

**Report of Chief Officer Parks and Countryside**

**Report to Director of Environment and Housing**

**Date: 14 March 2017**

**Subject: Temple Newsam Golf Course Reconfiguration**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s): Temple Newsam	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. This report sets out the rationale for the reconfiguration of Temple Newsam Golf Course from 36 holes to 27 and redirect resources to help improve the quality of the remaining holes in the hope that this will increase golf participation. Any remaining land from the course reconfiguration would then be brought back into the natural habitat of Temple Newsam estate.
2. Whilst acknowledging the benefits that golf can provide, it is also of note that between 2011/12 and 2015/16 there has been a considerable decline in income at Temple Newsam Golf Course from £275k to £139k – a reduction of 49%. This is due in part to a national decline in golf, weather dependant and the courses becoming too challenging for existing participants and for those who are new or entering the sport.
3. Following a four week public consultation period in February 2017 about the proposals to create a new 18 hole golf course and a new 9 hole course, 49 people responded with the majority in support of the proposals being put forward.

**Recommendations**

4. For the Chief Officer of Parks and Countryside to note the contents of the report and to give approval for the reconfiguration of Temple Newsam Golf Course from 36 holes to 27 holes as set out within the public consultation paper and for this work to commence with immediate affect.

## **1.0 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for the reconfiguration of Temple Newsam Golf Course from 36 holes to 27 and redirect resources to help improve the quality of the remaining holes in the hope that this will increase golf participation.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Leeds City Council provides 2 golf sites, namely Roundhay Park Golf Course and Temple Newsam Golf Course and the focus of this report is in relation to the proposed golf course reconfiguration at Temple Newsam and does not affect or impact in any way on the golf course at Roundhay Park.
- 2.2 It is recognised that participating in golf has many benefits – to health and wellbeing, social interaction, education and learning as well as fostering sporting talent, and golf courses like Temple Newsam provide such benefits.
- 2.3 Temple Newsam Golf Course has two 18 hole golf courses, the first of which opened in July 1923 and is known locally as the Lord Irwin course with the 2<sup>nd</sup> golf course which opened two years later, known locally as Lady Dorothy.
- 2.4 It is believed that both courses were designed under the watchful eye of the late Dr Alistair Mackenzie who was born in Yorkshire and was the founder member and designer of Alwoodley Golf Club. He was one of the most prolific golf course architects of his time, who later went onto design St Augusta and other national and international golf courses until his death in 1934.
- 2.5 Part of the original golf course was affected by open coal cast mining and although the original plans for Temple Newsam Golf Course have long since vanished, Dr Alistair Mackenzie believed that golf should be enjoyed by players of all abilities and his guiding principle was to make the most of the existing typology of the land which can still be seen at Temple Newsam today.
- 2.6 Over the last few years, the Council has seen a steady decline in golf participation and by reconfiguring both of the two existing golf courses at Temple Newsam, there is scope to retain the majority of the original holes that are believed to have been designed by Dr Alistair Mackenzie as well as creating a new full size 18 hole golf course aimed at the more experienced golfer and to create a new 9 hole golf course for those who are perhaps new to the sport or for those wishing to have a less challenging course option.
- 2.7 Working in close liaison with Temple Newsam Golf Club, the Council launched a four week public consultation period seeking the views of the public about the proposal to reconfigure the two golf courses from a 36 holes to 27. The closing date for responses was 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and a summary of the results may be found at section 4 below.
- 2.8 The public consultation was not about a proposal to close the courses but to reconfigure the courses, thereby creating a new 18 hole golf course and a 9 hole golf course with a view to re-directing existing resources to help improve the golf

course conditions and any unused land from the golf course reconfiguration would then form part of the natural habitat of Temple Newsam estate.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Whilst acknowledging the benefits that golf can provide, it is also of note that between 2011/12 and 2015/16 there has been a considerable decline in income at Temple Newsam Golf Course from £275k to £139k – a reduction of 49%. This is due in part to a national decline in golf, weather dependant and the courses becoming too challenging for existing participants and for those who are new or entering the sport.
- 3.2 This steady decline if continues is not sustainable for the Council to maintain in the longer term. Working closely with Temple Newsam Golf Club, it is proposed to reduce the number of holes from 36 to 27 to enable the Council to re-direct resources to help improve the course conditions for the new 27 hole course reconfiguration.
- 3.3 The proposed golf course reconfiguration retains the majority of the original course that it is believed Dr Alistair Mackenzie set out in 1923 and the Council continues to support his guiding principles, that golf should be enjoyed by players of all abilities.
- 3.4 Introducing a new 9 hole course is more likely to encourage those new to the sport to participate as well as enabling existing players who are perhaps wishing to seek a less challenging course option and thereby able to continue to participate in golf for longer.

### **4 Corporate considerations**

#### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 A four week public consultation period was undertaken during February 2017 about the proposal to reconfigure Temple Newsam Golf Course and a copy of this consultation paper together with a detailed summary of responses is attached to this report at Appendix A.
- 4.1.2 The public consultation paper was made available via the Council's website and hard copies were also available on site at Temple Newsam both in the Club House and at the golf shop. The consultation was also advertised using local press releases, email and using other means of social media, such as Face Book and Twitter.
- 4.1.3 The Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability and Ward Members were consulted and are in support of the proposals being put forward.
- 4.1.4 In total 49 responses to the consultation were received, the majority of whom were active golf participants and in support of the proposal to reconfigure the golf course from 36 holes to 27 as set out within the consultation paper.
- 4.1.5 Only 16 respondents objected to the proposals being put forward who cited course conditions leading to the fall in golfing numbers, lack of promoting the

Mackenzie designed course and lack of promoting golf generally. Other points raised were along the lines that the proposal being put forward would not encourage more players and that the Club history needed to be retained.

- 4.1.6 Fears were also expressed about closing 9 holes would eventually lead towards a complete course closure and with the historic connection, the reconfiguration should not be done to save money.
- 4.1.7 Other respondents felt that a course reconfiguration was a wrong response to the issue and that more needed to be done to promote the golf course and link with colleges so that the course could be used for training students to help improve course conditions and save money.
- 4.1.8 Rather than a golf course reconfiguration, ideas being put forward included putting more effort into the maintenance of the course, including improving the club house facilities and consideration to reduce the season ticket prices. Encourage ladies, juniors, freeze charges, invest more and improve course drainage.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

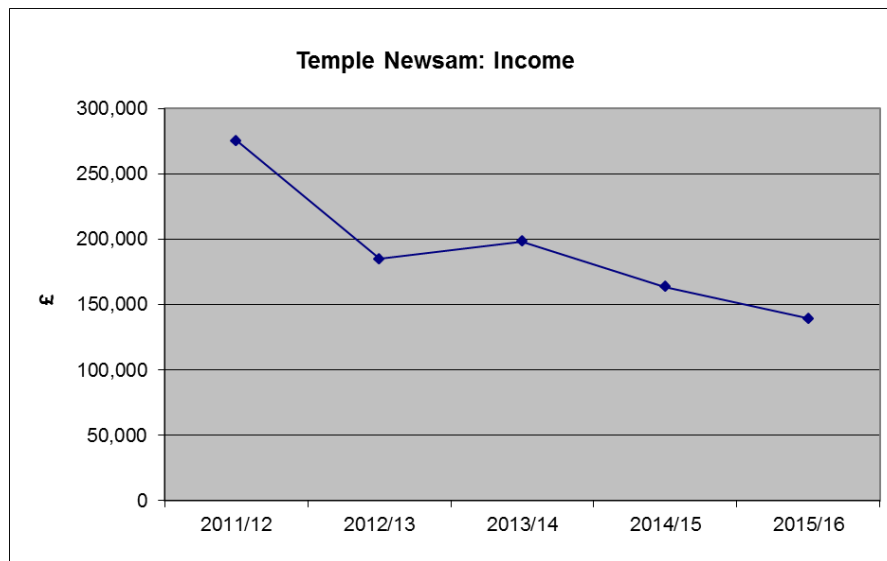
- 4.2.1 Working in close liaison with the Club, the Council wants to encourage more golf participation with a focus on under represented groups which include, BME communities, ladies, youth and seniors.
- 4.2.2 The proposal to reconfigure the course will make provision for those who would welcome a less challenging course option that will enable them to enjoy this sport for longer in life and is also more likely to encourage those who are new into the sport to use this as an introduction before embarking on the more challenging course for the more experienced golf players.
- 4.2.3 There is scope to redirect existing resources to help improve course conditions and encourage more golf participation.

## **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

- 4.3.1 The golf course reconfiguration supports the Council's role in improving health and reducing health inequalities as set out in the Leeds Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Best Council Plan.
- 4.3.2 Retaining a municipal golf provision also contributes towards the Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 which sets out a revised vision for the city with the specific objective for Leeds to be the best city in the UK by 2030.
- 4.3.3 In establishing this vision one of the top priorities to emerge from consultation was for the city to be a cleaner greener city. Aspects of this priority can be found in all of the areas in which the vision is intended to make a difference, although specific reference can be made to the commitment within the vision for Leeds to be the best city to live with good green spaces where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The following graph illustrates the decline in income received on a year by year basis at Temple Newsam.



- 4.4.2 Whilst acknowledging the benefits that golf can provide, it is of note that between 2011/12 and 2015/16 there has been a considerable decline in income at Temple Newsam Golf Course from £275k to £139k – a reduction of 49%. This is due in part to a national decline in golf, weather dependant and the courses becoming too challenging for existing participants and for those who are new or entering the sport.
- 4.4.3 This steady decline in income is not a sustainable position in the longer term. Reducing the number of holes and redirecting existing resources to help improve course conditions has the potential to increase golf participation and income.
- 4.4.4 Feedback from the consultation process also raised some concerns in relation to season ticket prices and whether this ticket option still represented best value for money in light of the reduction in the number of holes.
- 4.4.5 It is not proposed to make any changes with season ticket charges as this still represents best value for money as the season ticket holder may play an unlimited number of rounds at two golf locations. For those who may not wish to play an unlimited number of rounds or who feel that that the season ticket no longer represents good value for money, there is another ticket option to play golf by purchasing a green fee for each round that is played.
- 4.4.6 Set within the context of the Council’s budget, among the broader financial considerations, the Council continues to face serious budget pressures and has experienced a reduction of core funding in the region of £214m from central government between 2010/11 and 2016/17 budgets with a further reduction of £25.1m in 2017/18. This has also impacted on the Parks and Countryside service, with a £3.8 million budget reduction between 2010/11 and 2016/17. This equates to a reduction of 32% and further reductions are expected to be required over the coming months.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, access to information and call In**

- 4.5.1 There is no legal obligation for the Council to provide a municipal golf provision. However, the Council acknowledges the importance to encourage sport participation wherever possible. There are no legal implications in relation to this proposal.

## **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 There is a need to reduce the number of holes and re-direct existing resources to help improve course conditions. Failure to take any action to help stem the decline in golfing numbers leads to a real risk of the service being unable to keep within budget.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 With the increasing decline in golf participation, it is not a sustainable position for the Council to continue to operate two 18 hole municipal golf courses at one location. There is also a need to improve course conditions and by doing so there is a potential to increase golf participation and income.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 For the Chief Officer of Parks and Countryside to note the contents of the report and to give approval for the reconfiguration of Temple Newsam Golf Course from 36 holes to 27 holes as set out within the public consultation paper and for this work to commence with immediate effect.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 Consultation paper and golf course layout for the new course reconfiguration.
- 7.2 Detailed summary of the consultation results.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.