagement potential. This would be a community driven project of high complexity lasting 18 months or longer with costs up to £400k. Similar local projects have benefitted from very high levels of grant and local fundraising. A key contractor would need to be selected to oversee the installation and enable an inclusive co-design approach. FTC's contribution could be a project manager, the funds that enable a fundraiser to be recruited and a possible loan to cover any funding shortfall or match funding needed.

#### Background

The existing upgrade to the Skatepark in Mary Baily was installed 13 years ago, at a cost of £34k.

*Skate jam at existing Mary Baily Skatepark*

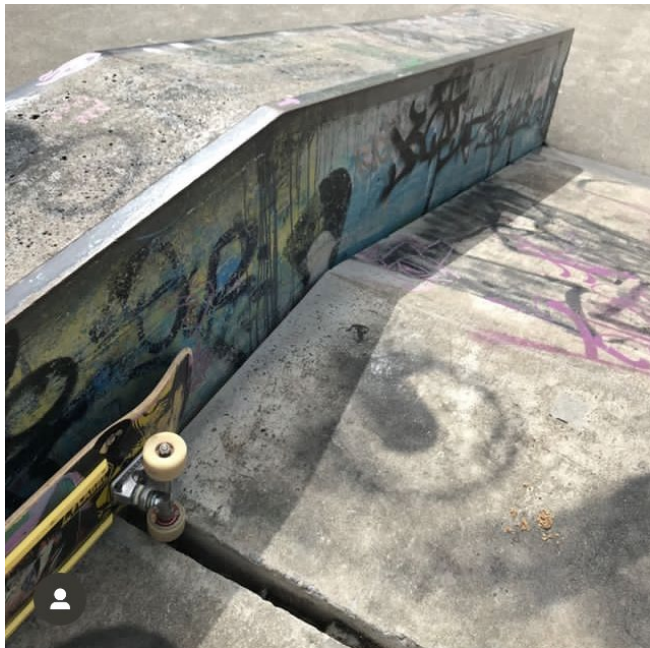


*Current location of Skatepark in Mary Baily*



It is now showing its age both in terms of repairs needed and as compared to the potential appeal of new designs.

*Example of Skatepark repairs needed to aging concrete*



There is an active Skatepark community keen to support a project for a wholesale redesign of the facility and this report is a proposal for how a refurbishment could be undertaken.

**Fit with Play Strategy and community priorities**

Frome Town Council commissioned a Play Strategy in 2021, updated in March 2025, [Play Strategy Update](#)

*FTC Play Strategy*





This sets out the council's ambition to create an inclusive playful town that is engaging for all genders and ability. It recommends that spaces be developed with the aim of promoting inclusion, risk and challenge.

The development of a new Skatepark at Mary Baily aligns with this strategy by offering an opportunity for risky play in a space that is managed for safety and helps increase a sense of belonging for all teenagers regardless of gender or protected characteristics. The strategy promotes the principle of inclusive spaces evolving through co-designing, and this would be the cornerstone of the design process for this project.

The picture from the Frome Findings study [here](#) highlights that improving play opportunities for young people is a key community concern with a particular desire for more adventurous play. The need for an improved skate offer is specifically highlighted.

### Researching community priorities



The high regard for Frome's outdoor spaces, and their particular relevance and value for young people, was further underlined by the key finding from recent conversations with School councils across the town.

*Word Cloud showing the priorities of Frome young people and the primary value that Open Space hold*



*Sky Brown winning bronze for team GB at the Paris 2024 Olympics*

Skateboarding is now an Olympic sport and the much higher profile this now brings, and the many role models people encounter at events and through the media, helps inspire the next generation of skaters and is a great motivator for getting involved. Having a leading facility can not only provide highly engaging activities for a group who have voiced a clear need for this but also act as an incubator of talent for a worldwide sport with an Olympic profile.



### Interest and Location

From the consultation that we have undertaken for this project a key finding is that there is widespread support for a Skatepark within Mary Baily. This fits with the more general research mentioned above that young people in Frome feel that there is a particular absence in the town offer for adventurous play.

This research suggests that an engaging Skatepark offer could provide a much needed and wanted play facility for young people.

Options for relocating the Skatepark outside the Mary Baily park were considered but there is no site owned by FTC that would pass the planning criteria. An alternative site would therefore have to be on private land and hence include the purchase or lease costs of the site.

There is also a long-standing tradition going back to the 1990s of Mary Baily being the location for a Skatepark.

To consider the location possibilities within Mary Baily an options review was undertaken with the following results:

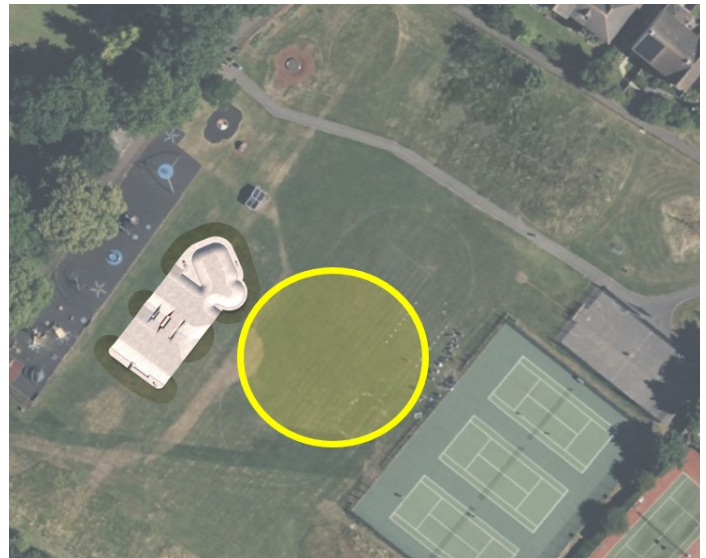
Where (see also inserts)	Pros	Cons
Existing Location	Already a Skatepark there	Very close to residents Would not pass planning
Middle of Mary Baily	Further from residents	Would compromise open nature of MB named in original bequest as well as use by school groups and air ambulance
Near Play Area	70m from residents	Some have questioned proximity to younger play

	Does not compromise open aspect of field area for use by groups/air ambulance	
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*Option of Skatepark in middle of Mary Baily*



*Option of Skatepark near younger play*



From this options review, the existing location would not work due to proximity to residents. While the middle of the field could work from a Skatepark perspective it would compromise the open aspect of the site that is used for school sports days and open space sports such as cricket/rounders as well as preventing its use by the air ambulance.

The option of relocating near the younger Play Area would allow space in the middle of the field to continue to be used as it is currently while also ensuring the Skatepark to be located a significant distance away from residents.

The map below shows this distance to be over 70m from Longleat Court (compared to 10m in the current location). Depending on the exact design and location it would be a similar distance to the nearest residents on Somerset Road.



*Distance from closest point of proposed location to Lingleat Court*



### A note on historic considerations for the proposed location within Mary Baily

The proposed site was the location of a large wooden cabin when the field was first gifted to the town in 1928. This shelter was originally set up to offer support to war veterans returning from the Great War. It later became a community club as part of the YMCA network across the country and featured a football team called the red triangles. Later the building was managed by Somerset Council and in the 1950s it became a satellite site of Oakfield School. It was knocked down in 1958 and only the storage shed now remains.

*'Red Triangles' hut at proposed skatepark location from 1919 - 1958*



It might be fitting if the final design could in some way incorporate red triangles as an acknowledgement of the site's former community heritage.

### Feedback from the Public

Two consultation exercises have been conducted to get insights from park users and non-park users about their views on a Skatepark within Mary Baily and to test views on specific locations. The first took place in the winter of 2024 and considered views on a refurbishment of the Skatepark within Mary Baily and views on this being based where it is now or in the middle of the field.

We received 770 comments to our review of the management of Mary Baily and Victoria Park in general (196 in person, 354 by survey and 220 via social media). Respondents were largely local, across all ages (though notably 30-50) with more women than men.

As part of this wider review, 156 people were interviewed at the Skate Jam event held in November 2024. They were mostly younger (under 25) with the very young represented by attending parent/ carers.

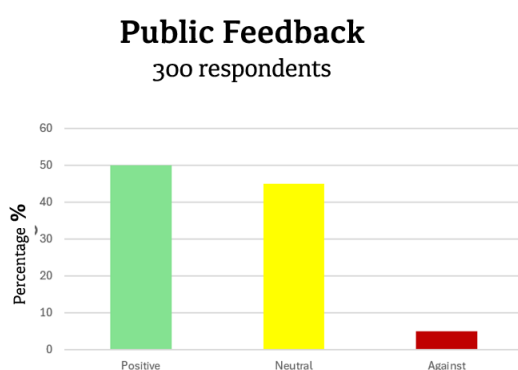
The summary of the key findings relating to the Skatepark:

- Concerns confirmed about current condition: *“outdated,” “rough,” “potentially dangerous,”* and *“shocking”*.
- The opportunity is for a larger Skatepark providing more space for all users
- An upgraded installation would allow a smoother, safer, quieter, more user-friendly surface to create a more engaging and exciting experience
- The Skatepark is seen as a hub for youth and community-building.
- Opportunities to make a new Skatepark offer more inclusive for age, gender, accessibility and experience
- This is echoed in a desire to make the wider park more inclusive through better pathways (drainage), lighting and seating
- Wider views on the park highlighted a desire for more natural features to soften the look, offer shade and improve the wildlife value. Ensuring a natural setting could be built into any new skatepark feature
- 88% had walked to the site

The second Skate jam event and consultation was held in May 2025, and the consultation continued by survey for the remainder of the month. This looked specifically at the proposal of the location being near the younger play area.

Over 300 people replied, and there as an equal mix between users and non-users and there was a mix of males and females.

*Skate jam event 10 May 2025 considering views on location near younger play*



Nearly everyone was either supportive or open to reviewing the proposal if given more information. (45% positive, 50% neutral). Only 1 in 20 was actively against the idea. The discussion topics were around the impact on the play area and questions about how to ensure safety of users of both installations (see below) as well as a request to see further details.

We have sought feedback from some key stakeholders and will continue to engage with relevant parties, such as the Police, when the project moves towards the design stage.

Feedback from these groups has underlined the following considerations:

- The need to ensure the installation is as inclusive for all as possible
- The need to consider the safety of the park for smaller children given its proximity to the younger play area
- The potential for impact on others using the park

### Ensuring inclusivity of all

It is a central requirement of the project that the views of all potential users be considered, and every effort is made to ensure inclusivity to the needs of all groups and protected characteristics. The principle of inclusivity applies at each stage of the project, from this project conception stage and at the codesign stage. [An Equalities Impact Assessment for the project as whole has been undertaken and can be viewed as Appendix 4.1 on the website here.](#)

When the project reaches the co-design stage it will be a central principle for the contractor managing that process to ensure the views of all potential users are considered and the co-design project and workshops will feature as many voices as possible from all groups, ensuring the needs of all protected characteristics are addressed in the final design. This final design will also be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

### Proximity to Younger Play

The concerns expressed about a newly located Skatepark that is closer to the younger play related to whether older children might behave inappropriately near younger children and also whether there could be risks of younger children getting hurt by dashing without attention into a busy wheeled environment.

Looking at comparisons in other towns, there are many examples of Skateparks being near younger play areas (see examples below). The experiences from these suggest that a close physical location between skating and younger play installations can help promote inclusion by lowering any barriers to getting involved; being already near to an 'older' activity can make it less intimidating for a younger child to make an initial approach. The skating community are known for having a culture of being thoughtful towards younger children and when they do seek to join in this extends to helping the less confident to have a go.

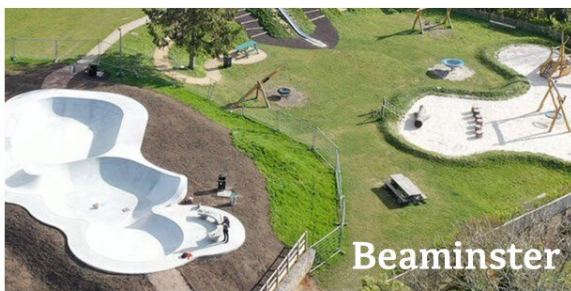
Another advantage of co-location is that parents of children of different age groups can be available to oversee both areas at the same time.

The possible issue of children accidentally running without care onto a busy skating area can be managed with a physical intervention such as a high grass bank between the two areas. A grassy bank such as this often proves to be very popular with waiting groups or friends/family as a place to sit and view the action, such as happens already on the bank beside the existing play area.



In terms of oversight it is worth mentioning that the Police also have several CCTV cameras within Mary Baily.

*Examples of locations where skateparks are near younger play areas*



## Planning considerations

Frome Town Council have confirmed, by obtaining a certificate of lawfulness, that it would be lawful to build a new Skatepark in Mary Baily providing that the specification falls below the threshold that requires planning application being compulsory (including the requirements that no elements be more than 4m high and the total below-ground excavations total less than 200m<sup>3</sup>.) A further planning consideration regarding noise impact would be met by being more than 70m away from residents (the Fields in Trust advice is to be more than 30 meters from residents). Consideration will need to be given to managing water drainage but this is often a standard requirement in Skatepark projects.

## Learnings from projects in other towns

*Skatepark Bradford upon Avon – Opened May 2023*



*Portishead Skatepark, Opened May 2023*



As part of the scoping of this proposal we have reviewed in some detail two Skatepark projects by similar sized local towns: Bradford-upon-Avon and Portishead. This has been very helpful for gauging likely time and cost implications, options for fundraising and helpful insights into project management approaches. Some of the key conclusions being:

- Timeline for the fundraising element is approx. 1 year +
- Initial concerns have generally receded markedly upon installations going live
- Very close working needed between Town Council and Skatepark community. Indeed the key organiser in both cases had been both a councillor and a member of the skatepark community. This aspect will be different in Frome's case.
- In one case the Skatepark community became a Community Interest Company (CIC) and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was drawn up between the two parties which enabled funding applications to be made jointly.
- Some very creative options that involve a high-profile campaign for the whole town can help raise awareness for fundraising

#### Scope for design to include the surrounding location

The scope of the proposed project will include the Skatepark installation itself but also specifically the surrounding area, to include a barrier, such as a bund, between the play area and the park. (A similar bund currently exists next to the existing Skatepark.) As well as being a means of preventing younger children accidentally running onto the surface, a bank can be a very popular viewing area for those waiting to skate or spectators (see image above of Skate Jam event with people congregating on the existing bund).

Below is an example of the bund being a key feature in the very popular nearby Midsomer Norton Skatepark design. As well as including a consideration of a bund or barrier between the existing play and the new Skatepark, consideration should be given specifically to providing attractive socialising spaces and planting for aesthetics and shade.

*Design of popular Midsomer Norton Skatepark with bunds as a key feature*



### Cost and Fundraising

The final price of the project is dependent on the final design which is not known at this stage. However, as seen above, a guideline estimate can come from similar projects, which suggests a cost up to £400k is probable.

A project of this scale takes time to design, consult, fundraise and build. However, one step that adds time to some projects, which is not needed in this case as we already have a certificate of lawfulness, is to gain planning consent.

The fundraising aspect has been one of the most significant aspects of similar projects. The community group has already secured approx. £10k for the project through existing fundraising efforts

While £400k is a very significant sum, there are significant sources of potential funding available and the following are illustrative examples of how other projects have secured funding:

- Lottery (with a very strong community voice) - £100k+
- Veolia (land fill tax) - £75k
- Principal local authority – match funding for Town Council contribution - £50k
- Crowdfunding including sizable contributions from Sport England, UK Cycling and housing associations - £50k
- Local Trust - £50k
- Public Auction event for custom designed decks made by local artists - £20k
- Grant from Medlock Charitable Trust - £20k



- Business sponsored plaques at Skatepark - £10k

The project works include decommissioning the old site and returning to parkland. This area may then be subject to a separate co-design project to re-imagine how best to make the space engaging.

### Timescale

It is likely that co-design and the fundraising to secure the approx. £400k total needed will take in the order of 12-18 months with the build being another 6 months. For comparison, the £280k Bradford-upon-Avon Project took 2 years and the £360k Portishead project took 15 months. It is likely that the scale and potential appeal of the project will make this a high-profile endeavour across the town for this period.

### Governance of the project by FTC as the landowner and installation manager

FTC will not seek to be the decision maker on many of the project's specific details (such as which elements go into the design brief). However, as FTC's has the role of landowner, liability manager and asset maintainer this does require that FTC has the final sign off approval at key project stages. These include:

- The tendering brief for appointing the contractor
- The selection of the contractor
- The final design ensuring that it aligns with our Play Strategy and our policies on inclusivity and the process ensures effective community wide participation

### The design process

Once a project is underway one key strand of the work will be the design process itself for the Skatepark. It will be a requirement that this be as participatory and inclusive as possible (as noted above) to ensure that the wishes of those who will be using the site and the needs of all protected characteristics go towards shaping the final installation.

There are of course constraints set by the location, by planning, and by cost. However, we expect the successful contractor to undertake highly participatory design workshops where constructive and creative input is guided by clearly setting out these constraints.

*Conceptual images of a Skatepark, produced by Maverick*



## Project Management

A key question to be decided is how the project will be co-ordinated and managed. In the two case studies we have reviewed there was a well-placed member of the Skatepark community team who was also themselves a councillor. The situation in Frome is that there is a very active Skatepark group and a council that is keen to explore options and, subject to this proposal being adopted, keen to enable the project to move forward. However, there is not one individual that sits in both groups.

There may be options for the two groups to work more closely together such as, for instance, in Portishead where the community group set themselves up as a CIC and this allowed for a Service Level Agreement to be set up between the council and community group. However, even with such closely aligned work, there is still the need for a key individual to take the lead.

To manage the project in our situation the recommended option is for Frome Town Council to project manage in-house and recruit an external fundraiser as a fixed term post or as a contractor. See below for further details.

## The Tender Process

Once we have agreed the parameters of the project this will go out to national tender and a contractor will then be chosen. In managing the project up to this tender stage, as is common for complex projects, we are receiving pre-tender specialist advice to help guide this pre-

tender process. This project management aspect is considered below as separate from the fundraising work.

### Funding and staffing options appraisal

The key factor for the success of the project has been identified as the need to source £100k's of funding. There are a number of possible approaches to secure the funding as well as securing the capacity and skills/expertise to enable this to happen.

#### Option 1 – the Safety Net

Option 1 is a standalone option and should be considered separately to the other three options below. It is not about how the project is managed but rather it is a means of helping to limit risks of non-completion by ensuring that the project goes ahead at pace even if there is found to be a funding shortfall. There could be a shortfall either because the funding streams are not sufficient or because the eligibility criteria requires match funding.

The principle is that a shortfall that risks delaying or stalling the project could be met by an FTC Public Work Loans Board (PWLB) loan. The possibility of accessing funds from a loan would act as a funding safety net – it would only be used if needed. By ensuring there was a viable option in place if the project faced a shortfall this would help to ensure that the project could move forward at maximum pace, and avoiding the risk of stalling, and thereby allowing a greater chance that the project timescale might be of the 18 months order rather than the risk of being 2 years or even longer.

The proposal is to agree the principle that a loan *could* be taken out, for a maximum of £400k. The actual amount of a future loan could be any level up to this maximum (e.g. £100k or £200k) as deemed necessary, or indeed no use made of a loan at all. The decision being taken is only the *principle* that FTC can use a PWLB loan.

Any loan amount would be then subject later to final Council approval. The loan level would be based on evidence from the fundraising work of any possible funding shortfall identified once the project was live for a period of time (for instance after 6 months).

For a PWLB loan option to be a possibility for this project, the principle has to be decided at this stage because the loan application process takes upwards of 6 months and an application window is closing shortly. It is an eligibility requirement for a PWLB loan application that it has been approved and minuted by the Council. If agreed, the process for applying for a PWLB will commence immediately. But to be clear, by agreeing at this meeting to take out a loan doesn't mean that FTC will actually be taking one out – it gives the council the option to do so to make up a funding shortfall.

For information, to understand the scale of the total PWLB burden, the repayment total for all FTC loans is currently £133k and is going down. The decrease is because older loans are coming to the end of their term (three of the Cheese & Grain development PWLB loans end during 2026 and 2027). As a consequence, if the repayments for a Skatepark PWLB loan were added, the increase in the revised total for all loan repayments would be limited.



As a worked example, looking at the worst-case scenario of a maximum PWLB loan to cover all costs of £400k loan (which is not envisaged), with a 15 year term, such a loan would cost FTC £38.4k per year.

Looking at the total PWLB loan repayment costs because the total is reducing over the next two years, even with a maximum Skatepark loan, the total FTC repayment burden from PWLB loans by 2028-29 would be just £8.8k higher than they are this year. And a smaller loan might bring that total repayments down below current levels.

Obviously any Skatepark loan repayment would be an absolute sum that FTC is paying annually. It is the limited impact on the total loan burden which is context.

As mentioned above if Option 1 is approved, it is an agreement in principle that allows a process with a long lead time to begin with further council governance built in before a loan is actually taken.

#### Options 2-4 – How to manage the project

Options 2 -4 relate to the way in which we manage the project. Only one of these options is to be chosen and this decision is regardless of whether option 1 is adopted or not.

Essentially there are 3 ways the fundraising workstream can be managed – in house, by the community group, or by bringing in these specialist skills at cost:

- Option 2 – FTC manages in house. However there are high barriers to this in terms of both staff capacity and staff skills. No FTC member of staff has the fundraising expertise or the significant capacity to manage this complex critical element of the project
- Option 3 – The Community Group take on this fundraising role. However essentially the same arguments apply, no member of the skatepark community has the availability or the skills needed to manage the fundraising process.
- Option 4 – Bring in this vital resource at cost. There are people who have specialist fundraising skills so rather than seek to undertake this directly, Option 4 is to bring in these skills to ensure there is both the specialism needed for this critical work but also the capacity

#### How would Option 4 (Bring in the Fundraising expertise) work?

In terms of the funding stream for Option 4 this is proposed to come from the New Projects budget 900-7977 and the New Projects EMR 348. Together these total £45k. The other alternative would be that the funds come from General Reserves.

The person contracted to undertake the fundraising could either be a contractor working to an agreed rate or an FTC fixed-term part-time officer post.

It may be that this resource is most likely to come from a specialist contractor with the fee and resource provided being agreed on a specific case basis (taking into account the above maximum funds available).

However, to provide a guide to the possible indicative costs for a potential fixed term 1 year contractor working 3 days per week for a year, at current staff rates, cost between £33k - £40k (including “on-costs” of pension and NI). A further £1k may be needed for laptop and mobile etc.

The above is illustrative to gauge cost. What is actually being voted on is the *principle* that the fundraising expertise will be contracted in. The specific HR approach to bringing in the personnel skills needed would be decided once the project is live based on research as to who is available and on the terms that would work best for that specific situation (officer post or contractor). This would be decided in consultation with the HR team.

It is important to note that even with Option 4 there is an impact on internal FTC workload as capacity is needed both to manage the fundraising post (be it contractor or fixed term FTC post) and the significant work of managing the project itself (notably the tendering process).

It is proposed that this project, and the two key elements described above, would be jointly managed by the Environment Manager and a lead from the Communities Team.

The ‘opportunity cost’ of this internal resource needed to run the project would impact to some degree on available capacity and the ability of teams to undertake some other projects. Some existing work may have to be re-prioritised as a result.

#### Summary Pros and Cons of all 4 Options

Based on this commentary, a summary of the respective pros and cons of the options is as follows:

Option	Detail of how this might work	Pros	Cons
1- FTC has access to a PWLB loan as a possible safety net to make up any funding shortfall	The council vote to undertake a Public Work’s loan up to a maximum of £400k. The exact amount would only be sought from council once the funding available had been explored (and hence any shortfall was known). This loan cost would be spread over 15 years. Loan cost would depend on the level of any funding shortfall, but the worst-case scenario of a total £400k loan, would result in annual payment of £38.4k (at Aug 25). In this scenario	Acts as a safety net if there is a risk of the project stalling due to lack of fundraising or a need for match funding.  Enables project to proceed at pace with an earlier finish date  Agreeing to the loan does not commit the	The cost of a PWLB loan spread over 15 years

	the total PWLB repayment burden would only increase by £8.8k by FY28/29 as other loans are coming to an end	council to using it	
2- FTC provides the fundraiser/ project manager	A member of staff from either the Environment Team or The Communities Team would be assigned the project manager role. The FTC contribution could fully go towards the project	All FTC funds would be devoted to the project costs rather than project management	Unless priorities of the member of staff were changed there is not the capacity from existing staff to take on the project. No one has specific fundraising expertise
3- The Community undertakes the fundraiser/project manager role	A member of the skatepark community leads on the fundraising and project management	FTC would be enabling the community to deliver a community project. Again all FTC funds would go directly to the project	No one from the community group has the availability or the specific skills to support the complex project for up to 2 years
4- Recruit an external fundraiser	FTC would cover the costs of a new fundraiser post. This would either be the costs to hire a contractor for a period of time or a fixed-term, part-time post. The funding to come from small projects (this year's budget and an EMR)	Enables external skills to be sought for the specialism of fundraising. Allows the person to have the focus and dedicated capacity to ensure the project moves at pace and maximises the chances of a successful outcome	Initially FTC funds go primarily to hiring in fundraising skills. Although this would change if FTC provided extra funding via a loan

Option 1 relates to the idea of a funding safety net to ensure that the project is successful and proceeds at pace whatever the fundraising climate turns out to be.



Options 2-4 relate to the managing the project. Of these, option 4 is the most credible as it brings in the capacity and skills that the FTC team are currently lacking for the critical specialist work of fundraising.

#### Recommendations

1. Approve the plan to relocate the Skatepark to near the younger children's play area
2. Agree to take out a PWLB, in principle, of up to £400k with the precise amount that is to be drawn down to be decided by Council once the total cost of the project is determined and net of any grant funds raised. Noting that the indication is that there are grants available so long as match funding is made available, in this case via a PWLB loan. (Referred to as Option 1 in the report)
3. Allocate from the New Projects budget and EMR (a max total of £45k) to pay for professional fundraising, noting that the exact nature of engaging the specialism (officer post or contractor) to be decided later in consultation with the HR team. Project management and staff/contractor management to be provided from within the existing staff body and the relevant managers be delegated to ensure that there is capacity by reducing other areas of work. (Referred to as Option 4 in the report).