



HIGH WYCOMBE CROQUET CLUB

Minutes of Committee Meeting

Thursday 16th November 2023, 19.00

Venue: Green Pastures, Wheeler's End HP14 3NQ

Present:	Nigel Clogg	Chairman NC
	Guy Priestley	Secretary GP
	Wendy Kingon	WK
	Ed Olhausen	Membership Secretary EO
	Ian Shore	Croquet Academy IS (non-member)

Present by invitation:	Matthew Miles-Griffiths	MM
	Kenny Weir	KW

1) Apologies

Richard Coward	Treasurer RC
Chris Webbley	CW
Alan Clark	AC

With 4 of 7 Committee Members present the Chairman welcomed those present, declared the meeting quorate, and opened the meeting at 7.15pm.

All Committee approvals below were carried unanimously.

2) Approval of Minutes of Meeting 18th May 2023

Approved.

3) Matters arising from the last minutes/actions outstanding

All items resolved except:

CHAIRMAN

Involving younger members

See Membership below.

Carol Lawther had been satisfied with the most recent youth event.

NEW LAWN MANAGER: carried forward (see 6.1 below)

SAFEGUARDING

GP had provided basic required data to Croquet England, and confirmed Ron Carter was still Safeguarding Officer for the Croquet Association.

He had further proposed himself as Club Safeguarding Officer – see Safeguarding Report below.

AOB

Document hospitality procedures

Carried forward

GP/EO

Provide Croquet England with HWCC details: GP believed this had been done, but would double-check and confirm.

GP [since confirmed by CW]

4) **Chairman's Report**

Chairman introduced MM and KW to the Committee, thanking them for attending. See 7.2 and 12.2 below.

5) **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer had given his apologies, but the meeting noted its thanks and approval of the very high quality written report submitted.

5.1 Interest earned

The meeting then discussed how the interest earned on deposits should be reflected in reported numbers. After discussion, *it was agreed* that the Treasurer should allocate it all to the Development Fund (the balance of which exceeds the sum placed on deposit, and is therefore the source of all the interest earned).

As distinct from the interest income, *it was agreed* that any general surplus should be divided evenly between the Development Fund, the Reserve Fund and Operating Fund.

5.2 Subscriptions

The following proposal submitted by the Treasurer *was approved*:

- Raise annual membership subscriptions from £240 to £250, with matching 4.2% increases in other subscription levels. Green fees to remain unchanged at £10

5.3 Expenses

The Committee discussed at length the Treasurer's suggestion that the club should have a formal policy on expenses when entertaining visiting clubs.

IS felt the circumstances varied too much between events to be able to adopt a standard policy: sometimes we provide refreshments, sometimes not; sometimes we ask visitors to contribute, sometimes not; sometimes we ask the home team to chip in, sometimes not.

The level of entertainment/prizes also varies a great deal.

GP observed that it was reasonable for the Treasurer to be given guidelines. It was **agreed that** the present ad hoc system would continue for the moment: the Treasurer would be encouraged to seek Committee approval by email if he was in doubt over a claim.

Agreed that GP would approach CW and solicit a formal proposal for future guidelines, perhaps based on the practice of other clubs, which would be put before the Committee in the next meeting Agenda. **Action: GP/CW**

6) **Lawn Manager's Report**

6.1 Lawn Manager Role

The issue of a replacement for RP remains pressing. NC reported that regrettably Mike West had had to withdraw from the role as he was not available enough. He called for suggestions. Joy Biggs had done it briefly, but could not pick it up full time. EO observed that there is actually a lot of work involved: ideally we would have a team of 3 or 4 persons, with the Lawn Manager primarily guiding and co-ordinating. When speaking to potential replacements we should manage expectations, to reduce the fear-factor. Also, we should look out for potential deputy Lawn Managers to this end.

6.2 Toro Mower Replacement

The proposal to buy new mower was **declined**.

6.3 Top-dressing: Noted

6.4 Lawn Condition: noted. The Committee could not understand the benefit of swapping fungus-infected plugs with uninfected plugs within the playing area, as reported by IS, since it appears we are merely moving the infection around on the lawn.

6.5 Scheduled Work Progress: noted

6.6 Rates increase: after discussion the Committee **approved** an increase in hourly remuneration to £27 for Russell and £24 for Aaron.

6.7 Grass Cuttings: it was agreed to **continue with the present arrangements**. However NC would ask the groundsmen to not spray cuttings so high up onto the fencing.

6.8 Cutting Times in winter: the proposal was **declined**. The club will continue with the status quo.

6.9 Lawn Brush

The Committee **approved** the purchase of a lawn brush to supplement the swishers. It is not necessarily more effective, but involves less strain on the (elderly) user.

The Committee **approved** the proposed sign, but it is to be affixed to the door of the store rather than the entrance gate.

6a) Sprinkler Manager's Report

NB a supplementary report was submitted to the Committee.

6a.1 Sprinkler Manager role: EO will action this item, ensuring Barry has access to all necessary records. NC reported that Barry appears to be an excellent candidate for the role, and will continue to encourage him to assume it. **Action: EO**

6a.2 Sprinklers proud of lawn: noted

6a.3 New sprinkler: the Committee **approved** the purchase of a spare/stand-by sprinkler at £250.

6a.4 System drainage: noted

7) Membership Secretary's Report

The Committee noted that all was generally well, with member numbers around the desired maximum. WK noted that rollups continue to be congested, with the lawns under-utilised at other times. Members grumble about the congestion but rarely take the trouble to book (easily available) lawns.

7.1 Youth involvement

The Committee discussed progress in youth player awareness. IS reported that Carol – who is driving the initiatives – is pleased with progress to date. It was agreed that we should not look for immediate payoff in the form of new young members: although new youth members would be very welcome, the aim is more to raise general youth awareness. IS added that our efforts form part of a larger Association-wide drive, and there is scope for us to raise CA awareness of our activities and hence our club profile. He and Carol had attended a Zoom meeting with Paul Francis, who had told them about this, but mentioned that HWCC were not currently one of the CA-identified clubs pushing this forward. IS recommended we approach the CA formally to advise them of our activities and perhaps involve ourselves in inter-club youth activities: this would ensure Carol received due recognition at national level for her efforts. However, the CA emphasises primary school ages, whereas we prefer older children who are closer to being able to take up the sport in their own right. NC agreed.

WK noted that we could not commit to broader involvement until we knew how many lawns would be required and when. They are very well used in the summer months. It

was agreed that IS should explore the idea informally with the CA, and report back with a clearer outline of what it would imply. NC noted that he should ensure Carol is kept in the loop.

MM suggested that when we approach schools we target DofE students, who will have time allocated in their schedules and for whom the exposure may 'stick' better. EO suggested we try to exploit the existing link to John Hampden Grammar, probably on Wednesdays.

7.2 Membership Secretary

The Chairman asked Matt Miles-Griffiths if he would be willing to assume the position of Membership Secretary from EO, who had a lot on his plate. The takeover would be gradual.

MM agreed, and **was co-opted to the Committee** with immediate effect. The decision would be formalised at the next AGM.

7.3 Email distribution/club membership

After discussion it was agreed that the present system for updating the club membership at Association level, and for sending out 'all member' emails, is not user-friendly. EO agreed to look into ways to streamline it with MM. Until then, GP confirmed that distribution emails should be sent in the first instance to him as Secretary.

Action: EO/MM

7.4 Inducting new members

WK reported that this had generally gone well, with all new members systematically invited to induction sessions to ensure they understood the full potential of membership. She stressed that one of the most important elements was teaching people to unlock and lock up properly.

8) Marketing Report

The Committee noted the report and thanked NC for his successful efforts.

NC reported that he had secured good value from the marketing spend, including exposure in local news-sheets.

NC noted that members were still not taking and distributing the flyers provided in the clubhouse. He intended to print more posters next year, and fewer flyers. EO noted that not one of the new members had approached the club due to flyers. NC reiterated the importance of getting more of them out into the public eye.

EO observed that whilst take-up from come-and-try advertisements was low, at perhaps 1 in 400, the take-up rate from those who did attend once was much better. This was a clear argument in favour of trying to focus marketing efforts wherever possible on promising individuals.

8.1 Lawn congestion

Although there is some congestion around Roll-ups, especially for the first hour, it was agreed that current numbers were acceptable. It would help if more Roll-up members were more proactive.

9) **Competition Report**

EO commended CW for his efforts in this crucial role. **The Committee recorded a formal vote of thanks to CW and Keith Pound.**

WK appealed for volunteers to play in a tournament on 27 February 2024 that was being arranged to enable guests from Leighton Linlade to gain experience of the 'Handicap Zero' method of calculating starting scores for Advantage GC games

10) **Chiltern Academy Report**

All reviewed and noted. The Committee and IS thanked each other for their efforts, and IS added his own appreciation for those members who had had to give up lawns in favour of CA matches. It is very helpful to have a supportive host club.

IS advised that the Academy was considering a course in Club Management. He has a lot of experience in this area, and he would like to involve HWCC. In particular, the SW Federation Coaching Office wants to try out a new software package called ClubMatters: would we be prepared to trial it? Probably in Spring 2024.

The Committee gave its in-principle approval but asked IS to explore the implications, apprise the Committee and perhaps arrange a brain-storming session.

NC further noted that the contribution of IS was valued: although he is not a Committee member his report and presence at future meetings will be welcome.

11) **Safeguarding Report**

The club currently has no formal Safeguarding Officer. GP submitted a proposal for himself to assume this role: the proposal was **accepted**.

GP will now introduce a greater degree of formality to the club's safeguarding structure, including an audit of who has and needs DBS clearance. This information would be included in future Safeguarding Reports. He warned the committee that this would probably involve increased bureaucracy.

IS is the UK's only CA-approved Under-18 Coach: we will need at least one more qualified coach.

12) **AOB**

12.1 Playing Equipment Manager

NC introduced KW, and asked if he would be willing to serve as Playing Equipment Manager. KW agreed to do so, and **was Co-Opted into the role** by the Committee. The appointment will be formalised at the next AGM.

IS noted that he would need to review the stock of mallets: many of them were very tatty and should perhaps be thrown. Failing which, taping worn handles would improve their appearance.

IS believed child-sized equipment – especially mallets – is available from the CA. WK noted that KW should ensure there is space to store it before taking it in. Also, we not infrequently need a lot of the mallets when we have guests, socials etc. Older children can use adult mallets: the recent Thorpe House event used 16. Steps to cull existing and obtain new for children should reflect an appropriate mix between size, condition and storage space.

12.2 AOB Items submitted by R Peperell

Paint roofs of green sheds)

Drill holes in paving)

NC will ensure this is done.

Action: NC

Push-button gate lock: **AGREED** that the club would continue with a padlock as at present, rather than risk the push-button lock.

Condition of Hoops: See 12.2

Shelter: after discussion **it was agreed** that NC would ask Maintenance contractor Will to renovate the roof at a cost of £500, rather than spend substantial sums on replacing it.

Action: NC

Paving slabs: NC noted that the gravel path to the car-park also needs attention before winter. NC will ask Will to sort these out.

Action: NC

Another lunch bench: it was agreed that the cost was not warranted, especially as we enter the winter.

Clubhouse clutter: NC will put out an email advising that members have 1 month to collect belongings. Anything left after that date will be put in a rummage sale or otherwise disposed of.

Action: NC

12.2 Hoops

Richard Peperell had been looking into replacements for the club's existing hoops, which have started splaying and damaging the lawns. The alternatives are

- like-for-like
- Quadways competition hoops, which are very high specification but very expensive at c. £1,000
- Ultra Stainless steel at £600

The Committee was generally supportive of the Ultra option. After discussion it was decided that the c. £200 cost of powder coating could not be justified; but that the necessary visibility could be achieved by white/red/blue tape.

IS noted that although he also supported stainless steel, they are fatter and longer than the current hoops, so will require more force to embed them, and will probably reach through the growing medium into the underlying sand.

It was agreed that two sets of Ultra hoops be purchased from Croquet England. Once new hoops have been purchased the old ones can be sold to recoup some of the cost.

Action: NC/KW

12.3 WhatsApp Group

It was agreed to set up a WhatsApp group for the Committee.

Action: NC

12.4 CCTV Camera

WK raised the proposal of a member to allow members live access to a CCTV feed so they could see whether lawns are playable before driving to the club. The Committee declined the proposal for reasons including Data Protection.

As an effective alternative, it was agreed that all GC members should be invited to join a WhatsApp group. The lawn managers would report the lawn conditions early in the morning, enabling all members to decide whether to attend.

Action: EO/MM

12.5 Additional Lawns

NC reported that there has been no progress in obtaining Council approval. He would ask Nigel Moore if he could help, as he seems to have considerable experience in such matters.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday, 30th January 2024

Venue: De Havilland Room, Memorial Hall, Hazlemere Recreation Ground

Date of Prizegiving Dinner: Friday 16th February 2024

Venue: The Potter's Arms, Fagnall Lane, Winchmore Hill, Amersham, HP7 0PH

Date of AGM: Sunday 17th March 2024

Venue: Hazlemere Memorial Hall