

Item 9 – Swanage Bowling Club – Report following meeting to discuss fees

At the meeting of the Tourism Committee held on 10th July 2014 consideration was given to a letter from Swanage Bowling Club requesting a reduction in their fees for the current financial year. A copy of this letter is enclosed, together with a reply from the Town Clerk.

The Tourism Committee asked that a meeting be arranged between the Bowling Club and Town Council, and that took place on Thursday 14th August. In attendance were Mr Clive Bryceson, Mr Terry Buck and Mr Brian Beeston on behalf of the Bowling Club and Councillors Patrick, Poultney and Brown, together with the Town Clerk.

During the meeting consideration was given to the information enclosed with these agenda papers, providing the following information:

- an estimate of the cost to the Council of operating the bowling green in the last full financial year (excluding contributions to capital projects and equipment purchases);
- income received from the bowling green over recent years;
- the fees charged to the Bowling Club in recent years, together with the Club's proposal for the current year;
- a list provided by the Club of improvements that they have made to the Pavilion.

During the meeting the possibility of agreeing a single fee to be paid by the Club to the Council for the facilities at Beach Gardens in future years was suggested, potentially fixed for 3-years to provide certainty to all parties for financial planning. However, in respect of the current year, the Club remained reluctant to pay the fees due in line with the Council's agreed fee structure. During the meeting a payment of £9,000 was offered, in-line with the Town Council's estimate of total income from the Bowling Green for 2014/15.

In considering this proposal, it should be borne in mind that a decision by the Council to reduce its fees and charges in-year could be seen to set a precedent by other clubs and organisations. There will also be a requirement to explain the difference between the scale of charges and sums received to the Council's auditors. A possible way forward would be to seek the payment in full of the fees as agreed through the budget setting process, but to agree in writing to reviewing this at the end of the financial year when the full cost of operating the Bowling Green is known. If income were to be significantly above expectations, and exceed the cost of operating the facility, a refund could be offered.

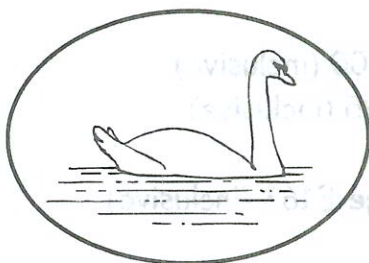
Action required:

To review the Council's agreed fee-structure for Bowls Club Membership for the current financial year, and consider the proposals put forward by Swanage Bowling Club.

To authorise ongoing negotiations between the Town Council and Swanage Bowling Club to develop a new charging structure for future financial years, to be presented to the Tourism Committee as part of the usual budgetary process for 2015/16.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

August 2014



SWANAGE BOWLING CLUB

Affiliated to EBA, DCBA, B&DBA, EWBA, DCWBA and DWBL

Secretary:
Clive Bryceson
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8th May 2014

Dr Martin Ayres (Town Clerk)
Swanage Town Council

Re: Bowls Club Season Ticket Fees

Dear Dr Ayres



In 2012 our then President Mike Keats personally wrote to all the local councillors to protest and appeal about the charges levied by the council to play bowls (for 5 months) on the green at Beach Gardens.

Unfortunately we never received any kind of official reply (or the offer to meet with anyone) other than a further £5 increase. Additional increases of £5 have subsequently been applied in both 2013 and 2014 which means the seasons bowling fee has now reached the sum of £150 per person. (The club fee on top of this is another £13.00 making a total inclusive fee of £163)

When comparing this fee with those levied by the majority of clubs in Dorset it is clear that Swanage is charging substantially more.

Alexander Park - Bournemouth	£80 (inclusive)
Blandford	£80 (inclusive)
Bridport	£75 (inclusive)
Broadstone	£84 (inclusive)
Dorchester (County Green)	£60 (inclusive)
Ferndown	£105 (inclusive)
Gillingham	£80 (inclusive)
Greenhill/Weymouth	£100 (inclusive)
Iford Bridge	£95 (inclusive)
Shaftesbury	£65 (inclusive)
Sherbourne	£85 (inclusive)

Melcombe Regis/Weymouth
Wimborne

£100 (inclusive)
£95 (inclusive)

Average fee = £85 (inclusive) Compared with Swanage £163 (inclusive)

The Beach Gardens Tennis fee is also lower at £100 (summer, 5 months)

Apart from the high fees there are also no concessions for couples and/or families who invariably have to pay from a limited income. For instance the tennis club give a 30% discount to couples/families.

In view of the above information our committee feel that a fair payment this year would be a sum of £100 per playing member (£15 more than the above average) and £150 for couples (representing a 25% concession). First year members £50, and Juniors £25. Our cheque for £6,422 is enclosed together with our Treasurers separate calculations.

As mentioned above our own club membership fee is £13.00 per person of which £10.50 has to be paid to Bowls England and Bowls Dorset. This means our club only receives £2.50 per member.

It should perhaps also be noted that two of the six rinks are normally reserved for public use and that the putting green and other public areas absorb the majority of the green keepers time (one of whom has recently retired).

We are disappointed that previous attempts to make our case heard seem to have been disregarded or not fully understood and we hope that our position in this matter will be reviewed and accepted now that all the information is available.

Yours sincerely



Clive Bryceson - Club Secretary (On behalf of the 2014 committee)

Brian Beeston - President

Graham Smooker - Vice Captain

Sue King - Ladies Captain

David Thomas - Vice-President

Gill Bryceson - Ladies secretary

Terry Buck - Treasurer/Men's Captain

Judy Smooker - Ladies Vice-Captain

Jean Thomas - Publicity and Catering

Mike Keats - Ex-President

Dr Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

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TOWN HALL
SWANAGE
DORSET
BH19 2NZ

6th August 2014

Dear Mr Bryceson

Bowling Club Fees 2014

I write further to your letter of 8th May 2014 and your subsequent correspondence with Cllr Ian Brown, as Chairman of our Tourism Committee.

Firstly, let me assure you that I fully acknowledge the frustration you feel at the lack of an official reply to your President's letter in 2012. I can assure you that the letter was not ignored, and I recall an informal discussion with another committee member on the subject, but I appreciate that that was an inadequate response for which I apologise.

I am writing now as I felt it important to set out some background to our meeting on Thursday 14th August, which will be attended by me, Cllr Ali Patrick as Mayor, Cllr Steve Poultney as Deputy Mayor, and Cllr Brown. You supply some compelling evidence that the fee charged by the Town Council to Swanage Bowling Club is high in comparison to the membership fees levied by other clubs, and it is clearly important to take this opportunity to reflect on whether this is an appropriate charge to be levied.

However, I am afraid that the Council cannot simply accept the current situation in which the Club has determined its own charging policy. I'm sure that you can understand that this places the Town Council in a very difficult position as if this situation is not addressed it might mean that the Tennis Club, Football Club, or indeed any of the Town Council's other user groups such as its allotment tenants or beach hut users might determine their own charging structure. No doubt you can appreciate that this would ultimately make a nonsense of the Council's annual budget setting process and place considerable strain on the Council's finances.

I must therefore ask that prior to our meeting on 14th August a cheque is made out to the Town Council for the membership fee for the year, as set by the Council in February 2014. By my calculations that amounts to £3,850. If as a result of our discussions the Town Council agrees to such a reduction a refund can then be given.

By way of explanation of the Council's budget setting process, the Council sets its annual scale of charges during a series of meetings each autumn and winter. The Bowling Club fees are first discussed by the Tourism Committee in early November each year and a recommendation is made to the Council's Finance and Performance Management Committee which meets in December. The fees are then ratified at a full Council meeting in late January/early February.

During the period 2010-12 the Bowling and Tennis Clubs were invited to every meeting of the Tourism Committee, in no small part so that they could participate in the setting of the fees and charges. However, that opportunity was never taken up and in 2013 the agendas ceased to be circulated to you. Clearly our discussions now can be used to inform the setting of the fee for 2015/16

and you and a fellow Committee representative would be most welcome to attend the Tourism Committee meeting at 10 a.m. on Monday 3rd November 2014.

Enclosed with this letter is an extract from the Council's Budget book showing overall income and expenditure headings for Beach Gardens. You will note that as a whole the operation of Beach Gardens operates at a loss to the Council of approximately £25,000. That figure in itself is an underestimate as it does not include a share of the Council's central services costs, such as insurance, nor general maintenance work that is costed to the Council's Depot.

I acknowledge that your first response to this is likely to be that the costs of the Bowling Club's activities are a small proportion of those relating to the overall operation of Beach Gardens, and prior to our meeting I will endeavour to drill down a little deeper into the direct costs of the Bowling Green and Pavilion to better inform our discussions. However, I must also highlight the fact that each of the activities at Beach Gardens helps to support the others and I'm sure you'll agree that the overall ambience and atmosphere of the location is what helps to make it so special. The Council has perhaps not been good at acknowledging the Bowling Club's financial contribution towards supporting that bigger picture, but your club does play a vital part in that and I would hope that you and your members take some pride from their contribution towards what is widely seen as one of the jewels in Swanage's crown.

Please be assured that the Council wants to encourage membership and see a thriving Bowling Club. It is to the benefit of all to see the facility being well-used and that will in turn help to secure the long-term future of the Bowling Green. I hope that our meeting on the 14th can help put some firm foundations in place for a continuing partnership between the Club and Council in the years to come.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything that you would like to raise in advance of the meeting on Thursday 14th, and I look forward to seeing you at the Town Hall at 6 p.m.

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

Mr C Bryceson
Spyway Edge
9 Steppes Hill
Langton Matravers
SWANAGE
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Bowling Club Fees					
	2014/15 - Club Proposal	2014/15 - Council	Last year 2013/14 - Council	5 years ago 2009/10 - Council	10 years ago 2004/05 - Council
Adult Season	£100	£150	£145	£128	£110
Junior (under 16) Season	£25	£36	£35		
New Member	£50	£75	£72.50	£64	£55
New Member (Joining after 1st August)		£25	£24		
Reduced rate for second member of same household	£50 N/A	N/A			

Income to Council from Bowling Green

	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2004/05
Club Fees	est. £10,344	£8,478	£7,242	£9,214	£8,016	£8,640	£10,395
Casual Lets	£671 to date	£1,280	£411	£1,422	£1,747	£1,495	£1,605
Total Income		£9,758	£7,653	£10,636	£9,763	£10,135	£12,000

Cost of operating Facilities at Beach Gardens operated by Swanage Bowling Club 2013/14

Bowling Green

Wages	£4,088
Rates	£102
Water	£300
Hired Services	£475
Fertilizer	£2,000
Insurance	£100
Pavilion	
Water	£100
Rates	£692
Electricity	£290
Insurance	£200
	£8,347

NB. These costs do not reflect any contributions towards the cost of replacing equipment or for maintenance of the Pavilion, for example:

2010/11	Purchase of spiker	£3,650
2008/09	Replacement windows at pavilion	£12,300

Martin Ayres

From: Clive & Gill Bryceson <clivegill@bryceson.plus.com>
Sent: 14 August 2014 13:08
To: Martin Ayres
Cc: ali@patrickswanage.co.uk; stevepoultney13@gmail.com; Ian Brown
Subject: Re: Bowling Club Background Info

Dear Martin

Thank you for your latest figures.

Here is our own assessment of what has been spent by the bowls club on improving the Pavilion and its facilities at Beach Gardens over the last few years.

Kitchen £7,500
Canopy & Deck £6000
Improved Access to toilets + lighting £1,500 ?
New Chairs £2,700
Lockers £2000
Window Blinds £500
Bar £600

Total £20,800

Outside:

Storage shed and base £1,800

Grand Total £22,600

Rgds
Clive Bryceson

On 13 Aug 2014, at 16:26, Martin Ayres <M.Ayres@swanage.gov.uk> wrote:

Dear all

In advance of tomorrow evening's meeting please find attached an estimate of costs of operating the Bowling Green and a proportion of the Pavilion to help inform our discussions.

Kind regards

Martin

Dr Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

This e-mail and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom

Informal meeting held on Thursday Aug 14th 2014 at the Town Hall.

Present (for the council): Alison Patrick (Mayor), Ian Brown (Tourism Chairman), Steve Poultney (Tourism committee), Dr Martin Ayres (Town Clerk)

Present (for the Swanage Bowls Club): Terry Buck (Treasurer), Brian Beeston (President 2014), Clive Bryceson (Club Secretary)

Here is a summary of our thoughts following last night's meeting:

1) The council may be able to do something about this year's fees but are somewhat constrained by previous budget estimates.

Council meeting on Monday night (Aug 18th) may clarify your position on this.

Total budgeted bowls income for this year is £9000.

Amount paid by Bowls Club to date £6422 + Casual bowls income to date £671. Total to date £7093. Shortfall £1907

2) For years going forward i.e. 2015/16 onwards it is the intention of both parties to come to a new agreement which will hopefully achieve two aims.

a) The council wish to cover their "running costs" for the bowls green/pavilion

b) The bowls club wish to achieve a cost per member of £100 and a couples reduction of 25%.

3) Based on council figures the maintenance costs for the bowls green are estimated at £7065 which includes £2000 worth of fertilisers. (We would be interested to know how this fertiliser sum is spent the major

cost might be "top dressing" applied in the autumn which is not always required every year).

This cost is for 6 rinks whereas 2 of these rinks are generally reserved for public use i.e. "Casual bowling income".

This would reduce the bowls clubs liability to £4,710 (i.e. 2/3rds)

Our shared costs for the Pavilion are estimated at another £1282. Total £5992. If divided by our "average" membership of 65 = £92.18
(Reminder: The average membership fee for Dorset is £85)

Costs relating to the long term purchase/replacement of specialised bowls green equipment could be amortised over at least 10 years. (not to be confused with general grass maintenance equipment as used on the putting greens and other grass areas.) A figure for this is not yet included.

4) Fees going forward to be set for 3 yrs and then reviewed.

5) Other matters

- Permission to erect Bowls Club signs on Pavilion and outside Toilet screen (similar to new Tennis club sign). Agreed subject to checking details with Geoff Brookes
- Flooding (after heavy rain) of the concrete terrace by the entrance gate at top of the steps off Cauldron Rd. We offered to install a drain but council prefers Geoff Brooks to organise.
- Permission to put storage box for possible future BBQ close to existing storage shed. Agreed.

A further meeting to be arranged at a later date to finalise the above fees issue.

Clive Bryceson
Secretary