

Heswall Golf Club
Minutes of the Member Open Forum
to present the Players 1st Membership Survey
Tuesday 9th August 2022

1. The evening was well attended by members, with the numbers in attendance totalling 90
2. The Chair of Council welcomed everyone to the open forum and introduced Ben Johnson, our England Golf Club Support, who would present the survey results.
3. Ben briefly described the Players 1st Membership Survey, which is used by England Golf to survey Clubs on a series of set questions, plus 5 custom questions, which can then be benchmarked against all clubs regionally and nationally who have taken the survey.

Ben then presented the results in a series of slides, detailing each slide individually. He also explained the Net Promotor Score system, and how the totals for all questions determine our overall score. Slide 4 shows the club's standing overall on this system which is within the 'Great' range. Ben also explained how certain questions are given a higher priority than others on the overall Net Promotor score (as shown on the priority map) such as the Course section, and will therefore have a greater impact on the result than other areas such as the Oasis.

He also mentioned that some areas marked as 'needing urgent attention' or 'Underperforming', when looked at in detail, show how certain questions have pulled down the overall score. For example, within the Course results, the overall score is largely affected by the responses to the statement 'The number of available tee times makes it easy to play when you want to'.

Ben also detailed the main themes from member comments to come out of the survey (slide 21) and Council's short term/medium term/long term plans to address these themes (slides 22-25).

4. Following the presentation, Ben opened up to questions from members which are summarised below:

Q. Are the criteria for results and priorities set by England Golf or Heswall Golf Club?

A. Ben confirmed that the criteria are set by Players 1st to be consistent throughout for all Golf Clubs.

Q. The last time we had a strategic plan was approximately 22 years ago and all members voted on this. Will members have an opportunity to vote on the new plan.

A. Chair of Council confirmed that this will be the case, as the plan is to sign off plans at the November EGM. Prior to this date there will also be other opportunities for members to consider aspects of the plan. The plan will also include additional details such as the vision/direction for the club over the next 5 years.

Q. If the plan includes several aspects, can members vote on individual points.

A. Chair of Council confirmed that yes, for larger points such as capital expenditure these would be dealt with and discussed separately to the main plan prior to the EGM.

Q. Is there a plan to engage with non-responders and younger members, as they are not well represented at the open forum meeting. Another member also noted that we had similar issues with bringing younger members into the club, and a lot of work was undertaken to increase the engagement of this age profile which did garner results around 20 years ago.

A. Yes Council are considering ways to increase engagement with members of all ages, including those who have minimum interaction currently. To that end, we have already held two new members reception evenings which received some great feedback and will continue to host these moving forward. We have reformed the Social Committee which will look to address ways to increase younger members attending social events and what type of functions and events different age profiles of membership are interested in. Junior Organiser, David Parsons, has also worked hard in recent months to continue to build up junior numbers and engagement from this age group for competitions etc.

Ben Johnson also noted that of the 413 responses to the survey, 73 of these are under 50 with only 13 of this number under the age of 30.

Q. Does the meeting time of 5.30pm exclude those younger members as they may be working full time?

A. Chair of Council noted that it was difficult to find a day or time suitable for all members. However, that is why members were given 6 weeks' notice of the meeting to aid them in planning should they wish to attend. Nevertheless, this will be considered for future meetings. The slides and minutes from the meeting will also be circulated to all members following the meeting.

Q. As we continue to see the improvements for the course with the expectation that this will continue, we need to ensure that the other club facilities come up to the same standard. Also, another member asked whether this improvement should be in the short term.

A. Chair of Council confirms that this is absolutely agreed by Council and to that end we have already started the process of improving the food and beverage area, including taking on board the comments from members in this survey. He also confirmed this is within the short-term plan with food and beverage issues being addressed immediately and will continue moving forward. Major improvements to the clubhouse downstairs layout are also planned for Spring 2023, subject to funding being available.

Q. Regarding the point on tee time availability, one member noted that maybe this relates more to Saturday competition days rather than an overall lack of availability throughout the week. Other members disagreed with this point, and also noted that some members feel that the issue around booking times has been worsened with the full time tee booking system as you have to be very quick when booking opens to get the slot you want. A question was raised around whether it would be feasible on certain days to reduce tee slots to 5-minute intervals.

A. Chair of Golf confirmed that he does not believe it would be workable to reduce times to this interval. However, the Golf Committee are currently working on improvements in other areas such as pace of play problems.

The Committee also review BRS regularly to free up any unused times. He notes that the number of events this year have also reduced tee time availability for all members due to many events such as the North of England Under 16 Championships (not back at HGC for 3 years), CCLGA County match week and Cheshire Strokeplay Championships being carried over from 2020 and 2021 due to covid delays and this would not be repeated in 2023. Council have agreed that the club should work to approve 1 major external tournament per year plus the Wirral Classic. Therefore, Chair of Golf believes that there should be a big difference to the perception of tee time availability when we look to re-issue this survey next year.

Ben Johnson also notes that the problem of booking for busy days is a common theme at all clubs for peak times, and that the number of members who indicated in our survey that they would not be a member in 2 years solely due to tee time availability was 14 – although a fairly low number from the overall 413 responses it still needs to be addressed which the club are working on currently.

Q. As tee times can be very emotive, one member suggested that the club look at ways to reduce blocking tee times unnecessarily. For example, he asked why the Seniors section require a buffer when playing a match which in his opinion should not be required. He also asked that the club are consistent on bookings as it is not always dealt with the same year on year.

A. Ben Johnson noted that the survey indicates a clear request from members to improve this area. Chair of Council confirm that the Golf Committee and Handicap Committee keep this under review constantly and a lot of work has already been done and will continue to be done to improve on this issue.

Q. As England Golf are well positioned to review how clubs fare within these surveys, can the club be provided with examples or information of best practices for other clubs in those areas we are weaker. We should maximise these results and not solely look inwardly but at other clubs regionally and nationally especially in terms of Governance, Committee structure etc.

A. Ben Johnson confirmed that he can provide this information to Council which can be used for each section accordingly. Chair of Council also noted that our Men's Captain is well placed to feedback information from other Golf Clubs as he visits many during his term, and has done so on many occasions already this year. He also confirmed that Council is reviewing both Governance and our legal structure currently.

Q. For the 3 large external events held this year, should Council have asked members whether these competitions should be agreed before hosting all in a short space of time, and do they believe this would have been approved by members.

A. Chair of Council confirmed that, as we had committed previously to each event, we could not refuse. Only one of these events was supposed to be held in this year, ie the Cheshire Strokeplay. North of England was carried over by 1 year and the CCLGA County

Match week from 2020. He agreed that this was a 'perfect storm' of bookings, however it would not be appropriate for the club to pull out.

Q. The quality of drinks and food has been inconsistent in the last 12 months, which could discourage younger members from wanting to stay and use the clubhouse.

A. Alan Jones confirmed that work is already underway to improve the Food and Beverage service, including consistency, and the House Committee are working through the responses provided by members on individual points in much greater detail alongside the House Manager, Head Chef and Bar Supervisor.

The Chair of Council then closed the meeting, thanking Ben Johnson for presenting this survey and his work in getting this in place. He also thanked all members present for giving up their time to attend this survey presentation, which will aid Council in developing the Strategic plan and therefore is very important for the future direction of our club. He confirmed that this is solely the first steps towards progressing with future planning and members will be kept informed every step of the way.

He finished by inviting members downstairs for a drink in the lounge.