

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY REVIEW BOARD

24 January 2022

Minute Extract

32/21 Allestree Golf Course

The Board considered a report on Allestree Golf Course. This report was presented by the Head of Parks and Active Living, the Strategic Asset Manager and the Director of Property Services.

The Board noted that on 11 September 2019 Cabinet approved the sale of Allestree Hall and agreed that as the sale of the Hall would affect the operation of the Golf course. It was noted that Cabinet had resolved:

- To consult with stakeholders regarding the potential closure of the golf course.
- To undertake an Expressions of Interest Exercise (EOI) to provide an opportunity for third parties to set viable proposals to operate the golf course.
- That if no viable proposal is received, the golf provision ceases and for the course to be decommissioned and absorbed into the existing parkland.

It was reported that a consultation exercise was launched on 16 December 2019 and was open for 14 weeks, closing on 23 March 2020.

It was noted that four bids were received which varied in quality, some providing either basic or incomplete financial information, whilst others were seeking a subsidy from the Council to run the course. Whilst one party did not specify an amount of subsidy required, it was inferred that support of the Council would be required as in their view "... the commercial returns and risks associated with operating a course in a public do not allow there to be a straightforward commercial investment opportunity. Growing the facility into new activities will require civic commitment."

The Board noted that in addition, there were unrealistic assumptions or omissions in the bids, relating to:

- The failure to appreciate the time, cost, and resources to create new/replacement facilities considering the challenging planning environment associated with the Park.
- Limited recognition regarding potential TUPE costs and issues.

It was reported that the outcome of both the consultation and EOI exercises were subsequently considered by the Council's leadership team

ITEM 8

in August 2020 with the exercising of the delegated authority on 2 November 2020, leading to the following decision:

- To note the results of the consultation exercise.
- That no viable business proposals to operate the Golf Course have been submitted.
- That the golf provision at Allestree Park to cease and for the course to be decommissioned and absorbed into the existing parkland.
- The course to be closed on 31 December 2020.

It was noted that after the deadline for submission of bids, and the decision to close had been made, following the publicity around the closure of the course, another party who was experienced in the managing and operating of several golf courses in the East Midlands came forwarded in late 2020 with a proposal to operate the course. Officers were subsequently authorised to evaluate the proposal.

The Council's leadership team following consideration of the bid on 14 January 2021 subsequently resolved:

- Not to proceed with the proposal submitted
- Not to proceed with any other enquiries that may be received in connection with operating the golf course.
- To confirm that the course can be decommissioned and absorbed into the existing parkland.

It was noted that the course was closed on 31 December 2020 and works to decommission it and incorporate into the existing parkland commenced early in 2021.

It was reported that in response to a resolution passed at the Full Council meeting on 21 July 2021, the Councils' Cabinet revisited their decision regarding the closure of the golf course, at their 4 August 2021 meeting, the conclusion of which was that on the balance of the evidence considered, there were not sufficient grounds to overturn its decision of September 2019.

It was noted that in October 2021 an application was made by members of the "Save Allestree Golf Course" Group to the Secretary of State to use his powers under section 98 of Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to direct the Council to disposal of the Allestree Park Golf Course.

It was reported that following consideration of the evidence submitted by both parties the Secretary of State made the following decision

ITEM 8

“On the evidence before him, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the land is being sufficiently used by Derby City Council for the purposes of public parkland, incorporated into the wider Allestree Public Park. For this reason, the Secretary of State has decided that it would not be appropriate for a section 98 direction to be given in this case.”

It was noted that at their meeting of 10 November 2021, Cabinet resolved to start a consultation process regarding the rewilding of Allestree Park including the area that was the site for the former golf course.

The Chair asked to be provided with a copy of the minutes from the Council Cabinet meeting on 11 September 2019. The Strategic Asset Manager agreed to provide this.

A councillor questioned where the estimated cost of repairing the building of c£2.8m had come from. The Director of Property Services informed the Board that this was a listed building and that heritage experts had provided the estimate of c£2.8m.

A councillor asked how the sale of Allestree Hall was progressing. It was noted that the potential purchaser had invested time and money into this sale and that complex issues were being worked through. The Strategic Asset Manager informed the Board that they would be notified when the sale was completed.

A councillor commented that it was disappointing for the Council to be losing this asset. The councillor suggested that the Council needed to improve maintenance of heritage assets to avoid losing any more.

Board members noted that Derby was losing heritage assets and encouraged Cabinet to look at ways to reverse this and to maintain assets.

The Board resolved:

- 1. to note the information provided within the report.**
- 2. to note that Derby was losing heritage assets and to encourage Cabinet to look at ways to reverse this and to maintain assets.**