

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND WEST HERTS GOLF CLUB JOINT COMMITTEE

26 MARCH 2012

Present: Jim Banks (Chair)
Ross McCue (General Manager)
David Rogers
John Baldwin

Councillors D Scudder, D Walford, A Mortimer and G Derbyshire

Officers: Sports Development Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Jim Banks was elected Chair for the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES

It was noted that Councillor Derbyshire had replaced Councillor Sharpe for this meeting.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2011 were agreed.

There were no matters arising.

4 COURSE USAGE UPDATE

The meeting considered the table detailing course usage and noted the increase in usage by residents.

One Member asked whether there was a specific reason for the increase.

The Chair advised that the golf club provided an enjoyable course and good value for money, advising that fees had remained at the same level since 2006. He referred, however, to the minutes of the previous meeting where he had warned that it could prove necessary to increase fees for 2012.

A Member asked what benefits Everyone Active pass holders were entitled to.

Members of the golf club explained that a pass holder would effectively be granted temporary membership for the day of attendance. This allowed full access to all facilities, including use of the bar. Pass holders could not, however, enter competitions.

The Chair advised that Everyone Active cards appeared to be used by very few non-residents. He pointed out that the SLM system could not separate residents from non-residents and that consequently it was not possible to determine the residential status of users. He explained that there was a difference in cost between the two types of user and that in the past the use of two different cards had been instrumental in determining which price to charge. He noted that this method had helped to ensure that residents were not subsidising the non-residents' use of club facilities.

One Member asked whether a different type of card reader, such as a 'palm reader' could be obtained.

The General Manager replied that this subject had been broached in 2008. The Watford Borough Council's Community Services Section Head had advised, however, that this would not be possible as it would be in breach of confidentiality.

The Sports Development Officer added that a 'palm-reader' might not be compatible with the SLM system. She explained that in the past the cards had been part of a manual system and it had been easy to identify which card holders were residents, non-residents and concessions. SLM, however, had changed to a computer system.

A Member suggested that it would be sensible to:

1. Investigate the possibility of obtaining hand-held readers
2. investigate whether this method would be cost effective.

The Chair pointed out that potential users could borrow residents' cards even under the old system. He said that whilst staff did ask where users lived the answer was not always forthcoming. He asked whether more non-residents could be using the club than would appear from the figures.

ACTION: Sports Development Officer to investigate

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COURSE CLOSURES 2012

The Committee noted the six events which precluded play for the public and Club Members.

In reply to a question from a Member, the General Manager advised that a number of high profile players attended the Club events.

David Rogers added that David Griffiths, the winner of the Portuguese 'open', had attended in the past which had been of great benefit for the cadets.

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GREEN FEE RATE 2012

The Chair informed the meeting that there had been no price increase in fees since 2006. He noted the rise in expenses and suggested that the Club be enabled to make an increase this year.

The Chair drew the meeting's attention to the list of Green Fees and proposed a rise of £5.00 for a mid-week and £7.00 for a week-end game for residents. This would raise the cost to £25.00 and £32.00 respectively. He advised that this compared favourably with other local clubs.

The General Manager proposed increases of £5.00 at mid-week and £7.00 at the week-end for non-residents and pro-rata increases for those with concessions. He added that users claiming concessionary rates would be asked to provide supporting documentation.

The Chair advised that he did not envisage a reduction in usage due to the increase in prices as the club offered good value for money. He said that this would be monitored to ascertain whether the price increase affected use of the course.

The General Manager said that he compiled a monthly monitoring report which identified residents' and non-residents' visits to the club.

In reply to a query from a Member, the Chair advised that the club had made a profit in 2011 but that it had been small compared to the previous year.

AGREED: That the West Herts. Golf Club raises the fees in line with the Club's proposals.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Everyone Active membership

The Chair asked whether more promotional material on the Golf Club could be directed at Everyone Active card-holders. He also asked whether there was generally a good 'take-up' amongst card-holders.

The Sports Development Officer advised that all card-holders were encouraged to take up membership of the club. With more data available this could be used for advertising to potential new users.

The General Manager noted the discounted rates for Everyone Active card-holders and asked when SLM and Watford Borough Council would need to be advised of a rise in rates. In response to a query from a Member, he explained that it was hoped to raise the rates as from 1st May 2012.

2. Cadet Section

The General Manager said that the Cadet Section was thriving. Cadets were offered tuition and could take part in competitions after which a presentation was organised when they were advised of their handicap. The Cadets gained promotion from this point.

The General Manager advised that one parent had produced a data base of children in the cadet Section and that all parents received regular e-mails. He added that the Cadet Section included both boys and girls.

3. Heritage Lottery Fund Application

The General Manager drew the meeting's attention to a document detailing the proposed rejuvenation of Whippendell Woods and West Herts. Golf Club. He said that there had been no consultation with the Golf Club on the matter.

The Chair pointed out that the access to Whippendell Woods was across the golf course and that it would be helpful for the club to be aware of ongoing work.

One Member advised that it was intended to upgrade the bridle paths and also Rousebarn Lane.

Councillors AGREED to ask the officers concerned to pass on relevant information and to telephone the golf course to discuss the issue.

4. Year End Accounts

The General Manager advised that the year end accounts had been completed.

5. Directional Signs

The Chair reported that there had been a sign on the roundabout at the junction of Baldwins Lane and Watford Road and another at the end of Links Way to direct users to the Golf Course. Both signs had been removed.

One Member noted that both sites were within the bounds of Three Rivers District Council's area. In response to a request by the Chair the Member, who was also a County Councillor, said that he would ask for information at County Council.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 5.00 pm
and finished at 5.45 pm