

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board held, in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Thursday, 25th May 2006 at 9.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor Mrs M Chambers
Councillor B Hanvey
Councillor M Henderson
Councillor T Jeffers
Councillor G Robinson
Councillor J Spratt
Councillor J White

IN ATTENDANCE:- Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Leisure Services, Director of Technical & Environmental Services, Operational Services Manager, Acting General Manager, Marketing & PR Manager, Acting Business Manager, Catering Manager and Members' Services Officer.

APOLOGIES:- Apologies were recorded on behalf of Councillor Cochrane and Councillor Jeffers.

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & LEISURE SERVICES

GCB/2006/42 : PROPOSED FINANCIAL PROCEDURE FOR PAYMENT OF CLUB EXPENSES

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services referred to previous Board discussion and subsequent communication with the Local Government Auditor and drew Members' attention to the Financial Procedures for the payment of Castlereagh Hills Golf Club expenses as outlined in detail in his report, namely:-

- **The Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board agrees the annual budget for the Golf Club expenses and profiles the various expenditures.**
- **The Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Honorary Treasurer presents its annual estimated expenses to the General Committee**
- **The General Committee authorises monthly estimated expenditure for the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club submitted by the Honorary Treasurer. The Committee can authorise up to £5,000 at any one meeting**

The Director advised Members that the General Committee would approve its monthly estimated expenditure and once approved, as per the Constitution, and the Executive Treasurer reconciled, cheques would be signed off either by himself, or the Chief Executive.

In response to Members' queries, the Director clarified that if estimated expenditure was agreed by the General Committee, it would be submitted to the Executive Treasurer with receipts for reconciliation by the Internal Auditor. He assured Members that should there be any dispute with expenditure, it would not be paid and would go back to the General Committee for further discussion as all monies paid will have to have prior approval.

Councillor Robinson stated that although Members were not totally satisfied with these procedures, the Council was being guided by the Auditor in this matter.

Councillor White stated that, in any other Golf Club, the members decided what and where they are going to play. Furthermore, if a team is invited to the Club, the easiest way to operate is that they collect their own fees, whereas if Council staff have to collect them, it puts pressure on staffing resources.

Councillor Spratt reiterated that although procedures will be operated differently next year, and the fees will be paid into a separate bank account, the current situation would have to be resolved.

Members discussed a number of various options.

Councillor White asked if there was any finance available from the previous Club, to which the Director responded that there was, and they had had to come to the Council for recoupment of their expenses. He stated that this element was lodged in a suspense account. However, his only criticism was that the Council did not know what should be paid out and, following the last meeting of the General Committee, he was trying to set out procedures.

Councillor Chambers suggested that the Council should lift the green fees and any member who joins/re-joins should pay them separately. However, the Chief Executive informed Members that anyone who broke away from Club membership would lose their subsidy of £150.

Councillor White referred to the old Gilnahirk Golf Club and their constitution, which had already satisfied the GUI and had not created any problems.

The Chief Executive, however, stated that the new constitution protected the Council as a proprietor and provided a clause that an application could be rejected if the Council were unhappy with it.

The Operational Services Manager reiterated that the Council had passed a resolution to take over the Club and the existing members had received a discount of £150. He went on to state that the Council had bought the Club out, but if the Council were to let them run it as a separate Club, the deal would be off.

The Chief Executive commented that he was prepared to discuss the matter with John Buchanan and let the Golf Club run their own affairs within their budget.

Following a request from Councillor White regarding clarification of membership, the Operational Services Manager indicated that there were 352 Club Members.

Members agreed that, in the interim, the Council continue paying retrospectively until the Officers converse with the LGA.

RESOLVED:- That,

- (a) the Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Leisure Services meet with the LGA and endeavour to agree on guidelines which will satisfy the Auditor and create a more flexible procedure for the recoupment of Golf Club expenses.
- (b) In the interim period, the Council continue paying retrospectively until the Officers converse with the LGA.

At this point in the proceedings, the Chief Executive left the meeting.

GCB/2006/43 : BREAKDOWN OF THE “CATERING EXPENSES” FOR THE GOLF CLUB FOR LAST YEAR

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services drew Members' attention to his report in which he had detailed a breakdown of the catering expenses for the Club in respect of last year.

Councillor Spratt referred to certain allegations that had been made in relation to the catering figures, but was satisfied with the breakdown of costs provided by the Officer.

The Director confirmed that towards the end of the year, the last recoupment had exhausted the financial amount, and the Club had had to pay the new GUI fees. However, he indicated that these would be reversed into the current year.

Noted.

REPORT FROM THE MARKETING & PR MANAGER

GCB/2006/44 : MARKETING SCHEDULE/PHOTOGRAPHY

The Marketing & PR Manager sought retrospective approval for the amendments to the scheduled marketing programme and photography outlined in her report.

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Board grant retrospective approval for the amendments to the scheduled marketing programme and photography as listed in her report.

GCB/2006/45 : MEMBERSHIP OF BELFAST VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

The Marketing & PR Manager recommended that the golf course becomes a member of the BVCB at a discount of 10% on the annual fee, as the DIIB and the Touring Caravan Park are already existing members.

She reported that the annual membership with BVCB was £180 + vat per year and she outlined the benefits which, in her view, represented good value for money.

Councillor Robinson referred to the lack of directional signage for the club and hoped to address this issue to enable the Golf Club to become a popular visitor/tourist attraction.

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board approve the membership of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau at a cost of £180 + vat.

GCB/2006/46 : HEADED PAPER/COMPLIMENTARY SLIPS

The Officer circulated copies of the proposed stationary for Members' comments and approval before going to print.

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board approve the purchase of the proposed headed paper and complimentary slips as circulated by the Marketing & PR Manager.

GCB/2006/47 : FREE WEB PAGE

The Marketing & PR Manager referred Members to her report in which EG Consulting, host providers for the DIIB web site, had offered to include a separate page for the Golf Course with links to and from the Council website and with full administrative access for staff to change information and upgrade images at no cost.

RESOLVED:- That, the Officer be instructed to arrange for EG Consulting to include a separate page for the Golf Course, at no cost to the Council.

GCB/2006/48 : SHOPPING CENTRE PROMOTION & NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

The Marketing & PR Manager referred Members to the content of her report with regard to this matter and advised that she would be reporting back on the feedback with regard to the Members' Day promotion at the next meeting.

Members suggested that there would be merit in advertising in other publications, i.e. Down Recorder, Mourne Observer and Lisburn Star, to extend the catchment area and ensure that all advertisements state that the Golf Club is open to members of the public.

The Marketing & PR Manager then informed Members that because they were running behind the current schedule, she would take on board Members' comments for the new schedule for the meeting and went on to comment that she was looking at advertising costs in certain golfing magazines. Furthermore, the Corporation Marketing Officer was proposing to circulate all council publications to local hotels etc.

RESOLVED:- That, the Marketing & PR Manager will take on board Members' suggestions with regard to placing advertisements in the Mourne Observer, Lisburn Star and Down Spectator to extend the catchment area, and that these advertisements will be included in the summer marketing schedule.

GCB/2006/49 : UNIQUE ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY – IRELAND –v- ENGLAND CRICKET MATCH, 13TH JUNE 2006

The Marketing & PR Manager informed Members that the Pavilion complex at Stormont was hosting one of the finest England Cricket Teams at an Official One Day International on 13th June 2006.

She commented that a souvenir programme was being produced and one full colour page had been made available to the Council at a cost of £500.00 and it had been proposed to share the costs throughout the Council's leisure and technical facilities for a collective advertisement.

Councillor Henderson also suggested that the Council should distribute flyers giving a discounts on the Council's Golf Course and Ice Bowl at the forthcoming Waterloo Ball.

RESOLVED:- That,

- (a) the Marketing & PR Manager be instructed to arrange for inclusion in the Ireland-v-England Cricket Match souvenir at a cost of £500 and the costs to be shared throughout the Council's leisure and technical facilities for a collective advertisement.
- (b) The Marketing & PR Manager be authorised to circulate flyers offering discounted admission for the Golf Club and Ice Bowl facilities.

REPORT FROM THE ACTING BUSINESS MANAGER

GCB/2006/50 : SUMMARY OF TRADING ACCOUNTS 1ST-30TH APRIL 2006

The Acting Business Manager circulated a summary of the trading accounts for the Golf Course and Restaurant for the month of April 2006.

She indicated that the restaurant showed a deficit for the first period of the month and although the total targeted income had not been achieved, the estimated income in relation to food sales had been exceeded.

She outlined that 74% of the total income figures related to salary costs, which had largely contributed to the loss. She highlighted that other catering type businesses would normally aim for a wage cost bill of 25%. She stated that part of the problem was that the Council could not pay employees "cash in hand" in order to reduce wage costs Management had increased the use of casual staff. She also reported that it was more cost effective on occasions to use agency staff than overtime.

Councillor Robinson asked if the Officer could provide details of current kitchen staff levels. At this point, the Acting Business Manager circulated the list of salaries that had been paid out last year in comparison to current staffing costs.

The Catering Manager informed Members that he had looked at reducing the number of bar and waiting staff but it was difficult at this time of year to anticipate the number of users, although he was trying to manage these inconsistencies. He referred to other restaurants, which based their staff rotas on the number of bookings.

With regard to casual staff procedures, he indicated that casual members of staff signed in and out through completion of a timesheet, which was monitored by the Supervisor.

Councillor Henderson asked if there were set staffing levels per day, to which the Catering Manager responded that there was a minimum requirement of 2 waiting staff and 1 bar person.

Councillor White asked for a more detailed breakdown of the weekly sales of drinks and man-hours.

The Acting Business Manager stated that previous information of this nature had been lost from the till during a power failure, but she would endeavour to obtain accurate sales figures from the relevant department on a weekly basis.

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services suggested there might be merit in asking a professional restaurateur to carry out an audit with regard to staffing levels.

The Catering Manager felt that this action would be extremely helpful in offering to support him and would point him in the right direction. Members then agreed that the Director of Finance & Leisure Services and the Chairman meet with a Consultant from Becker Merchant Ltd, in order to have an initial audit carried out on matters such as staffing levels in the restaurant etc. the Board agreed to approve the appointment of this consultant, with the expenditure not to exceed £800 and therefore to stay within Council fiscal policy. The Mayor, Councillor Tommy Jeffers, then declared an interest in the matter.

Members reiterated that the Club Restaurant had received some excellent comments, but they concurred that the problems were not with group bookings but casual dining numbers on a daily basis.

The Acting Business Manager informed Members that the food gross profit margin was 57% and she had been informed that in a Golf Club situation, a 60% margin was deemed normal. She outlined that the drink profit margin was 61% and drink wastage levels were minimal.

RESOLVED:- That, the Board grant approval that the Director of Finance & Leisure Services and the Chairman meet with the Consultant from Becker Merchant Ltd, in order to have an initial audit carried out on matters such as staffing levels in the restaurant etc.

Furthermore, that the Board agree to approve the appointment of this consultant, with the expenditure not to exceed £800 in line with Council fiscal policy

At this point, the meeting went into "Staff in Committee" from 10.20 to 10.50 p.m.

STAFF-IN-COMMITTEE

REPORT FROM THE OPERATIONAL SERVICES MANAGER

Members expressed concern at the lateness of the evening and it was agreed that only matters of the Operational Services Manager's report that required urgent decisions, be discussed.

Noted.

GCB/2006/52 : PROGRESS ON AFFILIATION

In light of the lateness of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED:- That, further discussion of this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Board.

GCB/2006/53 : PROGRESS ON THE GOLF CLUB FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Operational Services Manager referred to his report in which the funding arrangements for Club Expenditure were to be clearly set out, as permitted by the LGA. He stated that when this was completed, the Board needed to carefully consider the implications.

The GUI Constitution would then need to be reviewed by Officers to identify any conflict between those funding arrangements (if approved by the Board) and the current Club Constitution and those raised by the club. These are to be referred for legal advice. On return of that legal advice, the Board needs to consider the current situation and decide how the matters are to be resolved. In addition the Golf Club representatives on the General committee are required to clearly set out the following:

- Club Expenses budgets
- Personal and team allowances
- Suggestions for marketing and promotions
- List of all their planned competitions, events and functions

Once these budgets and programme of events have been established by the club and approved by the Board, all expenditure is then to be approved in advance by the General Committee. The General Committee to have devolved authority to approve expenditure.

The Council will in all probability set up a Current Account with chequebook, similar to the CSDA with two signatories, one to be the Chairman of the General Committee.

Noted.

GCB/2006/54 : STAFF ANALYSIS FOR THE GOLF COURSE AND CLUBHOUSE

The Operational Services Manager referred to the staff organisational chart attached to his report and the complete staff list including staff structure, grade of pay, weekly overtime hours, weekly and annual staff cost, annual overtime hours, together with maintenance task analysis and analysis of staffing levels at other golf venues.

He sought approval for the position of Administrative Assistant, which was essential to the running of the Club House and was currently being covered through a Recruitment Agency to be filled on a permanent full time basis. He referred Members to the proposed Job Description and indicated that the salary for this post had been included in the current budget and the need for the post had been established over a 1-year trial period.

Councillor White suggested that consideration of the post be deferred for a further 4-month period.

RESOLVED:- That, consideration of the position of Administrative Assistant be deferred to a future meeting and in the interim period, the Agency Worker continue in post for another 4-month period to establish whether the suggested duties in the job description can be carried out by one member of staff.

GCB/2006/55 : COURSE MAINTENANCE DOCUMENT

Noted.

GCB/2006/56 : SIGNAGE

The Operational Services Manager's report referred to an email update from the Chief Executive to Councillor Robinson (Chairman), which had been attached to his report.

Noted.

GCB/2006/57 : ASSET REGISTER

The Operational Services Manager referred Members to the Asset Register set out in his report which includes a breakdown of the current levels of Golf Course machinery and Clubhouse furniture.

Noted.

GCB/2006/58 : MAYOR'S CHARITY GOLF EVENT

After some discussion it was agreed that the proposed "Dawn till Dusk" charity Golf event, to raise money for the Mayor's Charity arranged for 7 June shall be accommodated at the Golf Course.

RESOLVED:- That the proposed "Dawn till Dusk" Charity Golf event shall be accommodated at the Golf Course.

GCB/2006/59 : DRESS CODE AND COURSE RULES

The Operational Services Manager referred Members to the Dress Code and Course Rules for the Golf Club attached to his report.

He further advised that a notice had been displayed informing users that a new dress code was being introduced.

RESOLVED:- That the Golf Club Board approve the Dress Code and Course Rules for the Golf Club as attached to his report and that it be reviewed on an annual basis.

GCB/2006/60 : MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

The Operational Services Manager reported that the membership numbers had reduced from the previous year to 352, as compared to 375 and represented a potential year end income shortfall of approximately £46,000 for 2006/2007. He had sent out an extensive questionnaire to those members who had left the Club and only a few had been returned, highlighting a lack of Club atmosphere, lack of a dress code and the fact that alcohol could not be purchased at the bar, as the main reasons for their decision.

The Officer went on to state that, in his view, the lack of social events and Golf Club atmosphere concerned him and these issues need to be tackled.

He continued that Castlereagh Hills Golf Club was now affiliated to the GUI and was known as Castlereagh Hills Golf Club but it was still a private club, as they have not yet passed the necessary resolutions that they were previously advised to progress. He added that this would require an extraordinary general meeting to be called as soon as possible at which the two resolutions must be passed and it is recommended that the general Committee require the Club to pass these resolutions and that the Club should produce their own social calendar of events for the next General Committee meeting.

Councillor White asked who would be responsible for organising the events, to which the Operational Services Manager responded that while he had not been

approached with an events programme, Officers were keen to assist the Club in providing and organising a Social Events programme.

The Operational Services Manager again referred to his report and indicated that the Council did not run the Club as it was still currently essentially a private club.

Members discussed ways in which the Club's atmosphere could be enhanced, but appreciated that it was difficult when the majority of the diners using the restaurant were not Club members.

The Operational Services Manager indicated that the Officers had suggested special golfer-only menus and special function menus for the club, but that it is critically important that the General Committee ensured that the Golf Club organised an events programme and come forward with their own proposals.

RESOLVED:- That the General Committee require the Club

- (a) to pass these resolutions as set out in the Operational Service Manager's letter to J Gibson dated 4 May 2005.
- (b) To produce a social events programme for at least the next 12 months.
- (c) That Officers arrange to meet the representatives of the Club to assist them in producing and organising their social events programme.

As there was no further business, the meeting concluded at 11.10 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE