



LONG-TERM PLANNING COMMITTEES – ARE THEY WORTHWHILE?

Planning for the future can sometimes be forgotten in golf club management because of the transitory nature of Committees. One way of ensuring that this does not happen is through the creation of a Long-Term Planning Committee. Here we suggest how such a Committee might be started and made to work effectively.

(reviewed June 2011)

The Purpose of the Long-term Planning Committee (LTPC)

Its principal role is to ensure that serious consideration is being given, on a regular basis, to long-term projects of possible benefit to future generations of the Club's members.

The LTPC can have a secondary purpose, which is to persuade or prevent the main Committee from taking action which is likely to be detrimental to the Club's long term interests. For example, a practise can be established under which no major alterations to the course can happen without the LTPC's prior consent.

The Composition of the LTPC

The Chairman should be someone who is involved in the management of the Club for more than the usual 2, 3, or 4 year's period of service by the ordinary Committee member. In some Clubs this will be a member of the supervisory or management Board, in others a trustee who is perhaps the Chairman of the Finance Committee, and in others a past Captain remaining on the Committee. Ideally he should continue as Chairman of the LTPC for a minimum of three years.

The other members of the LTPC could include the Club Captain, the current Chairman of the Club's sub-Committees, the Secretary/Manager and one or two other members of the management Board or trustees. Any other member of the main Committee who is known to be an "ideas man" could also be invited to join the LTPC. The person currently having the main responsibility for managing the Club's finances should always be included.

Getting the LTPC Started

Before the first meeting of the LTPC, its Chairman should invite all members of the main Committee and of any separate management Board to submit to him any ideas which they think the LTPC should consider. From these submissions and his own thoughts, he should prepare a detailed agenda for the first meeting of the LTPC, setting out all the items to be discussed, under suitable headings.

Examples of ideas which might be included on the Agenda are set out at the end of this article.

The Next Steps

As soon as the LTPC has completed its deliberations on the opening Agenda (two or three meetings may be necessary) it should submit a report by its Chairman to the main Committee:

Outlining the matters on which it recommends action should be taken, classified as Essential, Highly Desirable, or Desirable. Recommended priorities should also be given.

Summarising all the other ideas which it has considered but rejected, giving the reasons where appropriate.

The main Committee can then decide which of the recommendations it wishes to accept, the priorities of each, and how each is to be progressed through an existing or new Sub-Committee. The LTPC should not have any executive responsibilities of its own, in order to avoid any conflict with the terms of reference of existing Sub-Committees. It may have the power of veto if it is to fulfil its secondary, preventative role mentioned earlier. The Finance Committee could be asked at this stage, for example, to prepare a new 5-year cash flow budget to show how the proposed expenditure on any major projects can be financed. The LTPC might be asked also to produce a rolling 5-year plan for the Club, incorporating all the agreed projects, and the budgets prepared by the Finance Committee.

Thereafter, the LTPC should need to meet only once a year, first to review how its accepted recommendations are progressing, secondly to decide whether any previously rejected or new ideas should be brought to the attention of the main Committee through a further report and thirdly, to up-date the 5-year Plan.

Examples of Subjects Which Might Be Considered by a Long-term Planning Committee

Land

The possible purchase of:

- ✎ Some adjoining land on which to build another 9 or 18 holes, or a practice ground or a driving range;
- ✎ Other adjoining land which might otherwise be developed for housing or from which players might be prevented from retrieving their golf balls under new owners;
- ✎ The freehold of the course.

Any threat of a compulsory purchase order on all or part of the course, or of the current landlord refusing to renew the lease?

The Course

Should consideration be given over the next five years to:

- ✎ Creating new holes
- ✎ Rebuilding any of the greens
- ✎ Extending the teeing area

- ✎ Constructing or improving the practice facilities;
- ✎ Adding or removing a substantial number of bunkers
- ✎ Extending or upgrading the irrigation system?

Safeguarding future water supplies (& reducing costs of water) by:

- ✎ The sinking of a borehole (if allowed)
- ✎ Creating new lake(s)
- ✎ Adopting a water conservancy scheme.
- ✎ Better management of the Club's woodland.
- ✎ The preparation of a Course policy document.

Buildings

Extension to the Clubhouse, such as:

- ✎ Changing Room for visitors
- ✎ A snack/spike bar
- ✎ Improved shower and washroom facilities
- ✎ Additional room for Committee meetings, billiards/snooker, or bridge.
- ✎ Do/will the kitchen areas in the Clubhouse need upgrading?

Is the Clubhouse likely to require major repairs to its roof, foundations or elsewhere, in the foreseeable future?

Rebuilding or substantial improvements to other Club premises eg the Secretary/Manager's house, staff accommodation, the Pro's shop and the greenkeepers' sheds (including any new requirements to meet Health & Safety regulations).

The possibility of obtaining outline planning permission now for additional or better accommodation for the Head Steward or senior Greenkeeping staff (or a house for the Secretary/Manager if one does not exist already).

Membership and Golf

Alterations to the number of members or to the categories (eg 6-day instead of 5-day membership, introducing Country membership etc.)

Will increasing number of members playing mid-week mean that fewer Societies should be planned for?

The effect of the possible taxation of profits from certain green fee income.

Is the older members' subscription discount too high or too low?

Constitution

Do the present Rules or Articles ensure that the Club and course cannot be sold to third parties without the consent of say 80% of members?

Should the Club consider changing to/from a limited company constitution?

Does the present Committee structure work well? Should the Green Committee be abolished?

Do the Rules or Articles need revising for other reasons?

Other Subjects

The addition of new facilities eg.

- ⌘ Tennis and/or squash courts
- ⌘ Changing room for visitors
- ⌘ Swimming pool
- ⌘ Bowling green

Should more use of the Club by third parties be encouraged, to increase bar and catering profits?

Similarly should members be encouraged to use the Clubhouse more by additional evening, social events, or by drastic improvement in the catering service?