

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND WEST HERTS GOLF CLUB JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

14 October 2021

Present: **West Herts Golf Club**
Jonathan Kaltner (General Manager)
Eric Woodward (Chair)
Simon Fowle
David Shelley

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

Officers: Head of Leisure and Environmental Services
Sports Development Officer
Democratic Services Officer (LM)
Democratic Services Officer (IS)

1 Apologies for absence/committee membership

Dave Rodgers, the previous Chair sent his apologies.

2 Disclosure of interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2020 were agreed.

4 Course usage update

Jonathan Kaltner introduced the course usage figures for the previous 12 months (to August 2021). He explained that there had been course closures due to Covid in April and May and then again in November and December. He explained that there had been some bounce back since the course had reopened.

In response to a question from members, Mr Kaltner advised that equal access had continued through all periods. There had been an increased demand for tee times from members while the golf club also had reduced capacity due to Covid

restrictions. Initially there had been an issue with Watford residents and visitors unable to book tee times. The golf club resolved the issue with set daily tee times reserved for Watford residents and Everyone Active card holders only.

There was a discussion around the reduced visit numbers from Everyone Active members, which had dropped from 350 in 2020 to 37 in 2021. This was attributed to increase demand from members who had been playing more often than in previous years, booking for non-member's only available by phone and a downtrend across the golf industry. Mr Kaltner informed the committee that a flexible membership had been introduced, which had lower fees and some people had migrated to this new membership.

Following a query from Councillor Dhindsa, Mr Kaltner clarified that the generic online booking software does not support the function of Watford residents to book with a discount. It was agreed that Mr Kaltner would make enquires with the software provider BRS whether it would be possible to add the feature.

In response to a question from members, Mr Kaltner advised that there had been 90 new joiners to the club and he provided a breakdown of the new membership in terms of adults, juniors and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

5 Course closures 2022

Mr Kaltner informed the committee that the course closure dates for 2022 were the same as in the previous year.

The closure dates for 2022 were noted by the JCC; these included days when there would be restricted access to the course.

6 Green fees 2022

Mr Kaltner informed the JCC on the proposed green fee increases for 2022; with fees per round to be increased by 10% for visitors to the club on Monday to Thursday and also at weekends. It was noted that for the 5 years prior, increases have been below inflation.

The proposed rise was predominantly due to the increased running costs of the club, which included but were not limited to a 38% increase in machinery lease, projected 10% increase for fertiliser and associated chemicals, 30% increase for utilities and increased staffing costs due to the implementation of the living wage.

In response to a question from members, Mr Kaltner stated that West Herts bench-marked themselves with Sandy Lodge and Portis Park golf clubs, the green fee was lower at West Herts than both respective golf clubs.

Councillor Dhindsa raised concerns regarding the increase of fees by 10% could create a golf club that many Watford residents would be unable to afford to attend. The increased costs the golf club was experiencing with utilities was also experienced by Watford residents with salary increases unlikely.

AGREED –

That the proposed green fee increases for 2022 outlined in the meeting papers be approved.

7

Any other business

Councillor Grimston asked a question on behalf of Councillor Williams regarding paths being closed with no communication.

Mr Kaltner informed the JCC that no right of way paths had been closed and right of way paths have been maintained by the golf club. During the Covid lockdowns while the golf club was closed, members of the public were able to walk freely across the area. However with active play resuming some paths and areas of the course have been considered to be unsafe and there is signage to inform people of this. Only paths that are not a right of way have been closed and are on private property. It was agreed that if any right of way paths were to be closed then this will be communicated to the council.

There have been some issues at the golf club with property vandalised and staff verbally abused by members of the public. Chris Fennel stated that to help with any issues there are now 3 meetings a year with the club and officers, to improve communication.

Chair

The Meeting started at 5.30 pm
and finished at 6.35 pm