



Committee and Date

Cabinet

30 November 2016

SHREWSBURY PITCH AND PUTT GOLF COURSE

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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Shropshire Council owns a dedicated pitch and putt golf course adjacent to its wider municipal golf course in Shrewsbury. Sitting beside the overall golf course, the pitch and putt is an open green space equating to 3.95 acres. It is located between Meole Brace roundabout and Bannatyne Health Club. The Council currently operates the facility through a Service Level Agreement with the "golf professional" and employs Shrewsbury Town Council to undertake the grounds maintenance.
- 1.2 This report seeks to agree the future position for the pitch and putt course which in recent years has seen a decline in use. The overall usage of the facility is down by a 1000 visits in the last four years (from a peak of 2590 in 2011.) The area of the course is well located in terms of physical infrastructure and accessibility being adjacent to the inner ring road and the Meole Brace roundabout which serves one of the major routes into the Shrewsbury Town Centre. There is potential for an alternative use on the site which could generate a significant capital receipt should it be declared surplus to the Council's requirements.
- 1.3 Prior to any further consideration it is proposed that the Council consult over the potential closure of the pitch and putt facility.
- 1.4 The overall municipal golf course and its future is not considered within the context of this report, save its relationship with the pitch and putt course.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to approve the commencement of a public consultation on the potential cessation of the pitch and putt golf course with the intention of bringing forward a further paper to consider the outcome of the consultation and to agree next steps.

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3.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 When considering a potential cessation of public amenity and leisure space, the Council will take account of Equalities Legislation, its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, as well as the Human Rights Act as any change will affect the public in its pursuit of leisure activities. An Equalities Impact Needs Assessment will be prepared alongside the public consultation and will consider the potential impact of the loss of the pitch and putt facility to the public and to specific protected groups. This will take into account the level of usage and decline in recent years (of the Pitch and Putt element) and the relationship of the pitch and putt facility to the wider course.
- 3.2 The pitch and putt golf course was registered as an Asset of Community Value on the 14 January 2014; this creates a requirement for the Council, should it wish to sell the site, to delay the disposal for a minimum of six weeks to give the nominating organisation or other qualifying community body time to confirm whether they wish to make a bid; if during the six weeks a request to bid is made, the Council cannot dispose of the asset (other than to a community interest group) during this six month moratorium period. This gives the opportunity for the community group to make a bid for the asset within the six-month period but the owner is not obliged to accept the bid and can dispose of the asset at the end of the period.
- 3.3 It is recognised that the future of the pitch and putt golf course is a matter of public interest and concern. Before any decision is taken on the future of the facility it is proposed to undertake a six-week public consultation plus the period of time associated with the festive break.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Council is continuing to rationalise its estate in accordance with the current Asset Management Strategy and is targeting the release of certain non-core assets which don't support its overall corporate objectives.
- 4.2 Specific operating costs for the pitch & putt are difficult to quantify as the majority of costs (grounds maintenance, management and utilities) are combined within contracts and service level agreements relating to the golf course as a whole, however expenditure can be estimated to be approximately £8,500 per annum. Annual income generated by the pitch and putt facility is currently in the region of £4,600. This means that the facility currently runs at a deficit of approximately £4,000 per annum. This is reflective of the decline in use over recent years.
- 4.3 Should the pitch and putt no longer be operated as a public facility, it may not be possible that net savings of £4,000 per annum would be realised, as full savings would be dependent on the extraction of the pitch and putt facility from each of the wider golf course contracts. Therefore, it may be that there is little or no net revenue saving from closure of the pitch and putt facility, particularly in the short term.

- 4.4 However, as the revenue implications, both of operating the facility and the potential closure, are minimal, they should be considered in the context of the value of capital that could be realised from sale of the site, should this option be considered further.

5.0 Background

- 5.1 The Pitch & Putt facility operates from the site between Meole Brace roundabout and Bannatyne Health Club. Please see the site plan detailed in **Appendix 1**. It is independent of the adjoining golf club although the Club office and professional staff serve both the Pitch & Putt and Golf Course.

6.0 Alternative Options and Appraisal

- 6.1 Three potential options for the future of the pitch and putt golf course are described below.
- 6.2 The Council could continue to operate and subsidise the facility. It is considered that within this option, investment will be required in both improving the facility and in better promoting it to local residents. This option would not necessarily preclude any alternative ownership or management arrangements being considered in the future.
- 6.3 The site could be considered for transfer/sale. Due to the location and potential attractiveness of the site, being separate from the main course, the pitch and putt course could be considered separately in the context of a potential closure. This in turn could then present an opportunity for disposal with the potential to generate a capital receipt. Further work would be needed subject to the findings of the consultation but the professional property advice confirms the site would be attractive for alternative use in the market place.
- 6.4 Finally there may be an alternative use for the site that will provide long-term benefit to the local community. In this respect it should be noted that the site has previously been registered as an Asset of Community Value.
- 6.5 The Council has undertaken an initial analysis of the above options. With respect to arriving at a recommendation the options will be considered further following the outcome of the consultation with a further report being brought forward to a future cabinet meeting.

7.0 Consultation and stakeholder engagement on proposed options

- 7.1 Prior to a report being taken back to Cabinet confirming recommendations for the future of the pitch and putt golf course it is proposed to undertake a six-week public consultation plus the time associated with the festive holiday. Whilst no decision has yet been made it is proposed to consult on the options as set out in section 6 and on the basis that the Council's current preferred option is to dispose of the site because of its attractiveness for an alternative use and the potential for a capital

receipt.

- 7.2 Alongside the public consultation, the Council will seek the views of key stakeholders including Sport England, relevant national associations, Shrewsbury Town Council, Bannatynes, local residents' associations and the current course operator.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Shropshire Council Asset Management Strategy 2014-2018
Medium Term Financial Plan

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Michael Wood, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support
Robert Tindall, Deputy Portfolio Holder

Local Members

Councillors Ted Clarke, Jane Mackenzie, Jon Tandy

Appendices

Appendix 1 Site plan