

KEELE GOLF COURSE

Property Management – Asset Disposal – An audit of Asset disposals has been scheduled in this year's audit plan. A review of asset disposals identified that since the last review conducted in 2013/14 no further property assets have been disposed of. However it was acknowledged that one of the key disposals for the council is that of Keele Golf course. A review was therefore undertaken to ascertain progress to date in relation to this matter.

A report submitted to Cabinet on 6th March 2014, proposed a number of options available for the site, however it was recommended by Officers that it would not be appropriate to go forward with any of the specific options at that time, rather that Members should proceed with a master-planning exercise to determine the optimum long term use for the site whilst addressing the short term operational issues.

It was therefore resolved that;

- Officers be authorised to engage with nearby/adjacent land owners with a view to jointly commissioning a comprehensive master-planning exercise, involving Borough Council owned land in the area in order to establish the most appropriate long term use for the Keele Golf Course site.
- Officers report back on the outcome of the land owner engagement process and to seek approval for a two stage master planning exercise beginning with a scoping report to identify its physical parameters, with any budgetary approval being sought from Council as necessary.
- Officers be authorised to undertake a limited maintenance regime on the basis described in the report until the outcome of the master planning exercise is known.
- Officers be authorised to undertake security measures described in the report.
- Officers be authorised to see expressions of interest in some form(s) of interim use for a period of up to three years.
- Officers keep under review the holding costs attributed to the Keele Golf Course and take all appropriate steps to minimise the same.
- A wider, broader leisure use be kept in mind.

In accordance with the above decisions, the Golf Centre was marketed to let with written expressions of interest invited by 30th May 2014, the outcome of which was reported to Cabinet on 23rd July 2014.

In light of the marketing exercise, it was considered that there was merit in exploring the scope for securing some sort of locally based community recreation uses in the interim period, whilst the commissioning of the master-planning exercise is still proposed in order to identify the most appropriate long term end use for the site taking into account the current Local Plan process as well as service and financial considerations.

The following was therefore resolved at the Cabinet meeting of July 23rd 2014;

- That officers be authorised, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder(s), to undertake a community consultation exercise (for the purpose of informing the master plan) for a period of 8 weeks for initial expressions of interest, this timescale could then be extended to enable these expressions of interest to be expanded upon. The aim of the consultation would be to establish the potential scope for some form of community recreation use of the site in whole or in part on the basis described in the report and that the outcome reported back to the earliest available Cabinet meeting.

Classification: NULBC UNCLASSIFIED

- That in parallel with recommendation (a), officers be authorised to procure the most economically advantageous arrangement for short term grounds maintenance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- That officers be authorised to agree, in principle, the terms and scope of a brief with relevant land owners to commission a master-planning exercise in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, and reported back to Cabinet for approval.
- That the financial resources required as the Council's contribution to the master-planning exercise be sought in accordance with current Financial Regulations.

A review of the Council's Risk Management system GRACE, verified that operational risks in relation to Keele Golf Course are recorded on the risk register as follows;

- Insufficient market interest in the operation at Keele Golf Course.
- Inadequate course maintenance of the golf course.
- Failure to fully consider all the long term strategic options for Keele Golf Course.
- Non-compliance with statutory Health and Safety legislation.
- Additional facilities management costs placing a burden on the Council.

It could be confirmed that all recorded risks are being managed in line with the Council's risk management procedures and that the latest review of all risks was undertaken by the Executive Director of Regeneration and Development in liaison with the Directorate's Risk Champion on 18th July 2014. Mitigating measures and action plans, where necessary, are evident for each risk.

It is expected that a further report with regard to Keele Golf Course will be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting, after which time further audit days will be utilised with regard to asset disposals.