

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday 18th February 2020

Present:	M Keates	Chairman
	P Higgins	Golf Director
	E Botham	Ground Director
	G Unsworth	House Director
	J Bliss	Lady Director
	S Wells	Captain
	A Crawford	Lady Captain
	A Stewart	President
	PJ Keane	General Manager

Apologies:	T McIvor	Finance Director
	T Longden	Marketing Director

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm with a warm welcome by the Chairman. With no amendments to the minutes of Tuesday 21st January, they were signed as a true record.

Finance Director's Report: Figures for the month of January have been circulated.

Income for the month £24.1K – last year £24.2K

Expenditure for the month £43.2K – last year £40.4K

Summary: a deficit for the month of £19.1K – against a loss last year of £16.2K

The Finance Director stated that the accounts are not a true reflection of the trading of the Club. Income is inflated as a result of the profit incurred of the stolen tractor and two tractors that have been replaced as a result of the 2019 flooding. Loss on income as a result of the flood; green fee, bar and catering is estimated at £57K. Whilst this should be recoverable as part of our insurance claim, the Club is losing between £15/20K each year. This is not sustainable!

Paul Higgins stated, that following a recent finance meeting, there is an imbalance in our cash flow that will support the statement above. As a Club we have been fortunate in recent years to have received unforeseen gains, income from: canoe steps, Environment Agency, Highways England, Papillion, members loans. Whilst cash in hand may be healthy, the Club is spending more that it receives. He will forward a Cash Flow Tracker to support this.

Expenditure this year will be substantially higher than in previous years relating to additional spending as a result of the flood in August 2019. This expenditure will involve greater amounts of VAT. The area of VAT is very complicated and whilst we have partial exception due to our main income stream being non vatable, the recommendation of the committee is to seek advise from a specialised company to ensure we are accounting for the additional VAT in the correct manor. This was discussed and approved by the Board.

Insurance Claim against Environment Agency

The Chairman stated that following discussions with our Loss Assessor it has been agreed that a 50% reduction on members annual subscription fees would be offer for the 2020/21 financial year. No further discount would be awarded in future years. This has been conveyed to the

membership with mainly positive feedback. An updated claim schedule has been submitted and a further interim payment of £220K has been requested.

Following some members feedback, it was requested that information be available on the development of the golf course in an attempt to return to full 18 holes. This has been detailed in the Ground Directors Report and a summary will be sent to members via a newsletter.

Biomass Boiler

The General Manager confirmed that a consultant has been appointed to apply for planning permission on behalf of the Club for the sighting of the boiler, burner and pellet silo housed in a pod to the corner of the Clubhouse. An architect has also been appointed to design a concrete base for its location. Our application will be submitted week commencing Monday 24th February. Once our application has been approved the new boiler will be ordered.

Bank Switch

The General Manager confirmed we are close to moving banks from Royal Bank of Scotland to Santander. There have been a number of additional barriers that have prevented this happening: lack of some documentation, PC update and reconfiguration in the office, VAT online enrolment, holiday entitlement. The Board asked the General Manager if there was any additional help that could be provided to assist Nicola with her workload. The General Manager will investigate.

Ground Director's Report for the month has been circulated and a copy has been posted on the Club's website. Brief summary as follows:

Impact of Flooding Events

The outlet drain is now operating normally allowing water to drain off the course into the 16th pond and into the River Mersey as soon as river levels fall, i.e. generally 24-36 hours after heavy rain.

The Pond level was monitored closely following Storm Ciara on 8th / 9th February and it fell rapidly to normal / low level within 48 hours. As a consequence, no temporary pumping has been necessary in January /early February.

However, it took over 3 days for the 17th and 18th fairways to be clear of standing water following Storm Ciara, reinforcing our concerns that the drains are not working properly. Trial holes will be taken to expose the end of each drain on 12th and 13th February.

A package of work to investigate the condition of these drains and undertake jetting to remove silt deposits has been developed and quotations obtained. This includes the provision of additional access/jetting points allowing the Club to carry out regular maintenance works, ensuring the drainage system continues to operate efficiently.

It was intended to undertake the work week commencing 10th February. This has had to be postponed, following Storm Ciara, until week commencing 17th February when hopefully ground conditions will have improved sufficiently to allow transport of jetting equipment on to this area of the course

We are still awaiting suitable conditions to undertake a visual flow test to check that the outlet drain flap valve is seating properly and preventing back feed from the River on to the course via the 16th pond.

Assurance that the flap valve is working will allow us to maintain our isolating valve in an open position allowing discharge off the course at all times when river levels are low. Currently the valve is being closed when heavy rain is forecast.

A visual inspection of the outlet flap valve protecting the stream on the 1st from back feeding, when river levels are high, has been conducted. The valve is suffering from a build-up of river debris and is not seating properly. Photographs of the problem have been taken and sent to the EA with an accompanying letter. They have responded formally accepting responsibility for its maintenance and have given a commitment to undertake regular maintenance. We await confirmation that this has been undertaken. We have also requested a meeting with the EA to seek assurances that work is in hand to prevent further flooding events.

The ground staff continue to remove localised silt deposits from the drainage system, which have built following the flooding events, allowing standing water to drain away more rapidly. In addition, short lengths of additional drain runs are being installed by the ground staff as part of this year's Winter Projects.

The cut-off drain at the base of the M60 embankment is now blocked in places. This has resulted in localised flooding of the course from the 13th tee to the 16th tee. The Highways Agency have been notified of the problem, and a meeting has been requested to deal with a number of other ongoing issues.

A high-level proposal for providing flood protection to the basement storage areas of the Clubhouse will also be investigated as part of the forthcoming meeting with the EA.

Reinstatement undertaken following the July floods, has now been subject to further prolonged flooding and areas may be at risk of permanent damage. Further reinstatement i.e. verti-draining, seeding and top dressing will be required in early Spring 2020 to fully restore the playing surfaces to their former condition.

Course Drainage

Subject to weather and ground conditions Phase 1 drainage improvements affecting the 17th and 18th fairways will take place week commencing 24th February. This will comprise of extending existing drains along both fairways into a new ditch across the front of the Ladies 18th tee. The existing drains will then be inspected and jetted to clear any silt / blockages. The section of ditch across the 17th fairway will be filled in with a solid pipe taking surface water towards the 16th pond. The arrangement will allow both fairways to be jetted in the future with minimal disruption. The Board would like to thank both Phil Hill and Jay Patel in their commitment to provide valuable technical support in the development of these proposals.

House Director's Report no report for the month.

The House Director confirmed that the redecoration of the Main Lounge has now been completed and honours boards, Captains' and President's pictures will be displayed shortly. In addition, historical memorabilia of the Club together with new images will soon follow. The Chairman stated that the finish to some areas of repainted areas of the lounge are unsatisfactory. The House Director will investigate and speak to the contractor.

Repairs to the balcony commenced Monday 27th January with the application of a waterproof sealant. Unfortunately, the anti-slip coating has not been allied due to wet weather. Once the balcony has been sealed, work will commence to make good the damaged ceiling in both ladies and gents locker rooms.

The beer cellar doors that were damaged as a result of the flood have been replaced.

A quotation to replace the garages doors has been provided. This does not include the two wooden doors, for the trolley shed and Pro's teaching area. Alternative quotes will be requested.

The House Director informed the Board he and the Chairman have met with a graphic designer with a view to give a new look to entrance area, foyer and ladies locker room. Floor plans of these areas were circulated. Following discussion, these were approved, and the House Director was asked to obtain cost and images. Once received these will be prioritised and displayed for members to see an overview of new proposals for Clubhouse developments.

The service lift remains out of order, despite the replacement of the new rope. The engineers attempted to commission the lift but due to the electric switch being submerged in water, this may have damaged the motor rewiring gear! Engineers will be back on-site tomorrow. Meanwhile, this remains an issue with stock being carried up and down stairs.

The House Director informed the Board that a survey on the damaged roof guttering and recommendation to redirect rainwater flow from the balcony has been carried out, quotation is pending. The Chairman confirmed he knows a company that may be able to provide an alternative quotation and will forward details to the House Director.

The House Director confirmed he and the Finance Director have met with the catering team to review overall catering operation. It is clear than more catering needs to be managed inhouse to maximise revenue stream. Every mindful to Living wage increase in April and potential staff bonus scheme, the House Director discussed an alternative proposal using the services of Table 10. This was discussed by the Board and approved.

The House Director informed the meeting that Mile Lucas continues to engage with the catering staff on Code of Practices, Food Hygiene and Health & Safety Awareness in the working place.

Golf Director's Report for the month has been circulated.

Health & Safety

The Golf Director confirmed that H&S will form a formal part of future M & H meetings and that all incidents should be reported. He asked all committee members to highlight any known incidents.

Members should be mindful that the ground staff have priority on the course, and nobody should put another person in danger whilst playing.

Tony Longden indicated that a members Facebook/Twitter could report incidents, highlight issues and provide useful suggestions as a member's open forum. PH confirmed he had already "tested the water" for inter-action via social media with the Suggestion Book which the Board had deferred. It was agreed an incident book would be kept in the Pro Shop to record any issues.

Guidelines/best practices for inclusion in the pre-season e-mail will be drawn up.

Annual Handicap Review

Wing Chiang handicap had been reduced to 14.0. The discussion highlighted the sustained, but considerable improvement shown by Wing Chiang who started the Winter season at 18.7. The Committee felt his improvement was worthy of congratulation in respect of the work he has made in recent months. All other recommended reductions resulting from the November review have been implemented and players notified accordingly. Revised handicap details are on the noticeboard.

Winter Handicaps

Following testing it was inconclusive as to the benefits of operating a separate Winter Handicap. The additional administration for such a process to be adopted was deemed a further disincentive. The Committee agreed ongoing discussions regarding “General Play” reductions would feature and would allow for the many variables that winter golf can incorporate to be considered.

R & A 9 Hole Challenge

R&A Initiative to promote 9 Hole Competition Golf (restrictions apply). The leading nine pairs nationally will be invited to Royal St George on Saturday 11th July 2020 to play a challenge event.

The leading two scores from an event will be added together to form a pair. The leading nine pairs in England will qualify for this all expenses paid final.

The Committee agreed to support this which will be a Mixed event and must take place before 5th June 2020. DH to consider a suitable date, possibly in place of an existing Sunday 9-hole event, date to be confirmed

M & H WhatsApp Group

All committee members agreed this would be a useful communication tool, although must only be used for relevant M&H activity.

Junior Golf Initiative

The Golf Director highlighted Colin Webb had proposed a special incentive to boost junior golf members. This proposal has full support by M&H and the Marketing Director made reference to this matter in his January report. This matter needs to be deferred until the Summer.

The Golf Director stated he has contact Graham McCormick Cheshire Junior Golf to provide a point of contact and seek any County support initiatives available.

The General Manager informed the Board that the Finance Director and Bob Ganley have done some work in 2019 that is to be rolled out this year.

M & H Financial Report

David Hunter presented the M & H financial position which on face value is very encouraging. The 2019 accounts show a profit for M&H of £1742.23.

Whist Competition income had fallen during the year, team matches had been cancelled due to the weather, progress in MDGA had been limited and some internal events had not been completed and prize money not allocated; consequently, the profit figure was inflated.

Consideration will be given to increase the prize money for divisional winners of 2020 Summer Medal Competitions. 70% return of prize money was deemed reasonable.

World Handicap System

The new handicap system will come into operation in November 2020 but will not come into force until the start of the 2021 playing season.

Caroline Perry, Fred Gregory and the General Manager had attended a seminar hosted by England Golf. It was suggested Withington should arrange an event in the newly decorated Clubhouse in order to educate members and be seen to be an early adopter. There may also be marketing advantages integrating the new process.

New handicap index would represent 8 from 20 qualifying scores of a players score over the last 24 months.

Supporting technology including terminals and applications to maintain player records may be necessary but all major software providers are working on this.

Course Comments

Some damage to the course following the vandalism to greens. This matter had been reported to the police; however, no further action was currently deemed necessary. From a H&S perspective, members were not requested to intervene, but to report any incidents to the General Manager or a Director. In relation to the damage the ground staff were making immediate repairs and the greens would be back in action shortly.

Marketing Director's Report - no report for the month.

Current Focus for the Marketing Committee are as follows:

Ladies Academy

Once again, we will be promoting Ladies Academy that will run for a period of 5 weeks from 18th April. Posters and leaflets have been designed and we will also promote on the website, via social media and email.

- Professional coaching for 5 x 1-hour sessions
- Ladies receive a glass of Prosecco in the bar after the first session to build engagement and start to talk about next steps
- There will be an offer of £100 for 3 months membership following coaching – refunded from full price if ladies join as a 6 or 7 day player

Spring Campaign

Join Withington and play 3 courses until the end of April 2021

- £188 ages 12 to 20
- £182 ages 21 to 24
- £449 ages 25 to 29
- £650 ages 30 plus

Family Offer

Whilst this offer was approved by the Board, it was agreed this would be better rolled out and marketed in the Summer months.

Reciprocal Membership

We currently have a reciprocal agreement in place with AUL and Marple that is well received by existing members who are core to our loyalty strategy. This will be an important part of our ongoing engagement and strengthen our membership with recruitment and a key part of our retention approach.

A further two clubs, not competitors in the immediate local will be approached to see if they would be interested in linking up to such an offer. This has been approved by the Board but should be limited to no more than four clubs.

Society Booking 2020

As per the campaign rolled out in 2019, Summer Society Packages at £38 to include the following:

- Bacon barm tea/coffee on arrival
- 18 holes of golf
- 2 course evening meal
- Four Ball Voucher – Master of the Stretch

Lady Director's Report – no report for the month.

General Manager:

The General Manager stated that he has received a number of enquires from third party companies with a view to hire/rent part of the Club car park. This was discussed by the Board and declined.

The General Manager asked the Board to approval any Annual Subscription Fee increase for the 2020/21 financial year, as members renewals are to be circulated in March. Following a detailed discussion, the Board approved a 3% increase across the board. The Chairman will draft an appropriate letter to accompany the subscription renewals.

Suggestion Book: no suggestions for consideration.

Any other Business:

The Chairman is in receipt of a letter from Brian Fleetwood regarding his playing membership. This was discussed by the Board and the Chairman will send a suitable replay.

The meeting closed at 10.35pm. With no further business, the Chairman thanked all for attending. The next meeting will be Tuesday 10th March at 6.30pm.