

DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel, at its meeting 20 September 2016, re-established the Dibden Golf Centre Task and Finish group to review the performance of Mytime Active who are responsible for the running of the Golf Centre, at the end of the first 5 years of their 30 year contract. The Group was also tasked with reviewing the rental amounts for years 6-10 of the contract and examining the proposed investment programme for that period.
- 1.2 The Task and Finish Group was first established in 2011 to assess tender bids for the operation and management of Dibden Golf Centre. On 1 February 2012 the Cabinet agreed the Group's recommendations that Mytime Active be awarded a 30 year contract to manage the Centre, commencing 1 April 2012.
- 1.3 The new Task and Finish Group comprises Cllrs W Andrews, Mrs Bennison, Mrs Crisell and Poole with input from key Council Officers.
- 1.4 The Group held their first meeting on 9 December 2016. At this meeting the Group agreed their terms of reference as follows: - that the Group
 - Consider the next five years' rental income
 - Consider a strategy for the business rates
 - Consider price amendments
 - Consider a policy on joint long term investment proposals
- 1.5 The Group held a further three meetings on 24 January, 9 February and 11 May 2017. This report details the Group's findings and recommendations.

2. REVIEW PROCESS

- 2.1 On 24 January 2017, the Task and Finish Group undertook a site visit of Dibden Golf Centre. Members viewed the pro-shop, driving range, changing facilities, car park and function room. Members noted with disappointment that the facilities required repair and replacement. Of particular concern was the condition of the car park surface, the pathways, fencing, external lighting, the lack of clear signage to the front of the building and ladies changing facilities.
- 2.2 Following the tour of sites, the Group held a discussion with some club members and service user representatives. During this meeting it became clear that whilst the users were happy with the quality of customer service from Centre employees, the investment in the Centre, as set out in the investment programme for years 1- 5, had not been fully implemented. In comparing the Centre with Southampton Golf Course, also managed by Mytime, it was generally felt that whilst the facilities available were better at Dibden, the course itself was a higher quality at Southampton. Club representatives and users felt that more should be done to improve the drainage of the course in order to allow the course to stay open all year round. They also

requested that user forum meetings with Mytime be more formalised and better managed to improve communication.

- 2.3 The Group, in addition to holding a discussion with the users, also invited Mytime Active representatives to give a presentation to members. During the presentation Mytime explained that they had not been able to achieve their income projections over the last five years largely due to a national decline in golf and adverse weather in years 1-2 of their contract. As such the capital investment programme for the first years has been underfunded by £211,300. Mytime proposed to spend £558,800 over the next five years (2017-2021).
- 2.4 Following the meeting at the course, members agreed an initial rent proposal which was submitted to Mytime for consideration. As part of the negotiation process, representatives from Mytime Active met with Cllr Andrews, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, and the Executive Head of Operations. As a result of this meeting the following proposals were put forward to Mytime Active and subsequently agreed: -
- That the rental for Dibden Golf Course be fixed at £152,471 p.a. for the next five year period of the contract;
 - That the Council not claim back the National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) entitlement of £4,000 per year for 2017/18 owed under the terms of the contract;
 - In light of the increase in turnover at the Golf Centre, should the golfing income increase by more than £10,000 in any one year, the Council would look to revisit its NNDR entitlement on an annual basis; and
 - Regular monitoring meetings take place with the Council, quarterly with Council Officers and the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, and every six months with the full Task and Finish Group, to review the progress of the business, monitor the investment programme and discuss other methods of service delivery and areas for partnership working.
- 2.5 The Group, during this time, also raised its concerns regarding the maintenance of the site, the shortfall in the investment and other areas of improvement (such as communication with users and officers/members of the Council). The Group was pleased to note that already repairs have been made at the site (replacement fencing, road surfacing and lighting) and machinery has been purchased as part of the investment programme for 2017-2021.
- 2.6 Whilst appreciating that the general golf market has declined and that Mytime Active struggled to meet its own income targets due to the inclement weather in the first 2-3 years of the contract, the Group has raised its disappointment that the initial investment programme has not been fulfilled. In contrast, the last financial year saw an increase in profit at the centre. It is hoped that Mytime Active, with the support of the Council, can continue this momentum by agreeing a new, more realistic investment programme and monitoring the implementation of this on a regular basis.
- 2.7 The Task and Finish Group at their final meeting on 11 May 2017 endorsed the above to put forward as a recommendation to the Cabinet.

3 FUTURE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group felt that robust monitoring of the Centre needed to take place in the future, through regular monitoring and review meetings between Mytime

Active, senior Council officers and Councillors. Progress on the outcome of these meetings should be reviewed on an annual basis by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- 3.2 Quarterly meetings should take place to not only monitor the progress of the investment programme, but also to review more strategic operational approaches and future aspirations and service delivery of the site.
- 3.3 As users of the Centre had indicated that greater improvements could be made in communicating planned investment at the Centre, it was felt that officers of the Council should attend user group meetings at Dibden and assist in the minuting of these meetings, to be distributed to service users.
- 3.4 Members felt that greater collaboration should take place between the Council and Mytime Active. One example of this is through the Council hiring its flail/leaf collection machine to Mytime Active who had indicated that they were unable to purchase their own machine as it would have very limited use (only 6 weeks of the year) that would not justify the spend. The Council has a greater need for this equipment as it is used to maintain the foliage on the cliff tops at Milford and Barton.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed rent increase of £7,261 per year over the next five years of the contract amounts to £36,305 additional income for the Council over this period.

5. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 5.1 I am very pleased with the outcome of the report. Working closely with Mytime we have been able to find a compromise which is acceptable to both parties and going forward we will work collaboratively to ensure proper engagement between club members, users, ward members and myself as Portfolio Holder, to help influence the investment strategy. My thanks to the task and finish group for their excellent work.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That the Cabinet approve the following: -
 - a) That the rental for Dibden Golf Course be fixed at £152,471 per annum from 27 April 2017 for the next five year period of the contract;
 - b) That the Council does not claim back the NNDR entitlement of £4,000 per year for 2017/18; and
 - c) That the Council review the NNDR entitlement claim on an annual basis.

Further information:

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Background Papers:

Published documents