

THE FUTURE OF GOLF COTTAGE & FOXHILLS COTTAGE, DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Head Greenkeeper and his family, as a condition of his employment, live in Golf Cottage – rent is deducted from salary. Unfortunately, neither the cottage nor its foundations are in a satisfactory condition and are continuing to deteriorate towards a position when the cottage will no longer be safe to inhabit. Although at present it is safely habitable, there are already quite large cracks in the walls.
- 1.2 It is considered to be greatly beneficial in operational terms to have the Head Greenkeeper living in close proximity to the Golf Course. His presence is useful in assessing what the availability of the course will be, in adverse weather often making inspections out of hours. Additionally, operational matters such as breakdowns and deliveries can be handled outside normal working hours. Club members realise that any problems can be reported (and actioned more swiftly) as they arise, due to the Head Greenkeeper's presence.
- 1.3 There are also clear health and safety advantages to having a resident Head Greenkeeper. For example, the works depot which is immediately adjacent to Golf Cottage houses valuable plant and machinery. The depot is also the store for potentially hazardous chemicals and vehicle fuels. A Golf Course cannot simply be locked up at night like a building can; the domestic presence of the Head Greenkeeper is both a deterrent and occasional detector of potential vandals / thieves. He is both a security keyholder for on site alarm systems and a qualified First Aider.
- 1.4 It would be unhelpful for the service if the Head Greenkeeper could not continue to be housed on site. Fortunately, there is another cottage at the Centre which could house the family (perhaps temporarily), called Foxhills Cottage. This cottage does require some expenditure to bring it up to a satisfactory standard, but no major works are required to the fabric.
- 1.5 Asset Management Group have discussed a previous report on this situation which suggested three options for the future use of these assets, as set out below.

2. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 2.1 The options suggested were as follows:
 - Option 1** Extend and refurbish Foxhills Cottage, transfer the family, and demolish Golf Cottage
- 2.2 Foxhills is a smaller property than Golf Cottage and whilst the Head Greenkeeper and family will manage that in the short-term, were the decant to be permanent, then it would be advisable and perhaps obligatory to extend Foxhills, in advance. The estimated cost of extending by one additional room is £20,000.

- 2.3 There are also potential delays associated with an extension (the Centre is in the National Park). Additionally, a previous proposal – to put Foxhills with an agent with a view to generating some income from letting this asset – would not be possible if the family lived there. This is also a risky option as the issue is urgent but planning delays might occur.
- 2.4 An assessment has been made of the cost of bringing Foxhills Cottage up to standard, based on recommendations made by the letting agent and following a recent survey; the cost is £22,000. The estimate for demolishing Golf Cottage is £6,000, so this option would cost an estimated **£48,000** in total.

Option 2 Refurbish Foxhills, decant the family, repair Golf Cottage and return the family to it.

- 2.5 To effect substantial repairs to Golf Cottage will be very expensive. Given that the property might still be subject to subsidence thereafter, this might not seem the best value for money option. The nature of the repairs means that Building Regulations approval would be required but not Planning Permission.

- 2.6 The estimated cost of repairs is £105,000. The temporary decant would cost £22,000 for the upgrade – so the total estimate for this option is **£127,000**.

Option 3 Refurbish Foxhills, decant the family, rebuild Golf Cottage and return the family to it

- 2.7 To demolish Golf Cottage, including foundations and site clearance, it is estimated will cost £6,000. No demolition would be undertaken unless the National Park gave prior agreement to rebuilding the cottage. If rebuilding is on a like-for-like basis as proposed, formal approval is not needed. The estimated cost of a newly rebuilt cottage is £167,000. So with £22,000 decant upgrade, this option would cost about **£195,000**.

3. THE SERVICE'S VIEW

The Head of Service is clear about the value now and in the longer term of having the on- site presence of the Head Greenkeeper.

4. ASSET MANAGEMENT GROUP'S VIEW

- 4.1 As the matter is becoming urgent, Asset Management Group (AMG) have decided their preferred option (see 5.5), based on health & safety, speed, cost and flexibility.
- 4.2 AMG considered whether it was too risky to wait for planning approval which might not materialise, to extend Foxhills Cottage (Option 1). Options 2 and 3 are more expensive, but result in two property assets, rather than one.
- 4.3 Option 3 provides a new property, of similar capacity to the repaired property in Option 2, but built throughout to present Building Regulations standards, with the added advantage of a ten year guarantee.

- 4.4 It is within AMG's terms of reference to make an appraisal of options and a recommendation to CMT / Cabinet for the best use / disposal of refurbished Foxhills Cottage, if and once the family are re-housed in new Golf Cottage. This will be the subject of a later report, but see Financial Implications, below.
- 4.5 The recommendation of Asset Management Group is that Option 3 should be pursued and as soon as possible.

5. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

To rebuild Golf Cottage will require resources but the new property will be more energy efficient.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The estimated cost of refurbishing Foxhills Cottage is £22k. If subsequently the Council were to dispose of this asset by open market sale it is estimated that it would realise £350k.
- 7.2 The cost of demolition / rebuild for Golf Cottage is estimated at £173k. The estimated present market value of the rebuilt cottage is £300k., should the Council at some time decide to sell this corporate property asset.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

The new build option, to current standards, also includes for improved access to facilities.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' COMMENTS

"The Finance & Efficiency and Leisure Portfolio Holders support option 3. This option satisfies the need for the green keeper to live on the course and accrues to the Council the greatest asset value. Any decision to sell the Foxhills property should be taken when the project has been completed in the light of the then state of the property market."

10. RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet recommend the Council to agree the funding of Option 3, at £195k. This divides into a supplementary estimate of £28k in 07/08 and an Expenditure Plan bid for £167k for 08/09.

For Further Information Please Contact:

Peter Freeman
Acting Property Services Manager
Tel (023) 8028 5627
E-mail peter.freeman@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers: