



ENGLAND  
GOLF

VERSION 3.0

WORKING IN  
COLLABORATION WITH

GCMA   
Golf Club Managers' Association

# A BLUEPRINT FOR *good* GOVERNANCE

INSIGHT AND GUIDANCE TO  
BUILD A **SUCCESSFUL FUTURE**



Working in  
collaboration with



# ENDORSED BY

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# CONTRIBUTORS

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## Gavin Anderson

**Club Support Manager  
England Golf**

Gavin has worked in the golf and leisure industry for close to 20 years, eight of those in golf club management and an additional seven for England Golf. In his role as Club Support Manager, Gavin leads on developing tools, resources and guidance for golf clubs to help them operate more effectively and profitably.

*"We regularly hear from clubs about how challenging a topic governance can be to work on. By developing an approach which makes it easier to understand and a framework that breaks the various topics down into more manageable steps, this will support clubs in implementing positive change and strengthen the industry."*

## Matt Bloor

**Volunteer and Workforce  
Manager England Golf**

Having worked in the sports industry for over 20 years, Matt has aspired to develop a range of sports at a local, regional and national level. As the Volunteer and Workforce Manager, Matt develops training and education and provides guidance on the successful recruitment, support, and recognition of those who work and volunteer in golf.

*"The golfing workforce, both professional and volunteers, define how clubs are run up and down the country. This support aims to make the role they play in improving governance easier, as we know that great plans and structures will only help organisations meet their aspirations if there is an empowered workforce."*

## Jerry Kilby

**Principal  
Kanda Golf**

In his 38-year career in the golf industry, Jerry has held several senior management positions, including roles with the PGA, and six years as CEO of the Club Managers Association of Europe. He currently provides consulting and advisory services to clubs delivering a 'Governance Review' service alongside more general business support.

*"After months of research, discussions and consultations, this guide is an accurate and comprehensive description of 'best practice' in golf clubs in England, and we are sure this document, along with the online toolkit, will help clubs plan improvements to their club's governance structure."*

# FOREWORD

**Governance plays a crucial role in the success of our sport and this is something that is recognised across all aspects of the industry.**

A golf business, like any other, faces daily challenges and issues that are often governance related. Whilst in most cases it is considered to be something which provides protection for organisations it should also be viewed as a vehicle for delivering organisational success.

Many golf clubs in England - both member-owned and proprietary - have found there is a better way to make decisions at their clubs, for the success of the business and the enjoyment of the members and visitors that play golf there. There is no longer a need for member-owned clubs to suffer from protracted and confusing decision-making, or for proprietary clubs to have a disconnect between the owner, or operator, and the customer.

## *Jeremy Tomlinson* CEO - England Golf

Good governance is fundamental to growing our sport, especially at clubs where golf is loved by so many.

The modern world presents constant challenges... as such golf clubs who place an emphasis on excellent leadership, strategy and deliverance, truly become best placed to thrive as successful clubs, consistently attracting people of different ages, genders, abilities, disabilities and ethnicities to join, play and enjoy their golf.

We have taken much time and energy to improve and refresh our governance guide and toolkit, with a consummate view of empowering golf clubs around the country to set the highest possible standards in developing a transparent, positive culture with a view to achieving long-term relevance and sustainability.

I thank the GCMA for their excellent collaboration in producing this guide, alongside of course the many noted endorsers for their support with this important project... and without bias we wish all who utilise these assets, great success in their future and of course in making our game ever more inclusive.



## *Tom Brooke* CEO - GCMA

We're delighted to have been invited by England Golf to work with them on this incredibly important and valuable piece of work that we're sure is going to make a hugely positive difference to many, many golf clubs as we move forward. Long term and meaningful success are only achievable with strong and healthy leadership and a great team culture which can only be delivered when underpinned and held up with a modern, fit for purpose and sustainable governance structure.

We are very pleased and naturally in full agreement that this new Governance toolkit puts emphasis on the importance and value that a well-supported Golf Club Manager, team of professionals, hospitality staff and greenkeepers brings to any golf club, regardless of its ownership structure or place in the market.



**We think there is a better way, so this handbook with the supporting toolkit outlines how this can be achieved.**

This content is designed to support a better understanding of governance and the various different aspects that need to be considered. It is structured to encourage a methodical approach to analyse your current position and presented in a modular format to enable incremental change.



*Jeremy*



*Tom*



*Want to know more?*

To see the full range of support and the resource toolkit visit the England Golf website:

**[www.Englandgolf.org/governance-support](http://www.Englandgolf.org/governance-support)**

# IMPACT OF GOOD

We know that members and customers can have strong opinions, but that is generally because they feel emotionally attached to your club and want to see it flourish. Whilst they may communicate their views on all areas of the club, there are some factors which significantly impact their overall experience and their decision to remain loyal to you.

**Data collected through Players 1st from over 40,000 members over a one year period, highlights that three out of the top five most important factors are governance related.**



## EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of the board or management committee



## MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the club



## ENGAGEMENT

How effectively the board or management committee listened to suggestions and new ideas



# GOVERNANCE

42%

of clubs have the Board's or Management Group's effectiveness in their **top three most important evaluation points** in relation to member satisfaction.

The Board of Directors / Management Committee group is effective" – scored out of 10

30%

**higher member loyalty** score at clubs who perform well across governance related questions.

How likely is it that you will still be a member of your club in two years?"

13%

of members highlight **dissatisfaction with the Board or Management Committee** as their number one reason for wanting to leave the club.

What is the reason you do not expect to be a member in two years?"



Players 1st

Players 1st are experts in golf customer experience management, offering software which helps clubs to retain and recruit golfers by focusing on customer experience and loyalty.



## DISCUSSION

- Do you know how your members or customers feel about the experience they receive whilst at your club?
- Are you confident they consider your governance to be effective?
- Find out more about accessing Players 1<sup>st</sup> surveys at: [www.englandgolf.org/players-1st](http://www.englandgolf.org/players-1st)

## MORE INFO



To see a more in depth and detailed analysis of how governance impacts member satisfaction, view the infographic from Players 1st

# THE *TOOLKIT*

**If you asked every golf club to define what governance meant to them you might get a different answer every time. It can often be a topic that is misunderstood and sometimes is considered to need vast amounts of input and attention.**

This governance support is designed to encourage a direction of travel to help make improvements in a structured way, breaking the key components into different stages and focussing on the different elements in order of importance.

For clubs that are further forward in their journey or have specific areas they wish to focus on, the content is arranged in a modular format, allowing for it to be digested in the way that best suits their needs.

## STAGES AND TOPIC AREAS

Review the recommended stages to prioritise your work, understanding the different elements and why they are important



## HANDBOOK AND WEBSITE

Develop an understanding of how the support is structured, the order in which topics should be approached and underlying principles that will help you to implement change



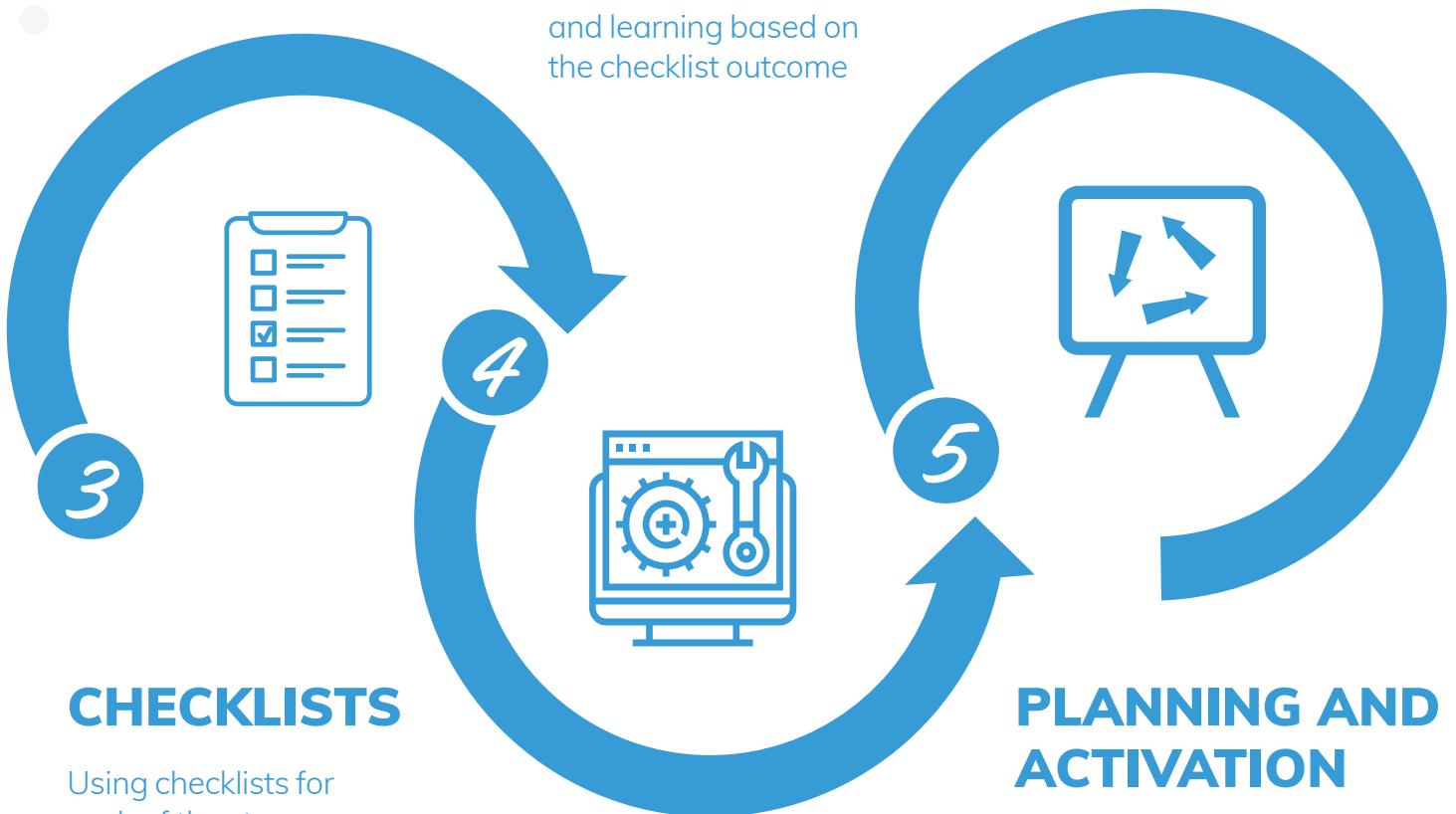
## MORE INFO

We have added QR codes throughout this handbook to help you jump straight to content you want to read more about.



## TOOLKIT

Access the online toolkit to review relevant resources and learning based on the checklist outcome



## CHECKLISTS

Using checklists for each of the stages you can carry out a self-assessment to identify areas of weakness and those you need to focus on as a priority

## PLANNING AND ACTIVATION

Once focus areas of work are identified plan how you will deliver your changes, who will be responsible and by when

# BUILDING

## YOUR SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

There are many similarities between the stages involved in construction and how club governance can be best approached. Take the plans for this clubhouse as an example, and how certain fundamental aspects of the building process are no different from the prioritisation of governance related work.

### STAGE 1

Throughout any building project and particularly in the early stages, policies and legal compliance are fundamental aspects, often influencing what is achievable for a specific site.

**These are non-negotiable elements which must be right before any progress can be made and a clear direction agreed on.**

### STAGE 2

When thinking about construction, utilising the most appropriate structure is key, and along with the materials used and internal systems installed, they must be the most suitable solution for the intended use and location of that building.

**From the foundations up, a structure needs to be fit for purpose and able to contend with the pressures of the environment surrounding it.**





## STAGE 3

There will always be a clear set of plans used to help move this sort of project forward, not only specifying what the finished design looks like, but also detail of who is responsible for what elements and the order in which they need to be delivered.

Without the documented vision of what a building will look like when complete, it makes it challenging for anyone involved in the construction to know what is required of them.

## STAGE 4

Once complete, occupation is just the start and isn't enough to make sure the building thrives and succeeds. This means thinking about how you maximise its potential, ensuring that tactics are used which enable it to be fully utilised in the way it was envisaged within the original plan.

Having a finished building does not complete the project as continual work is required to optimise its use. There is a need to continually edge it forward, adapting and implementing small changes to make sure it stands the test of time.

## WHO IS BUILDING YOUR "GOVERNANCE" CLUBHOUSE...?

The construction of any building requires a well co-ordinated project team who collectively take responsibility for its successful delivery, each having a specialism and skill set which adds value to the leadership team.

A golf club with good governance is no different, and whether changes are needed or standards maintained, a **Governance Working Group** should be your club's equivalent to that group of people. They may have to focus on making fixes and adjustments or they could be looking at ways in which to develop the business further. Either way, creating a team which utilises a range of different skills and levels of experience will help to make governance a focal point within the running of your club.



### MORE INFO



Access guidance on how to set up your Governance Working Group here



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# INTRODUCTION

THE COMPONENTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE



**In the ever evolving and fast paced world we live in the importance of good governance is often misunderstood. It should be considered a key foundation for any organisation who wishes to be future facing and adaptable to the constant change in the society around them.**

Governance is connected to all areas of a business, whether that be fundamental elements such as remaining legally compliant, or lesser considered areas like the impact it can have on your reputation and the trust customers have in you.

The value of having strong governance is more significant than ever and is intrinsically linked to the success and future sustainability of any organisation.

In golf clubs, good governance could be defined in many ways given the unique nature and variety of different organisations that operate within the sport, and whilst it covers several different aspects within your operation, some elements will be more or less relevant dependant on what sort of club you are.

Governance is a system that provides a framework for leading and managing an organisation. It is the foundation that enables the management team and board to operate legally, ethically, sustainably, and successfully.

Governance is about responsibility – for the performance of the organisation, in building trust amongst stakeholders, effectively managing risks and ultimately the protection of an organisations assets, including their reputation.

As demands and expectations from customers continue to grow, there is increasing pressure to operate with sensitivity towards social, cultural, economic and environmental issues. Governance lays the foundation in the setting of these type of operational standards.

**WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?  
THE WAY THAT ORGANISATIONS ARE MANAGED AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, AND THE SYSTEMS FOR DOING THIS**

CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY



## DISCUSSION

- What does having good governance mean to your club?
- How often is governance on the agenda or discussed by your Board?

# BENEFITS

## OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

**Golf is no different from any other sport or industry – satisfaction levels amongst your customer base generates loyalty which in turn creates financial security.**

Statistics show how important it is to members and regular users to have confidence in the club’s leadership and management – with happier members and customers much more likely to keep coming back.

### EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IS YOUR MOST EFFECTIVE RETENTION TOOL...

In addition, the advantages in golf can be seen throughout all aspects of the operation:

- Helps to establish a **purpose** and **values** which underpin all that you do
- Develops a **positive culture** with accountability and transparency at its core
- Creates an efficient approach to delivering **aims and ambitions**
- Builds a **financially and administratively secure** business which stays ahead of the curve and is more adaptable to change
- Drives effective and **co-ordinated decision making**
- Promotes an **accessible and inclusive** environment to all stakeholders
- Supports **better recruitment** for future Board members – as well as your wider workforce
- Creating a more engaged and better informed membership with **clear lines of communication**
- Allows for **stronger utilisation of peoples skills** across the club

**79%** of consumers in GB consider governance important when deciding on the purchase of goods or services from an organisation

Source: youGov - Global Market Analysis - Importance of ESG in consumer purchase decisions (2023).



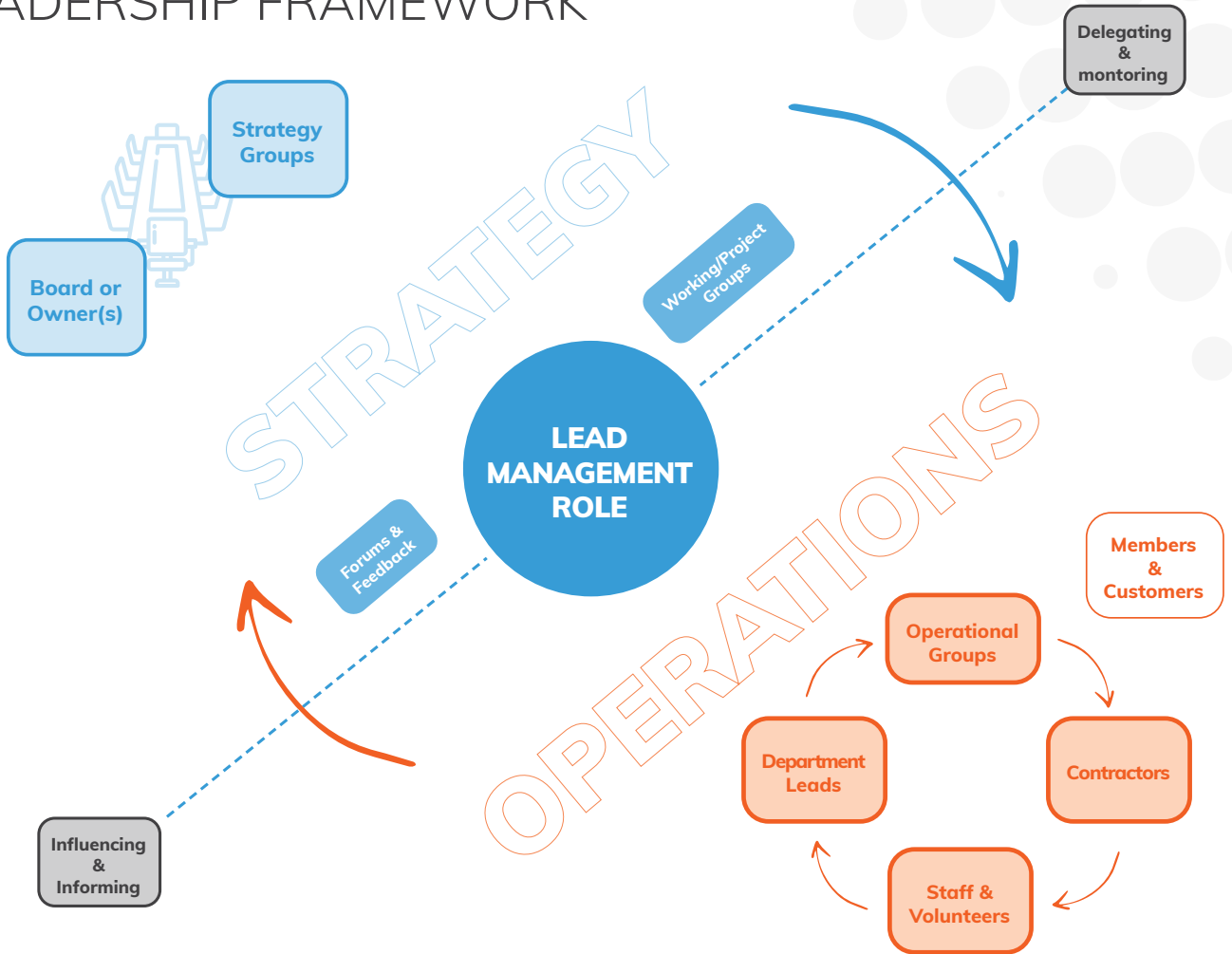
### DID YOU KNOW?

Many funders, commercial sponsors and golfing partners require organisations to meet minimum governance standards and legal requirements?

This ensures their investment is protected and they can be confident they are providing money to well-run organisations.



# MODERN LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK



*What core areas are important for your business?*



FINANCE



HOUSE AND FACILITIES



MEMBERSHIP



COURSE AND GREENS



DIGITAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

**Board or Owner(s)** – the key decision-making function within the organisation. Accountable for setting the direction and driving implementation of key activities.

**Strategy Groups** – sometimes referred to as sub-committees, they support and advise the Directors responsible for the identified core areas of the business.

**Lead Management Role** – Often known as the General Manager or Club Secretary. This role creates a bridge between the strategic focus and operational delivery, converting goals into achievements.

**Working/Project Groups** – formed to steer a specific and normally larger scale project which has a defined end. Utilises those with the necessary expertise and skills.

**Department Leads** – managed directly by the General Manager, these roles take operational responsibility for delivery of objectives within each of the core areas.

**Operational Groups** – created to support the General Manager in the delivery of non-strategic areas such as social events or handicapping and competitions.

**Forums and Feedback** – the most effective organisations employ various methods to gather feedback, utilising this insight to inform future decision making and building loyalty amongst their customers. It completes the circle and ensures the direction of travel always takes the satisfaction and opinions of those that matter into consideration.



## LEAD MANAGEMENT ROLE

This will vary from club to club and will be determined by several factors, including the size of the club or their chosen method of operation, but often a job title is not fully reflective of the role being performed. Download our additional guidance to see descriptions of what may be expected from the various different types of roles.



Delivery of your objectives and achieving your organisational goals is likely to be in the hands of your Department Leads as they and their teams will engage most with your members and customers. Below are some examples of job positions within this group.



## PGA PROFESSIONAL

In most clubs, the Professional and supporting team deliver the main front of house function, making them pivotal to the experience your members and customers receive.

The Club Professional often takes on a multitude of tasks and responsibilities to support the operational effectiveness of their club, potentially covering retail, fitting and coaching. Alongside this they remain as one of the key points of contact for golf related support.

To help you fully understand more about PGA deployment and the benefits that come with having a strong club professional, read our extra guidance.



## COURSE MANAGER OR HEAD GREENKEEPER

Responsible for a club's most valuable asset, the greenkeeping team also have a huge impact in satisfaction levels amongst members and customers.

To lead this team requires a great level of technical and practical knowledge and goes well beyond just cutting greens. A detailed understanding of agronomy and knowing how to look after the grass is needed, as well as the people skills needed to manage and co-ordinate a team.

Read more about this key role within your club and find out why it's important to engage them in all conversations related to your golf course.





## KEY RESOURCES

This badge identifies important resources that contribute towards achieving the Tier 1 standard.

# CODE

## FOR SPORTS GOVERNANCE

**Developed by Sport England and UK Sport, A Code for Sports Governance sets out the levels of transparency, diversity and inclusion, accountability and integrity that are required for well governed sports organisations and clubs.**

It was designed to help drive improvement across all areas of governance for a variety of different organisations throughout the sports sector.

The code identifies the five key principles of good governance outlined below and including the eight requirements, provides support for organisations who need to make improvements to their governance standards and processes.

### What does it mean for golf?

Golf is a top five participation sport in England and is reliant on well governed golf clubs for its future sustainability.

Alignment to the Code for Sports Governance ensures your club will be modern and relevant in its governing practices, helping to safeguard your club's future.

Furthermore, organisations such and Sport England and UK Sport require clubs to meet Tier 1 criteria to access funding opportunities.

The principles and requirements of the code are embedded throughout this governance support helping you to meet the Tier 1 standard whilst at the same time improving your future outlook.

| PRINCIPLE              | REQUIREMENTS  |
|------------------------|---|
| STRUCTURE              | <b>Requirement 1:</b> The organisation is properly constituted, has a clear purpose and, if membership-based, is inclusive and accessible   |
|                        | <b>Requirement 2:</b> The governing committee meets regularly, and decision-making is recorded  |
| PEOPLE                 | <b>Requirement 3:</b> The organisation seeks to ensure diverse viewpoints are considered and that its decision-making groups have the skills and diversity needed to operate effectively  |
|                        | <b>Requirement 4:</b> Committee members are subject to regular election and ideally should serve no more than nine years  |
| COMMUNICATION          | <b>Requirement 5:</b> The organisation shares information on its governance, structure, activities and financial position to enable stakeholders to have a good understanding of them   |
| STANDARDS AND CONDUCT  | <b>Requirement 6:</b> Conflicts of interest are recognised, managed by the chair and recorded. At least three of the people on the governing committee are neither related to, nor cohabiting with, other committee members   |
| POLICIES AND PROCESSES | <b>Requirement 7:</b> The organisation ensures appropriate financial procedures and practices are in place and as a minimum can evidence: a) appropriate oversight of financial planning; b) financial decision-making and processing is not managed by one person alone; and c) accounts which are independently scrutinized |
|                        | <b>Requirement 8:</b> The organisation assesses and manages organisational risks and liabilities appropriately  |

### Want to know more?

Access the full Code for Sports Governance, read about the requirements in more detail, the reasons they are important and signposts to relevant supporting resources on the Sport England website.





# DIVERSITY

## WITHIN LEADERSHIP GROUPS

When looking at the composition of leadership groups, it is important to consider diversity and whether they adequately reflect the different perspectives amongst a club's membership, as well as the surrounding community.

### THE BENEFITS OF HAVING DIVERSE LEADERSHIP GROUPS ARE:

- They are better placed to make decisions which are based on a variety of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Recruiting from across the whole membership, or even beyond just members, significantly adds to the talent pool and skills available.
- Leadership groups which represent their membership/customer base are better placed to understand what their wants, needs and constraints are.
- Visibly diverse leadership groups can improve the perception of the club in the community.
- Furthermore, visibly diverse leadership groups can act as not only inspiration for others from previously under-represented groups to step into a leadership role, but also create a stronger sense of "like me" relatability to prospective members and customers.
- Creating diverse groups will not happen overnight as people from under-represented groups may need to be encouraged and empowered to get involved.

### CONSIDER WHAT STRATEGIES YOU CAN EMPLOY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS AREA:

#### AUDIT AND EVALUATION

Review existing groups to ensure they reflect the balance of your customers or membership – consider age, gender, golfing ability, socio-economic background for example. Is more work required to ensure your customer base is more diverse?

#### RECRUITMENT

Look at your recruitment process to make it as open and inclusive as possible. This will make everyone at the club feel positions are obtainable. Co-opting people into roles is a reasonable and useful option to consider.

#### MAKE A COMMITMENT

Diversity throughout an organisation starts with the Board or owner(s) who need to prioritise specific efforts and ensure they have the tools and resources in place. If it doesn't already exist, your club should develop and adopt an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

#### UPDATE STRUCTURE

Consider if your current structure gives you the flexibility to improve diversity. A review of current roles in these groups may highlight opportunities to change the number of seats and provide opportunities to add new, well-suited people

COMPANIES IN THE TOP QUARTILE FOR GENDER DIVERSITY ON EXECUTIVE TEAMS WERE 25 PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO HAVE ABOVE-AVERAGE PROFITABILITY THAN COMPANIES IN THE FOURTH QUARTILE

DIVERSITY WINS – HOW INCLUSION MATTERS  
MCKINSEY 2019

#TOGETHERINGOLF



Read the England Golf #togetherringolf framework on making golf more inclusive to view our commitments for improving diversity in golf

MORE INFO



View our on demand webinar on Board Diversity

There are specific questions related to access and opportunities for leadership groups within the England Golf ED&I Club Audit Tool, accessed through your Club Support Officer.

# CHANGE MANAGEMENT

**Change is a challenge for all organisations. Whether that be small adaptive changes to keep the business evolving, or larger scale transformational changes which represent a more significant operational or strategic shift.**

It can be driven by many different factors including market changes, economic trends or the development of new technology, and in a lot of cases purely just to meet the evolving demands of customers.

Change in committee led organisations can be slow and cautious as members tend to be more comfortable with evolution over revolution.

Change management is simply the process of steering organisational change through to completion, from the initial stages of conception and planning, through to implementation and conclusion.

The effects of not managing change effectively can have a significant and long-lasting impact, particularly when it comes to any that are considered transformational. Having effective strategies or utilising proven techniques is therefore crucial to ensure an organisation is prepared for changes that may come their way.

## Communication and Transparency

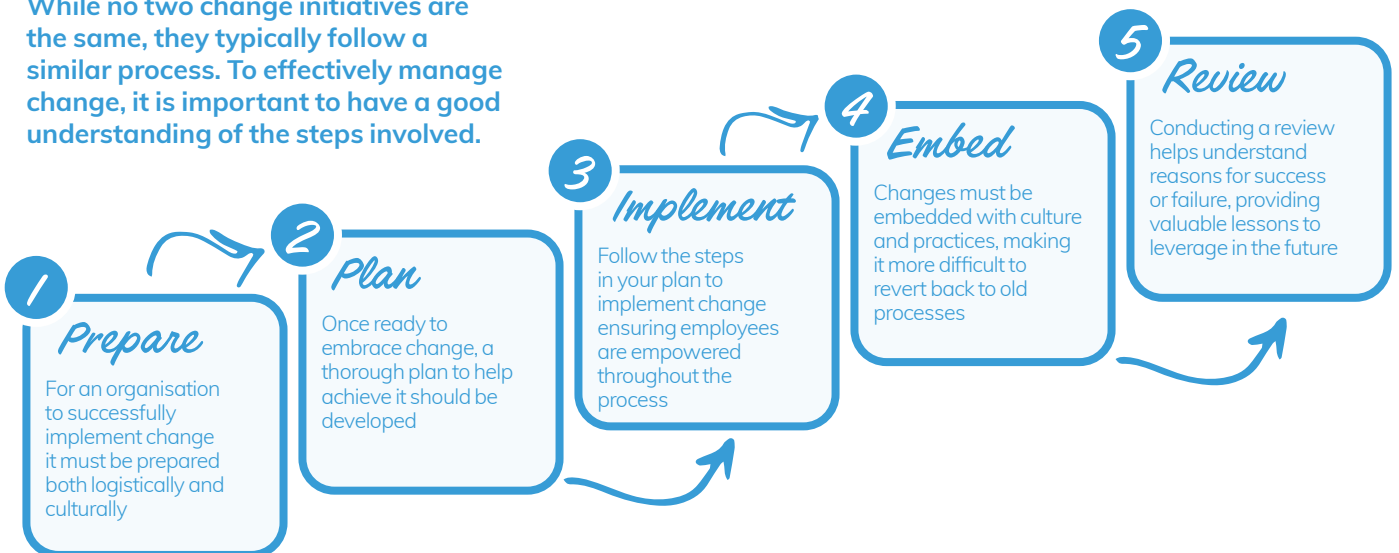
Change in golf clubs can be particularly challenging, especially when those changes will have an impact on the status quo or the way in which things have been done previously, potentially for many years.

In many cases, club members may have the final say on whether a change is implemented, so it is vital that they are involved as much as possible throughout the whole process.

Sharing information throughout all stages of the process, and being open to feedback, will ultimately have the biggest impact on your success.

When making changes in a proprietary club, it is equally important to listen to the views of golfers and the membership, as while they may not have an official vote, they could vote with their feet and leave the club if they are not happy with any changes.

**While no two change initiatives are the same, they typically follow a similar process. To effectively manage change, it is important to have a good understanding of the steps involved.**





## *REFLECTION*

- What was the last significant change you made at your club?
- What challenges did you have to overcome?
- What would you have done differently?

# CULTURE

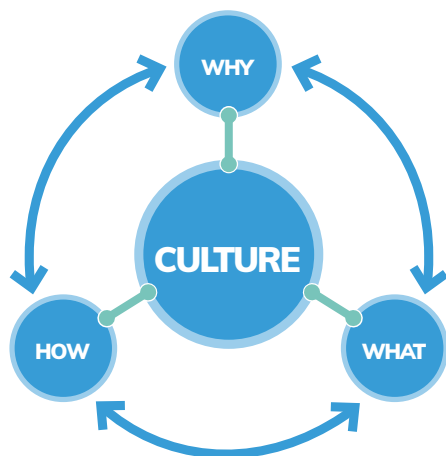
**At its simplest, culture should be considered as an agreed set of customs and norms that inform, and are evident in, the behaviour of those who are part of an organisation – “the way we do things around here”.**

To fully understand its importance, consideration needs to be given to not just how things are done but also the what and the why behind them. So much of what an organisation does and how they do it stems from why they exist.

In your club, think about about culture as the behaviours, social habits, values and customs exhibited by the people associated with the club, particularly the membership and the workforce (staff and volunteers).

Often, you can get a feel for the culture at club very quickly, as it is visible in the relationships and actions of people.

Governance and culture are connected and can influence each other. Clubs that have stronger governance will likely have a more positive culture, but a weaker culture can limit a clubs ability to implement change.



## Why is culture important?

The experience that members and visitors have at a golf club will often be defined by the culture. A great course is important, but it's unlikely to override the effects of negative interactions during your time at the facility.

Getting the culture right at your club can set your club apart from local competition, not just golf facilities, but alternative leisure options too. Culture can be a reason why members leave, but it can also be a reason why people will join a club.

A positive culture can even impact the club's finances – the better the environment the longer people stay and the chances of incremental spend are improved.

### What?

The overall vision and reason for existence

### How?

The approach to delivery and the processes involved

### Why?

The aims and objectives to deliver success



## STATS

**42%** of members consider having a welcoming and friendly atmosphere as one of their top five most important satisfaction factors.

## MORE INFO



### Encouraging participation in golf clubs.

This research report on golf club volunteering focusses heavily on the culture in clubs with relevance to all types of facilities.



## ACTIVITY

### Who do you want to be?

As a group, discuss which organisations you consider to have a strong culture? What values do they have that make them stand out? What can you learn from them?

# CLUB

## TYPES

**Golf is fortunate in that there are numerous different types of clubs offering opportunities to access the game across a variety of formats.**

*MORE INFO*



Read our supplementary guide to the importance of governance in proprietary clubs

Whilst the underlying principles of good governance apply to any type of golf operation, there are some elements which could be less likely to apply dependant on the way in which a club is structured.

The diagram below identifies the three main operational models within clubs. Once you have established the type that best applies to your club, the related icon can be used as a reference throughout the support resources indicating the content which is more relevant to your type of operation.



# OWNERSHIP

## AND RESPONSIBILITIES

One of the biggest factors that underpins good governance is having a solid understanding of who leads and has overall accountability for the key elements of the organisations operation, and who is more focused on the day to day delivery.

With many different core functions required to operate a golf business successfully, it is important to establish the level of responsibility and ownership across the workforce – both paid and voluntary.

The matrix below gives an example of a simple overview to help you understand how these key topics should be allocated;

| Area   | Board / Mgt. Committee / Owner           | Lead Operational Role   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Governance</b>                              | Leads, develops and communicates         | Implements and monitors                                       |
| <b>Strategic Direction and Long Term Goals</b> | Develops and Communicates                | Provides Input  |
| <b>Business Plan and Short term Goals</b>      | Approves and Monitors                    | Develops and Executes   |
| <b>Day-to-Day Operations</b>                   | No role                                  | Full Responsibility   |
| <b>Budgets</b>                                 | Informs, approves and monitors           | Recommends, implements and monitors                           |
| <b>Hiring of Employees and Deployment</b>      | Manager or lead employees only           | All other club employees                                      |
| <b>Performance Evaluations and Salaries</b>    | Manager or lead employees only           | All other club employees                                      |
| <b>Supply Purchases</b>                        | Sets policy / approves budget            | Purchases according to policy                                 |
| <b>Membership Fees</b>                         | Develops structure in line with strategy | Provides input and implements                                 |
| <b>Operational Policies</b>                    | Monitors                                 | Develops, implements and monitors                             |
| <b>Club Policies</b>                           | Creates, communicates and monitors       | Provides input and implements                                 |
| <b>Membership Growth and Marketing</b>         | Develops strategy and monitors           | Provides input, develops delivery strategies then implements  |
| <b>Golf Course Development</b>                 | Develops in line with strategy           | Provides input and implements through course operational lead |

This list should not be considered exhaustive and will need to be adapted to reflect the areas covered at your club, but provides a solid foundation from which you can formulate a version that ensures all of your areas of responsibility are sufficiently covered.

Within your structure there is a role to play for additional committees, working groups and key members of your workforce who all support in more topic specific areas.

## MORE INFO



A more detailed breakdown which takes into account the type of club you operate can be found in our resource hub.

## ACTIVITY

List the areas outlined in this table to map out how this looks at your club. Do they match?



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## STAGE 1 CHECKLIST

Assess your position for this stage by utilising these questions.

# STAGE 1

Legal Structure | Mandatory Policies  
| Risk Management

**AN ORGANISATION THAT OPERATES IN THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY FOR THEM, UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDAMENTAL OBLIGATIONS OF OPERATING IN THEIR SECTOR TO CREATE A SOLID FOUNDATION FROM WHICH TO BUILD**





In the performance of sport, those that perform at a high level can only get there if they master the basics – and exactly the same principles apply in governance.

As part of the process of improving your governance, it is critical to ensure you are building from solid foundations, starting with the following key sections;

## LEGAL STRUCTURE

The legal structure of your club is how it is viewed in the eyes of the law. It is important that the structure is one that best suits your needs now and in the future. Golf clubs will take different legal forms dependant on their size, operating model or business priorities.

Ensuring the right structure is in place should enable the club to fulfil its objectives and also defines what level of protection is provided for those involved with the club.

Beyond understanding what structure is right, it is then important to have governing documentation which allows the club to evolve and achieve its purpose, reviewed regularly to confirm it is able to keep up with the demands of constant market changes.



Structure Options

Incorporation Guidance

Governing Documentation

Charitable Status

## MANDATORY POLICIES

These are the policies you must have in place in order to open your doors and can be split between what is required by law, and what the industry you operate in requires from you.

They exist to ensure the overall safety and protection of customers and the workforce, whilst also upholding the integrity and image of the sector an organisation is based in.

Without them, a club risks facing legal challenges, fines or potentially having to cease trading, so it is vital these not only exist but also are kept up-to-date and implemented by those responsible within the organisation. Those laid out below include legal requirements, minimum standards and mandatory terms of England Golf affiliation.



Health, Safety and Fire

GDPR

F&B Compliance

Employment

Safeguarding

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Member Disciplinary

Handicapping and Rules of Golf

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Establishing risk policies and strategies is a critical element set in the foundation of your club. Risk is an everyday part of any organisation and managing it effectively is essential if funds and assets are to be protected.

Managing risk means reducing the likelihood or impact of any identified risk whilst putting in place contingency plans in case a risk materialises.

At its core sits a risk register - a document that identifies and evaluates the risks that could directly impact the day-to-day running and sustainability of the organisation which should be reviewed and updated regularly.



Effective risk management

Insurance

Cyber Security

Conflicts of Interest

Anti-Bribery



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# TERMS OF AFFILIATION

**At the core of England Golf’s role as the national governing body for amateur golf, it is our mission to lead, support, inspire and deliver for our community of golfers, golf clubs and counties.**

## Our four guiding principles are to:

**LEAD** through strong governance and integrity

**ENERGISE** and support the golfing community

**DELIVER** a more inclusive and accessible sport

**INSPIRE** current and future generations

A fundamental responsibility that we have is to not only protect golf’s image and integrity, but promote it as a safe, inclusive and accessible sport for all to play and enjoy.

This is why we prioritise supporting affiliated clubs and counties in implementing and maintaining suitable policies and procedures as mandatory terms of affiliation.

### Safeguarding Policies and Procedures



Through supporting clubs in achieving and maintaining the SafeGolf accreditation, the golf community can collectively ensure that minimum safeguarding standards are met, as recommended by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU).

This promotes that clubs are safe places for children and vulnerable adults to learn, play and enjoy golf, through effective policy, consistent procedures, staff and volunteer training and essential DBS checks.

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Policy



In having a suitable, up-to-date ED&I policy, golf clubs can both set expectations of inclusive behaviour, processes and standards, and promote their adherence to the Equality Act (2010) and their commitment to tackle any form of discrimination.

We support clubs in implementing a suitable policy through providing a template and guidance as to what must be included.

## Member Disciplinary Procedures



To align with their ED&I and safeguarding policies, as well as other club rules and codes of conduct, it is vital that a golf club has a set of robust and repeatable set of disciplinary procedures to ensure that issues can be dealt with effectively and consistently.

We support clubs in providing guidance as to what should be included in a disciplinary procedure and have a full template to be utilised to ensure that the criteria is met.

## Compliance with the WHS™ Rules of Handicapping



Within club rules and/or their constitution documents, golf clubs must agree to comply with the WHS™ rules of handicapping and any conditions/discretions imposed within the system by England Golf.

An integral part of this compliance is to ensure that there is an appointed “Competitions and Handicapping Committee” as required under the rules of golf and the rules of handicapping, which shall have control of competition and handicapping matters at the golf club.

## Recognising the Rules of Golf as set by The R&A



Within club rules and/or their constitution documents, golf clubs must agree to recognise The R&A as the body responsible for the rules of golf and amateur status, and to abide by them in the competitive playing of the game.

Where breaches of the rules take place, county bodies and England Golf are a part of the appeal process, set out in the disciplinary procedures.

The QR codes provide more information related to each of the terms, supplying you with templates and guidance to help. In addition, our team of dedicated Club Support Officers are available to provide hands on assistance across all areas.





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## STAGE 2 CHECKLIST

Assess your position for this stage by utilising these questions

# STAGE 2

Organisation Structure | Financial Processes | Evaluation & Review

**CREATING A ROBUST AND APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE FROM WHICH AN ORGANISATION CAN GROW, EMBEDDING PRACTICES WHICH SUPPORT FUTURE BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY**



With a solid foundation, a structure can be created and supported by systems and processes, enabling your organisation to achieve its vision by delivering on the required objectives.

This stage focusses on setting up your club for success by firstly exploring how it operates, and then considering the leadership structure which steers the club forward. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and the scale of your operation operation, along with your overall ambitions, will determine the approach you need to take.

## ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

No matter what their legal status, golf clubs are generally similar in top level organisational structure. There should be two key groups: one that views from a strategic perspective and another that drives operational aspects.

The success of a club will largely depend on that leadership team working effectively – both independently and as a group. Any committees and working groups that support play an important role and, although this will vary across different club types, they are a central part of the structure.

Whilst there are standard positions you are likely to see at all clubs, a club's structure is bespoke to them and should be reflective of their specific strategic and operational requirements.



Successful Club Structures

Strategic Groups

Effective Club Groups

Codes of Conduct and Accountability

## FINANCIAL PROCESSES

Managing your money is an essential part of good club governance. The financial policies and procedures of an organisation are an important part of the overall control framework. Ensuring that these are understood by the Board, workforce and members (if appropriate) helps to make certain the clubs finances are being managed effectively.

Having robust and well documented policies in place is the foundation of being financially secure - regardless of the size or type of club you are. Whilst these may differ slightly from club-to-club there are a number of core processes which will likely be needed by all.



Monitoring Financial Performance

Procurement

Financial Planning and Forecasting

Financial Policies

## EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Organisations who recognise the importance of governance will also give focus to supporting the continuous improvement of their Board, meaning they can lead the organisation in the delivery of its objectives effectively.

It is important that the he Board and its supporting strategic committees regularly evaluate their own performance, both as individuals and a collective group. Evaluations should objectively and independently assess the people, experience and skills present on a Board, as well as the environment within which they operate.

More broadly, a frequent review of risks and operational effectiveness is needed to ensure the club remains on track to achieve its objectives.



Succession Planning

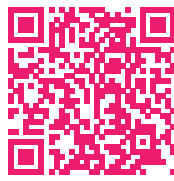
Board / Committee Evaluation

Nominations Committee

Stakeholder Engagement



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## STAGE 3 CHECKLIST

Assess your position for this stage by utilising these questions

# STAGE 3

People | Strategic Planning

**DEVELOPING A ROAD MAP FOR THE FUTURE TO PROVIDE A CLEAR DIRECTION, UTILISING A WORKFORCE WITH THE CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY TO LEAD THE ORGANISATION EFFECTIVELY**



With the appropriate structures in place, the way in which a business starts to drive itself forward is by documenting where they are going and how they will get there, best done in the form of a documented strategic plan.

Any plan is only as good as the people responsible, and their capacity to deliver it. If this element has not been considered, an organisation may struggle to get to where it aspires to be.

The level of detail included within a plan will vary from club to club and will be informed by the type and size of facility they operate from. Its success is not dependant on the size of the document or the level of detail it contains, but the sense of direction it creates.

Having effective policies and procedures in place is key, but your workforce and its structure must be aligned to how you need to operate in order to achieve your strategic goals.

## PEOPLE

A golf club may have the right structure, strategy and policies in place, but without recruiting and empowering the right people, it is highly unlikely that the club will be successful.

The workforce within a golf club is generally a combination of full-time and part-time staff, and a body of volunteers. The size of the workforce and ratio of staff to volunteers can vary significantly between clubs, making it important to recognise what is realistic for a club to achieve with the resources available.

Whilst recruiting effectively and efficiently is an important first step, the way in which individuals are onboarded, developed and supported in their roles is fundamental to the success of the organisation.



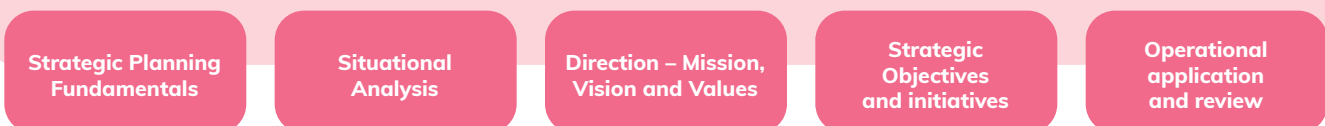
## STRATEGIC PLANNING

One of the most important questions any organisation needs to ask itself is where they see themselves in 10 years' time. That vision is the starting point from which a strategic plan is developed and outlines the goals that need to be achieved in order to get to where they want to be.

Many clubs will already have in mind the approach they are taking and the direction they are travelling, but it is important that this is well documented in a forward-looking plan.

Changes in personnel are inevitable whether they be in a clubs elected leaders or in key operational roles. Having a plan offers continuity to the business regardless of who is responsible for delivering the objectives, and without one it can result in an inconsistency of mission and stagnation.

The development process must have communication and transparency at its core, utilising the voices of customers to influence the most appropriate direction.



### ACTIVITY: START, STOP, CONTINUE

As a group spend 20 minutes each on discussing the following;

**START:**

Brainstorm activities you should start doing and what changes need to be made to support them.

**STOP:**

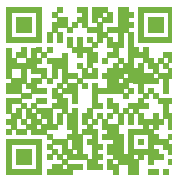
Create a list of activities or bad habits within the club that you want to stop.

**CONTINUE:**

Identify areas that are working well and need to carry on, but think about how the can be made better.



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## STAGE 4 CHECKLIST

Assess your position for this stage by utilising these questions

# STAGE 4

Business Sustainability | Communication

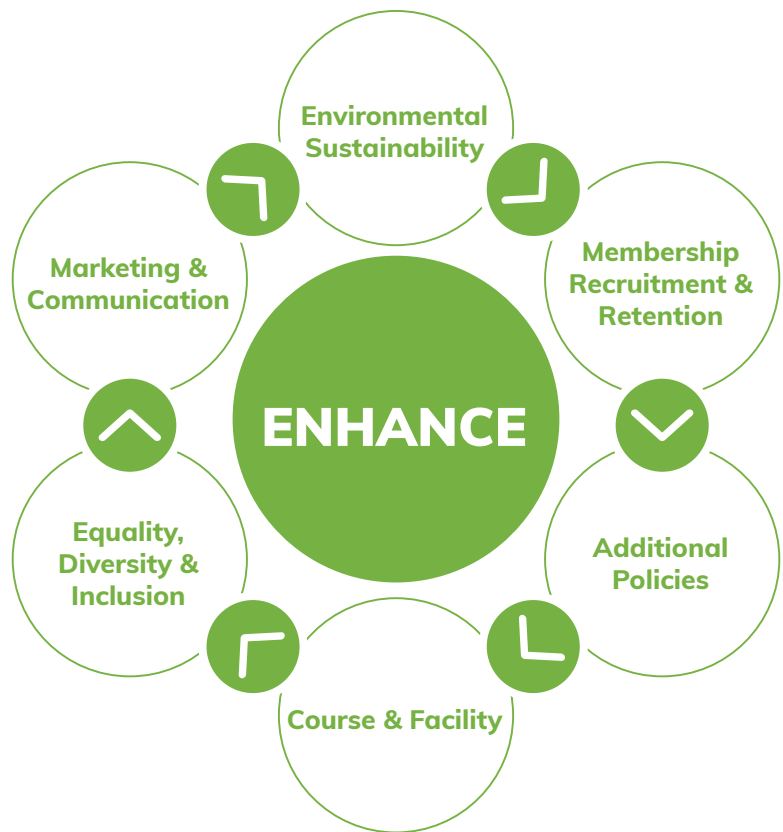
UTILISING A ROBUST AND CONSISTENT FRAMEWORK, THE ORGANISATION IS WELL POSITIONED TO CONSIDER THE BROADER ASPECTS OF THEIR GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONTINUALLY ENHANCE THEIR OFFER TO CUSTOMERS






With the organisation now on a firm footing and with the fundamental elements under control, you are now in a better position to consider the other elements of your operation, all of which can be strengthened as part of your wider governance responsibilities.

It could include a number of different aspects and likely could have connections to your long-term vision for the club. The highlighted areas below should not be considered exhaustive, and there likely will be elements that will be less applicable dependent on the type of club you operate.





**Environmental Sustainability** – as the effects of climate change take hold, golf must recognise its responsibility to adapt to the situation for the good of the game and the planet. Making a commitment to change, no matter how small, is an important first step.





**Membership Recruitment and Retention** – a loyal membership is an essential element to the long term sustainability of a club. The fundamental elements of good governance have a direct impact on your success levels in these areas.

**Additional Policies** – with the numerous challenges and changes in society adding continual pressure to club management, implementing and adopting policies helps to document your approach ensuring consistency of delivery throughout the club.

**Course and Facility** – the quality of your course and facilities has a major effect on the perception and image of your club, meaning the ongoing maintenance and development is key. Using your strategic plan, you can develop goals and actions to help deliver the quality required to sustain and grow your business.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** – having diversity within the decision-making group improves business performance. Creating diversity across your workforce, in leadership roles and within your membership is challenging, but it is worth the effort for a whole host of reasons. Clubs should prioritise being reflective of the community in which it operates.




**Marketing and Communication** – why have a great product delivered through a well-run club and not do enough to shout about it? Developed in line with your strategy, you should have annual plans providing structure to your promotion for all aspects of the club.

# PLANNING AND ACTIVATION

**When you begin to think about the governance changes required throughout your club, it can seem like a daunting task.**

Smaller and less complicated changes are likely able to be managed through a simple action plan, but more large-scale structural changes should follow a process to give you the best possible chance of success.

## Getting Started

- Is your club and its members ready for change? Results from a **members survey** will give you an indicator of the general mood and help you identify where changes may need to be made.
- Consider utilising an **external consultant** who can provide an independent and impartial review of your current position, making recommendations for the club to consider.
- Create a **positioning document** which you can use as the driver for change at your club. Include details on your background and what has got you to this point, then provide an analysis of your current situation and the need for you to change. Finally provide an overview of the possible options available to you to make changes.
- Put together a **steering group** who will help to define the process and requirements to make changes. They should have appropriate skill sets and also include representatives from across the membership – its sometimes better to have this group independent of the current Board or management committee.
- **Communicate with your members** and inform them at your earliest opportunity of the process you are about to go through. Explain why change is needed and consider sharing your positioning document or vision for the future when ready.

## Action Planning

Regardless of the size or complexity of any tasks you are undertaking, a simple action plan can help to keep you on track and maximise effectiveness.

Using headers similar to these will provide you with a straightforward and efficient approach to manage your actions.

**ACTION IDENTIFIED**  
**RESPONSIBILITY**  
**TIMESCALE**  
**STATUS**



LINKS



**POSITIONING DOCUMENT TEMPLATE**



**ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE**

# START YOUR JOURNEY



## PRINTABLE VERSION

To download a printable version and make it easier to share, follow this link

**Getting started and knowing where to begin your journey can often be the hardest part, but analysing your current position is a great way to understand the areas you need to improve in.**

The below **health check questions** will assist you in performing a high-level assessment of your governance, helping to identify the areas you are executing well, and those where changes may be required.

| Focus Area   | Linked Topics                     | Focus Area   | Linked Topics                         |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Have you defined who has responsibility for governance within the organisation and is it discussed frequently?   | <b>Start your Journey</b>         | Do you operate with a solid understanding of who leads and has overall accountability for the key elements of your operation, and who is more focussed on the day-to-day delivery?   | <b>Ownership and Responsibilities</b> |
| Have you considered establishing a governance working group that regularly reviews effectiveness in this area, leading on identifying and implementing change? | <b>Planning and Activation</b>    | Do you consider that your organisation operates in the most efficient way, and understands the fundamental legal obligations of operating a modern and forward-thinking golf club?   | <b>Stage 1</b>                        |
| Do you monitor the satisfaction of all your members and customers, using the insight gathered to help support and inform your planning and decision making?    | <b>Surveys / Data</b>             | Are you confident that your organisation is utilising the most appropriate decision-making structure which allows effective delivery of your objectives, employing processes that support your future business sustainability? | <b>Stage 2</b>                        |
| Are all changes, large or small, managed through an established process designed to take methodical steps and ensuring all connected stakeholders are engaged? | <b>Change Management</b>          | Do you work from a documented plan which is underpinned by a clear vision and core set of values, utilising a workforce with the capability and capacity to lead the organisation successfully?                                | <b>Stage 3</b>                        |
| Do you feel your organisation has a strong, recognisable identity, which is visible in the relationships and actions of all people associated with the club?   | <b>Culture</b>                    | Have you got policies and procedures in place that allow you to consider the broader aspects of your governance responsibilities ensuring you are able to continually enhance the offer to your members and customers?         | <b>Stage 4</b>                        |
| Are you confident that you can demonstrate sound governance practices in line with the Code for Sports Governance?   | <b>Code for Sports Governance</b> |  |                                       |

**This would be a great exercise to perform with leadership groups at your club – ask members of your Board or management committee, lead management role and department leads these questions, requesting just a simple Yes or No. This not only helps to identify areas of improvement, but gives you a view as to whether there is consistency of opinion amongst key personnel.**

Once you have developed a clearer view of your current position, and particularly if you haven't been able to answer Yes to any of the stage related questions, a further detailed checklist can be used to find out the specific areas that need to be worked on.



We're always on the look out for more stories and best practice we can share, so if you want us to celebrate the successes at your club get in touch with your Club Support Officer or email us directly at [clubsupport@englandgolf.org](mailto:clubsupport@englandgolf.org)

# FURTHER SUPPORT



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## The Club Support Team

All clubs have access to direct support provided by our team of **experienced and knowledgeable** Club Support Officers who are on hand to help guide you through this handbook and provide additional value as you start to identify areas of improvement. Their support can cover help in **analysing problems or issues and the creation of an action plan to prioritise change**, as well as in being an advocate for taking a new direction amongst club stakeholders.



## Resource Hub

Our online resource hub contains a range of different tools to help you through each of the stages and topic areas, ranging from **useful templates and helpful guidance**, through to **learning content and additional reading**.



## Suppliers

Our network of carefully selected **expert suppliers** helps us to expand the support we provide by giving further advice in specialist topic areas, including **health and safety, customer experience surveys and legal guidance**.



The Golf Club Managers Association (GCMA) are the leading association for Golf Club Management in the UK. Building on their proud heritage and history, they have an exciting vision for developing and shaping the future of club management roles across the industry.

Their commitment to developing and supporting members to grow, both professionally and personally, makes a positive impact throughout the game of golf.



Golf Club Managers' Association

## How Can They Help

### Professional Leadership

GCMA members have access to a wide range of different learning and development opportunities providing clubs with a professional workforce who are trained and upskilled to meet the challenges of operating in the modern-day environment.

### Regional Networking

Members have access to regional groups which provide fantastic opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of best practice – all great in helping them to drive their own clubs forward.

### Club Management Recruitment

Utilising their knowledge and understanding of the club management profession, the GCMA are well placed to support clubs with the recruitment of personnel into key leadership roles.

**CONTACT:**  
[www.gcma.org.uk](http://www.gcma.org.uk)  
or 01275 391153

To read more, access the full range of support and view all available resources, visit [www.Englandgolf.org/governance-support](http://www.Englandgolf.org/governance-support)



# SUCCESS

## STORIES

**It's no secret that success breeds success, so it's important to highlight and share stories from clubs who have put the principles of good governance into practice. Each example below is different, with each club starting from a different place, but all recognising the significance of making improvements to their governance to safeguard their future.**

If you want to read more about any of these stories, each is available to read in more detail by following the link.

### ROCHFORD HUNDRED

Rochford Hundred is a member's golf club steeped in history having originally been formed in 1893. Although they considered themselves to be in a relatively comfortable position despite a slow decline in membership numbers, in 2019 they set out on a journey to future proof the club.

Utilising insight from a members survey the club's first ever strategic plan was created and at the same time a small working group began to review their structure to assess the most appropriate operating model.

At the start of 2023 a new structure was implemented with a Board whose roles are aligned to the needs of the business, making them more effective and keeping them focussed on delivering the objectives identified in their long-term plan.



### WELWYN GARDEN CITY

Welwyn Garden City Golf Club is a members' golf club that is celebrating their centenary in 2023. Operating as a Company Limited by Guarantee, the club's Board of Directors had found themselves spending too much of their time reacting to problems, and not enough time planning.

Following a governance review by an external consultant they identified several issues, particularly centred on their governing documentation and clarification of roles and responsibilities amongst the Board and sub-committees.

They have now updated their Articles and Club Rules, with new Terms of Reference implemented, helping to improve their effectiveness and allowing for focus to be placed on moving the club forward.



# good THE insured

Owning and running a golf club means you have a number of responsibilities and risks to consider. You will need to maintain the clubhouse and golf course, ensuring they remain in premium condition for the enjoyment of your members and guests. When things don't go to plan, a club should have the confidence that their insurance policies would respond to losses in the way you expect.

Clubs should consider the need for an insurance broker, preferably a specialist in the golf sector, who can navigate the insurance market on your behalf, provide support with technical advice, and to help ensure you obtain the broadest possible insurance coverage that you can afford.

Furthermore, individual club members may be looking for peace of mind with personal liability protection for those wayward shots, or concerned about the potential financial risk, and inconvenience, if they cause damage to third party property.



**Marsh**



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF Insurance

## Golf Club insurance

Clubs have a duty of care to minimise health and safety risks for employees, members, guests, and visitors. Consideration should be given to accidental damage to the course and buildings, and damage from unforeseen weather conditions that could temporarily close the clubhouse and course, losing valuable income while repairs are carried out.

The economic climate should also be taken into account, and particularly periods that may lead to high rates of inflation. As well as increased running and maintenance costs, inflation presents a risk of underinsurance. This means that insurance policies and asset values, should be regularly reviewed to ensure you have the correct levels of protection. An insurance broker can provide support with this, as well as access to professional valuation services for added peace of mind.



## Individual affiliated member insurance

Affiliated members of England Golf and iGolf subscribers automatically receive the benefit of £10,000,000 personal liability insurance. This provides protection if found to be negligent for causing injury to another person, or damage to third party property, whilst playing, or practising golf. This cover applies whilst at any golf club, or recognised practice facility in the UK, Channel Islands, or the Isle of Man.

This benefit can also be supplemented to insure against other exposures, including loss/theft of golf clubs and personal accident protection.





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