

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

15 October 2014

Present: West Herts Golf Club

Eric Woodward (Chair)
Steve Barrett (General Manager)
David Rogers
John Baldwin (for Minute Numbers 3 to 8)

Watford Borough Council

Mayor D Thornhill
Councillor S Johnson
Councillor D Scudder

Alan Gough Head of Community and Customer Services
Gary Oliver Culture and Play Section Head
Jason McKenzie Democracy and Governance Section Head
Rosy Wassell Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Eric Woodward was elected as Chair; proposed by David Rogers and seconded by Mayor Dorothy Thornhill.

2. APOLOGIES

There was a change to the Committee for this meeting: Mayor Thornhill replaced Councillor Sharpe and Councillor Johnson replaced Councillor Walford.

Apologies were received after the meeting from Councillor Crout.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meetings held on 17th December 2013 and 7 May 2014 were agreed and signed.

4. COURSE USAGE UPDATE

The Chair noted that the number of 'Everyone Active' pass holders using the course in 2013 was lower than in the previous year. He pointed out that the figures for 2014 were for the first nine months rather than for the whole year.

The Chair advised that the lower number of players was not wholly driven by economics but was, in part, due to the present over-supply of courses in the UK. He added that membership of golf clubs had generally declined throughout the country and that very few clubs currently had full membership.

In response to a comment from the Mayor, the Chair agreed that a joint drive to increase membership would be advisable.

5. COURSE CLOSURES 2015

The course closure dates, when special events would take place, had been circulated with the agenda. The dates were similar to those of previous years.

David Rogers pointed out that training took place on Sunday mornings.

6. GREEN FEE RATES 2015

No changes in fees were proposed for 2015.

The General Manager advised that the green fee rate for casual play was £23.00 per round. He suggested that current fees remain in place and that percentage increases were only applied when whole numbers were involved.

David Rogers cautioned that it was advisable not to save an increase until a large rise was to be instigated.

7. BOOKING SCHEDULE

The Committee discussed the proposed new booking schedule.

The Chair confirmed that, as noted under minute number 4 above, it would be wise to increase course usage by Watford Residents. He suggested that this could be made possible by varying access times and by allowing residents access to the on-line booking schedule.

The General Manager proposed that the new system, as outlined in Appendix 1, be trialled for a year.

The Mayor asked whether those residents who played as Everyone Active players later became Club members.

The General Manager affirmed that it was hoped that, after a year's trial, the proposed booking schedule would achieve this result.

The Chair then advised that residents who played the course had been asked to complete a survey/questionnaire on the quality of facilities at the club. He noted that cost had not been the main issue addressed in the feedback. A significant number of residents had, however, noted that increased access times would be an advantage.

The Chair added that initiatives to increase membership had been suggested; these included the facility for residents to book a round on-line as well as reduced green fees at certain times. He noted that the club considered that, in order to realise the initiatives proposed within Appendix 1, it would be beneficial to agree a number of changes to the Joint User Agreement.

In reply to a question from Councillor Scudder, the General Manager confirmed that there would be no change in fees. He added that it was hoped that fees for play at 'twilight' times would be cheaper.

Councillor Scudder asked whether Watford Residents would be eligible to play at twilight.

The General Manager answered that residents would be eligible for twilight rates and would have the same access to the booking system as members.

In reply to further comments from councillors, the General Manager advised that the club was proposing a new 'flexible' style of membership which would not attract a joining fee. He added that new ideas were constantly needed to maintain membership numbers; it was necessary for clubs to change in order to attract new members

Responding to a question from the Mayor, the Legal and Democratic Services Section Head explained that details of the lease could be changed by a deed of variation if necessary; this would be easy to facilitate.

A change to the Joint User Agreement, however, would require a recommendation by the Joint Consultative Committee to the Club and the Council. A decision on behalf of the Council would be taken by the Head of Community and Customer Services and the Culture and Play Section Head in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Client Function. Following the Decision, letters of confirmation would be exchanged with the Golf Club.

The Legal and Democratic Services Section Head commented that he did not immediately consider that a change to the lease was necessary to effect the booking schedule proposals, but he would consider this.

The Mayor said that the Joint Consultative Committee should consider how the club could be promoted. She considered that the club and Council needed to co-operate in a joint publicity drive and suggested that the Culture and Play Section Head work with the Council's Communications section and the General Manager.

The Joint Consultative Committee agreed to Recommend to the Club and the Council that the proposals concerning fee bookings outlined in Appendix 1 of the agenda be implemented and that the necessary changes to the Joint User Agreement be made to facilitate this.

ACTIONS :

1. All necessary documentation to be sent to the Legal and Democratic Services Section Head in order to effect implementation of the recommendation by the Joint Consultative Committee in relation to fee bookings and the changes to the Joint User Agreement.
2. Culture and Play Section Head to work with the Council's Communications section and with the General Manager of the Golf Club on a joint publicity drive.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Membership Applications

The Legal and Democratic Services Section Head advised that the procedure for managing complaints regarding refusal of an application had been considered; the procedure had been agreed by both the club and the Council.

The Mayor considered that it was not the Council's role to be an arbiter of applications. If a significant number of complaints were received, however, it would be wise for the Council to be advised particularly where the complainant felt that a refusal had been discriminatory.

The Legal and Democratic Services Section Head said that the Joint Consultative Committee's power and scope to review an application was limited and that scope is set out in the proposed procedure. It was not within the remit of the Joint Consultative Committee to determine whether an applicant should be granted membership, but to consider whether the appropriate procedures had been followed. Going forward, in light of the internal changes by the club to its membership procedures, it was likely that the circumstances under which this procedure would be invoked would be very limited.

John Baldwin concurred with the Democracy and Governance Section Head and said that the procedure had been approved by both the club and the Council.

Woodland Management

The General Manager asked for clarification regarding woodland management in the light of the regeneration of Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Woods.

The Culture and Play Section Head advised that communication should be with the Council's Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks and Streets) who could advise on this matter.

Chair

Watford Borough Council and West
Herts Golf Club Joint Consultative
Committee

The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and finished at 6.40 p.m.