

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – CALL IN REQUEST

Cabinet, Individual Cabinet Member Decision or Key Officer Decision and date of decision.	Cabinet Decision on Wednesday 13th September 2023
DECISION FOR CALL IN (title of report and specific decision to be called in with minute number)	Minute 7: Creation of a Regional Park and relating to 7/VII resolution to close Perivale Park Golf Course in council year 2023-2024 subject to future consultation.
CALLED IN BY (List names of those calling in decision)	Cllrs Julian Gallant, Connie Hersch, Anthony Young, Seema Kumar, Fabio Conti, Gregory Stafford and Anthony Young, Gary Malcolm, Athena Zissimos, Gary Busuttil, Jon Ball and Andrew Steed.

Which of the following principles do you believe the decision did not take into account:

Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome)

- In Sustainability & Accessibility (i) there is no consideration of the flat and level nature of the golf course which makes it accessible to the elderly, or the fact that it enables access to sport for hard to reach groups through its pay and play payment structure. The limited analysis is flawed and has excluded pay and play users who are likely to be those who are most disadvantaged financially challenged and vulnerable groups of the community including age, ethnicity and gender disproportionately.**

Overall, the significant benefits of a new regional park are proportionate to the action being taken to create one.

The council has an ambitious vision to create a new regional park for Ealing which will benefit generations of our residents in all areas of their life, from addressing the climate emergency, to improving health and wellbeing, creating green jobs, offering new cultural and leisure activities and tackling inequalities.

The Equalities Impact Assessment within the original paper recognises that Perivale golf course is favoured by older and less mobile adults and is an affordable and accessible facility. However, this is balanced against the impact of a major new green space in the borough which will bring a multitude of benefits for older people. There is also an opportunity to mitigate affordability by offering reducing green fees at the Council’s other managed golf

course; namely Brent Valley Golf Course. We have also asked the operator to review the course layout to assist with accessibility and to give consideration to increasing the availability of golf carts at low or no cost to golfers with mobility issues.

The Regional Park would be designed to be accessible to older golfers and residents with a disability. It is recognised that Perivale Park Golf Course attracts less mobile customers due to its flat topography and size. The mitigation would be to signpost these customers to the very many other golf facilities in the Borough and nearby.

There is no differential impact on gender as any future developments delivered as a result of this proposal, as it will improve access to green and open space for people of all backgrounds.

The actions being taken to create a regional park in the borough are therefore a proportionate means of achieving a significantly improved green space offer for residents in Ealing, improving health and wellbeing, air quality, climate resilience and the economic and cultural performance of our borough.

- **In Economy & Culture (iii) there is no evidence that that Perivale Golf course is a financial burden and unviable or a drain on the public purse.**

The motivation behind this proposal is to create an incredible new green and open space for West London and Ealing residents. In order to achieve this ambition – which will benefit a broad range of people for generations to come – it is necessary to close Perivale Park Golf Course, and signpost its customer to other nearby golf facilities.

Financial performance is not the reason for the proposal to close Perivale Park Golf Course, it is to create a new regional park.

It is true that the council subsidises the facility, which is run by Everyone Active, and this is detailed in the performance summary below. LBE costs are estimated and cover Buildings Insurance and the Landlord's facility maintenance costs.

Year	Contractor payment	Council costs	Covid Business Grants	Total subsidy	Users	Subsidy per round	Unique users (average)	Subsidy per user per year
2018/19	19,668	3,000	NA	22,668	20,194	£1.12	236	£ 96
2019/20*	19,668	3,000	NA	22,668	20,767	£1.09	216	£ 105
2020/21*	19,668	3,000	50,021	72,869	49,557	£1.47	325	£ 224

2021/22	19,668	3,000	12,091	34,759	40,815	£0.85	271	£ 128
2022/23	19,668	3,000	NA	22,668	31,000	£0.73	319	£ 71

**The Golf Course was closed due to covid – 19 lockdown from 21st March -16th May, 5th November to 2nd December 2020 and from 6th January-29th March 2021. Golf facilities were open during most of the lockdown periods and even with operating restrictions on facilities and activities available, the course had much higher attendances in the May to September 2020 period than in previous years.*

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- **There are already approx. 2,000 petitioners have signed up to keep access to Perivale Golf Course.**

This is noted, though it is also noted that there is no facility within the petition mentioned to ascertain whether those petitioners are Ealing residents.

Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers

- **To question why a decision has been taken to close Perivale Park Golf Course BEFORE due consultation with golfers, other users and the Ealing public.**

This is not the case. A consultation will be launched shortly and run for 6 weeks. Cabinet has approved a closure in principle only, subject to the analysis of the consultation responses.

As outlined in the cabinet report, there has been comprehensive professional advice from officers in the development of the concept of a regional park for Ealing and we will be establishing a Stakeholder Sounding Board to ensure local residents are at the heart of guiding the delivery of the new park.

Respect for human rights and equalities

- **Elderly golfers will be disadvantaged by the closure of the Perivale Park Golf Club as it is affordable compared to most golf courses.**

Access to a new regional park will provide health benefits to elderly residents as well as other groups. These positive health outcomes, include:

- improvements in mental health and wellbeing, such as depression, stress, dementia
- increased longevity in older people
- lower body mass index (BMI) scores, overweight and obesity levels and higher levels of physical activity

- better self-rated health for all ages and socio-economic groups.
- reductions in a number of long-term conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and musculoskeletal condition

Closure of the golf course will in fact enable greater and broader access to the health benefits of open space.

- **There is indirect discrimination taking place here against hard to reach groups such as elderly users, ethnic minority users and women who use the site to improve their health on a pay and play basis as well as a season ticket holders. In addition, the pay and play function enables low-income users access to public golf course (1 of only 2) in Ealing. They are effectively excluded from private clubs on the basis of cost.**

There are two public golf courses in Ealing, which is unusual, particularly in an urban context. Anyone who wishes to play golf in the borough will still have the option of the public golf course, and the council is reviewing fees, charges and membership rates at Brent Valley Golf Course to maintain affordability for any golfers displaced if Perivale Park Golf Course is closed.

A presumption in favour of openness

- **This decision was introduced suddenly and at short notice.**

The Council Plan 2022-2023, adopted over a year ago, includes a commitment to creating 10 new parks and to reviewing golf provision in the borough. There will be a six week period of consultation so there is sufficient time for residents to submit feedback on the proposals.

Clarity of aims and desired outcomes (i.e. link between corporate strategy and implementation)

- **To question whether the effect on nature of removing an existing golf course has been taken into account.**

This has been covered extensively in the Cabinet report.

The creation of a regional park offers the perfect opportunity to develop a wider, more connected Ealing as well as building the climate resilience of the borough. Alongside the climate action agenda, there is also a growing recognition of the need to begin to restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity and provide space for nature to re-establish itself. With these issues in mind, putting nature at the heart of a green 'post-covid' recovery, can help drive locally led economic regeneration in a way that is good for nature, climate and people.

The creation of a regional park would be a major transformation of the landscape of Ealing to deliver a wide range of significant benefits including:

- Supporting nature recovery in Ealing by providing more space for nature-rich habitats and potential new species reintroductions.
 - Increasing the carbon storage and sequestering capacity and contribute to the Council's carbon reduction targets.
 - Providing more opportunities for Ealing's residents to connect with nature.
 - Providing much needed flood resilience
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- **To question whether the Perivale Park Golf Course, open to other users, needs to be closed.**

The case has been made in the cabinet report which outlines the benefits of creating a regional park for ealing. The gold course is a facility used by 10 people a day on average. The facility uses a large tract of public land (21 hectares of community open space). This is unfair, and this space could be put to better use and be made available to many, many more people.

- **To state that demand for golf is decreasing on the basis of national estimates rather than local examination.**

This decrease is evident from both national and local data.

- **To question whether the fundamental differences between Ealing golf courses have been fully taken into account.**

The cabinet report comprehensively analyses golf provision both locally and sub-regionally. The report details the different facilities available at golf courses in Ealing and in neighboring Boroughs.

The operator of Brent Valley Golf Course has been asked to review the current course layout to determine whether there is an opportunity to create 2 x 9 hole courses within the current 18 hole course with an emphasis on accessibility. The operator has also been asked to consider increasing the availability of golf carts for less mobile golfers.

- **To give details of any negative effect on the flora and fauna in the area caused by any works relating to the creation of the Regional Park.**

The regional park aims to increase biodiversity in the borough.

A detailed programme of works has not yet been developed for the creation of a regional park, as we are at the beginning of the process of creating one. Any works will seek to minimise the negative impacts on flora and fauna in the area, and to use highly sustainable methods and

materials wherever possible.

Once created, the regional park will likely create habitats, encourage biodiversity, and capture and sequester carbon.

- **To question whether the substantial existing green spaces, including an underused rugby pitch, are not sufficient to meet the needs of the Ealing public and visitors.**

Currently, Ealing offers 1.97 hectares of public green space per 1,000 Ealing residents. Given population growth projections, this will drop to 1.82 hectares per resident in the near future. That is well below recommended levels. We also know that the distribution of green space is uneven across the borough, with residents of some towns lacking access to local, good quality open space.

The council's ambition is to create a regional park that is available for all residents of Ealing.

- **There is a focus on rewilding Perivale Golf Course whilst de-wilding Warren Farm – all of which suggests a lack of method or approach across Ealing.**

This is simply not true. Over 60% of Warren Farm is due to be designated as a Local Nature Reserve, and the council is currently undertaking detailed ecological surveys to determine the best configuration of playing fields to both protect the Local Nature Reserve and deliver much-needed cricket and football pitches for Southall.

Our approach is absolutely consistent across the borough as part of our commitment to rewild 800,000sqm of land. We are prioritising provision of high quality open space which is accessible to a broad range of residents. We are tackling the climate crisis by creating habitats and managing our open spaces sustainably. And we are supporting residents to lead healthy, happy and active lives.

- **The report does not appear to allow for the golf club to exist within a Regional Park. We ask whether the course might be altered to allow for a golf club and other leisure activities to co-exist within a larger Regional Park.**

The exact geographic location of the regional park is yet to be agreed, and what facilities are located in the park will be subject to ongoing discussion with residents.

There are a number of other courses nearby with a good distribution of golf facilities that are accessible for Ealing residents¹.

¹ In the main, these courses are easily accessible by public transport. However, most regular golf players with access to a car prefer to drive to golf courses due to the need to transport the clubs. There is less provision in the

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- **With regard to the make-up of the regional park will the officers confirm that a regional park will include ponds, wetlands and meadows?**

The regional park will be a huge asset when it comes to tackling the climate crisis, and it's anticipated that the park will include ponds, wetlands and meadows, given how important we know these things are.

The trees, hedgerows, parks, rivers, ponds, fields and gardens in Ealing all have a vital role to play in storing carbon and combatting climate change. It is of equal importance for the borough to retain a diversity of habitats which are connected to each other.

Consistency with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, Contract, Financial and other Procedure Rules, legislative requirements and any other requirements set out in this Constitution.

- **To question whether removal of a sporting facility can ever be considered beneficial for the Council's stated aim of improving public health outcomes.**

Green open spaces which are publicly accessible have huge benefits for public health – that fact is well rehearsed.

The Perivale Park Golf Course is a sporting facility used by an average of just 10 people per day, and golfers have access to 35-times more green space than non-golfers in Ealing. Only 1.5% of the population plays golf, whereas over 50% enjoy walking and visiting parks.

The public health case for closing Perivale Park Golf Course in order to enable us to deliver a regional park in the borough is therefore clear, as the health benefits of good quality, large, connected open spaces is evident, and outlined above and at length in the cabinet paper. Added to this there is the need to create climate resilience, from reducing flood risk to creating forests and new new habitats.

east of the borough (and no 9- or 18-hole courses), which is to be expected due to the lack of availability of land towards central London. In addition, the 9-hole course, driving range and indoor golf facilities in Chiswick at Duke's Meadow are within 12 minutes' drive time of Gunnersbury Park. To the north of the borough there are accessible golf facilities in Kenton Road, Harrow (Playgolf London with a 56-bay floodlit driving range and a 9-hole course) and at the Harrow School Sports Complex (9 holes). To the northwest there are facilities in reach at the Hillingdon Golf Club (9 holes). All three of these golf facilities in neighbouring boroughs are well within a 15-minute drive time of Ealing's Sudbury golf site. To the south of the borough there are golf facilities available at Wyke Green Golf Club (18 holes) in Isleworth and in Chiswick at Dukes Meadow Golf & Tennis Centre (9-hole par 3, driving range and indoor centre). The Wyke Green course is just 8 minutes' drive time from the West Middlesex Golf Course in Ealing borough and the Council's Brent Valley golf course is only 11 minutes away. The Airlinks Golf Centre in Southall Lane, Hounslow is temporarily closed but due to reopen in 2023 with a new 18-hole golf course, new 24-bay floodlit driving range and a bar and eatery; the facility is located within a 9-minute drive time of the West London Golf Centre in Ealing borough.

- **Is the provision of a Regional Park good value for money given the costs involved and current economic instability?**

We will always ensure that we are prudent with public finances, and that investment in our facilities is good value for money. Further work on the financial plans for the regional park will be developed as part of stage two of the project, which will report in Summer 2024.

While nothing is certain at this early stage, a new regional park offers many opportunities to secure funding through the Greater London Authority and Heritage Lottery Fund as meets all the priority criteria for their funding.

There may also be an opportunity for funding from developers looking to secure biodiversity offsetting for local developments.

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- **We question whether the basis for consideration of the closure of Perivale Golf Course is indeed to address health outcomes, as these are already being addressed through provision of pay and play (not only annual) membership and accessibility which accommodates a broad spectrum of age, gender and ethnicity.**

This is addressed above and throughout.

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- **The most up to date figures for golf playing appear not to have been used in making the decision. Will the Council agree to view the up-to-date figures when it reviews its decision?**

Yes – we will always seek to use the most up-to-date and relevant data.