

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES – 19 AUGUST 2019
REPORT ON: CAIRD PARK, CAMPERDOWN, AND FUTURE CITY GOLF STRATEGY
REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT NO: 217-2019

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise the Committee of the challenges relating to the provision of golf at Camperdown and Caird Park and consider the key issues of sustainability and future development of both Camperdown and Caird Park.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Committee note that Leisure & Culture Dundee have concluded that the 2019/20 season will be the last year that the Camperdown Golf Course operates unless an alternative operator wishes to take on the Course.
- 2.2 The Committee note progress with implementation of the existing development/master plan for Camperdown Park and instruct the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, Executive Director of City Development, and Director, Leisure and Culture to bring back a refreshed plan for the next five to ten years.
- 2.3 The Committee instruct the Executive Director of City Development to provide an update on the initiatives to market/develop an alternative use strategy for Camperdown House.
- 2.4 The Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, in partnership with Leisure & Culture Dundee, City Development, and other key stakeholders, continue development of a strategy through a feasibility study which examines options for the future use of Caird Park.
- 2.5 The proposal to develop a Driving Range at Caird Park should be taken forward as quickly as possible.
- 2.6 The Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, undertake an appraisal to determine the associated costs relating to the future grounds maintenance requirements resulting from the change in use of Camperdown Golf Course into a restored public parkland amenity within Camperdown Country Park.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Golf Dundee has a gross expenditure of £820,000 (2019/20) and requires a total subsidy of approximately £440,000 per year from Dundee City Council and Leisure & Culture Dundee over the Caird Park and Camperdown courses.
- 3.2 Leisure & Culture Dundee does not have the capacity to sustain the level of required subsidy and has agreed at its Board meeting on 31 July 2019 to propose closure of the Camperdown course at the end of the 2019/20 season.
- 3.3 If the actions proposed by Leisure & Culture Dundee are taken, the level of subsidy required should reduce from its current level of £272,937 to £134,232. Completion of the Golf Driving Range should further reduce this by an estimated £80,000, bringing the deficit in concentrating the golf offer in Caird Park to £54,482 in 2020/21.
- 3.4 It is recognised that there will be financial implications associated with improvements relating to both Camperdown and Caird Parks. There will therefore be a requirement to make provision

for this within the Capital Plan, to support a feasibility study which defines priorities and determines the scope for potential external funding support.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 As part of the city's transformation and change agenda, Dundee City Council and Leisure & Culture Dundee have been actively reviewing the portfolio managed on behalf of the Council. Budget and resource challenges remain significant, and in recent years it has proven increasingly difficult to maintain life cycle investment in the full range of assets, buildings and facilities run by Leisure & Culture Dundee.

4.2 In discussions with the Board, it is clear that leisure and sport priorities include:

- safeguarding, maintaining and where possible improving key city facilities such as the Olympia, Ice Arena and Dundee International Sports Centre;
- working closely with Dundee schools to ensure that the Council's significant investment in recent years in the learning estate benefits wider communities across the city;
- working with Dundee City Council to maximise the impact of major new facilities across Dundee such as the Menzieshill Community Hub and the new Regional Performance Centre, Dundee.

4.3 It is also timely to revisit the current range of facilities provided in Camperdown and Caird Parks, which are both significant leisure and recreational hubs for the city. While both remain strategically important, it is considered that there is a strong case for consolidating golf provision on a single site at Caird Park.

4.4 The Camperdown Park Development Plan 2012-2017 [Report 329-2012](#) was approved in 2012. Article V of the minute of meeting of the Environment Committee of 10 September, 2012 refers. In the period since then there has been steady progress towards the development of Camperdown as a Green Flag listed park which provides tremendous range of outdoor opportunities for the citizens of Dundee and those who visit the city.

4.5 A major capital investment in Camperdown Park was the replacement of the roof of Camperdown House during 2010/11. This restoration project was completed at a cost of circa £880,000, with external grant assistance offsetting the costs to the Council.

4.6 The new visitor centre at Camperdown Wildlife Centre was completed at a cost of £1,250,000 in 2012, and the associated play area has been recently refurbished at a cost of £425,000. These have become major visitor attractions with significant footfall from both the city and much further afield.

4.7 In the current financial year, 2019/20, a number of projects totalling circa £350,000 have been undertaken to improve car parking for both facilities. This includes an overflow car park incorporating EV charge points, bike stands and surface repairs to areas of the internal paths.

4.8 Other recent significant improvement works at Camperdown include:

- Recent remediation of the grass area of the former Fun Fair site in 2015 at £20,000
- Road Improvements to the North and Main Drives
- Installation of bollards to prevent damage to the soft landscaping at £20,000
- Completion of improvements to the inclusive play area in 2013-2015, costing £140,000
- Restoration of the perimeter wall 2015-2018, costing £155,000

4.9 Attempts have been made to market Camperdown House including the possibility of any future operator having access to and responsibility for the Golf Course. Although there were a number of expressions of interests, none of those materialised into firm offers.

4.10 There have been informal discussions with private golf clubs locally and these have indicated that there is no interest in taking on the Course. However, the City Council will be open to working with any third party who is interested in taking full responsibility for the golf course from 1 April 2020.

- 4.11 There has been a steady decline, nationally as well as locally, in the number of people participating in Golf in recent years. This has been highlighted in recent press coverage. Courses in the ownership of local authorities in a number of other parts of Scotland are facing similar challenges and are recommended for closure.
- 4.12 The condition of the Camperdown course in Dundee was reviewed by independent specialists, STRI (Sports Turf Research Institute). Analysis of their report findings highlighted the significant infrastructure works to drainage, woodland and irrigation which would be required to maintain playability.
- 4.13 There has been very little capital investment in either the Camperdown or Caird Park Golf Club Houses and both are in need of significant investment. Caird Park currently has around 105 members and Camperdown has 90 members. Both clubs have expressed concern regarding their ability to continue trading.
- 4.14 In 2016 Leisure & Culture Dundee approved a strategic plan to support the future development of golf in the city. This plan recognised that there was a national decline in numbers participating in golf and that this impacted on the city region. There has been a need for increased subsidy of public courses. Dundee City Council is not in a position to further subsidise the delivery of golf and reluctantly Leisure & Culture Dundee has concluded that it would be in the best interests of sustainability to invest in Caird Park to develop a diversified golf offer and withdraw from operating the Camperdown course.
- 4.15 Two key development proposals included in the 2016 Leisure & Culture Dundee Strategy were firstly to create a golf driving range in Caird Park and secondly to reinstate the Nine Hole course in Caird Park allowing for more diversified golf offer which it is intended would appeal to younger people, those wanting to play quick games and the development of Ladies golf.
- 4.16 The membership of both golf courses will require to be advised of these changes, which will take effect from April 2020. Arrangements have already been put in place to ensure that staff with permanent employment rights are protected through the change process and will be redeployed on the same grade and conditions of service. A minimum care and maintenance package will be put in place for the Camperdown course for the summer of 2020, during which time on-going discussions about ways in which the current golf course can be used for community benefit.

5.0 VIABILITY OF GOLF DUNDEE

- 5.1 In comparison with other local courses, Golf Dundee has done relatively well, with good levels of usage and a profile of users who would otherwise be less physically active in older age. However, the long term trend follows the national picture.
- 5.2 The main success over the period of the Golf Dundee Strategy has been the development in Caird Park of a Ladies and Junior Golf Section, which has been directly managed and delivered by Leisure & Culture Dundee.
- 5.3 However, the viability of golf remains a serious challenge to Leisure & Culture Dundee. In 2018, the Board decided, as a result of budget pressures across all areas, it was no longer able to subsidise the delivery of golf and urgent action was needed to either reduce costs by closing/reducing the golf offer.
- 5.4 A one year agreement was reached for 2019/20 to enable the status quo to remain and the existing level of golf provision to be provided while future options were considered.

6 LOOKING FORWARD

- 6.1 A working group to look at the development of a feasibility study for the creation of a development strategy for Caird Park has been established and has created an outline of the issues which a future strategy for Caird Park should consider.
- 6.2 The appointment of a consultant to support the development of a costed strategy which determines key priorities and the scope for attracting external funding support. Additional early priorities for action include:

- Complete construction and opening of the Regional Performance Centre Dundee
- Improving signage
- Delivering the driving range proposal
- Improving the condition of public car park
- Demolishing disused buildings
- Improving perimeter security and maintenance

The Director of Leisure & Culture and the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services will continue, with their teams, to refine and develop these proposals in order that Caird Park becomes the recreational and sporting focal point for the city.

- 6.3 The master plan for Camperdown Park previously agreed by Committee requires to be refreshed. Elements of the plan have been implemented but key proposals, including finding an alternative, economically viable use for Camperdown House, have not yet been achieved. It is recommended that the master/development plan be updated to create a forward view for the next five to ten years.
- 6.4 Attempts to market the house included the opportunity to acquire a lease of part or all of the Camperdown course but this did not result in any formal expressions of interest. It is recommended that further effort be made to find an alternative economic use for the property.
- 6.5 Many of the actions contained in the Golf Dundee Strategic Plan 2016 remain relevant.
- 6.6 Proposals for the driving range at Caird Park should be delivered as soon as possible.
- 6.7 To achieve this will require focused effort and support from Leisure & Culture Dundee, the Golf Clubs, and the City Council.
- 6.8 It is also recommended that a cost be established for reinstating the former Nine Hole course at Caird Park which would enhance the role of Caird Park and further improve access to golf.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. A copy of the Integrated Impact Assessment is available on the Council's website at www.dundee.gov.uk/ija

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Leisure & Culture Dundee has been consulted on the content of this Report.
- 8.2 Golf staff and Trade Unions have also been consulted.
- 8.3 The Council Management team has been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its contents.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

David Martin
Chief Executive

8 August 2019