

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

17 December 2013

Present: West Herts Golf Club

Jim Banks (Chair)
David Rogers
John Baldwin
Eric Woodward
Ken Connelly

Watford Borough Council

Councillor K Crout
Councillor G Derbyshire
Councillor D Walford

Gary Oliver Culture and Play Section Head
Rosy Wassell Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Jim Banks was elected as Chair; proposed by Councillor Crout and seconded by John Baldwin.

2. APOLOGIES

There was a change to the Committee for this meeting: Councillor Derbyshire replaced Councillor Sharpe.

Apologies had been received from Councillor Scudder.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 2012 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising

Palm Readers:

The Chair advised that the cost of supplying palm readers was prohibitive. It would consequently not be possible to introduce this scheme.

Cards for Users:

It had been suggested at the previous meeting that new cards could be introduced in order to differentiate between residents and non-residents. The Culture and Play Section Head explained that this system had been investigated but had been found to be economically unfeasible as the issue of differently coloured cards would equate to a bespoke service for Watford. The current practice of producing a driving licence, Council Tax form or utility bill to prove residency in Watford Borough

would be continued and a notice to remind users to bring this with them should be displayed.

The Chair said that this system had been in use for approximately 15 years. He advised that residents could book a round seven days in advance whilst non-residents booked one day prior to playing. He added that the numbers of non-resident users were diminishing.

The Culture and Play Section Head noted that, in order to comply with the conditions of use, it was necessary to provide information on residency when booking.

The Chair replied that it was possible to turn away those who were not entitled to play but that people would lend out the relevant documents to others.

The Culture and Play Section Head suggested that users could be asked to show a photo driver's licence.

Directional Signs:

Councillor Walford said that he was unsure whether Councillor Scudder had asked Three Rivers District Council whether they had any information on the removal of the direction signs. He said that he would speak to Councillor Scudder and report to the Committee.

ACTION: Councillor Walford to ask Councillor Scudder for information on the signs to the Golf Club.

4. COURSE USAGE UPDATE

The Chair said that usage by both resident and non-resident Everyone Active (EA) Pass Holders had fallen during 2013. He advised that the Head Greenkeeper had reported that the course had been closed due to snowfall for 14 days in January 2013, for a further four days in February and for an additional two days in March.

The Chair noted that usage had risen during the months of June and July due to an exceptionally hot Summer. The warm spell had, however, been followed by a very wet autumn when the numbers of players had fallen.

Replying to a question from Councillor Crout, the Chair advised that this pattern of usage had been experienced by other clubs and was not particular to the West Herts Golf Club; the statistics indicated the conditions of both the weather and the general economy.

The Culture and Play Section Head noted that for Watford residents who were not members of the club, there was only a limited time for them to play; he asked for information on membership of the club.

The Chair responded that there had been a significant increase in membership when the EA card had first been introduced. He advised that the allocation for seven-day membership was currently full but that there were vacancies for those who wished to take up the restricted 'five day membership'. The Chair further

advised that most 'five day' members were waiting for the chance to upgrade to seven-day membership.

David Rogers explained that this was currently a general trend for most clubs.

The Culture and Play Section Head suggested that the Council and the club could co-operate in a joint initiative to fill vacancies for five day members and that cross marketing could increase club membership. He added that discussions could be held to evolve a general fitness / golf package.

In reply to a question from David Rogers, the Culture and Play Section Head said that SLM, the club and the Council could explore options available for advertising.

The Chair agreed that this would be wise and that he would refer the suggestion to the Golf Club Committee for discussion.

ACTION: The Golf Club Committee to progress marketing initiatives

The Chair informed the meeting that whilst the past 12 months been relatively poor in trading terms, reserves had been built up over previous years and the club was consequently financially sound.

Referring to the table of usage of EA Pass Holders, Councillor Crout asked why the year 2011 had yielded such good results.

The Chair replied that the weather had been exceptional that year; weather was the determining factor in course usage.

In reply to a question from the Culture and Play Section Head, Eric Woodward advised that income from the bar had also decreased during the previous year.

The Chair said that whilst some income had been derived from hiring out the bar, this was also less than in previous years.

5. COURSE CLOSURES 2014

The meeting noted that there would be 15 dates on which special events would affect access to the course.

Councillor Crout noted that the game organised by the Watford Observer was not on the list.

The Chair advised that this game would take place but that it would not impinge on availability for the public or for club members.

Ken Connelly explained that in 2013, for the first time, there had been no game organised by the newspaper; there was no specific reason for this decision. He advised that it was probable that a game organised by the Observer would be held in September or October 2014.

The Chair noted that it had been intended that the annual meeting take place during either September or October but that this had not been arranged for 2013.

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer explained that there had been no spaces on the calendar during either September or October when all Councillors on the current committee would have been available to attend.

ACTION: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to email Ken Connelly with suggested dates.

6. GREEN FEE RATES 2014

Councillor Derbyshire said that it would be better to make small regular increases to the fees than to have a major increase after a number of years.

The Chair advised that there had been no increases since 2012. In response to a question from Councillor Crout he said that whilst a rise in fees had not been agreed, an increase of £1.00 had been suggested for midweek games with a proportional increase at the weekend.

Members agreed that this would be wise.

The Chair proposed that these increases start on 1 April 2014.

Following a question from the Culture and Play Section Head, the Chair agreed that the club would send a schedule of the current charges with their proposals for increases in 2014 and that a report on the matter could also be provided. He informed that there had been no increases for several years and that West Herts was only one of many clubs for whom an increase in fees had been necessary.

The meeting discussed current and proposed fees and increases.

AGREED -

1. That fees be increased by £1.00 during the week with a pro rata increase at the weekend.
2. That the club forward to the Council, a schedule of current fees and proposals for increases

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cassiobury Park Developments

David Rogers asked for details on the refurbishments planned for Cassiobury Park.

The Culture and Play Section Head advised that, following a public consultation, proposals for this initiative would be presented to Cabinet in January 2014. He explained that one of the main features of the development would be a new building situated close to the paddling pools. This would be used as a café with provision for educational facilities; there would be accommodation for the park rangers as well as improved changing rooms.

Councillor Crout added that the existing café, Cha Cha Cha, would remain and would be the subject of substantial improvements.

The Culture and Play Section Head further advised that the bandstand would be moved back to the park from its current location by the library.

Ken Connelly noted that were the Lime Walk to be restored this would affect the club.

David Rogers agreed and said that once approved this would result in greatly increased usage of those paths which crossed the golf course. He asked whether better signage would be installed.

Councillor Crout advised that most people using the paths would be families who, he believed, would take all necessary steps to comply with informational signs.

The Chair advised that it should be borne in mind that the Lime Walk was not a public footpath with a right of way across the course; users crossed the course with permission from the club.

ACTION –

The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to ask the Cassiobury Park Project Officer for information regarding signage placed on footpaths across the golf course.

Chair

Watford Borough Council and West
Herts Golf Club Joint Consultative
Committee

The meeting started at 5.00 pm
and finished at 5.50 p.m.