

# Minutes of the Village Golf Club Annual General Meeting

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

**Present:** Jane Annetts, Brian Ball, Carol Edwards, Lindsay Edwards, John Gower, Pam Jameson, Annette Scott, Dave Tremain

## 1. Introduction and welcome

Annette Scott thanked everyone for attending the Annual General Meeting of the Village Golf Club and opened the meeting at 7:00pm.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Ray & Carole Cretney, Peter Danby, Callum Finlay, Alan Gregory, Paul Heard, Richard Marriott and Linda Southby.

## 3. Minutes of the last AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 5th December 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were agreed as a true and correct record. Pam Jameson proposed and Carol Edwards seconded that they should be adopted unchanged. Annette Scott signed the minutes.

## 4. Chairman's Report (Annette Scott)

Please forgive me if this sounds like something you have heard before but, again, I am delighted to report on another hugely successful year for the club.

Membership has reached record levels and in addition to all the ongoing maintenance work we have also managed to continue to improve the infrastructure of the club. Thanks to J.Brazil contractors who dug out and laid our new car park at a very competitive price, we now have the foundations necessary to lay a permanent surface sometime in the future when finances allow. We have removed the unsightly container near the entrance and installed another shipping container which has significantly improved our storage arrangements. We have also improved the entrance to the club by reducing the unsightly dead fir trees around the car park and have erected new fencing and hedging which will provide an evergreen backdrop to the course in a few years' time.

We have had our fair share of challenges this year too. I am sorry that we had a spell of some unwanted visitors who were not members and who chose to abuse the community aspects of the club. In spite of our best efforts it was difficult to deter them despite trying to engage the support of local policing. I suspect that, unfortunately, this may be an issue that will resurface from time to time.

The weather has also presented some real difficulties. The dreadfully wet start to the year caused some prolonged and unavoidable closures but it would have been worse had we not invested in the drainage work the previous year. Currently our major challenge is resolving the water leak situation. We have had several companies visit and the advice we have received, is that we should not waste money trying to locate the leak which could be very difficult, time consuming and expensive. Instead, we should invest in laying new water pipes as the existing ones are well past their serviceable life and even if repaired would be very likely to fail again. Our plan, therefore, depending on costs is to renew all the old piping. Connecting the new water pipe to the toilet as a matter of urgency and then getting

the rest of the work completed in the spring next year when the damage to the course will be minimized and we will have the benefit of income from next years' membership fees. I do apologise for the lack of toilet facilities but we are trying our best to resolve this inconvenience as soon as possible.

As always there are a lot of people who do a lot of work behind the scenes and I would like to publicly thank:

- John for the many hours he puts in to maintaining the course and machinery. The condition of the course gets better every year and this is down to his good planning and flexibility in making sure jobs get done when the conditions demand, rather than when it suits him. The greens in particular have never been better.
- To Jane who does so much behind the scenes taking phone calls, banking money, reconciling the books, sending out badges, ordering and budgeting to name but a few. This is a particularly demanding role and we will be looking to develop a structure next year where the club is not so reliant on the huge voluntary role that Jane performs.
- To the gate closing team Alan, Matt and Paul who come out in all weathers often late at night to lock up, patiently waiting for players who are trying to get the last rays of daylight. Alan is still locking up 5 nights a week so if anyone is able to help out for one night a week we would be very pleased to hear from them.
- To Rob Burr who is always at the end of the telephone to advise or help out with machinery breakdowns and the delivery of fertilizer, seeds etc.
- To the members who have turned up to support working parties or to help with specific tasks such as erecting the new fencing.
- To the Community Pay Back teams who have continued to be an invaluable support to the club over the last year. They have undertaken a number of large projects which we would not have managed without their help. These include making the concrete ramps to the new containers, which has made it so much easier for John to move machinery around, clearing the course after tree surgery work, building storage units for the tool store as well as the general tasks such as strimming and leaf clearing. I would be grateful if members would voice their appreciation to the team when you see them on the course as I know that this is much appreciated.
- And lastly to the committee who happily respond to whatever is required.

As I hope everyone is aware, we are a community managed venture that is run entirely by volunteers. We are a not-for-profit organization with the sole aim of making golf accessible and affordable to all. As the club is becoming more popular there are growing demands on the amount of volunteer work required in respect of both administrative tasks and course maintenance. This means we constantly need to review the way we are running the club to ensure we develop the structures that will support us to be flexible and sustainable in the future. Over the next year our plan is to improve the infrastructure, with new water services being our priority, and to increase administration support. Both of these things will incur increased costs and consequently we have decided that the time is right to increase both membership and guest green fees and to reduce the clubs over reliance on voluntary work in key areas. Having spoken to many members I have received positive feedback that this is both reasonable and realistic. As always, the club would be sympathetic to anyone who finds this increase challenging.

I finish my report by remembering and thanking David Williams who sadly died last December. David was a major catalyst in saving the course from closure in 2010 and it was David who steered the club into becoming the viable community resource that we are today. The David Williams Tankard to be presented annually at the 2-club competition will be a lasting memorial to his contribution to this club. And that concludes my report for 2024 so thank you for your attention.

## 5. Membership Report (Jane Annetts)

At this time last year, we had 413 members, which was the highest number of members the Club has ever had. This year, that number was exceeded by the middle of August and currently we have 469 members, an increase of over 13%. It is very pleasing to see that the membership of the club continues to increase year on year.

Of the correspondence I have received from members and prospective members over the years, very many include compliments about the condition of the course and almost all comment on how helpful, friendly and welcoming everyone is. This is exactly the atmosphere we hope to engender at the club and I am sure it is one of the reasons membership has grown as it has. It is brilliant to see the course so well used by such a wide range of people. We have always sought to encourage family membership and it is particularly pleasing to see the course so well used by younger members and families. Looking back to 2014, we had a total of 27 members who had joined as part of family group or as a juniors. This year that number has grown to 133, and accounts for more than 28% of our total membership.

We have maintained the current membership fees for the last two years and, whilst the Club's finances are currently secure, we still need to continue to improve infrastructure and replace and upgrade the machinery. Additionally, unexpected costs often arise, some of which involve significant expenditure such as the current need to replace all of the water pipework across the entire course and it has become clear that we need to establish a greater level of financial reserves for the future. As a consequence, and after very careful consideration, the Committee are proposing an increase in both membership fees and green fees for next year.

<b>Annual Membership Fees</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
Adult - 7 Day	125	140
Adult - Weekday Only	105	120
Junior	60	65
Family - 2 Adults, 2 Children under 18	260	295
Family - 1 Adult, 2 Children under 18	175	190

Green fees for members' guests have been maintained at their existing level since 2003 (the last 22 years). We are therefore proposing that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 the green fee payable for each adult guest player will increase to £10, but will remain at the current level of £5 for any guest players under the age of 18.

The increase in membership fees and green fees was proposed by John Gower and seconded by Brian Ball.

Despite these increases we hope you will agree that playing at the Club remains affordable and continues to represent value for money. The overarching philosophy of the Club is that golf should be accessible to all and that cost should not be a barrier to anyone who wishes to play. We are aware that these are financially challenging times for many, so if anyone has difficulty in paying for their membership next April, please do contact me as I am certain we will be able to find a way to help.

## 6. Ground Staff Report (John Gower)

The end of 2023 saw the weather continue to be very wet indeed and this carried on well into the new year. The new drainage runs proved very effective, with any laying water draining away within 24 hours, whereas in previous years water would have laid in several areas for well over a week. Despite

this, we had to close the course on several occasions, but this was no different to many of the big 18-hole courses in the area, so we held up pretty well by comparison.

Because the wet conditions continued, the contractors who carried out drainage work in the previous autumn were not able to flatten the runs and these remained high after the winter until well into June.

Having found the ongoing wet weather very frustrating to carry out this necessary work, it also had its advantages. With the greens being wet and cool I was able to fertilise in mid-June which is not something I can normally do in the middle of summer because we don't have the irrigation system necessary to keep the greens in the condition required. This fertilisation helped the greens enormously and probably, in my opinion, they have never looked better. We can hopefully look into upgrading the irrigation system in the near future, so I can fertilise in June on a regular basis.

Having started this report with a little moan about the inclement weather, this autumn we have just experienced a long period of dry and very mild conditions. This, combined with heavy overnight dew, has resulted in the greens suffering from a fungus called fusarium. This appears as patches of poor growth on the greens. It is something I have not experienced in the years I have been with the club, and it is proving to be troublesome to control. Thankfully, it is a surface condition and not something that affects the roots and therefore does not impact the spring and summer growth. I have now treated this and should see some recovery in the coming weeks.

With the new fairways mower being able to work from the start of summer this year, the fairways were kept in good condition and it has certainly proved its worth. Although this machine has proved a very good addition to our mowing stock, we are going to convert it from a cylinder mower to a rotary mower. This is so the club has two machines that can mow both the fairways and the semi-rough in case of any major breakdown to one or the other.

Thankfully this summer we did not suffer any major problems on the machinery front, only a blade drive belt on the Kubota, a cylinder drive cog on the Jacobsen and a stuck valve on the leaf collector. So, just moving parts problems, and a great improvement on other years.

As always, many thanks to people like Brian with his strimmer, to the volunteers from our committee members, to those who lock the gates, the leaf collectors, and of course none of what I spoke about in my report this evening would be possible without the ongoing, amazing input from Jane and Annette, not just with the club's administration, but also rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck in at the course week after week.

That concludes my report.

## **7. Treasurer's Report (Jane Annetts)**

The accounts have been prepared on a simple cash accounting basis to reflect income received and expenses actually incurred up until 31st October 2024. The accounts have been reconciled with the bank statements and have been audited by Callum Findlay.

Total income for the year was £58,163. Overall expenditure for the year was £52,950. This represents a reduction in income of 11.6% and a reduction in expenditure of 19.8% when compared with last year. However, the figures for the year ending 2023 included grants totalling £21,000 and expenditure of £37,500 for the course drainage, new cesspool and toilet container.

Looking in more detail at some of the highlights from the accounts, firstly Income:

- Membership Fees – Total income from membership fees was £44,675, an increase of £5,001, or 12.6%, when compared to 2023 and broadly in line with the increase in membership numbers this year.
- Donations - decreased by 20% to £330. We continue to be very grateful to those members who choose to make voluntary contributions to the Club.
- Green Fees – Income from green fees was much reduced during February and March, when the very wet weather prevented normal use of the course. Despite that, overall green fees for the year were £4,630, which is a very similar level to 2023.
- Grants – In addition to our regular income, and thanks to Annette's efforts, we received three grants this year; £1,000 from Kent County Playing Fields, £2,500 from Kent County Council and £1,000 from Maidstone Leisure Trust. These were all contributions towards the cost of the new shipping container that was delivered in April.
- Sale of Equipment – Having replaced the fairway mower last year, we have sold two old John Deere mowers; a non-working mower for spares/repairs for £784 and the newer working machine for £3,109.

Turning to the items of Expenditure:

- AGM & Membership costs – Of the £1,543 shown under this heading, £854 relates to the purchase of a 3-year supply of bag tags and £472 for envelopes and postage. It also includes £55 for the Google email application we use and £72 for the Club's mobile phone sim card.
- Course Maintenance - This year's total expenditure of £5,535 included £1,820 for tree surgery, £553 for hedge cutting, £1,125 for new hedging plants, £302 for new water point covers and £1,109 for weed & feed, wetting agent, and grass seed.
- Machinery Service and Repair – The servicing and repair costs for the mowers and other machinery amounted to £3,704, a significant reduction from last year.
- Other Repair and Maintenance – We have made significant investments in infrastructure improvements this year. The extension to the car park and resurfacing of the whole area cost £12,504, the final payment due for the toilet and storage container, together with the plumbing connection and repairs amounted to £690 and cesspool emptying costs were £597. The new shipping container, including the base, lock box, security bollard, paint and building the ramps cost £8,021. The waste bin collection costs were £266 and various other sundries amounted to £219.
- Publicity & Advertisements – The £242 under this heading relates to the renewal of our website domain name, a new banner for the car park and a small supply of leaflets.
- Purchase of Equipment – This year we have purchased a new hole cutter at a cost of £1,332, an additional leaf blower at a cost of £435 and a petrol generator at a cost of £287. A further £270 was spent on various other items and tools.

### **Looking Forward**

You will see from the balance sheet that at the 31<sup>st</sup> October year-end, Club funds stood at £26,717. At this stage of the year, we continue to incur costs but have no further income until the new membership year starts in April. The current balance, amongst other things, needs to cover routine items such as wages, fuel, insurance premiums, water rates, waste collection, hedge cutting and machinery servicing.

Additionally, we now need to fund the £6,757 cost of replacing the water pipe to the toilet from the main inlet, which unfortunately is in the diagonally opposite corner of the grounds. As a result of this

and the routine committed expenditure for the next 5 months, we are forecasting a balance of just £800 by April next year.

### **Plans for Next Year**

Our priorities for next year include:-

- Installing new water pipes to the greens. The current estimate for this work, including a slightly more sophisticated irrigation system is just under £20,000.
- Installing security fencing at the top end of the course by the 9<sup>th</sup> tee and replacing and repairing the rest of the fencing along the course on the railway side.
- Replacing the old 40' shipping container. This leaks and the doors no longer close or lock.

### **8. Election of Officers**

Annette Scott confirmed that the current committee had already confirmed that they were prepared to stand again. Dave Tremain proposed and Brian Ball seconded the re-election of officers who were voted in en block.

### **9. Any Other Business**

9.1 Jane Annetts read a note of appreciation that had been received from Linda Southby and Pam Jameson passed on a record of thanks to the committee from Richard Marriott.

9.2 Jane Annetts read a note from Paul Heard in which he expressed his view that there were a lot of positives this year with regards to the overall excellent condition of the course, the improved etiquette, the general appearance of the golfers and the fun at the Sunday competitions.

Paul Heard also raised an issue regarding the speed of play, generally in relation to single players who play multiple balls on the same hole and then search for their lost balls on the same hole and fail to allow following players to play through. Paul stated that this can be very frustrating when the course is busy and it is not possible to move to another hole.

Whilst this problem had not been experienced by those present at the meeting, it was agreed that when the next newsletter was sent, we would remind players that they should not play multiple balls and should call though anyone who is being held up by slow play.

9.3 The course closing time in the summer was discussed. Those locking the gates are sometimes left waiting for players to finish as late as 10pm, which it was felt was unreasonable. No firm decision was reached on the subject, however, this matter will be discussed further with the gate lockers and at the next Committee meeting.

9.4 Annette Scott announced the results of the 'Player of the Year' shield, which is based on points accumulated from competitions played throughout the year. In joint third place was Daryl Austin with 22 points, in second place was Ricki Pilbro with 31 points and the winner was John Woods with 38 points.

There being no other business the **Meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.**

## Village Golf and Sports Club

### Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending 31st October 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
<b>Income</b>		
Membership Fees	44,675.00	39,674.00
Donations	330.00	412.50
Green Fees	4,630.00	4,582.00
Competition Income	135.00	98.50
Grants	4,500.00	21,000.00
Sale of Equipment	<u>3,893.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
	<u>58,163.00</u>	<u>65,767.00</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
AGM & Member Administration	1,543.09	655.78
Course Maintenance	5,535.40	18,538.26
Machinery Service & Repair	3,704.30	5,428.24
Other Repair & Maintenance	22,298.25	25,586.89
Wages	14,315.00	12,915.00
Expenses - Fuel	1,330.09	1,004.27
Expenses - General	50.00	476.00
Insurance Premium	823.92	671.12
Water Rates	565.56	311.00
Website & Advertising	242.38	64.80
Affiliation Fee	25.00	25.00
Sandvik Licence Fee	0.00	0.00
Competition Expenses	192.64	0.00
Purchase of Equipment	<u>2,324.75</u>	<u>360.00</u>
	<u>52,950.38</u>	<u>66,036.36</u>
Balance to Accumulated Fund	5,212.62	-269.36

## Village Golf and Sports Club

### Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Balance Brought Forward	21,504.49	21,773.85
Balance from Income and Expenditure	<u>5,212.62</u>	<u>- 269.36</u>
	<u>26,717.11</u>	<u>21,504.49</u>
Represented By:		
Current Account - NatWest	<u>26,717.11</u>	<u>21,504.49</u>
	<u>26,717.11</u>	<u>21,504.49</u>