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Councillors quiz process behind option agreement



By [Angus Young](#)

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A councillor has questioned whether a proposed deal to sell a prime council-owned seafront site in Bridlington was

"immoral".

East Riding Council had asked for £750,000 for the freehold of the land currently used as a golf course by **Bridlington** Golf Club.

Under the deal, the cash-strapped club, which holds a 99-year-lease on the land, would have bought the site and then sell a 3.5 acre plot at the 16th hole to a developer to build 22 new homes.


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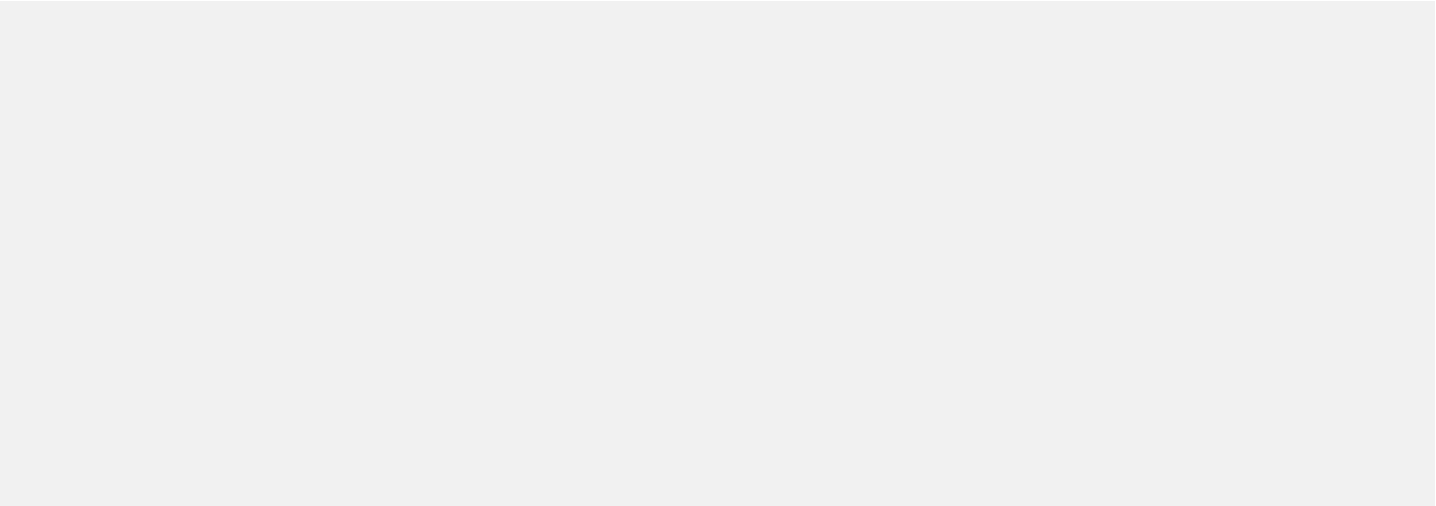
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According to minutes of an extraordinary general meeting of the club, an interested developer had offered £1.6m for the land in question.

But councillors on East Riding's audit committee heard a three-year period giving the club the option to buy the course off the authority had now elapsed.



Bridlington Golf Club's Belvedere course

The committee was told talks between the two parties were continuing without a deal currently on the table.

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However Councillor Ros Jump questioned whether the council had under-valued the land during the period of original option agreement.

She said: "This is prime land we are talking about. It might not be illegal but isn't it immoral to sell off council property at a value of £750,000 and then find out the owner of that land sells a very small piece of that land for £1.6m?"

Matthew Buckley, the council's head of democratic and legal services, said the authority's valuation of the golf course had been calculated with advice from the Valuation Office Agency.

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In addition, he said the council's external auditors had confirmed it had complied with its legal duties during the process after concerns were raised by a local resident.

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East Riding Council's Alan Menzies

Alan Menzies, the council's director of planning and regeneration, said selling the land to the golf club was seen as a way to resolve the club's long-standing financial problems, which included difficulties making regular rent payments.

The proposed housing development, together with a small hotel, was given the go-ahead by the council's planning committee last year on the casting vote of chairman Councillor Phyllis Pollard.

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Planning officers had recommended refusal because the golf course had not been allocated for any new housing under the council's recently-adopted Local Plan.

John Read, the council's valuation and estates manager, said the option to buy the land had not been taken up by the club by the end of the three-year period.

He confirmed discussions over a way forward were continuing with club officials.

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