

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board held, in committee, in the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club on Friday, 16th May 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:-

Alderman J White
Councillor Mrs J Cochrane
Councillor B Hanvey
Councillor M Henderson
Councillor G Robinson
Councillor J Spratt

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Director of Leisure Services, General Manager of Leisure & Marketing, Golf Club Secretary/Manager, Parks Section Manager, Acting PR & Marketing Manager, Business Manager and Assistant Members' Services Officer

APOLOGIES:-

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Councillors Chambers and Jeffers

GCB/2008/129 : MINUTES

Tabled:- Minutes of the meeting of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board held on 18th April 2008 (copy previously circulated)

Following a proposal from Alderman White, which was seconded by Councillor Hanvey, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the minutes of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board meeting held on 18th April 2008 be accepted as a true and accurate account of the proceedings that took place.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman wished to express his congratulations, on behalf of the Golf Club Board, to Councillor Cochrane on the recent birth of her daughter, Jessica.

GCB/2008/130 : COURSE INSPECTION

Councillor Henderson reported that there had been a number of complaints from club members in relation to the condition of the golf course.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, following the meeting, Members would walk around the course to inspect the condition of the course first-hand.

GCB/2008/131 : GOLF PROFESSIONAL – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

The Director of Leisure Services reported that 3 Expressions of Interest had been received by the Council, however one application had subsequently withdrawn and the remaining 2 candidates had made presentations to the panel. She stated that, following these presentations and further discussion with the Chairman of the Board, a recommendation was being made to Members that the new Golf Professional should be made an employee of the Council, with their working hours being controlled by the Line Manager. She commented that if a Golf Professional was employed without being a council employee, accountability would remain an issue if he/she was providing an independent service.

She circulated a supplementary report on the matter and a proposed Job Description for Members' perusal.

In response to a query from Councillor Hanvey regarding the promotion of the Golf Club, the Director advised that as Castlereagh Hills was only one of the Council's 5 facilities, it was important that the new Golf Professional would encourage the development side of the sport. She felt that this element had been excluded from the previous post-holder's duties and she wanted the new Golf Professional to encourage sales of golf to schools etc. as part of the Council's "Try Golf" sports development programme.

The Director then informed Members that she had been informed by Human Resources that the Council would have to advertise the post. She went on to add that there would be a certain degree of flexibility tied in with the post and it would incorporate a 6-month probationary period.

Councillor Henderson commented that if the Council progressed recruitment as soon as possible, the successful candidate would be in place for the school holiday period.

Councillor Hanvey expressed concern that the Golf Professional could accumulate extensive levels of annual leave and time off in lieu and the golf club could be in a predicament when this leave was taken.

The Director advised Members that an evaluation of the post had been carried out and she referred to the worst case scenario that could apply in relation to the Council's "time off in lieu" policy. However, she reiterated that leave and time off would only be agreed at the discretion of the Manager, and because of the variable nature of the Golf Professional's post, it was up to the Golf Club Secretary/Manager to manage the post and prioritise his/her duties.

Councillor Spratt proposed that the Golf Club Board agree to advertise for the Golf Professional's post, and approve the job description circulated to the Members. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Cochrane.

Alderman White expressed reservations in relation to this proposal, as he felt that it would be very costly to the Council and would require proper auditing.

The Director responded that the Council had very few options with regard to this post, but she reassured Members that the Council would hold the golf stock levels, which would be managed by club staff.

Councillor Henderson reiterated that, as the post was subject to a 6-month probationary period, it could be reviewed at a later date.

The Director advised the Board that the Council would incur an overspend if it continued to use agency staff. She stated that there was no doubt that the Golf Club facility had improved greatly, but there had been costs involved in reaching this point. She felt that the services of a Golf Professional was urgently required to develop coaching and encourage the next generation of golfers.

At this point in the meeting, Councillor Robinson entered at 10.30 a.m.

She suggested that, if Members wished, she could advertise the post on a 1-year's contract, subject to renewal. However, Councillor Henderson felt that this would severely limit the number and calibre of candidates that would apply for the post.

Councillor Hanvey commented that the 6-month period provided enough opportunity for the successful candidate to demonstrate how they have developed golf in the Borough. Furthermore, he suggested that this responsibility could be used as part of the criteria in determining the successful employee, by way of asking them to demonstrate a development plan at the selection stage of the recruitment process.

Following Councillor Spratt's proposal, it was

RESOLVED: that the Golf Club Board agree to advertise for the Golf Professional's post as an employee of the Council with a 6-month probationary

period, and approve the job description as circulated to the Members by the Director of Leisure Services.

GCB/2008/132 : LEISURE STRATEGY

The Director of Leisure Services referred Members to the proposed Leisure Strategy attached to her report, and she advised that this would take the Council through to the Review of Public Administration.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board approve the implementation of the Leisure Strategy as outlined in the Director's report, however, should any Member wish to comment on the content, they should contact her accordingly.

REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER **LEISURE & MARKETING**

GCB/2008/133 : CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The General Manager informed Members that, following the Golf Club Board meeting on 15th February and the number of proposed changes to the Constitution put forward by the General Committee, he had subsequently sought a legal opinion from the Council's Solicitors.

He then went through the proposed changes to the Constitution for Members' information and outlined the comments put forward by the legal opinion.

4.2 The President will be elected at the AGM and shall hold office for two (2) years

The General Manager stated that Councillor Robinson had raised concerns at a previous meeting in relation to the fact that the President was elected on an annual basis.

He referred to previous discussion at the General Committee meeting and felt that there were ways of linking this, e.g. appointment of Honorary Members, to ensure a precedent would not be set with regard to Past Presidents.

13.5 The Proprietor may elect as Honorary Members, prominent golfers, or persons who had rendered special service for the advancement of the game or to the Club, or who are distinguished in public life.

The Director of Leisure reiterated that the Council was, in fact, the proprietor of the Golf Club.

Councillor Robinson asked that this matter be raised at the next General Committee to remind club members that the Council was the Club's proprietor and that the Golf Club Board believes that only a very distinguished person would qualify for an award of this honour.

Section 13 Juvenile/Junior Members

The General Manager advised that the Council's Solicitor had concerns with Section 13 in relation to the creation of a special category of members between 18 and 21, as this would not be a division recognised by law. 18 is the age of majority, therefore the Solicitor had felt that it could well be discriminatory against people between the ages of 18 and 21. Whilst this was probably acceptable in a private members' golf club, Castlereagh Hills was a proprietors club owned and operated by a Local authority therefore it should avoid anything by which an allegation of discriminatory practice could be made against it.

Councillor Cochrane felt that this wording made it even more discriminatory for members over the age of 21.

The General Manager felt that it would be more beneficial to have an over-18 section and he asked Members if this age-group would be permitted to vote if they paid a lesser fee.

Councillor Henderson advised that senior citizens were already permitted to vote despite paying a reduced joining fee.

13.2 Juvenile membership is available to persons under eighteen (18) years of age provided that they are proposed by an adult member who must be responsible for the conduct of the Juvenile Member

The General Manager referred to this ruling and advised that it stated that juvenile members must be proposed by an adult member, yet the age of 18 was legally classed as an adult.

Councillor Cochrane commented that currently, any one can join the Golf Club without requiring an initial proposal.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager reiterated that Castlereagh Hills was a municipal club, not a private club.

Councillor Henderson commented that a procedure was in place whereby the names of applicants to the Club would be tabled at the next General Committee to notify the two Captains of interested parties wishing to join the club.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager referred to the fact that the General Committee met bi-monthly and Councillor Henderson suggested that the Golf Club set up a separate Membership Committee to meet on a monthly basis for this purpose.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised that 5 new members had recently joined the club and an introductory procedure had been put in place whereby they had met with the Club Council and welcomed into the club.

13.9 Acceptance of members is at the sole discretion of the Proprietor

The Director of Leisure Services referred to this ruling and again reiterated that the Council was the proprietor of the Golf Club.

Councillor Henderson stated that although new applications would go to the Membership Committee who would carry out the screening process, the Golf Club Board would have the final say on the matter.

Alderman White commented that it was normal practice for new Members to be invited to the Golf Club to be entertained by the Golf Captain as an introductory gesture and it also served the purpose to make people feel important to be a member.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager responded that this process was now in place and several new members had been introduced to the Club Council and welcomed into the club.

Following a proposal from Alderman White, which was seconded by Councillor Hanvey, it was

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Board approve:

- (a) the suggested changes within the Constitution presented by the General Manager
- (b) no lower age limit to the Juvenile category ie. Under 18s.
- (c) Junior membership carries voting rights as they are legally an adult at 18 years of age.

REPORT FROM THE BUSINESS MANAGER

GCB/2008/134 : FINANCIAL TRADING ACCOUNTS

The Business Manager referred to the financial trading accounts for the month of April 2008 and reported a shortfall in income, but an under-spend in expenditure. She commented that, due to the year end process invoices relating to April may still be outstanding.

She drew Members' attention to the additional report, which shows this year's actuals against the same period last year. Income in relation to course fees have reduced from the previous year, this could be due to Easter falling in March this year rather than April. However, on a positive note the income from membership subs has increased as the Golf Club Secretary/Manager was proactively pursuing this matter.

The Business Manager then reported that there were currently 269 members, but she hoped that this number would increase.

The Business Manager referred to a number of overspends in the salaries/wages budget, this was due to an employee failing to achieve their probationary target and the Local Government ruling that applied to their salaries in instances of this nature.

Councillor Robinson expressed concern and asked that this matter be checked out as soon as possible to clarify if this was a Council ruling or was indeed Local Government based,

Councillor Hanvey referred to rising energy costs and asked if Members could provide a monthly or quarterly update on energy costs in relation to the budget.

The Business Manager stated that the Golf Club's estimates for energy were set above the actual expenditure to be mindful of fuel increases, at a rate of 30% for electricity and 28% for Phoenix Gas.

The General Manager advised Members that once the wind turbine for Lough Moss was successfully in operation, the Council would proceed with a wind turbine for the Golf Club, once the 100% grant became available again.

Councillor Hanvey asked if those contractors who placed a bid for tenders, excluding fuel costs, could seek variations to the price halfway through their contract as a result of these energy increases.

The General Manager advised that although contractors usually did not give a fixed price, the Council normally sought a guaranteed discount rate, therefore it was sometimes not economically viable to automatically accept the lowest tender.

The Business Manager stated that she would ensure a monthly fuel report was prepared and the costs would be highlighted.

Councillor Spratt referred to the £122k under-spend in the Parks Section budget and suggested that this expenditure could be used to carry out some of the urgent projects required at the Golf Club.

The Parks Section Manager advised that this figure represented a profiling issue as there were a number of invoices that were not yet processed which would impact on the final figures.

He further reported that the manning levels of his Section were reduced because one employee, who was dedicated to the golf course, was on long-term sick leave, which was impacting on his work programme. However, he would review the situation and pull in staff from other areas to cover the shortfall.

Councillor Henderson asked the Parks Section Manager to ensure that, in future, situations involving shortages in manning levels are brought to the attention of the Golf Club Board to ensure that Members are informed as it was imperative that the condition of the golf course was kept maintained to a high standard.

The Parks Section Manager advised that if agency staff were deployed, they were not trained in golf course maintenance, and furthermore, these were the busiest months in the Parks Section calendar with requirements to maintain football pitches, bowling greens, bedding areas as well as the golf course.

Alderman White felt that the golf course should take priority over flower beds and Councillor Henderson concurred that the golf course needed its full complement of staff during the height of season.

Councillor Spratt referred to the employee on long-term sick and received confirmation from the Parks Section Manager that his sickness absence was being monitored by Human Resources.

The Parks Section Manager reiterated that work to the golf course had recently been carried out, but that adverse weather conditions and the recent dry spell had detrimentally impacted on germination levels.

He also commented that heavy rain had washed out the pea gravel on to the course and he was trying to prioritise the reseeded of these areas.

Councillor Henderson enquired if the Parks Section had a set programme of works to maintain the course. The Parks Section Manager responded that golf course greens were cut on a daily basis except on Sundays and the

tees/fairways/roughs were cut twice-a-week. Except in wet weather due to wet grass causing lumps. However overall height is maintained. He referred to competitions and stated that the pins were moved every week beforehand and playing surfaces were prioritised. However, in circumstances like these e.g. weather affecting the sand slits he commented that smaller jobs of a more aesthetic nature were usually compromised.

Councillor Spratt stated that the golf course required a full staffing complement at present and asked the Director of Leisure Services to raise the matter of sickness levels and the managing of them at the next meeting of the Management Team.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised that the Club Council had met last week and had set up a Greens Committee which had compiled a list of findings, and were being very proactive in giving the officers guidance in relation to this matter.

Councillor Robinson concurred with the need for the Club Council to work with the Board to increase members to enable more income to be generated to improve the course and he also suggested that staff from other areas within the Parks Section be brought in to work on the golf course.

The Director felt that the current condition of the course affected the pay and play custom and she advised that Golfing Societies were unhappy with the course condition. She stated that Members had an opportunity to correct these problems to retain the customers and societies.

At this point, the Director of Leisure Services then confirmed the position in relation to earlier discussions re: the overspend in salaries/wages budget and advised that the Council, under NIJC-led terms and conditions, had to pay an employee who failed to fulfil the probationary period, with a payment of 2 months salary, unless they were dismissed because of gross misconduct.

Councillor Cochrane asked that the Director refer this matter to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting for condition.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board authorises

- (a) The Parks Section Manager to procure additional temporary personnel to carry out urgent works to the golf course to be financed from the projected under spend.
- (b) The matter of the Council's terms and conditions in relation to employees who fail to complete their probationary period and are dismissed with 2-

months salary be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

REPORT FROM THE GOLF CLUB SECRETARY/MANAGER

GCB/2008/135 : SECURITY ISSUES

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager informed Members that, following the Board's approval, Atlas Security were installing a panic button at a cost of £366.67.

She advised that Atlas Security had advised that the original specification for the CCTV cameras to cover the front of the building and car park area was inadequate for the purpose and they had recommended a higher specification at a cost of £1,103.60, in comparison to the original quotation of £722.63.

Councillors Henderson and Cochrane expressed their concern in relation to this matter and were not convinced by the recommendation put forward by Atlas Security.

However, following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board authorises Atlas Security to install 2 higher specification CCTV cameras to cover the front of the building and the car park area at a cost of £1,103.60.

GCB/2008/136 : HONORARY POSITIONS

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager referred Members to previous minutes in relation to waiving the Captains' green fees for the year of their captaincy. She indicated that the decision to waive their fees had been deferred last year until the Golf Club's social calendar had been progressed with an explanation on what the Captains did to earn "free" membership.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board authorises that the Men's and Lady Captains would have their green fees waived for the year of their captaincy.

GCB/2008/137 : OPENING HOURS

Members were informed that, in liaison with the Golf Club Committee, it was recommended that the opening hours be extended to 8.00 p.m. on a Thursday

and Sunday night, commencing Thursday 5th June 2008, if the Golf Club Board grant approval.

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Restaurant opening hours be extended to 8.00 p.m. on a Thursday and Sunday evening.

GCB/2008/138 : TROLLEYS

Members were informed that Officers had purchased 16 trolleys and awaiting delivery

Noted.

GCB/2008/139 : TWILIGHT RATE

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Secretary/Manager would update Members at the next meeting of the Golf Club Board.

GCB/2008/140 : CASTLEREAGH ENTERPRISES BOOKING - WEDNESDAY, 18 JUNE 2008

Members were notified that a barbeque has been confirmed for 18 June 2008, outside the Golf Club's opening hours. The restaurant had been booked for approximately 100 people from 7.00 p.m. onwards and catering numbers had been confirmed.

Noted.

GCB/2008/141 : BUGGY & TROLLEY HIRE

Members were updated on the intake of buggy and trolley hire numbers.

Noted.

GCB/2008/142 : MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

Members were advised that at the end of April 2008, total membership stood at 257. The Golf Club Secretary/Manager reported that 42 individuals did not renew their membership, with 12 members cancelling.

Noted.

GCB/2008/143 : GOLF PROFESSIONAL LESSONS

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised Members that one set of 6 golf lessons for the price of 5 had been sold during April 2008.

Noted.

GCB/2008/144 : NUMBER OF STAFF USING THE COURSE

Members were given an update on the number of staff using the Golf course.

Noted.

GCB/2008/145 : RECORD OF ALARM CALL-OUTS

Members were informed that there was one alarm call-out for the month of April 2008.

Noted.

GCB/2008/146 : COMMENT CARDS

Noted

GCB/2008/147 : SUPERVISORY COVER – RESTAURANT

The General Manager advised Members that it had been planned to open the Golf Club restaurant on Thursday evenings and later on Sunday evenings with a limited menu in place.

He referred Members to his report on the matter in which he proposed to operate these extra hours with skeleton kitchen staff and 1 waiter/waitress. On these, and other necessary occasions, it would be the intention to pay the waiter/waitress at a higher scale rather than bring in a supervisor.

Councillor Henderson asked that Officers monitor the situation to review it financially.

The Director of Leisure Services agreed and reiterated that the situation would not be ongoing but would only arise as and when it was required.

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Board authorise that:

- (a) Relief Supervisors will be replaced with a contracted waiter/waitress on a higher scale, as and when required.
- (b) A new job description for the waiter/waitress be drawn up, to cover necessary periods, and evaluated by Human Resources (BIS).
- (c) Once the new system has been implemented, Officers financially review the situation

GCB/2008/148 : FREE BUGGY HIRE – SATURDAY MORNINGS

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised that she had been approached by the Golf Club Captains seeking free use of buggies on Saturday mornings, as the course was closed to pay and play customers, therefore the Council would not be losing any revenue.

Alderman White commented that it was usual practice for Golf Club Captains to use buggies during competitions to check how players were performing around the course.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Secretary/Manager be authorised to permit Golf Club members to have free buggy hire on Saturday mornings, when the course is closed to pay and play customers. However, that she continue to monitor the system to ensure that it is not being abused.

GCB/2008/149 : GOLF CLUB WEBSITE

The Acting PR & Marketing Manager reported that the proposed Golf Club website would cost £1,700, with a hosting fee of £550 plus annual amendments as and when required. The Board had previously approved a budget for the year of £2500. A copy of the Home page was circulated for Members approval. She commented that the website would include a facility whereby the pictures on the screen would change at 5-10 second intervals and that there would be a General Enquiries page and links to the GUI, Council and Ice Bowl websites.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Board approve the Golf Club website as outlined by the Acting PR & Marketing Manager.

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER
LEISURE & MARKETING

GCB/2008/150 : PROPOSED GOLFING PACKAGE FOR HOTELS

The General Manager referred to the proposed hotel package in which bookings would be made through the hotel and the Golf Club would charge a Golfing Society rate with the provision of buggies etc.

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Board approve the proposed Golfing Package for hotels, as outlined above.

GCB/2008/151 : TESCO STAFF BROCHURE

Members were informed that the promotional Tesco Staff brochure had now been prepared.

Following agreement, it was

RESOLVED:- that,

- (a) the Golf Club Board approve the proposed Golfing Package for Tesco staff, as outlined.
- (b) Officers be authorised to contact Tesco's to ascertain if they would provide wine/cheese for an evening, in support of the Golf Club.

GCB/2008/152 : STAFF UNIFORMS

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Secretary/Manager be instructed to purchase staff uniforms of green polo shirts for the Golf Club front-of-house staff.

GCB/2008/153 : INCIDENT

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager referred to an incident which had occurred between a Golf Club Member and a Council employee and she reported that the matter had been dealt with under the Council's Code of Conduct.

Noted.

REPORT FROM THE ACTING PR & MARKETING MANAGER

GCB/2008/154 : NEW MEMBERSHIP PACKAGES

Members were advised that the marketing schedule for the promotion of the new membership packages was currently being implemented throughout May and June, with specific targeting of lady membership.

Alderman White expressed his concern at the speed in which Officers were marketing the promotions.

The Acting PR & Marketing Manager advised Members that the door-to-door leaflet drop would be taking place within the next few weeks.

The General Manager stated that the Marketing Department was short-staffed and the Acting PR & Marketing Manager was working without assistance, however he would ensure that the new promotions were being actively pursued.

Councillor Henderson asked that Officers prepare a rolling Progress Sheet with regard to feedback following the Golf Club's promotions.

RESOLVED:- That, Officers be instructed to prepare a rolling progress sheet which will record feedback following the Golf Board's promotional offers.

Noted.

GCB/2008/155 : JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP

Members were informed that a mail drop was being organised to local schools and colleges promoting the new junior membership package, with the inclusion of golfing lessons. The Acting PR & Marketing Manager stated that promotional literature was being directed to PE teachers of the School Golfing Society, and she outlined the suggested mailing list.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Acting PR & Marketing Manager be instructed to organise a maildrop to the following schools and the production of promotional literature at a cost of approx £350:-

Ashfield Boys High School
Lagan College
Wellington College
Bloomfield Collegiate School
Newtownbreda High School
Orangefield High School
Comber High School
Saintfield High School
Our Lady of St Patrick School
Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education

Ashfield Girls High School
Knockbreda High School
Campbell College
Strathearn School
Grosvenor High School
Regent House School
Dundonald High School
St Aquineas

Furthermore, that the Acting PR & Marketing Manager includes Campbell College, Methodist College, St Aquineas and Wellington College in the list of School Golfing Societies contacted.

GCB/2008/156 : WELCOME PACKS

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager informed Members that the welcome packs had now been printed out. However, she commented that there had been a number of IT problems relating to the swiping of cards system and the connection of the micro cache system with the Council's current system.

The Business Manager further advised that the Leisure Services Department would shortly have its own direct debit facility.

Noted.

GCB/2008/157 : TEE BOXES

The General Manager referred Members to his report and advised that research had been carried out into the production and erection of the proposed tee box signs with course maps and interchangeable sponsor plaques and he outlined the costs involved. He advised that the sponsor plaque could be change, if necessary, in the second year at a cost of £85.00.

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board approves the sale of the tee box signs by the independent contractor at a cost of £525.00 for the first year to cover costs.

As there was no further business, the meeting concluded at 12.05 p.m. and Members took an inspection walk around the golf course.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE