

## **CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the proceedings of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Advisory Committee held, in committee, in the Conference Room, Castlereagh Hills Golf Club, on Wednesday, 25 January 2006, at 10.00 am.

**PRESENT:-** Councillor G Robinson (in the Chair)  
Councillor M Henderson  
Councillor J White

**IN ATTENDANCE:-** Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Leisure Services, Director of Technical & Environmental Services, Operational Services Manager, Corporate Catering Manager, Business Officer and Assistant Members' Services Officer

**APOLOGIES:-** No apologies were recorded

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting.

### **CHGC/2006/01: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS AND STRUCTURE**

Councillor Henderson asked the Chief Executive to outline the current arrangements regarding the Terms of Reference and Reporting Arrangements and Structure.

The Chief Executive started by saying that, whilst the current arrangements had been approved by the Council's Technical & Environmental Services Committee, he was aware that Members were querying this. He confirmed that Officers would be happy to agree with whatever structure the Council wished to put in place, but that, as a starting point, he would outline his understanding of the current position.

With respect to this Committee, it had clearly been established at the Council's AGM as a 'User' Advisory Committee, and this was reflected in the minutes. That said, there was a considerable grey area around such committees at other locations/centres, as they rarely met and were somewhat conflicting in that they were set up as committees by Council (and hence should report back to Council), as opposed to being sub-committees of the Spending Committee responsible for the facility. This has created an anomaly.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the Council had directed Officers to negotiate the 'buying out' of the Gilnahirk Golf Club to enable the Council to start and run its own golf club, which was to be known as the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club. Whilst the buy-out had been negotiated in return for a

permanent discount in annual fees for the existing members at that time, the Golfing Union of Ireland had major reservations over the new club's Constitution (which had been approved by Council) and had dragged negotiations out over the past year. The basic principle is that the new club, as a proprietors' club, is owned by the Council, and the Council has the final say in its affairs and a majority in the governing General Committee. The Golfing Union of Ireland did not like this idea and preferred a Private Members Club (which all other clubs are), with the members being in charge. Clearly, the Council cannot agree to this, as public money is involved. He confirmed, however, that he was aware that the Golfing Union of Ireland had now accepted the Constitution and that a formal acknowledgement was expected.

The Chief Executive pointed out that the club was distinct from the golf course (ie the facility) and that the General Committee and its sub-committees only had jurisdiction over the running of the club, competitions and its membership. They will have no control over the golf course or club house, which remain the distinct property of the Council.

Turning to the club house, he stated that the Technical & Environmental Services Committee had taken a conscious decision to lease the restaurant to the Leisure Services Committee under a Service Level Agreement. This made sound business sense, as Technical & Environmental Services have no experience of running a restaurant, and the Council's Catering Manager was part of Leisure Services. He pointed out that all Private Member golf clubs had problems with catering and trying to run at a profit, due to restricting the usage to club members. Castlereagh's restaurant was, however, modelled on Rockmount in that it was designed as a public restaurant, based at the golf course, as opposed to a golf club's restaurant. The majority of customers were not golfers, and it is important to note this. The golfers are catered for separately in their own lounge at the rear of the club house.

In summary, the Chief Executive pointed out that it was important to note that the General Committee of the golf club report only to the club. It had no responsibility for the golf course, which was the responsibility of the Council's Technical & Environmental Services Committee. Any decisions taken by the Club's General Committee required approval by the Council's Technical & Environmental Services Committee, which in essence represented the Council as the 'proprietor'.

Councillor White raised concerns regarding the current financial position of the restaurant; for example, he felt it was not necessary to have separate bar staff, but that the floor staff could take over this task.

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services outlined that the Corporate Catering Manager was investigating the restaurant's expenditure, and there were plans to reduce outgoings, for example, by not employing agency staff and to introduce a new menu with increased prices. It was also hoped that, once the golf course was promoted more heavily in the spring, the restaurant would benefit also.

Councillor White raised concerns that the Technical & Environmental Services Committee was not in a position to oversee the running of the restaurant on a daily basis. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Technical & Environmental Services Committee had agreed that the Leisure Services Department run the restaurant, as they were best equipped to do so.

Noted.

## **REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & LEISURE SERVICES (copy previously circulated)**

### **CHGC/2006/02: RESTAURANT STAFF STRUCTURE**

Councillor White raised concerns that the restaurant had been overstaffed in relation to the business it received. The Corporate Catering Manager explained that, as this was a new restaurant, it had not been possible to determine the level of business it would receive and staff requirements. However, in January 2006 the restaurant employed only two agency staff. The Corporate Catering Manager added that the Council's employment procedures were lengthy and not very practical for the requirements of the restaurant, therefore more casual workers had been employed at a cost of £5.65 per hour.

The Corporate Catering Manager went on to outline the restaurant's staff structure for Members' benefit. He stated that he had been employed as Corporate Catering Manager and Restaurant Manager. There was an assistant who had responsibility for corporate catering, while he concentrated on the restaurant. Other staff included:

- 1 Head Chef (full-time)
- 1 Chef employed through an agency
- 1 Chef de Partie (full-time)
- 2 Commis Chefs (full-time)
- 2 Kitchen Porters (1 full-time, 1 part-time)
- 1 Restaurant Supervisor (full-time)
- 8 Waiters/Waitresses (1 part-time, 7 casual)
- 2 Bar staff (full-time)
- 1 Cleaner (full-time)

The Corporate Catering Manager stated that presently the opening hours were Sunday to Wednesday 10.00 am – 7.45 pm and Thursday to Saturday 10.00 am – 8.45 pm. There were plans to extend the opening hours on Friday and Saturday to offer a breakfast menu. The Corporate Catering Manager further outlined plans to offer special evenings, for example, on Valentine's Day, and he was currently waiting for the proofs of a sign to advertise any special menus or events, which could be placed at the club entrance.

Councillor Robinson suggested that at weekends the restaurant could also offer 'Today's Specials' to attract more club members to the restaurant.

Councillor White was of the view that the golf club should be better signposted, and he suggested that signs be erected on Ballygowan Road, Gilnahirk Road, Ballyhanwood Road as well as the entrance to the club.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, in future, the use of agency staff in the restaurant be avoided and only considered when absolutely necessary to ensure the operation of the business;
- (b) That the Client Manager be asked to investigate signposting for the golf club at roadsides and the entrance to the club.

### **CHGC/2006/03: RESTAURANT TRADING ACCOUNTS**

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services took Members through the restaurant's accounts for the period to 31 December 2005.

Members entered into a discussion. Councillor Robinson was of the view that the accounts should be listed in more detail to highlight where overspends had occurred. Councillor Henderson felt that, if the accounts were divided into separate periods during the financial year, seasonal variations could be better accommodated. Councillor White suggested the installation of video machines to increase revenue. Councillor Robinson agreed, although he pointed out that, as there were many customers in the 11-17 age group, the type of machines that would be installed needed careful consideration.

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services offered to prepare a business plan to assist in improving the restaurant's financial performance.

RESOLVED: That the Director of Finance & Leisure Services prepare a business plan for the next Committee meeting to assist in reducing overspends and improving the restaurant's financial performance.

### **CHGC/2006/04: CUSTOMER COMMENTS**

The Corporate Catering Manager reported that feedback from customers had been positive. He stated that he had only received four complaints, and two of these had been about the heating in the restaurant. The Manager invited Members to visit the restaurant to observe its operation. Members agreed, and it was

RESOLVED: That a visit to the restaurant be arranged for Councillors White, Robinson and Henderson in order to observe its operation.

### **REPORT FROM THE OPERATIONAL SERVICES MANAGER (copy previously circulated)**

## **CHGC/2006/05: MACHINERY AND STAFF LEVELS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE NEW 18-HOLE GOLF COURSE AT GILNAHIRK**

The Operational Services Manager reported that the machinery had been phased in as agreed by Council.

The Manager then outlined staffing levels for the golf course as follows. He emphasised the point that these staffing levels were as previously approved by Council (Minute 2003/640 refers):

- 1 Course Manager
- 1 Assistant Course Manager
- 3 Apprentice Green Keepers (full-time)
- 3 Fixed-term Apprentice Green Keepers

There was also one Golf Professional in place with responsibility for several matters, including the retail shop and 3 casual relief members of staff. The Operational Services Manager reported that the contracts for the three Apprentice Green Keepers were due for renewal. However, the decision had not been made yet whether to renew the contracts for six months or one year. It had been agreed that a minimum of eight Green Keepers were needed, who would be employed on fixed-term contracts, which allowed for more flexibility.

The Operational Services Manager continued that financial provision had been made to employ a Secretary/Manager and Administrative Officer, but nothing could be finalised until negotiations with the Golfing Union of Ireland were complete and the constitution had been accepted. However, the Operational Services Manager tabled a facsimile message from the General Secretary of the Golfing Union of Ireland (GUI) to the Secretary of the Ulster Branch, which had been received from the GUI recently and which unofficially indicated acceptance of the constitution.

Noted.

## **CHGC/2006/06: INCOME**

The Operational Services Manager took Members through the golf course accounts for the period ending December 2005. Members entered into a discussion. Councillor Robinson sought clarification regarding the miscellaneous and telephone codes. The Manager stated that he would provide a breakdown of costs for the next Committee meeting.

The Operational Services Manager highlighted that the current club membership was less than that estimated in the 2005-06 Estimates, and that this was reflected in the income levels.

**RESOLVED:** That the Operational Services Manager prepare a breakdown of the costs for Miscellaneous and telephone codes.

## **CHGC/2006/07: QUESTIONNAIRE AND EXIT FORM REPLIES**

The Operational Services Manager took Members through the questionnaire. He pointed out that 78% of respondents had felt that the quality of the course was excellent to Good, and that 72% felt that the restaurant was excellent to good and that 67% of ex-members had said they would consider rejoining.

Councillor Robinson referred to the locking of the entrance gates in the evening. The Manager stated that this was clearly an issue for the Restaurant staff as they were the last to leave the facility each evening.

Noted.

## **CHGC/2006/08: MARKETING PLAN**

The Operational Services Manager drew Members' attention to the Marketing Strategy Report 2006-2008 and suggested that an Officer provide a detailed presentation at the next meeting.

The Chief Executive stated that the Council's intention was to market the club more intensively in the near future in order to attract societies and to achieve an increase in membership. The Director of Technical & Environmental Services urged caution in that the Council should consider all the details of the marketing strategy first.

During the ensuing discussion, Councillor Robinson enquired whether some form of identification was required for joining the golf club, particularly junior membership. He was of the view that this aspect needed to be investigated and amended. The Operational Services Officer agreed to investigate and report back to the next Committee meeting. He stated that junior and senior members' badges were of a different colour, and junior members had to be verified by another club member before they were allowed to join the club.

Councillor Henderson felt that a dress code should be put in place, as this would enhance the club's image. The Operational Services Manager agreed to investigate and report back to the next Committee meeting. The Chief Executive pointed out that the club had to abide by the rules of the Golfing Union of Ireland.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That a presentation be given in respect of the Marketing Strategy Report 2006-2008 at the next Committee meeting;
- (b) That the Operational Services Manager investigate the implementation of some form of identification for junior members before they would be allowed to join the club;
- (c) That the Operational Services Manager investigate the implications of a dress code for the golf club for the next Committee meeting.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 1.10 p.m.

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**CHAIRMAN**

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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**