



VOTING – POSTAL BALLOTS

(reviewed August 2011)

Many golf clubs today have introduced postal voting for their members when voting for the committee at Annual General Meetings. It is important that if you go along this road that firm ground rules are established to avoid any doubt about the authenticity of the result after the event. The following points should be carefully considered by all those clubs embarking on this method:

- ✎ The club rules should clearly state that postal voting is allowed and set the rules for administering it.
- ✎ Before sending out the ballot papers a list of voting members should be prepared and each member given a number.

The voting papers when sent out should be numbered in the same way so that it is clearly shown that there would be a way of checking the votes should the situation ever arise.

- ✎ The number of voting papers sent out must agree with the numbers on the list and no additional papers should be printed. In the event of any additional papers being printed these should be kept under lock and key and numbers of those papers recorded in the presence of officers of the club. They would normally only be used in a situation in which it could clearly be agreed that a member had for some unforeseen circumstances not received their papers.
- ✎ It is important to have clearly printed envelopes for members to return their papers in either through the post or by hand and these should be kept unopened in the club safe prior to the meeting. On no account should any officer or committee member of the club open these prior to the meeting appointing scrutineers.
- ✎ At the commencement of the Annual General Meeting the Chairman should ask for the appointment of scrutineers who should not be members of the committee, candidates or their proposers and seconders. It is best to have a minimum of four and probably better to have at least six.
- ✎ These members so appointed should do their counting behind locked doors in the office and on completing their counting should hand over to the Chairman of the meeting their findings properly recorded on a document in which they each sign to agree the accuracy of their findings. The scrutineers should not have access to the list of members and their voting numbers. This should be kept in the club safe and would only be available on a decision by the club committee on a written request by members who are querying the result of the ballot.

- ⌘ In the event of any ties then these should be dealt by the Chairman according to the rules of the club and not by the scrutineers.
- ⌘ Whether the results are published on the board or not are dependent on the policy of the club but by posting the results including the votes cast for each candidate you will probably avoid any future recriminations.
- ⌘ After the AGM the voting slips along with the register of members should be kept for a specific period before being destroyed, this should probably be a period of say 28 days or such like.
- ⌘ Should there be a request for an investigation this should be carried out on the instructions of the committee by either the club auditors or a similar outside agency appointed by the club committee.

Although the above points may seem like taking a sledge hammer to crack a nut it is important for you as the secretary to see that strict rules are kept to and no member of the committee or club officer is given access to the votes prior to the meeting. Another way of doing it would be to appoint the club auditors to collect and count the votes in which case the voting papers would be returned to their offices. This will cost the club additional money and a properly set out and controlled system can work in each club.

[This document is prepared for guidance and is accurate at the date of publication only. We will not accept any liability (in negligence or otherwise) arising from any member or third party acting, or refraining from acting, on the information contained in this document.]