

Marion Golf Park Consultation & Marketing Plan

Originating Officer	Unit Manager Sport and Recreational Community Facilities - Mark Hubbard
Corporate Manager	Manager City Property - Thuyen Vi-Alternetti
General Manager	General Manager City Development - Ilia Houridis
Report Reference	GC210223F02

Confidential



Confidential Motion

That pursuant to Section 90(2) and (3)(d)(i) and (ii) of the Local Government Act 1999, the Council orders that all persons present, with the exception of the following persons: Chief Executive Officer, General Manager City Development, General Manager Corporate Services, General Manager City Services, Manager Corporate Governance, Manager City Property, Unit Manager Sport and Recreational Community Facilities, Unit Manager Land & Property, Unit Manager Communications, Unit Manager Governance and Council Support, be excluded from the meeting as the Council receives and considers information relating to Marion Golf Park Consultation & Marketing Plan, upon the basis that the Council is satisfied that the requirement for the meeting to be conducted in a place open to the public has been outweighed by the need to keep consideration of the matter confidential given the information relates to commercial information including financial figures provided by a third party.

REPORT OBJECTIVE

To provide a summary on community feedback for desired improvements to the Marion Golf Park, and detail a draft marketing plan to improve the profile and utilisation of the course.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the General Council Meeting held on 8 December 2020 (GC201208F03) Council endorsed a funding commitment of up to \$1.675m for the Marion Golf Park capital works upgrade, to support funding applications to the State 'Local Government Partnership Program', and the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing (ORSR) Community Recreation and Sports Facility Program (CRSFP).

The grant applications were submitted in January 2021 and results of those submissions are expected in March and April 2021.

In recognition of the potential investment into course upgrades, and the potential to increase utilisation of the course, Council requested a report be brought back to Council covering the views of users of the golf course as to desired improvements; and a draft marketing plan.

This report provides a summary of feedback collected from golf course users and club members on the course and facilities, and a draft marketing plan aimed at improving the profile and utilisation of the course.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receives and notes this report and attachments.
2. In accordance with Section 91(7) and (9) of the Local Government Act 1999, orders that this report, the attachments and any minutes arising from this report having been considered in confidence under Section 90 (2) and (3)(d) (i) and (ii) of the Act, except when required to effect or comply with Council's resolution(s) regarding this matter, be kept confidential and not available for public inspection for a period of 12 months from the date of this meeting. This confidentiality order will be reviewed at the General Council Meeting in December 2021.

DISCUSSION

The Marion Golf Park is a smaller local course suitable for all ages, and perfect for visitors. It is a hidden gem that is not well-known, but it has huge potential to grow and develop. The course unique characteristics include:

- Ranked in Top 20 public 9-hole Golf Courses in Australia
- Spectacular coastal views – ideal location that will attract golfers
- Only 9-hole public course in Southern Adelaide (surrounding population 407,277) offering a unique golf experience
- Affordable membership options and pay as you play options
- Location of the planned new Cement Hill housing development (600 new dwellings)
- Is suitable for beginners, those that can't afford a private club membership, those that can't commit to a full year annual membership, and those that only want to play on the odd occasion.

Belair Turf Management is the company appointed to manage the course for the next 2 years. They are responsible for all operations including bookings and site management / maintenance. Currently there is no food and beverage facility available to the public, however, in the Pro Shop there is a small fridge selling some soft drinks and sweets.

The site is open 7 days a week from 6.30am until late during daylight savings, and until 5pm all other times. The Marion Golf Club also operates out of the facility. The club has operated out of a small, portable "Atco" hut which has a bar which is managed by volunteers to serve up to 60 members during competition times.

In 2019, over 15,000 rounds of golf were played at the MGP for casual, tournament and social rounds. Research has indicated that, with a course upgrade and improved marketing efforts, the current 15,000 rounds played per year can increase to 25,000 to 30,000 rounds.

Consultation on Course Improvements

A survey was conducted of visitors to the Marion Golf Park between 8 January and 29 January 2021 to seek feedback on the current condition of the course and facilities, and to seek suggested priorities for improvement.

In total 43 surveys were completed over this period. In general, the majority of respondents felt the course was in good condition and very good value, but the majority also felt the facilities were in fair to poor condition. The results showed the following:

Facilities

- 76% rated the Clubhouse as 'fair' or 'poor'.
- 78% rated the Pro Shop as 'fair' or 'poor'.
- 66% rated the car park as 'fair' or 'poor'
- 68% rated signage as 'poor' or 'fair'.

Course



- Overall, ratings for the various aspects of the course itself (greens, fairways, tees, practice areas) were predominantly 'fair' to 'good'.
- The majority of respondents said that, if a driving range were developed, they would use it on a weekly (37%) or monthly basis (34%).

From the written comments section, the most common suggestion was to build a new Clubhouse (40% of total responses).

Other key survey results include the following:

- 93% believe that the course is good value for money.
- Location (39%) and Value for Money (25%) were the main reasons participants came to the course.
- 82% found out about the course through 'word of mouth'.

A copy of the full survey and results can be found in Attachment 1.

Further consultation was conducted directly with the Marion Park Golf Club Committee who provided the following feedback:

- The portable "Atco Hut" clubhouse urgently needs to be replaced with a new facility.
- The desire to see an integrated facility that has both the Pro Shop and Clubhouse together to create a singular place for visitors and members as the entry point to the course and a place to enjoy some food and beverages after the round; and provide greater efficiencies for staffing; and greater connection between course management and the Club.
- An opportunity to create a Clubhouse taking advantage of the views, high traffic numbers, and to provide a place for broader community usage (cafe, functions and meeting spaces).
- Need to address safety concerns from the car park.
- A desire for improved practice facilities.

Marketing Plan

There has been limited investment into the course, its profile and marketing for a number of years. A draft Marketing Plan has now been developed in consultation with Belair Turf Management (current course management). The plan gives consideration to short-term strategies for the course (which are limited due to the poor condition of the current infrastructure); as well as further opportunities to expand the marketing campaign should an upgrade to the course occur.

The main aim of the plan is to:

1. Increase public rounds to over 20,000 (by the end of 2023)
2. Increase the profile of the course
3. Improve the reputation of the course
4. Increase visitor satisfaction levels
5. Increase memberships of the Marion Park Golf Club to over 150 members (by the end of 2023).

A copy of the draft Marketing Plan is provided as Attachment 2, with short term actions outlined on pages 8 to 11. The following are immediate strategies that can be put into place that address issues (weaknesses) and opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis on page 6:

- Implement an online booking/CRM system to improve the booking process and capture key data for future communications, and analysis of the utilisation of the course.
- Update the website and create a more visually appealing representation of the course, and updated user experience.
- Complete a "Branding Audit" to inform a potential change that would be most suitable to launch following a "course upgrade".
- Improve customer service experience in the current Pro Shop.
- Refresh the courses social media platforms and implement social media promotions.
- Develop brochures and flyers.

- Audit signage and develop plan to improve effectiveness, especially on Ocean's Boulevard.

The initial short term marketing strategies allocated to City of Marion will be delivered from within existing resources and budget with Belair Turf Management funding the other strategies. A decision on further marketing actions and spend can be determined in May/June following the results of the grant submissions, and a decision on course upgrades.

Project Timeline

November 2019	EOI process for management of golf course commenced
January 2020	EOI submissions received
April 2020 - August 2020	Process undertaken to consider course management business case
October 2020	Course Management discussed at Elected Members Forum
November 2020	General Council Meeting GC201124F02 - No resolutions from discussions. Item placed on agenda for 8 December 2020 General Council meeting
December 2020	Report to Council on Marion Golf Park Management & Capital Investment
February 2021	Report to Council on golf course consultation and draft marketing plan
March/April 2021	Results on grant submissions
May 2021	Report to Council on results of grants and course upgrade options

Attachment

#	Attachment	Type
1	Marion Golf Park Survey Results Jan 2021	PDF File
2	Marion Golf Park Marketing Plan 2021-2023	PDF File