

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND WEST HERTS GOLF CLUB JOINT CONSULTATIVE  
COMMITTEE**

**12 October 2023**

Present: **West Herts Golf Club**  
Eric Woodward (Chair)  
David Rogers  
Jonathan Kaltner (General Manager)  
Sandra Turner

**Watford Borough Council**  
Councillors A Grimston, M Hofman and D Walford

Officers: Community Commissioning Lead  
Sports Development Officer  
Democratic Services Officer (LM)

**15 Apologies for absence/committee membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Saffery.

**16 Disclosure of interests**

There were no disclosures of interest

**17 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2022 were agreed with one amendment that the usage statistics should be noted as 1,740 Watford Resident rounds in 2022.

**18 Usage statistics for the last year**

**Usage Statistics**

The General Manager, Jonathan Kaltner, informed the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) of the usage statistics for the 2022/2023 period to the committee. It was noted that the usage had decreased compared to the previous year, particularly in the first quarter, which had been impacted by adverse weather conditions.

Overall, the committee acknowledged that the numbers were tracking well, and displayed a healthy level of golf participation and utilisation of the golf club. Councillor Grimston inquired about communicating this information to the residents of Watford. Jonathan Kaltner responded that the golf club had intensified its social media content over the past six months. He highlighted that the content focused on creating awareness and exposure, particularly in regard the junior academy, ladies' section, and adult academy—areas of pride for the golf club.

Councillor Grimston questioned the click rates further, prompting Sandra Turner to explain that a dedicated team member managed social media. They ensured a diverse range of topics and areas were covered in the content, meticulously organised with a spreadsheet.

There was a discussion about the current programmes at the golf club. This included local children from Chessbrook who had received lessons from Charlie Gough. A former member's widow, who was passionate about making golf accessible, had helped to fund the initiative. Jonathan Kaltner elaborated that the sessions had commenced this term, financially supported by the charity while the club provided the facilities. He emphasised reaching out to local schools and offering the golf club's meeting facilities free of charge to increase awareness.

Councillor Grimston proposed tagging the council in social media posts for better promotion, which the committee supported. The discussion then turned to the list of schools contacted. Regrettably, there had been limited interest from schools thus far. The Sports and Physical Activity Manager offered her assistance, expressing connections with local schools and sports programmes. She proposed to facilitate outreach efforts on behalf of the golf club to enhance engagement within the community.

Councillor Hofman asked about the revised targets and how this came about. Jonathan Kaltner explained that the targets were revised in 2019 by the JCC Committee. As a general trend, golf participation had declined since the late '90s and early 2000s. Therefore, the targets were revised by JCC in 2019. On the whole, they managed to meet the revised targets. Councillor Hofman suggested increasing the targets to be an aspiration. They could be revised in 12 months. He mentioned that people had been emailing the Mayor about using the golf course and suggested an increase of 25%. A discussion ensued within the committee regarding what percentage the new targets should encompass, taking into consideration the club's capacity to accommodate such an increase. Councillor Grimston commented that the upcoming year might pose difficulties due to the cost of living struggles many individuals faced. There was further discussion about the challenges of securing a tee time, especially during peak

busy times, for both Watford residents and club members, with Fridays being exceptionally high in demand. Jonathan Kaltner also highlighted that weather conditions significantly affected the demand for tee times, and cited examples from July 23 and July 22. After careful consideration, the committee reached a consensus to set a 20% increase in the target, taking into account the various factors discussed during the meeting.

Councillor Hofman inquired about the number of people with an Everyone Active pass and whether there were statistics for course usage, particularly in terms of whether they attended as a group or with a club member. Jonathan Kaltner explained that they did not possess specific data on this aspect. Since a guest green fee and an Everyone Active pass cost the same, people would book when accompanying a friend, making it difficult to segregate the usage based on these parameters.

The Sports and Physical Activity Manager then asked about the new booking system. Jonathan Kaltner clarified that they were still utilising Intelligent Golf. However, he noted a limitation with this system—it did not support the capability to register if someone was a Watford resident. Golf clubs widely used Intelligent Golf, but Watford's unique situation with few clubs having a similar setup led to a lack of demand for a software feature distinguishing residents for special rates. Consequently, Intelligent Golf was unwilling to implement this additional feature.

Additionally, pre-registering people as Watford residents was not feasible. Therefore, residents still needed to book through the pro shop and provide ID.

Councillor Grimston enquired if the software was from a local company. Jonathan clarified that it was not from a local company but rather a market leader which offered various options for handicaps that a bespoke system would not provide.

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### **Proposed closures in 2024**

Jonathan Kaltner discussed the planned course closures for the upcoming year with the committee, which remained consistent with previous years and included one additional event. Councillor Grimston inquired about the inclusivity aspect of these events. Sandra Turner clarified that the Millennium and Turkey Stakes, which were Christmas competitions, welcomed adult pairs without regard to gender. Additionally, when the course was closed on Saturdays for the Spring meeting, replacement tee times were allocated to the ladies on Wednesdays.

Councillor Hofman asked about the BBQ event and whether it was open to the public. Jonathan Kaltner explained that the match day was not open to the public. However, the fun day in the afternoon was accessible. The event included a bouncy castle and magician to enhance the experience.

Councillor Grimston enquired about the availability of the conference space at the golf club for local residents. Jonathan Kaltner confirmed that the space was available for rental to local businesses. However, demand had decreased due to some businesses' widespread adoption of Zoom, and it had yet to return to pre-COVID levels.

Councillor Hoffman asked if there were any competitions open to the public. Sandra Turner explained that the Women's Open competition had been open to the public, attracting 94 participants and there was invitation days when guests could be invited. Unfortunately, previous open competitions for men were unsuccessful and had been discontinued. However, there was potential for reintroducing such competitions in the future.

Eric Woodward addressed the committee regarding the proposed fee increases. He acknowledged the financial pressure it could impose on both individuals and businesses. The proposed increase was set at 8%, which would raise fees for Watford residents from £36 to £39. He highlighted the significant cost and wage increases faced by the golf club, necessitating this adjustment.

Councillor Grimston enquired whether the golf club staff were paid the living wage. Jonathan Kaltner confirmed that staff received the living wage; however, they paid more due to the club's location, limited public transport options, and competition with other more accessible hospitality venues. He emphasised that they did not pay those under the age of 24 a lower minimum wage, aiming to ensure fair wages for all employees.

Discussions were ongoing at the golf club regarding the subscription rates for golf club members. Jonathan Kaltner clarified that he couldn't discuss the proposed increase as it had not yet been agreed upon and was not public knowledge.

The committee also discussed the impact of inflation and predictions about the inflation rate. The Sports and Physical Activity Manager inquired about the county card. Jonathan Kaltner explained that the County Card was accepted at over 1,350 clubs across England. Allowing cardholders to use it at participating clubs, encouraging membership in clubs associated with the program.

Councillor Hofman enquired about the rates at nearby golf clubs, citing Batchworth as being around £50 to £60. Jonathan Kaltner disputed this,

providing the current rates for comparison. He mentioned that Moor Park charged £115 during the week and £140 on the weekend, while Sandy Lodge charged £80 on weekdays and £100 on weekends. He expected these rates to increase similarly to West Herts. He emphasised that the price difference reflected the quality of the golf course.

Councillor Hofman then asked about the waiting list for membership. Jonathan Kaltner explained that they could not predict when the waiting list would be cleared until they knew whether people were renewing. There was some attrition in membership, and they ensured that individuals who didn't immediately secure a membership spot were added to the social list. The closure dates for 2024 were noted by the JCC; these included days when there would be restricted access to the course.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted

#### **Any other business**

The Sports and Physical Activity Manager shared positive feedback about the Mayor's golf day, stating that £11,000 was raised for charity. She expressed the desire to host the event again at West Herts and focused on discussing potential dates, with a preference for Fridays. Jonathan Kaltner pointed out that Friday was already the most popular day, suggesting alternative weekdays to ensure minimal negative impact on the club and its members. He proposed considering Mondays, allowing for a lovely extended weekend, emphasising the need to strike a balance.

Chair

The Meeting started at 5.30 pm  
and finished at 6.10 pm