

MINEHEAD & WEST SOMERSET GOLF CLUB

MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2015 AT 6.00PM

PRESENT: Paul Fullbrook (PF) Chairman; Alan Ridgway (AR) President; John Fulwell (JF) Treasurer; Phil Bowden (PB) Captain; Phil Arbourne (PA) Past Captain; Graham Wells (GW) Course Manager; Jayne Fulwell (EJF) Premises; Dorrien Bickerstaff (DB) Competitions & Handicaps; Kay Lockett (KL) Lady Captain; Jenny Holland (JH) Lady Vice Captain; Tony Bowden (TB) Competitions.

IN ATTENDANCE Steve Archer (SA) Bar Manager; Faye Barringer-Capp (FBC) Minutes.

1. APOLOGIES There were no apologies for absence.

2. AGREE MINUTES

The Minutes of the November 2015 Committee Meeting were agreed subject to minor amendments, and would then be signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Grant Application – Trevor John was meeting with Jamie Anderson to establish a way forward. Equality Issues – Andy Giles had written a second letter to the Committee reiterating the concerns raised in his letter of 26 October 2015 regarding equality issues in the booking of tee times. In his letter, he urged the Committee to take action as soon as possible. Implications for the Club in relation to the Equality Act 2010 were discussed, and it was acknowledged that this should be addressed further. It was agreed that Tony Bowden would reply to Andy Giles, and take the matter forward to the next stage with recommendations for tee times and use of the golf course.

4. SECTION REPORTS

4.1 Treasurer

See attached Report. Updates and additions as follows:-

JF was hopeful that the Club would break even for 2015. A letter had been received from West Somerset Council advising of the possible loss of Business Rates Relief with effect from 1st April, 2016. JF hoped that this might be spread over a period of time and not as an immediate loss of the current £24k relief. JF was in the process of completing a new Rates Relief form. 2016/17 Subscription renewals had been prepared and initially placed in the foyer for members to collect.

Special Cases - ground rules had to be established for members requesting a reduction in their subscription due, for example, to ill health and it was agreed that such members must write to the Treasurer to request dispensation, which would then be addressed on an individual, but consistent, basis.

Corporate Membership – Maitland Walker had requested a reduction as employees and guests of the company had not used the 2015 membership. A potential compromise would be to place them in a “flexible” category. JF would contact Maitland Walker to suggest this option.

Subscription Year – JF considered that some members may try to renew their subscription from 1 April 2016 rather than 1 January, and should this be the case they would be asked to pay a re-joining fee of £170. Members joining in the Social Category and paying a green fee could not play in competitions. Premium Credit had confirmed initial numbers of re-joining members paying by Direct Debit.

4.2 Premises

See attached Report. Updates and additions as follows:-

EJF reported that Malcolm Grist’s contract for cleaning the premises was to be renewed. DB advised that the locker shed was never cleaned, and this should be included within the new contract. The locker shed was in poor condition and EJF advised that the lockers would be moved into the new container whilst the shed was being repaired. It was agreed that the Captain should have an indoor locker.

Solar Panels – the MC agreed that a representative from a solar panel company should visit the Club to offer consultation advice.

4.3 Lady Captain

KL reported that the recently implemented Winter Match play was now going well.

The conduct of a lady member was discussed, and it was agreed that PF and KL would meet with her to resolve the issue.

4.4 Captain

PB advised that the final of the Buchanan Cup would be held over the weekend of 12/13 December.

PB thanked PF for his work as Chairman over the past 2 years.

The Committee unanimously agreed that the Chairman’s existing membership of the Club be extended to include the period of three months ending 31 March 2016. In view of this, PF agreed to stay on as Club Chairman until, and including, the AGM.

4.5 Course Management

See attached report. Updates and additions as follows:-

GW advised that trees at the 6th would probably have to be removed. Replacement planting would be arranged.

Some members were noted as paying attention to the bunkers whilst passing and raking them over, as it was not possible for the greenkeepers to rake them every day. Special attention was required from all members in treating divots on the course.

Course expenditure was expected to be over budget by £10k due to the high cost of maintaining the irrigation system, which was old and required specialist machinery for the essential work.

4.6 Competitions

TB praised the forbearance of some players in the Buchanan Cup during the day of particularly bad weather early in the competition, which meant the final could be held on time.

4.7 Catering

Graham Walsh had resigned from his position as Catering & Social Committee Member. It was agreed that the post should remain vacant until the AGM.

SA reported that recent dining evening meals had been very well received, with a good atmosphere in the kitchen.

TB advised that some members had been upset that the kitchen had been closed for three days due to particular functions.

Shane Archer had handed in his notice, with a leaving date of 5 January 2016. EJF advised that she was happy to act as caretaker in the kitchen as required, until further notice.

JF raised awareness of staff holiday to be taken early in 2016. This included SA, who had 5 weeks holiday due. PF proposed that SA be paid for 3 weeks as worked, and took 2 weeks off. Unanimously agreed.

It was reported that member Brian Lewis and eleven colleagues were unable to get breakfast at the Club on a Friday due to a wedding function on the Saturday, and went elsewhere to eat. AR stated that they should receive a letter of apology, as Mr Lewis was a regular member visiting every month. PF to send letter.

5 STRUCTURE OF THE MC FOR 2016

Financial Year – JF proposed a change to the Club's Financial Year, in addition to the already changed membership year, to commence on the 1st April 2017. The AGM would have to move back to June, which was too late for the appointment of Club Captain. JF proposed that there be two Club Meetings, the first being a Golf Meeting in March with Reports from all three outgoing Captains and the appointment of the three incoming Captains. The second meeting would be a Business Meeting in June at which the Annual Accounts would be agreed, the appointment of Management Committee members made and anything that required the approval of the Members in General meeting, e.g. a change to the Club Rules. The proposal to hold two meetings to enable the financial year to be changed w.e.f. from 1 April 2017 was unanimously agreed.

The AGM was to be held on Saturday 26 March 2016.

6. NEW YEAR'S EVE UPDATE

The maximum number of bookings for the New Year's Eve function was to be increased from 70 to 90. A new poster to publicise the increase was to be put on the notice board to attract extra business. A dance floor would be set up in the foyer as in previous years.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed Seniors Avalon League - The Seniors had been asked if they would be interested in joining a new Avalon League if there was enough interest between various clubs, and the Committee were agreeable. The proposal was still in the formative stages. It was suggested that the Handicaps Committee liaised with Graham Walsh, Seniors Secretary, and reported back to the MC.

Marketing - PA and Steve Kaye had attended a marketing seminar, and were keen to promote the inclusion of a Marketing Member onto the MC. The proposal was to remove the position of Junior Representative to create space on the MC for the new role. Discussion ensued as to the importance of the appointee to be familiar with marketing, and a requirement for the person to report in regularly to the MC. A budget would be created for the role. It was agreed that someone would be co-opted at the AGM.

Captain's Jacket – DB advised that the price of the handmade Captain's jackets purchased from Harvey Jones was being increased by £70 giving a total cost of £255. DB suggested that an off-the-peg jacket was available in an almost identical colour from the handmade ones, and that this may a cost effective solution. It was agreed that an off-the-peg jacket be brought in for inspection at the February Committee Meeting.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 1 February 2016 at 6.00pm.

Meeting to agree Accounts to be held on Monday 29 February 2016.

M & WSGC

Proposal to change the Club's financial year-end

BACKGROUND

Members have agreed to change the Club's "subscription year" from a calendar year to a period of 12 months from 1st April to 31st March. This will take effect from 1st April, 2017. From an accounting point of view it would make a lot of sense for the Club's Financial year to be changed in the same way.

This would mean that the Annual General Meeting would also need to be moved forward three months to a date in late June but such a date would be too late in the calendar for the appointment of the three new Captains (Club, Ladies and Seniors), all of whom wish to be appointed at the same time.

IT IS THEREFORE PROPOSED

That there be two major Club meetings each year, as follows:

- i) a "Golf" meeting in March to deal with the following items.
 - i) Presentation evening
 - ii) Reports from the three outgoing Captains
 - iii) Appointment of the three incoming Captains.

Note - Shortly before this Golf meeting, the Ladies and the Seniors sections would hold AGMs to appoint their own Captains whose appointments would then be confirmed at the Club annual "Golf" meeting.

- ii) a Club AGM in June each year to deal with the following items.
 - i) Approval of the annual accounts to the end of March.
 - ii) Appointment of Chairman and other Management Committee members
 - iii) To consider any changes to the Club's Rules
 - iv) To consider any other special items.

As far as I am aware, the only other Somerset Members Club to have changed its subscription (and financial) year in the above way is Weston-Super Mare. Their solution would not, I believe, suit our club and I shall explain why at the meeting tonight.

John Fulwell
Club Treasurer

7th December, 2015

Premises Report - December 2015

1 - Rubbish Collection - Cory Waste, our new providers started at the beginning of December. There will be an overlap of a couple of days before Viridor remove their bins. We will be doing more recycling in the kitchen, separating tin, glass and plastic from other waste, which will still be mixed as we do not have enough food waste for a different bin, and this would have added to the cost. The move of provider should bring down the overall cost and the real bonus is that we have a named contact if things go wrong.

2 - Telephones - The new equipment should be arriving during the first week in January. There will be a short tutorial for staff once it is installed, and all staff will be more aware that they need to take messages for other people as the system will automatically try different extensions

3 - The Roof - We have had a problem with roof, with leaks in both main areas, this has been exacerbated by the rain and very high wind. Cody-Boucher replaced a couple of the tiles and Aaron has put in a short term fix. He will be back next week to do a proper repair and replace any other broken tiles. In the short term this will take precedence over the cellar doors and the small window, although he will be finishing the returns on the new windows in the ladies changing area.

4 - Container in place and being used - A big thank you to Rob and the "lads" for helping with the sand removal!

Jayne Fulwell 4/12/15

Green Fees 2016

Following our Marketing Group meeting last week, was surprised when I heard about the findings from the conversion rates from the Golfnow website. I have therefore been looking at some of the facts and figures on green fees.

Figures for green fees this year are up on last year, standing at around £60K to the end of October, which is £4.5K up on the budget, which was based on figures from last year.

In the spring Steve Archer and I managed to get a meaningful contact at Butlins, and this year for the first time they were advertising M&WSGC to their visitors. They displayed A1 posters in their booking shop, with a "Butlins rate" green fee of £20. This has resulted in new visitors and should mean more business next year, from returners to Butlins who did not have their clubs this year! Part of the trade off is that Butlins staff can come over and play at quiet times for £10 a round, the take up on this is slow, but is there for good will. Talking to their chief exec / manager, Julian Highfield, he is happy to support junior golf and charity events, and we will certainly approach them when we have the Disabled Golfers event next year, but he regards us as a business, so any cash help will not be forthcoming. We are already seeing bookings for next year, a Butlins group has booked for May at £30 pp (£20 green fee £10 food), while another group of 30 booked this week at £60 pp (2 rounds @ £40 + £20 food). Deposits are always taken for these groups.

Looking at the green fee book the following is relevant -

Butlins 398 players @ £20pp

Butlins staff 61 players @ £10pp about 50 of these is one person!

Golfnow - 46 players

Teeofftimes - 18 players

We are running the Winter Warmer again, as I mentioned last week. £25 (£15 + 10) during the week and £30 (£20 + £10) at the weekend. So far for next year we have 257 people booked in for these. This number will go up depending on what the weather does. We had a group of 6 from Oake last week, who enjoyed it so much that they booked again for December @ £30 pp.

I have never heard of the Golfnow website, so I have been doing a little research - I assume they are an offshoot of the TeeTimes website, as the prices and actual tee times are the same. Golfnow has 41 golf courses in the South West, it isn't easy to see where the SW ends as Tewksbury is Gloucestershire, but I didn't spot nay others. This is about 25% of the clubs in Devon, Dorset Somerset and Cornwall.

There are only 6 Somerset clubs, our nearest "competition" being Taunton & Pickering. Looking at the green fees offered by T&P they do not have any offers at W/E's and the weekday offers are one tee time £14 pp, usually at 1.56. We offer W/E tee times at a rate of £25pp, with 2 or 3 @ £18pp, during the week we offer at least one tee time per day @£13 pp.

Other clubs - Orchardleigh one tee time per day @ £16pp

Longsutton one tee time per day @ £14 or £15pp, usually quite late in the day

Launston £10pp, but at 2pm

Oakhampton £20pp - even at 2pm

East Devon £48pp with a smattering of £21pp

Green Fees 2016

Enmore and Oake, our nearest courses, are not on this website.

Enmore are quoting winter golf at £31pp with £92 for a 4ball, they offer a discount after 1.00 on Monday

I e-mailed Oake, who tell me that they do not publish winter prices, but would personalise a package for me. Midweek prices quoted were £80 a tee time or £70 for groups over 12 + the cost of food.

We may consider other reasons why we have not taken bookings through this site. I suggest that the main reason is not cost, but where we are geographically - plus being served by a very poor road network.

I am very keen to see us build up a better data base of visitor information; that should help us to continue to improve on the green fees we take. The installation of a new phone system should also be of great benefit.

Jayne Fulwell 18/11/15

Notes from the Marketing Group 25/11/15

Present - EJF PA SK NB and IR JB (pro shop)

The main purpose of this meeting was to include the Pro-Shop.

We had found previously that there were 2 key areas where we could not make significant progress without the cooperation of the pro-shop.

1 - the collecting of personal details from visitors so that a data the base can be significantly improved and used to send out offers on golf, opens and equipment.

2 - checking of those playing on the Beginners Package, with a view to being able to offer Flexible Membership to more members in the future. NB and SK feel that flexible membership that can be offered as an option to all members should be available as soon as possible.

3 - offers to visitors

Visitor details - It was agreed to place a small box on the bar for visitor "cards", which would be given out in the pro-shop when people came in to play.

There would be a prize draw every month, with the results on the website.

Ian Read to make/source the boxes, one for pro shop, one to put on the bar

EJF to find and order cards

SK to collect the cards each month and enter them on the database.

PA to find out about the system shown on the BRS day where identity cards were talked about, both for visitors and members. This system is linked to insurance cover. When we have more details on this we will be able to look the uses for members.

Green Fees Rates -

(There was some research on green fees following a discussion previously, this showed our current level of green fee)

It was agreed to try to fill the course as much as possible for January by offering some last minute deals.

Weekday

2 players £27

3 players £38

4 players £48

(subject to available tee times)

Weekends

2 players £45

3 players £66

4 players £80

Not involving the pro shop

While realising the the club's MC is a rather cumbersome body, it was nevertheless felt that there should be an experienced marketing person attending their meetings, as deemed appropriate.

1 - There should be a members of the MC who has sole responsibility for marketing. This person should be given a budget and allowed to operate as they thought appropriate.

2 - The measure of their success would be measured in terms of improved green fees and membership numbers.

3 - They would have autonomy to set green fee levels and make decisions about membership offers

4 - In the short term, both NB & SK to be privy to MC papers etc and able to attend meetings as appropriate.

5 - A long term measure to be put in place at next years AGM

Jayne Fulwell 30/11/15

COURSE MANAGEMENT REPORT – DECEMBER 2015

Because of the mild and damp weather greens have been unexpectedly caught by a fungal infection (literally overnight) notably the 4th. This has left them “patchy”. Ferrous sulphate and fungicide has been applied and the situation is under control although the greens will take time to recover to full fitness. This situation has incurred a cost which we had hoped to avoid.

Weather conditions have also caused waterlogging in front of the 4th green. Notices will be placed asking members to use the track down to the 4th at all possible times for carts and ride on buggies and to park them at the end of the track unless infirmity prevents otherwise.

Work continues moving sand to help construct the practice facility greens and with removal of soil from the reed banks to finish off the banking alongside the 5th fairway which should become playable in springtime.

We have formally met with Lynch who have now agreed to work to obtain a permit for themselves which will allow them to bring in the 15000 cubic yards of landfill required to fulfill the existing planning approval. Subject to this being obtained landfill will re-commence on the 5th tee and to the right of the 4th green in March.

Meanwhile, John A’Court has agreed to obtain a necessary extension to existing landfill approval beyond March for a further 3 years. He will also separately survey and seek further approval for use of landfill to the left of the 3rd fairway and behind the 6th green (mentioned in previous reports).

Ongoing maintenance on the course has focused on controlling rough to ensure that balls can be found but played with some difficulty! Members may also notice that greens may have been cut to prevent recently prevalent winds from moving balls – so from time to time they may have been slower than we may wish but at least play has been manageable!

Rabbit shooting has continued, usually at night, and the return of myxomatosis may further aid control. However, wet weather has made ferreting difficult as it makes the nets used heavy and impossible to manage. It is hoped that this latter method of control will be use to good effect in the near future.

Graham J Wells