

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board held, in committee, in the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club on Friday, 17th October 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor Mrs J Cochrane
Councillor D Drysdale (Chairman)
Councillor B Hanvey
Councillor G Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE:- Acting Director of Leisure Services, General Manager Leisure & Marketing (from 11.20 a.m.) Operational Services Manager, Parks Section Manager, Business Manager, Golf Club Secretary/Manager and Assistant Members' Services Officer

APOLOGIES:- Apologies were recorded on behalf of Alderman White, Councillors Chambers, Henderson, Jeffers and Spratt

GCB/2008/267 : MINUTES OF CASTLEREAGH HILLS GOLF CLUB BOARD MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2008 (copy previously circulated)

RESOLVED:- That, the minutes of the Castlereagh Hills Golf Club Board meeting held on 19 September 2008 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LEISURE SERVICES

GCB/2008/268 : FINANCIAL TRADING ACCOUNTS

The Business Manager tabled a summary of the trading results for September 2008.

She reported an adverse variance but indicated that Officers hoped to reduce the variance by cutting back costs.

The Director referred to the trading accounts for the month of July and advised Members that the adverse variance had been substantially reduced from that date. Furthermore, she noted that the financial trading trends had not been hampered as a result of the restaurant closure.

The Business Manager then identified areas where savings could be made and those areas which were likely to come in over budget and she outlined the amount of potential shortfalls.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager indicated that that the inclement weather conditions over the summer had affected some aspects of income, e.g. buggy hire.

The Parks Section Manager then drew Members' attention to the Golf Course trading accounts.

He pointed out that there was an overspend in the Salaries & Wages and Materials budgets due to remedial works caused by inclement weather conditions that affected the recent sand-slitting works to the golf course. This had necessitated the need to employ additional agency staff and purchase additional materials. However, he felt that it was possible that the overspend could be clawed back within the next six months.

Councillor Robinson asked Officers if they could add another column to their trading accounts which would highlight the percentage (pro-rata) for the time of year to identify potential overspends before they had been incurred.

RESOLVED:- That, Officers include an additional column to their trading accounts which would highlight the percentage (pro-rata) for the time of year to identify potential overspends before they have been incurred.

GCB/2008/269 : DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CASTLEREAGH HILLS GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 OCTOBER 2008 (draft minutes previously circulated)

Noted.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GENERAL COMMITTEE DRAFT MINUTES

GCB/2008/270 : CHANGES TO THE 2ND TEE
(Draft Minute No: GCGC/2008/109 refers)

The Parks Section Manager advised that the trees had now been removed and were in the process of being re-planted elsewhere on the course.

Noted.

**GCB/2008/271 : MEMBERS' ROOM
(Draft Minute No: GCGC/2008/123 refers)**

Following discussion, Councillor Robinson made a proposal, which was seconded by Councillor Hanvey, in which it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board grant approval for a pool table to be located in the Members' Room and reviewed at a later date.

Officers will initially ascertain if the Golf Club wishes to purchase the pool table, however, if this is not the case, Officers will then liaise with Ava to pursue the hire of a coin-operated snooker table as part of the existing contract for the video machines across the whole of Leisure.

GCB/2008/272 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM MR MOORE

Members were advised that a mid-week golf club member, who had undergone surgery, had been unable to play since January 2008. He had therefore requested that his direct debits be frozen to compensate for the time he could not play.

The Director went on to state that due to a lack of communication between the club and its members, Mr Moore had not been aware that he could have informed the club to freeze his membership at that time.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, Mr Moore be informed that retrospective approval cannot be sought for freezing membership and had he informed the Golf Club Council prior to his period of ill-health, the Board would have considered freezing his membership at that time.

Furthermore, that Officers issue a warning notice to the Golf Club Council informing that that the onus is on them to ensure that their club members are kept informed in relation to the guidelines re: freezing memberships.

OPERATIONAL ITEMS

REPORT FROM GOLF CLUB SECRETARY/MANAGER

GCB/2008/273 : BUILDING INSURANCE

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised that the club's insurance policy had been amended to include the golf shop stock and golf analysis studio at a cost of an additional £1,000.

Noted.

GCB/2008/274 : LOTTERY UPDATE

Members were advised that the Secretary/Manager, Golf Professional and Sports Development Officer were pursuing lottery funding on behalf of the junior section of the club to develop the under-18 membership and players within the club.

Councillor Robinson enquired if the junior section of the club looked after their own finances as it was important that they had their own cheque book account and the accounts were scrutinized.

The Director confirmed that, should the application to the Lottery be successful, then a dedicated cost centre for the purpose of administering the grant would be established within the overall accounts and this would allow for full accountability for the grant money. The Secretary/Manager expressed disappointment that she, the Sports Development Officer and the Golf Professional have had to progress this grant application themselves as the Golf Club did not provide any ideas.

Noted.

GCB/2008/275 : ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Members were advised that the Sports Development Officer was investigating any available grants that would assist in the development of the Ladies' Section and Officers would update the Board should there be any future developments.

Noted.

GCB/2008/276 : FULL DRINKS LICENCE

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised Members that Tughans Solicitors had received a copy of the Council's drawings and were currently pursuing minor

amendments which would be sent to the Courts with a provisional grant application.

She commented that Tughans were pursuing the purchase of an available licence through Greer, Hamilton & Gailey agents and they were hopeful that the 1st April 2009 would be a realistic deadline to have the licence in place.

Noted.

GCB/2008/277 : MRS THOMPSON UPDATE

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager informed Members that two ex-gratia payments had been honoured to Mrs Thompson following damage to her property and her car.

Noted.

GCB/2008/278 : REDUNDANCIES UPDATE

Members were advised that following the closure of the restaurant, three staff had been re-deployed to other Leisure facilities and six employees had been made redundant. However, five out of the six redundancies had since been re-employed.

Noted.

GCB/2008/279 : BOOKING ON 31 OCTOBER 2008

Members were informed that a late licence had been applied for to accommodate a booking made by the ex-Captain, Thomas McIver, for a charity fund raising evening to raise funds for a disabled child.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised that, as the golf club was still in a position to facilitate functions, this event would be honoured.

Noted.

GCB/2008/280 : GOLF STUDIO

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised that the golf studio was now installed in the restaurant and was taking bookings for lessons. She reported, however, that it would have to be dismantled to accommodate the aforementioned booking

on the 31st October and any other bookings for exclusive use of the restaurant area.

She advised that the Golf Club had expressed concern at the aesthetic appearance of the studio and she indicated that a custom fitted bespoke curtain could be erected at a cost of £1200 (excl vat) which would improve the appearance of the golf studio and make it easier to erect/dismantle.

Councillor Robinson suggested that any further consideration of this matter be deferred until after the meeting to enable Members to view the golf studio.

Councillor Cochrane asked if there had been many lessons booked, to which the Golf Club Secretary/Manager responded that taster lessons were now underway and marketing for the Golf Studio had commenced this week.

RESOLVED:- That, further consideration with regard to the custom bespoke fitted curtain would be deferred until the Board Members viewed the Golf Studio. Upon viewing the area in question the Members resolved to defer the purchase of the curtain and the matter would be reviewed in the New Year, once uptake and use of the area could be considered.

GCB/2008/281 : GOLF PROFESSIONAL'S STOCK INCOME

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager referred to the golf professional's stock income accounts for September as attached to her report.

She referred to discussion at the last General Committee meeting in relation to separate arrangements for the large quantity of sweatshirts that the Golf Club had purchased in error.

Councillor Drysdale suggested that they could be advertised for sale on the Council's website or used as presentation gifts.

Following lengthy discussion on the matter, it was

RESOLVED;- that,

- (a) the Golf Club Board would make an initial offer to purchase the remaining sweaters from the Golf Club at a cost of £10 per sweater
- (b) in the interim, the Golf Club Professional will ascertain how much he could purchase sweaters from his suppliers at his discounted rate.

GCB/2008/282 : COMPETITION MONEY, 2'S & GUI VOUCHERS

Noted.

GCB/2008/283 : BUGGY AND TROLLEY HIRE

Members referred to the Officer's report in relation to an update on buggy and trolley hire numbers.

Noted.

GCB/2008/284 : UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised Members that at the end of September 2008, total membership stood at 252 members however she had received applications from 2 new members yesterday.

Noted.

GCB/2008/285 : GOLF PROFESSIONAL LESSONS

Noted.

GCB/2008/286 : RECORD OF ALARM CALL-OUTS

Members were informed that there were no call-outs for September 2008.

Noted.

REPORT FROM THE MARKETING MANAGER

GCB/2008/287 : PRESS LAUNCH FOR INDOOR PUTTING STUDIO

Members were informed that the launch of the putting studio which had previously been planned for Wednesday, 19th November 2008 was being rescheduled to ensure that the event did not clash with any other significant sporting events due to be held on the same evening.

RESOLVED:- That, the Officers arrange for another date for the press launch of the indoor putting studio and to liaise with the Golf Club Social Committee in an attempt to organise a table quiz after the press launch to encourage members to attend.

GCB/2008/288 : CASTLEREAGH HILLS GOLF CLUB CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS SWITCH ON CEREMONY

Members agreed that the date for the switching on of the Christmas tree lights event at Castlereagh Hills Golf Club should be organised after the 26th November 2008 to ensure that the it would not clash with the Civic Offices Christmas tree light switching-on ceremony.

Noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

GCB/2008/289 : NIHE CHARITY EVENT

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager informed Members that she had been approached by the NIHE regarding a charity golfing event which was being held in March 2009 to include representation from NIHE, PSNI and Castlereagh Borough Council Elected Members and Officers. It was proposed that there would be a golfing competition during the day followed by an evening function.

She went on to comment that the NIHE had requested if the Golf Club Board would permit the golf to be played free-of-charge, as the event proceeds were going to the Mayor's Charity.

The Acting Director of Leisure Services suggested that the Golf Club Board develop a corporate package as economic as possible which would be sold as a 4-ball and meal package. However, she reiterated that the Mayor's Charity Cup would still be going ahead next year as a separate competition and that this event would neither replace nor overshadow it.

Noted.

GCB/2008/290 : ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Members were notified that the Golf Club's Administrative Officer would be relocating to the Ice Bowl at the beginning of November and the golf club would be recruiting a replacement officer.

Noted.

GCB/2008/291 : BBC – USE OF CARPARK

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager advised Members that the BBC had requested use of the golf club's top car park on Monday, 13th October 2008.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Secretary/Manager would request a copy of one of the photographs taken during the shoot, autographed by James Nesbitt if possible, which could be auctioned at one of the Council's forthcoming charity events.

GCB/2008/292 : REQUEST FOR HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Members were advised that a letter had been forwarded to the Board by the Golf Club's Honorary Secretary requesting that they consider awarding a life membership to Mr Ronnie Weir.

Councillor Robinson referred to the guidelines and protocol which had been set out in relation to Honorary Life Membership awards.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Golf Club Board would write to the Honorary Secretary of the Golf Club referring to the criteria determining Honorary Life Membership and asking that they specify how Mr Weir fulfils this criteria.

GCB/2008/293 : ROYAL SUN ALLIANCE – INSURANCE INSPECTION

The Acting Director of Leisure Services informed Members that the Royal Sun Alliance had carried out an inspection of the golf club for insurance purposes and the premises had been found to be satisfactory.

Noted.

GCB/2008/294 : PRICING - COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

The Acting Director of Leisure Services referred to the appendix attached to her report which outlined comparative price statistics from other golf clubs and her subsequent recommendations. She stated that she had taken on board what local competing clubs were offering and her objective as to increase footfall through Castlereagh Hills Golf Club, as this would subsequently have an impact on income.

Councillor Robinson referred to a previous Council resolution which stated that former Gilnahirk Golf Club members would receive a £150 reduction to their joining fees, but he stressed that if any former member left the club for any consecutive time, they would lose this privilege.

The Acting Director then went through the proposed and actual charges and commented that from early indications, golf clubs were having to reduce some of their prices in light of the current financial climate.

She stated that Castlereagh Hills had a significant range of membership options and the club offered competitive rates. Furthermore, she outlined that society rates and twilight rates were currently being reviewed.

Councillor Hanvey referred to the credit crunch and the fact that this had limited the amount of income that many people had set aside for recreational use. He felt that the golf club therefore had to reduce its fees to remain competitive and attract more players.

The Acting Director of Leisure Services advised that there was a maximum reduction in golf club fees that the Council could consider to offer yet this would be considered to make a minimal impact on the customer.

The Business Manager advised that the Golf Club Men's Captain had approached management and indicated that a significant number of the original Gilnahirk members would be prepared to waive their £150 discount this year so long as their membership price remained the same.

Councillor Drysdale suggested new promotions, e.g. new members joining between January-March 2009 would get 20% off the membership fee if they paid their fees in full. However, the Golf Club Secretary/Manager responded that many people were unable to afford to pay the fees up front.

Councillor Cochrane suggested that any member who introduced a new member to the golf club would receive 20% off their fees, as well as the new member receiving the discounted rate.

Councillor Robinson went on to comment that if an existing member introduced a new full member, they would receive £150 off their next year's fees on the basis that the new member pays for a full year's membership. However, this offer would be capped to a maximum of one person per year and would be non-transferable.

Councillor Drysdale enquired that if an existing Gilnahirk Members introduced a new member, would they receive an additional £150 off their already discounted fee. However, Councillor Robinson responded that this would not be the case.

At this point in the meeting, the General Manager Leisure & Marketing arrived at 11.20 a.m.

The Acting Director then advised that she was trying to build up the Juvenile and Junior sections of the club and suggested a junior rate of £250 to include 3 golfing lessons and a session at the Golf Analysis studio as part of the package.

Members were in agreement that the golf club should also reduce the Juvenile fees to £125 for the incoming year.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager referred to the lack of restaurant facility and Councillor Robinson suggested that Members and Officers should visit the basement restaurant at Stormont Castle to view its operation and ascertain if the golf club could provide a similar facility.

The Acting Director advised that the Council was not in a position to consider another restaurant facility at the golf club for at least a further six months.

However, she advised that the Golf Club could still operate pre-booked exclusive functions but she agreed that Officers could explore various ideas in the interim.

The General Manager Leisure & Marketing suggested that for family membership, the Council could add on use of other leisure facilities and the Golf Club Secretary/Manager concurred that a link into discounted prices for other Council recreational facilities could be offered as part of membership packages.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That,

- (a) The Golf Club Board approves that any existing member who introduces a new full member to the club will receive £150 off their next year's fees on the basis that the new member pay for a full year's membership up-front. However, this would be capped to a maximum of one person per year, and was not applicable to the £150 discount already

received by former Gilnahirk Golf Club members and it would be non-transferable.

- (b) Officers will look at juvenile and junior packages for new and existing members as an added incentive to pay their fees up-front.
- (c) Members/Officers will visit the basement restaurant facility at Stormont Castle to view its operation

GCB/2008/295 : CORPORATE PACKAGES

The General Manager Leisure & Marketing suggested that the Marketing Department widen the Castlereagh Borough periphery to target those organisations such as the Ulster Hospital, PSNI, Palace Barracks, Shorts, Britvic etc.

He further suggested that the golf club provide corporate package rates at the same rate as the golfing society packages.

Councillor Robinson commented that Officers should compile a corporate package of membership with names of local companies that could be approached, although he agreed that it might be best to test the water with a smaller group first.

The Acting Director responded that she would work on this proposal, in liaison with the General Manager Leisure & Marketing.

The Golf Club Secretary/Manager reassured the Board that any new members were being accommodated a playing slot on Saturday mornings.

RESOLVED:- That the Acting Director of Leisure Services and the General Manager Leisure & Marketing would look at the various options available and would update Members.

GCB/2008/296 : INDOOR PUTTING STUDIO

Members then left the Boardroom to view the indoor putting studio, located in the former Golf Club Restaurant.

Councillor Robinson commented that as the studio was not a permanent fixture, it could be used as a private dining area for dual purpose.

Alderman White enquired if the indoor putting studio could be relocated outside.

The Operational Services Manager responded that the studio could be placed inside a polytunnel and would only require an electrical power supply to be installed.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- that, the Golf Club Board would run with the indoor putting studio at its present location for a trial period to assess the amount of interest that it generates. Following a review of the income generated, Officers will prepare a report for the attention of the Board and the matter will be re-considered.

At this point, Members returned to the Boardroom to discuss remaining items.

GCB/2008/297 : RESTAURANT WINDOW

The Acting Director of Leisure Services advised that the small window at the far end of the restaurant had been omitted when blinds were being purchased for the facility and the amount of sunlight penetrating the window was blinding at times.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Drysdale, it was

RESOLVED:- That, Officers be instructed to purchase black-out fabric which will be placed on the small restaurant window to obscure strong sunlight.

GCB/2008/298 : CONDITION OF GOLF COURSE

Councillor Drysdale wished to congratulate the Golf Club Officers and grounds staff for the excellent condition of the golf course.

Noted.

GCB/2008/299 : SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Acting Director of Leisure Services reported that she had met with the Director of Technical & Environmental Services to discuss the SLA for 2009/10 with regard to the extra hours coverage required by Leisure Services for the Rangers.

The Operational Services Manager responded that the additional cost of providing Ranger cover on the golf course for all opening hours would be tabled

at the next Golf Club Board meeting prior to being tabled at the Estimates Working Group.

Noted.

As there was no further business, the meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE