

REPORT OF: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATES: 22nd AUGUST 2019

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MARSDEN PARK GOLF COURSE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Policy and Resources Committee to explore options for the future sustainability of the Marsden Park Golf Course.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to:-
 - a) note the success of the current operational management arrangements for the Marsden Park Golf Course;
 - b) give approval to explore options, including those outlined in the report, for the future sustainability of the Marsden Park Golf Course; and
 - c) agree that a further report is submitted to this Committee in due course with the outcome of this work.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. To explore options for the sustainability of the Marsden Park Golf Club and Course.

ISSUE

Background

4. Councillors will be aware that the Marsden Park Golf Course is one of assets leased to the Pendle Leisure Trust as part of the arrangement for the Trust to operate the Council's various sports and culture assets. The Golf Course comprises an 18-hole course along with a Clubhouse and associated car park.

5. In 2015, as part of the proposals for reducing the subsidy payable to the Trust, the Council agreed to permit the Trust to enter into a management agreement with Reevolution Golf, a company owned by the incumbent Golf Professional, Neil Reeves, to operate the Golf course. This arrangement is at no revenue cost to the Trust but the Trust/Council remain responsible for capital investment in the site.

Current Position

6. Since taking over the operational management of the Golf Course, Reevolution Golf have more than doubled the membership of the Golf Club (from 120 memberships in April 2016 to c250 at the time of writing). At the same time, daily green fee activity (pay-and-play users) has grown month on month.
7. It is apparent that this success is a consequence of Reevolution Golf's specific expertise and knowledge of golf as a sporting, recreational and social activity. In particular, they have worked hard to raise the profile of the Club; indeed, the Professional Golfing Association now use Marsden Park as a venue for their annual schedule of competitions. Alongside the improved usage of the Golf course, and recognising the complementary benefit of the Clubhouse, Reevolution Golf have made some improvements to facilities to make it a more attractive venue for local residents to socialize and to provide a venue for private functions. Added to that, it has become a community venue for, for example, walkers clubs, runners' meetings and other local groups.
8. That said the current building requires significant upgrading to the basic facilities. For example the washroom facilities fail on an almost weekly basis but to modernise it would require the plumbing and electrical systems to be updated. There is also a need to invest in replacement Green-Keepers equipment but there are no suitable dry and secure storage facilities. In addition, the car park is in a poor state of repair and no longer has the capacity to hold the number of vehicles now that the business has grown and is in need of significant investment. Given the limited capital fund held by the Council/Trust, it is not possible to address these issues.
9. Alongside this consideration of the state of the facilities, Reevolution Golf have approached the Council/PLT seeking assurances about their continued involvement in the operational management of the Course. In particular, they are keen to secure a longer term agreement so that they can build on the success they have had and to secure the future sustainability of the Golf Course, not least protecting the employment of the 10 members of staff who currently work at the Club.
10. In considering these matters with Reevolution Golf, they have suggested the following options that, in their view, could generate the necessary funding that could be reinvested back into the Golf Course potentially securing its long term sustainability:-
 - to dispose of a plot of land at the bottom of the course, where the Clubhouse, Car Park and Putting Green currently stand (Townhouse Road) for residential development with a view to developing a new Clubhouse, Green Keepers Shed and Car Park elsewhere on site. In general terms, this would have no impact on the Golf Course and would lead to new modern facilities being developed;

- to re-model part of the course using inert landfill. As Councillors may be aware, the course is particularly undulating and lends itself to being infilled which would allow the redesign of some of the holes to improve the course. Reevolution have had an exploratory meeting with a Landfill Company which has expressed an interest. They have experience of similar golf course development projects.

It is acknowledged that work of this nature would be subject to normal planning rules and any work would be staged to enable the golf course to stay open throughout the redevelopment. Fundamentally, it has the potential to generate a substantial amount of income which could be reinvested in the site leading to improvements in the Golf course and facilities.

11. At this stage, no work has been undertaken to assess the feasibility of either of these options and, indeed, whether there are other options the Council, the Leisure Trust and Reevolution Golf could consider for investment in the site. In view of that, subject to further discussions with Reevolution Golf about funding any feasibility work, the Committee is asked to give authority for further work to be undertaken to explore these options in more detail and that a further report be submitted to this Committee with the outcome of that work.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

12. There are no new policy implications arising from the contents of this report.

Financial

13. At this stage, there are no financial implications. However, exploring the options set out in the report may require feasibility work to be undertaken which may have financial implications, Where any such costs cannot be contained within existing budgets, by the Pendle Leisure Trust or by Reevolution Golg, a further report will be submitted to this meeting seeking additional funding as required.

Legal

14. There are no legal implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

Risk Management

15. There are no direct risk management implications at this stage.
16. This report highlights the need for capital investment in the Marsden Park Golf Course to ensure the facilities are adequate to support the growing membership and usage of the Club. Without this investment, there is a risk that the current operational management of the site is not sustainable.

Health and Safety

17. There are no Health and Safety implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

Climate Change

18. As with health and safety implications, there are no climate change or sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

Community Safety

19. There are no community safety issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

Equality and Diversity

20. There are no equality and diversity issues arising from the contents of this report.

APPENDICES

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None