

BUDGET SCRUTINY – MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSES

Report of the Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Commission

SUMMARY OF REPORT

1. To present recommendations and supporting information to the Scrutiny Management Commission on the selected area for budget scrutiny as part of the 2003/04 budget process.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2. Five Options are set out in section 4 of the issues paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That the Scrutiny Management Commission recommend a) Option One to Council Cabinet, namely: the golf courses be retained with incremental improvements being secured through five to ten year re-lets of the management contract and b) Council Cabinet i) use the impending 80th anniversary of the opening of Sinfin golf course as an opportunity to promote both courses and ii) encourage young people and schools to use the golf courses

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 4, conversion to park land, and Option 5, sale, both involve closure of the courses that would deprive local golfers of the amenities available at Sinfin since 1923 and at Allestree since 1930. This loss of amenity would be at no gain to the Council as Option 4 would probably be more costly because of the loss of income from golfers combined with more expenditure operating the sites as park land; similarly with Option 5 the restrictions on use would mean capital receipts would be only a fraction of the value were housing development a possibility.
- 4.2 Option 3, sale as a going concern would retain the amenity but it would mean the Council choosing to take no further role in shaping this leisure activity or influencing the game toward social inclusion.
- 4.3 Option 2, long term partnership to secure major investment, presumes it is desirable to acquire the range of facilities held by the top private and proprietary courses. Few such courses actually possess the full range and several have few more than Derby's municipal courses.

- 4.4 Option 1 is to be preferred as the arrangements appear to be working successfully and maximise the Council's influence in ensuring the courses cater for all types of golfer. The Environment and Sustainability Commission were pleased to hear, and would endorse, the comments of Cllr Repton and Mr Hall that there may be scope to secure greater levels of capital investment in future.
- 4.5 The Environment and Sustainability Commission also believe Council Cabinet should consider marking the impending 80th anniversary of the opening of Sinfin golf course as this provides a special opportunity to promote both courses; targeted marketing should also be considered so as to encourage young people to use the golf courses and this might be partly undertaken through the schools.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 5 The Scrutiny Management Commission agreed a number of discrete budget areas for specific scrutiny at the October 2002 meeting. At their special budget review meeting on 5 December 2002 the members of the Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Commission questioned Councillor Martin Repton, Council Cabinet Member for Leisure and Cultural Services and Geoff Hall, Assistant Director – Works and Engineering, about the operation, usage and finances of the two municipal golf courses. Questions were based on information set out in the attached issues paper prepared by the overview and scrutiny co-ordination officer (OSCer) from information received from Commercial Services, Development and Cultural Services, Cannon Leisure, and the Golf Research Group. The issues paper outlined 5 principal options. This report also includes responses to a survey of other local authorities conducted by the OSCer.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. The entire issues paper deals with the interaction between budget and policy implications; the recommended Option 1 is the continuation of present policy with no direct budget consequences up to 31 December 2005. Beyond then the net cost/profit to the City Council will be determined by the tender prices received when the contract is re-let; the bids submitted in 2005 will be influenced by the actual and projected market for golf.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. For legal implications see paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 re golf courses, paragraph 3.18 as development land, section 4 regarding options. The entire issues paper deals with the interaction between budget and policy implications, however the recommended Option 1 has no direct legal implications.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8. None from the recommended Option 1; none *directly* arising from Option 4. Regarding Options 2, 3 and 5 any sale whether as going concerns or other

uses or any long term public/private partnership would have implications for the Council employed grounds maintenance staff

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There are no environmental implications arising from the adoption of Option 1. All the alternative options set out at section 4 would be likely to have minimal environmental impact because of the restrictions on any alternate use because of the parks designation as public open space

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10. There are frequent references throughout the report to the social inclusion agenda of the City Council, see particularly paragraph 3.2; options 3, 4 and 5 would not be reconcilable with the promotion of social inclusion

Background Papers: