

Golf Course Consultation – Questions and Answers

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1. Background

1.1. How much does it cost the council to run both of the golf courses?

The operating subsidy to the two courses in the year 2013/14 was £186,000, with Western Park costing almost twice as much as Humberstone Heights with a subsidy of £123,000 compared to Humberstone's £63,000. Due to declining membership numbers, the operating subsidy has consistently increased over the last 5 years.

1.2. How far away is Humberstone Heights from Western Park?

Humberstone Heights Golf Course is 6.3 miles away from Western Park Golf Course.

1.3. Which course has more members / season ticket holders?

Generally Humberstone Heights has more members, although membership numbers do fluctuate. For example, in May 2014 Humberstone Heights had 307 members compared to Western Park's 253 – a difference of just over 20%.

1.4. How many women golf members are there?

Less than five per cent of the members across both courses are women, (approximately 17 women) with 3 at Western Park and 14 at Humberstone Heights.

1.5. How large are the golf courses?

*Western Park Golf Course is 60.1 hectares (148.510 acres).
Humberstone Heights Golf Course is 52.8 hectares (130.471 acres).*

1.6. Have/are other local authorities done/doing the same thing?

Council funding across the whole country has been significantly cut by central government and every council will need to look at its own services to ensure they meet the savings required. Tamworth Borough Council made the decision to close its only municipal golf

course earlier this year while Leeds City Council is also consulting on the closure of two of its municipal golf courses.

1.7. Are the golf courses run professionally by people who understand golf?

Yes they are run by an external company which employs golf professionals.

1.8. What have the subsidy / profit levels of the two golf courses been over the last 5 years?

Over the last 5 years the 2 golf courses have been subsidised as follows:

Course/Year	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Humberstone	12,697 Profit	12,869 Loss	19,110 Loss	78,453 Loss	62,693 Loss
Western	56,894 Loss	92,126 Loss	58,818 Loss	135,121 Loss	123,107 Loss
Total subsidy	44,197 Loss	104,994 Loss	77,929 Loss	213,574 Loss	185,800 Loss

NB: This does not include council support costs i.e. central costs for services such as Human Resources, Legal and Management.

1.9. What happened to the profits? Were they reinvested in the courses or were they used to subsidise other activities?

Other than in 2009 when Humberstone Heights made a small profit, there has been no profit to reinvest. This particular profit was offset by the loss at Western Park Golf Course.

1.10. How many golf courses are there in the county?

There are 32 golf courses in Leicestershire and Rutland.

2. Alternative Golf Courses

2.1. What would happen to the juniors that play at Western Park Golf Course if it were to close?

Western Park has fewer junior members than Humberstone Heights, currently with 3 Junior members compared to Humberstone Height's 25. Junior members would be able to find competitively priced membership alternatives at other golf courses close to Western Park Golf Course, including Humberstone Heights which has a very similar fee structure.

Here is a breakdown of competitive junior membership fees at various golf courses in and around Leicester:

Golf Course	Location	Distance from Western Park	Annual Junior / Under 18 Member
Western Park	Leicester	n/a	£135 (inc £25 club fee)
Humberstone Heights	Leicester	6.3 miles	£135 (inc £25 club fee)
Beedles Lake Golf Course	East Goscote, near Syston	11.5 miles	£145
Birstall Golf Club	Leicester (all prices inc Union Fees & Club Development fee)	5.5 miles	£206.00 (15-18yrs) £110.00 (10-14yrs) £62.75 (Under 10yrs)
Cosby Golf Course	Cosby	8.3 miles	£140
Forest Hill Golf Course	Botcheston off the M1	5.6 miles	£80
Kirby Muxloe Golf Club	Kirby	2.3 miles	£116
Scraptoft Golf Club	Scraptoft	8.4 miles	£147 (Under 18) £120 (Under 16) £94 (Under 14) £68 (Under 10)
Whetstone Golf Course	Blaby	6.8 miles	£145

2.2. Where else is there a competitively priced golf course where I can play?

There are a total of 32 golf courses in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Below is a breakdown of golf courses with similar membership as well as pay and play prices to Western Park Golf Course. Many golf courses also provide various discount prices and / or 2 for 1 offers during the week.

Golf Course	Pay and Play (weekday)	Play and Play (weekend)	Annual Member 5 day	Annual Member 7 day
Western Park	£17.50 (with the Card)	£21 (with the Card)	£510 (inc £95 club fee)	£645 (inc £95 club fee)
Humberstone Heights	£17.50 (with the Card)	£21 (with the Card)	£530 (inc £95 club fee)	£675 (inc £95 club fee)
Beedles Lake Golf Course	£19	£24	£500	£650
Birstall Golf Club	£30 (£15 during 2 for 1)	£40 (£20 during 2 for 1)	£717.6 1	£974.75

Blaby Golf Course (9 hole)	£10 (£7 for 9 holes)	£10 (£7 for 9 holes)	£305	£330
Enderby Golf Course (9 hole)	£10.50 (£8.99 for 9 holes)	£13.50 (£10.50 for 9 holes)	£199	£249
Forest Hill Golf Course	£20	£25	n/a	£675
Scraptoft Golf Club	£20	£25	£736 (new members £468)	£906 (new members £708)
Whetstone Golf Course	£14	£16	£450	£630

2.3. How far would people have to travel to an alternative golf course?

There are 32 golf courses in Leicestershire and Rutland. There are 15 other clubs within a 14 mile radius of Western Park Golf Course, they are as follows:

Golf Course	Location	Distance from Western Park
Western Park	Leicester	n/a
Humberstone Heights	Leicester	6.3 miles
Beedles Lake golf Course	East Goscote, near Syston	11.5 miles
Birstall Golf Club	Leicester	5.5 miles
Blaby Golf Course	Blaby	6.5 miles
Charnwood Forest Golf Club (9 hole)	Charnwood	10.9 miles
Cosby Golf Course	Cosby	8.3 miles
Enderby Golf Course (9 hole)	Enderby	5.1 miles
Forest Hill Golf Course	Botcheston off the M1	5.6 miles
Glen Gorse Golf Club	Near Oadby and Wigston	8.4 miles
Kibworth Golf Course	Kibworth	13.6 miles
Kirby Muxloe Golf Club	Kirby	2.3 miles
Rothley Park Golf Club	Rothley	6.9 miles
Scraptoft Golf Club	Scraptoft	8.4 miles
The Leicestershire Golf Course	Leicester	5.6 miles
Whetstone Golf Course	Blaby	6.8 miles

2.4. I have no transport - how would I be able to get to an alternative facility?

There are 15 other golf courses within a 14 mile radius of Western Park Golf Course which are widely accessible via public transport. Below is a list of golf courses and information on how to access them from Western Park Golf Course.

Golf Course	Location	Distance from Western Park	Accessible by public transport from Western Park?
Western Park Golf Course	Leicester	n/a	n/a
Humberstone Heights Golf Course	Leicester	6.3 miles	Bus 40 from Liberty Road to Sandhills Av. (direct) or Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 56 to Humberstone (1 change)
Beedles Lake Golf Course	East Goscote, near Syston	11.5 miles	Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 5 to East Goscote (1 change)
Birstall Golf Club	Leicester	5.5 miles	Bus 40 from Liberty Road to Red Hill Way (direct) OR Bus 14/12 to City Centre and Bus 2/126/127 (1 change)
Blaby Golf Course (9 hole)	Blaby	6.5 miles	Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 84/84A (1 change)
Charnwood Forest Golf Club (9 hole)	Charnwood	10.9 miles	Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 154 to Woodhouse Eves (1 change)
Cosby Golf Course	Cosby	8.3 miles	Bus 14 to near St. Margaret's Bus Station and 84/X44 to Cosby Chapel Lane (1 change)
Enderby Golf Course (9 hole)	Enderby	5.1 miles	Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 50 to Enderby (1 change)
Forest Hill Golf Course	Botcheston off the M1	5.6 miles	Bus 14 to Frog Island, Slater Street and Bus 26 to Merrylees Road (1 change)
Glen Gorse Golf Club	Near Oadby and Wigston	8.4 miles	Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 31 to Beaufort Way (1 change)
Kibworth Golf Course	Kibworth	13.6 miles	Bus 14 to near St. Margaret's Bus Station and Bus X7 to Kibworth (1 change)
Kirby Muxloe Golf Club	Kirby	2.3 miles	Walking distance or Bus 153 along Hinkley Road
Rothley Park Golf Club	Rothley	6.9 miles	Bus 14 to near St. Margaret's Bus Station and Bus 126/127 to Rothley (1 change)
Scraptoft Golf Club	Scraptoft	8.4 miles	Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 38/53 to Thurnby Lodge (1 change)
The Leicestershire Golf Course	Leicester	5.6 miles	Bus 40 from Liberty Road to Stoughton Drive (direct) or Bus 12/14 to City Centre and Bus 22/22A to Evington (1 change)
Whetstone Golf Course	Blaby	6.8 miles	Bus 14 to near St. Margaret's Bus Station and 84 to Cosby Chapel Lane (1 change)

2.5. Would the council offer any alternative golf provision in the city if it were to close Western Park Golf Course?

The proposal being consulted on is for the council to continue to provide a quality golf provision at Humberstone Heights Golf Course, which has an 18 hole course, a 9 hole Pitch and Putt course, an indoor driving range, a putting green, a practice bunker area, a club room, a bar and catering facility and a pro shop.

2.6. Why are you proposing to close Western Park Golf Course and not Humberstone Heights?

This was based on a carefully considered rationale which took into account a range of factors including membership figures, golf course facilities, financial sustainability and location.

Humberstone Heights Golf Course offers more facilities than Western Park – and is therefore better value for money. Humberstone Heights has also consistently generated more income and required less of a subsidy than Western Park Golf Course.

Based on a scenario of 50% of members and 20% of pay and play users switching golf courses, Humberstone Heights would become self-sufficient and would not require the council subsidy if Western Park were to close. Using the same scenario, the closure of Humberstone Heights would not make Western Park self-funding and the golf course would still require a council subsidy.

Furthermore, Humberstone Heights Golf Course is more popular than Western Park Golf Course, with more members, more female members, more juniors as well as a generally higher proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) users.

Humberstone Heights is located in the east of the city which is not served particularly well by other council sports facilities. Spence Street Sports Centre and Cossington Street Sports Centre, which are very small centres, are the closest city council leisure facilities to Humberstone Heights. Western Park is close to New Parks Sports Centre and Braunstone Leisure Centre, the latter being the council's flagship leisure facility. Therefore, should a decision be taken to close Humberstone Heights instead, it would have a greater impact on public access to the sport and leisure provision.

2.7. Why can't you divert funding from other sources?

Funding has been significantly cut by central government across the whole council and we need to make considerable savings over the coming years. All services are being looked at to ensure we meet the savings required.

2.8. Have you considered alternative ways of funding the golf courses?

Yes, the council has considered a wide range of possible options and has judged this proposal to be the most viable option. The continuation of a financially viable golf provision is the council's primary focus.

2.9. Could the golf courses be privatised?

The two golf courses are currently run by an external company which employs the golf professionals operating at the sites. Following extensive government cuts to funding the council are having to give very careful consideration to a number of council services which may help reduce the council subsidy to these areas. Consideration is being given to all aspects of the management of the sites.

2.10. Have you promoted the golf courses in order to generate more interest?

Below are some of the golf initiatives that the golf courses have delivered in the last 3 years:

- *B-Active women coaching (free coaching)
Through this scheme we have introduced new women players to golf (2011= 225 women, 2012=231 women, 2013=810 women).*
- *Free golf coaching for juniors at Humberstone Heights only.
On a Sunday afternoon, held every 6 weeks from April to September (not last year due to driving range issues). 350 new golfers per year attend the Junior Academy.*
- *Delivering free programmes such as Tri-Golf, golf extreme and club golf sessions to over 2,800 pupils in schools within Leicester City.
In the year 2010/12, 500 junior golfers took part in the Tri-golf programme delivered for city schools. In 2011 18 schools took part, in 2012 21 schools took part and in 2013 25 schools took part.*
- *Coaching lessons
In 2011 2,721 lessons took place, in 2012 5,340 lessons took place while in 2013 3,255 lessons took place.*
- *Work with England Golf to provide golf coaching.
A grass roots programme that brings new children into golf from the inner city.*
- *“Soar magazine” once a year to promote golf within the city.*
- *Online partner (“Tee off Times”)
This provides discounts to online users totalling approximately 1,500 rounds of golf.*
- *Promotions such as 50% off weekends from 10am until 3pm.*
- *Flyers for summer months promoting the golf clubs.*
- *Work with the Leicester and Rutland county golf partnership to promote new golfers to the sites.*

2.11. Have the golf courses considered offering other income generating initiatives which could reduce the council subsidy required?

Listed below are some activities that are promoted within the golf courses in order to increase both interest and revenue:

- *Weddings*
- *Birthday parties*

- *Social functions*
- *Inter club matches with other golf clubs (some 65 a year across both courses)*
- *Open days for new beginners*
- *Junior school competitions*
- *Super six competitions for special schools.*

2.12. Would there be other recreational facilities to replace the golf course?

Western Park Golf Course is close to two other council run sports facilities, Braunstone Leisure Centre and New Parks Sports Centre, which already provide a variety of leisure activities for people from the local area to enjoy. The proposal is also for substantial capital investment in order to upgrade facilities at Humberstone Heights Golf Course. This would provide a high quality and low cost golf course to everyone in Leicester.

2.13. How would the closure of Western Park Golf Course affect the health of people who would no longer be able to exercise and play golf there?

Humberstone Heights Golf Course would still be available for people who use golf to exercise. There are also 15 other golf courses within a 14 mile radius of Western Park Golf Course.

2.14. How would new people learn to play golf?

Humberstone Heights Golf Course would still be available to new players as well as the other golf courses in and around Leicester.

2.15. How would people on a budget play golf on a regular basis?

There are a number of other golf courses in and around the city which provide very competitive prices similar to Western Park Golf Course. Humberstone Heights would also continue to provide a budget cost for playing golf, and would be even better value for money following the refurbishment.

2.16. What would happen to the Western Park golfing community?

Western Park golfers would be able to play at Humberstone Heights Golf Course, joining the community there, or would be able to go to the various other golf courses in and around the city.

3. Land and Environment

3.1. What would you do with the golf course at Western Park if a decision were taken to close it?

At this stage there is no plan for alternative use of the golf course but the council would consider a mixed use, including retaining a large area of green space for the site, if the decision to close the course is taken.

3.2. Could the land be sold for private development?

The consultation exercise is to listen to the views of the public, both golfers and non-golfers alike, to find out if people think the council should invest further into Humberstone Heights and close Western Park. No decision will be made during this consultation period which ends on Friday 24th October 2014.

3.3. Are you aware that there are great crested newts in some of the ponds at Western Park Golf Course which are a European protected species?

The council is aware that the golf courses are home to various different groups of wildlife and will look to protect the natural habitat in accordance with the council's environmental policy and any other legislation on protected species.

3.4. How much green space would be lost if a decision to close Western Park Golf Course were taken?

No decision has been made on the future of the land currently occupied by Western Park Golf Course.

3.5. Where will I be able to walk my dogs?

If Western Park Golf Course were to close, it is anticipated that a considerable amount of it would be kept as green space. There are also other open green spaces nearby such as Western Park and Braunstone Park which could be used for various activities including dog walking.

3.6. Are there any restrictions or legislative protection in place on alternative use of the land currently occupied by Western Park Golf Course? Has the Council considered its value as a green space?

The Leicester City Council's environmental policy aims to protect and, where possible, enhance the quality, extent and accessibility of Leicester's open space, trees and natural environment. Therefore, if the decision to close Western Park Golf Course were taken, the council would look to preserve part of the land as green space.

Here is more information on the council's Local Plan (2006) and Core Strategy (2010) which outlines the council's policy in regards to the future of Western Park Golf Course:

Firstly, Western Park Golf Course is designated as a Green Wedge.

This means that the council will not grant planning permission for any development which would:

- a) Affect the predominantly open and undeveloped character of a green wedge; or*
- b) Reduce the physical separation between existing settlements; or*
- c) Prejudice agricultural and forestry operations; or*
- d) Impair recreational and leisure access to and within green wedges.*

For more information on the council's 2006 Local Plan Policy on 'Green Environment', click on the link below:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/ep/planning/plansandguidance/localplan/writtenstatement/adoptedcllpchapt10/>

The council also states in its Core Strategy Policy CS13 (Green Network) that:

“Green wedges will be maintained as areas of land that prevent the merging of built up areas of the City and adjoining settlements, guide the development and provide a “green lung” into the inner urban area. Their function as open space for leisure or recreational purposes will be maintained and enhanced. Development within a green wedge will be expected to serve the open space, be of high design quality and of an appropriate scale and size for its location to minimise the visual and environmental impact of the development.”

For more information on the council’s adopted Core Strategy Policy, click on the link below:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/ep/planning/plansandguidance/ldf/ldfcore-strategy/policies/cs-policy13/>

Western Park Golf Course is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

Click on the link below to find out more about the city’s Local Wildlife Sites on our maps:

http://citystreatz2.leicester.gov.uk/citystreatz/frame.npx?site=citystreatz_internet&lang=en&group=public&resol=2&layers=LocalWildlifeSites&map=HeritCons&tabs=11100

The 2006 Local Plan Policy on ‘Green Environment’ outlines the policy wording for Local Wildlife Sites (previously called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation). For more information, click on the link below:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/ep/planning/plansandguidance/localplan/writtenstatement/adoptedcllpchapt10/>

A Phase I Habitat Survey (a city wide survey) can be also found at:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council-services/ep/planning/conservation/biodiversity/habitat-survey/>

4. The First Consultation

4.1. How many responses were received from the public in the first consultation?

A total of 2,773 responses were received by the city council via the online consultation hub, the two golf courses, the council sports and leisure centres as well as the customer services centre.

4.2. In the first consultation, how many people agreed/disagreed to continue subsidising golf courses?

90% supported the council subsidy of the golf courses, while 10% did not.

4.3. How many people who answered the first consultation used the golf courses?

84% used both or either of the city council golf courses, 16% did not use the golf courses.

4.4. How many people who answered the consultation lived in the City boundary?

83% of consultation respondents lived in the city boundary, while 17% did not.

4.5. How many letters did you receive about the consultation?

The Council received 86 letters from members of the public.

4.6. What are people's main concerns with the possible closure of the golf courses?

In the 86 letters received by the council, loss of green space was the highest concern, with health benefits coming second.

5. Final Decision

5.1. Have you thought about the social and equalities impact of the potential closure of the golf courses?

Yes. In the past, councils have provided and subsidised golf provision to enable access to sport and leisure facilities to everyone, by taking away the barrier of cost or status traditionally present in many private clubs. However the changing nature of golf has allowed for greater availability of private courses for all. This has partly been due to a national decline in golf, which has resulted in existing golf clubs being more competitive and less exclusive – with most golf courses now regularly advertising promotional offers as well as welcoming non-members. This has resulted in greater accessibility to many courses around Leicestershire along with lower 'pay and play' and membership prices.

There are also various other private and public golf courses across the county, along with a vast number of sporting activity programmes, classes, services and cultural events which offer opportunities for social engagement. Many are run by the city council and promote and encourage social interaction. Below are links for further information on city council run activities.

Leisure Centres:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/sports>

Libraries:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/libraries>

Museums:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/museums>

The equalities impact have been assessed and will continue to be reviewed during the consultation and decision making process.

5.2. When do you think you might close the golf course?

This consultation exercise will help to decide if any potential closure is appropriate. If Western Park Golf Course were to close, we would anticipate it remaining open until we were in a position to consider alternative uses for the land.

5.3. What are you going to do with the golf course while you are carrying out this consultation?

Both council run golf courses will remain open and operate as normal.

5.4. Would I get a refund if a golf course were to close before the end of my membership?

If a decision is made to close a golf course, appropriate reimbursement of any money owed would be refunded in full.

5.5. How much money would you save if you were to close Western Park Golf Course?

The closure of Western Park Golf Course could save the council in excess of £100,000 a year, making a significant contribution to the council's revenue savings requirement, which is necessary as a result of national government cuts in public expenditure.

5.6. What would happen if you can afford to subsidise both golf courses in the future?

The council would look into new ways to improve the golf provision if more funds become available in future.

5.7. For how long will this new consultation last?

The new consultation on the proposal to close Western Park Golf Course and further invest in Humberstone Heights Golf Course runs from Monday 28th July until Friday 24th October 2014.

5.8. How do people get the chance to tell you what they think if they do not have a computer?

There will be paper copies of the consultation available for people to complete at the customer services centre on Granby Street, both of the council run Golf Courses and all of the council-run sports and leisure centres (listed below).

Aylestone Leisure Centre
Braunstone Leisure Centre
Cossington Street Sports Centre
Evington Leisure Centre
Leicester Leys Leisure Centre
New Parks Leisure Centre
Saffron Lane Athletics Stadium
Spence Street Sports Centre
St Margaret's Pastures Sports Centre

5.9. Who would have final decision on the closure?

Any final decision would be discussed and agreed through the appropriate council decision-making process.

5.10. Who do I contact if I am not happy with your decision?

The lead officer is Margaret Mernagh, Leicester City Council's Interim Head of Sports. She can be contacted via email at: Margaret.Mernagh@leicester.gov.uk.