

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND WEST HERTS GOLF CLUB JOINT COMMITTEE

18 DECEMBER 2012

At the meeting of Watford Borough Council and West Herts Golf Club held at on Tuesday, 18th December, 2012.

Present: Jim Banks – West Herts Golf Club (Chair)
Councillors J Dhindsa, D Scudder, D Walford and M Watkin

Also present: Ross McCue
David Rogers
John Baldwin

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

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Jim Banks continued as Chair, as elected at the previous meeting held in March.

2 APOLOGIES

There was a change to the Committee for this meeting: Councillor Watkin replaced Councillor Sharpe.
Apologies had been received from the Community Services Section Head.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2012 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising

Palm Readers:

The Sports Development Officer explained that the use of palm readers had been considered but that this system would be expensive to install and would not, therefore, be cost-effective. She added that there were also data protection issues.

In response to a question from Councillor Scudder, the Sports Development Officer said that the Everyone Active (EA) cards provided information on whether the holder was a resident or a non-resident. She advised, however, that this was not possible at the Golf Club as it had proved too costly to link to the main system at the Leisure Centres.

Councillor Scudder asked whether it would be possible to issue differently coloured cards to residents and non-residents.

The Sports Development Officer replied that the EA cards were contract specific and added that a difference in benefits between residents and non-residents was applicable only to Watford. She agreed to investigate whether differently coloured cards could be a possibility.

The Chair advised that EA card holders who used the golf club were asked whether they were residents and were also asked to provide their postcodes. It was noted that the number of non-residents had increased over the previous year.

Councillor Scudder suggested that residents could be asked for their driving licences as proof of residency.

The Sports Development Officer informed the meeting that comparisons had been made with other golf clubs. She advised that only two other authorities offered similar systems and that these were administered manually at the clubs.

Councillor Dhindsa said that it was preferable for residents rather than non-residents to gain most use from the EA cards.

The Chair advised that residents were able to book a round up to seven days in advance whilst non-residents could only book up to 24 hours beforehand.

Councillor Scudder asked whether residential status could be confirmed on the telephone.

The Chair replied that this could be achieved since postcodes were always requested but that nonetheless some non-residents did manage to gain preferential rates.

Councillor Scudder drew attention to two potential problems: residents could be turned away and there could be a loss of income for the club.

The Chair said that he could not recall that any residents had been turned away but that there had been a loss of income in the previous year.

Responding to a suggestion from Councillor Dhindsa, the Sports Development Officer advised that SLM had said that if there was a problem staff could ring through and SLM could check on the system.

Councillor Dhindsa suggested that new cards, which differentiated between residents and non-residents, could be sent to all those already on the data base.

ACTION:

1. Councillor Dhindsa and the Sports Development Officer to meet for discussion on the issue of differently coloured cards
2. The Sports Development Officer to investigate whether differently coloured cards could be a possibility.

Directional Signs:

Councillor Scudder had asked for information with regard to the signs to the golf course which had previously been removed. He advised that Herts County Council had no knowledge of the reasons for removal and that he would ask Three Rivers District Council whether they had any information on the matter.

Marketing:

The Sports Development Officer advised that new marketing had been initiated: advertisements had been placed on bus shelters and in the 'About Watford' magazine and promotional material placed on the website.

4 COURSE USAGE UPDATE

The General Manager tabled the figures for usage by EA Pass Holders.

The meeting noted that whilst usage in 2011 had been exceptional due mainly to the good weather in that year, usage in the current year had fallen below target.

The General Manager advised that the EA figures mirrored those of the club generally. He added that it had not been possible to complete the table with the year statistics but said that the figures for December 2012 so far had been reasonable with no snow fall to prevent play. He explained that as a general rule December's figures did not greatly impact on the year-end statistics.

The General Manager said that there had been concerns earlier in 2012 with regard to water provision. The club had been unable to draw water from the mains as the Environment Agency had installed a flow restriction mechanism. During early April no water could be drawn but then, fortunately, sufficient rainfall during April had eliminated this problem. During the period without water flow there had been expenditure on the application of a wetting agent.

5 COURSE CLOSURES 2012

The meeting noted that there would be 13 dates on which special events would affect access to the course.

6 GREEN FEE RATE 2012

The Chair informed the meeting that there was no intention to increase the green fees during 2013.

The Chair then noted that it had been proposed to hold the Annual meeting in December of each year. He advised that the club's financial year ended on 31 December each year and that the budget must be produced before the end of November. He suggested that it would be preferable to hold the annual meeting in either September or October.

Councillor Scudder counselled that increases in Green Fees should be reported to Full Council but that there had been no time to set this up during the current year. He recommended that increases in fees should be a decision delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure. He added that he would ask the Community Services Section Head when it was required that the meeting be held; he considered that there was no reason why the joint committee could not meet in September but suggested that it would be wise to check with the Council's Legal Service.

The Chair asked whether a recommendation on fees made by the committee in September could be determined by the following January.

The Sports Development Officer confirmed that a decision made at a September meeting of the Golf Club could go to Full Council and be signed off at the January meeting so long as there had been no call-in on the issue.

The Chair noted that the agreement specified that the annual meeting should be in January or February but acceded that this date could be changed to September or October if Legal Services gave consent.

The meeting then discussed green fee rates.

The Chair reminded the meeting that fees had increased in 2012 but that this had been the first increase in six years. He said that whilst this had been necessary it would be wise to not leave such a relatively long time between increases.

The Sports Development Officer agreed with this view and advised that there had been a number of complaints due to this perceived 'sudden' increase.

The Chair said that this should be matter for consideration each year and any necessary increase should not be unduly delayed.

AGREED: that the Community Services Section Head and the Head of Legal and Property Services be consulted with regard to the date of the Annual meeting.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Golf UK Accreditation

The General Manager advised that the club had sought accreditation; this was a bench-marking process run under the aegis of English Golf. Elements included in the process were: junior coaching, ladies' golf and child protection.

The General Manager confirmed that in excess of 300 hours of work had been assigned to the process and that several meetings with the Hertfordshire Golf Union had been held.

Excellent results had been achieved and it had been acknowledged that the club was particularly proactive. The club had been placed first in Hertfordshire and a wall plaque had been awarded in recognition of this achievement. The club had subsequently been put forward for the Golf Club of the Year award where it had achieved 'highly commended'.

2. Youth Players

The club was applying for funding of a maximum of £500.00. If successful this funding would be used for the Junior section.

3. Cassiobury Park

The Chair thanked council officers for information supplied regarding the development of Cassiobury Park and asked whether this information would be used for marketing purposes.

The Sports Development Officer replied that this information would be used for promotional purposes.

Chair

The Meeting started at 5.35 pm
and finished at 6.15 pm