

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Strategic Director, Regeneration, Environment & Growth

Council: 29 January 2020

**Subject: Report arising from motion to Council – June 2019:
Dalmuir Municipal Golf Course fees**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide a response to the motion agreed at the West Dunbartonshire Council meeting held on 26 June 2019 regarding Golf Club fees

2. Recommendations

2.1 Council is asked to:

- i. note the consultation activity which has taken place to date;
- ii. agree that Officers implement the proposals identified in section 4.10 numbers i), ii) & iv) of this report as a means to increase membership numbers and reduce the current net cost of operating the facility;
- iii. agree that Officers explore the potential for Community Asset Transfer of Dalmuir Municipal Golf Course as a long term sustainable option;
- iv. agree that Officers explore the option of developing the Dalmuir Bowling Pavilion into a café clubhouse, business case development costs to be contained in internal budgets; and
- v. note that a report will be provided to a future IRED Committee on the findings of the above recommendations iii) and iv)

3. Background

- 3.1** In March 2019 as part of the 2019/20 budget setting meeting, Council agreed to increase all golf fees by 20% to better recognise the value of the service provided, whilst remaining lower than local competitors. It was anticipated that this would raise an additional £20k in revenue. The implementation of this increase in fees resulted in season ticket sales reducing from 183 in 2018/19 to 146 in 2019/20. The overall income generated remained the same.

- 3.2** Following a discussion at the Council meeting of 26 June 2019 in relation to a motion by Councillor Douglas McAllister regarding Dalmuir Golf Club fees Council agreed:

Council is concerned that many members have indicated that they can no longer afford the costs associated with playing golf at the Municipal course. Council is concerned at the decision to significantly increase charges, which may in fact result in a loss of revenue to this Council.

Council therefore requests that a report is prepared by the relevant official to come to the next meeting of this Council, advising Council as to the effect of the increase to charges in relation to user numbers. Council asks that alternative options are explored in relation to the scale of charges, including reducing the costs associated across all categories, with a view to encouraging greater use of our Municipal course and the potential to encourage new members.

Council asks that our golf professional Stewart Savage and the current membership are consulted in the preparation of the report.

Council notes that Councillor McColl and Provost Hendrie have already held an initial positive discussion with our Golf Pro, Mr Stewart Savage, and are considering a number of really good suggestions he has made around pricing, facilities and promotion of the course.

Council notes that the membership fees are still significantly less than private clubs and day visitor rates are extremely good.

Council requests that a report is prepared by the relevant officers, in partnership with Mr Savage, with a strategy to secure the future of our municipal golf club. No ideas should be off the table and officers should consult elected members and golfers in preparing the report.

The report will be brought back to Council for discussion before the end of the calendar year.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** A recent survey carried out by KPMG has revealed that golf club membership in Scotland is continuing to drop. The report has highlighted that there has been a loss of 29,531 registered golfers in Scotland since 2014. The loss of members has led to a number of clubs being forced to shut in Scotland over the past few years, with others battling to survive.
- 4.2** It is recognised that the golf landscape is very challenging, and some difficult decisions will have to be taken to deal with the decline in participation. Failure to do so will lead to further closures of established golf clubs.
- 4.3** West Dunbartonshire Council has one eighteen hole municipal golf course located in Dalmuir. Over the past three years there has been a steady decline in season ticket sales for the facility, from 183 members in 2017/18 to 146 members in 2019/20.

The 2019/20 membership is as follows:

Adult	70
Junior	0

Senior citizen	25
Over 70's season tickets	51

The charging regime for 19/20 is as follows:

Adult season ticket	£384
Junior season ticket	£70
Senior Citizen season ticket	£135
Adult visitor per round	£14
Junior visitor per round	£7

- 4.4** The following table provides the membership numbers and participation levels over the last three financial years:

Year	Membership Numbers	Membership fee (Adult)	Ad- hoc round fee	No. of member rounds	No. of ad-hoc rounds
2017/18	183	£280	£11	11,385	3,635
2018/19	179	£310	£11.50	11,087	3,482
2019/20	146	£384	£14.00	9,823	3,035

This decline in usage has resulted in reduced income, thus increasing the net cost to the Council to continue to operate the facility. The current level of net cost is £130,000 per year.

- 4.5** To provide financial context, the level of increased memberships and visitor ad-hoc rounds required to reduce the cost is as follows:

Reduction in Cost	Additional members required	Additional ad-hoc rounds required
£30k	90	750
£50k	150	1,250
£100k	300	2,500
£130k	390	3,250

- 4.6** This shows that in order to reduce the net cost, participation levels will have to increase significantly. As well as the financial benefits that this will provide for the Council, it will also have health benefits for participants.
- 4.7** During an 18 hole round of golf 12,000 steps are taken, exceeding the commonly recommended daily target of 10,000 steps. There are also psychological benefits including improved mood, reduced anxiety and increased confidence. Golf is also known to boost social connections and self-esteem.
- 4.8** In order to develop a strategy to secure the long term future of the Municipal Golf Course officers have consulted with the following groups:

- West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust
- Elected Members
- Golf Course Professional
- Resident Clubs (Overton, Clydevue, Radnor and Clydebank Senior Citizens Golf Club).

4.9 During these engagement sessions a range of suggestions were highlighted that if successful could lead to increased numbers of participants using the golf course.

The stake holder feedback included the following comments:

- A competitive pricing structure in line with similar municipal courses;
- Improvement of the facilities; and
- Opportunity for café provision.

4.10 Officers have assessed the feedback from the consultation, considered stakeholder engagement and carried out benchmarking with similar facilities.

Officers would propose the following measures to increase participation levels:

i. The proposed fee structure for 2020/21 to be:

- Adult season ticket - £250
- Junior season ticket - £50
- Senior Citizen season ticket - £125
- Adult visitor per round - £10
- Junior visitor per round - £5

Note : South Ayrshire currently offer a six course package for £327 per year and Glasgow offer a six course package for £220 per year.

ii. Develop a marketing campaign to highlight what is on offer using both WDC and WDLT social media platforms. This will target current WDLT leisure club members, nomadic golfers with no current club affiliation and youngsters looking to take up the sport. The campaign will include the following:

Email

- Existing customers for renewal
- Previous customers – win-back campaign
- WD Leisure customers – integrated package offer

Social Media

- Posts on WDC and WDL Facebook/Twitter/Instagram

WDC Employee Offer

- Promoted via the intranet and payslip advertising

Leaflets and Posters

- WD Leisure sites
- Libraries
- Community Centres and schools
- Press Inserts Lennox Herald, Dumbarton Reporter and Clydebank Post

Digital

- WDC homepage
- WD Leisure App targeted notifications

Plasma Screens

- Church Street
- Clydebank Town Centre Office
- WD Leisure sites

- iii. Officers in the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop a business case to improve facilities. Costs will be contained within existing budgets. This includes the development of the redundant bowling pavilion into a café clubhouse and provision of practice facilities. The business case will determine if a café could replicate the success of the newly opened café at Levensgrove Park. A report will be presented to Council for consideration of the business case.
- iv. Develop a leisure package partnership with West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust to its existing 5,000 members that would include unlimited golf for an additional fee of £200.
- v. Investigate if there is a sustainable option for community asset transfer of the facility. This would require further consultation with users and the development of a business case. The feasibility of this option will be developed by inhouse team and the cost will be contained within existing budgets. A report will be submitted to a future meeting of Council presenting the business case for consideration by members.

5. People Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct people implications resulting from this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 This report identifies a number of proposals that if agreed will have a savings target for financial year 2020/21 of £30,000. This will be delivered by increasing participation levels. The target for the first year is to increase the general season ticket sales to 250, plus an additional 100 leisure club members taking up the golf package; and attracting 30 junior season tickets.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** As detailed in section 4.4 of this report the level of cost to provide a municipal golf course at Dalmuir continues to rise due to a reduction in membership numbers. If measures identified in section 4 of this report are not successful in increasing the number of members there is a risk that the facility could close.

There is a risk that the measures proposed do not result in an increase in membership and that the income is further reduced. On current membership number the loss in income would be in the region of £21,000 including the ad-hoc rounds income.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** An initial screening confirms there is no adverse impact.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** As detailed in the main issues section of this report engagement has taken place with user groups and other interested parties. This has informed the recommendations made in this paper.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** This report supports the Councils Strategic objective of efficient and effective public services that improve the lives of residents.

Richard Cairns

Strategic Director – Regeneration, Environment & Growth

Date: 16 January 2020

Person to Contact: Ian Bain, Greenspace Manager

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All