



Forrester Park Golf Club – Member's Committee Meeting

Wednesday 13th July 2022 at 19:00 Clubhouse F2F Meeting

Attendees:

Maria Kelly - Secretary and Chair (MK)
Paul Kelly - Mens Captain (PK)
David Steel - Mens Vice Captain (DS)
Phil Yearling - Past Mens Captain (PY)
Malcolm Harlow – VETS Captain (MH)
Steve Barraclough - VETS Section (SB)
Reg Brunt – Juniors Representative (RB)
David Gillespie - Greens Committee Liaison (DG)
Mike Manning - General Committee (MM)
Kev Royan – Mens Handicap Secretary (KR)
Leo King - Forrester Park GC (LK)
Robbie Cowling - Club Owner (RC)
Nick Swanson - Head Greenkeeper (NS)
Dawn Marriott - Ladies Vice Captain (DM)
Jennine Pook - (JP)
Kev Myers - Greens Committee Liaison (KM)
Robert Morley - VETS Vice Captain (RM)

Apologies: Judy Podd - Ladies Captain (JP), Peter Waknell - Treasurer (PW)
Phil Prior - Competition Secretary (PP)

Welcome and Introductions:

MK welcomed Robbie Cowling, committee members and attendees.

Context of Meeting:

On behalf of members MK outlined the main objectives of the meeting.

1. To open dialogue with RC and establish ways to keep communication lines open between RC and members.
2. To allay the fears and speculation of members around the sale of the club and RC's plans for development.
3. To identify actions and timelines for any imminent changes.
4. To agree a date and platform for a 'Town Hall' style open forum for all members and RC.
5. To agree submission for a member's 'wishlist' for club changes and improvements.

1. Robbie Cowling's Opening Response:

RC will always be transparent, when he can - somethings cannot be divulged to all - until all deals are done. RC stressed he never sets out to upset anyone, but he has a business to run and decisions sometimes have to be made for the better good of the business and the necessary profitability.

The reason for buying Forrester Park: He needs the land to relocate his Colchester United training ground in Tiptree as the current training ground has a lot of restrictions for use, so it is not fit for purpose.

His ambition is to get planning permission for houses on the current training ground, buy additional land around Forrester Park and build a state-of-the-art training ground and skills centre, his passion is in academy football. If he cannot buy the land he needs, then his initial proposal is to reduce Forrester Park to a 9-hole golf course and utilise the land released for football training pitches.

Now he has bought Forrester Park, he is talking with the owners of the surrounding land about a purchase - the outcome of which will happen "soon", if the price is right, hopefully within the next 4 weeks. Looking at the golf club and course, it has not had the investment it needs, Nick (green keeper) and his small team have done a great job with the resources they have in keeping the course at its' best, but RC recognises help is needed to release manpower and is looking into the possibility of using remote robot mowers for fairway cutting. As an immediate investment a new storage and workshop facility is planned for machinery and green keeping staff.

A lot needs to be done to regenerate the business, for golf, weddings and social events... whatever it becomes, RC assured us when he does things he does them well and it will be the very best of facilities, including possibilities for virtual golf rooms, gym, separate facilities for golf and functions, new golf professional, new buggies, etc. it won't be done overnight and he is learning the macroeconomics of golf clubs from experienced professionals (he is personal friends with owner of Brett Vale). RC said he has the money to invest but will do this with sound planning and it will be future proofed.

The Clubhouse... it's more than tired, it's exhausted. Work will be planned to make sure all Health and Safety aspects are covered - RC has his own maintenance company which will be used to carry out the work. RC advised that not all work will be obvious or visual to members but there is a lot that needs doing behind the scenes and already remedial electrical works, guttering clearance etc. are underway.

There will be investments, looking at the catering, menus, weddings, etc., experiment with kitchen and bar opening times and development of events like the Wednesday evening comps, but it all needs to be viable and will rely on member support and uptake.

Communications... at the moment, it will be - wait and see what happens. RC will come to the quarterly committee meetings or send a representative, although if things start to happen quickly, then perhaps there will be the necessity for monthly meetings to share what is happening. RC is very happy to attend an open forum meeting in person, or via zoom to allow all members to attend and ask questions, this initial date is to be arranged within the next 4 weeks and RC suggested this could take place twice a year going forward. LK will liaise and agree a suitable time, date, and location. For now, LK is the conduit for communications between members and RC.

When asked about the branding RC said there is no immediate intention of change so members can confidently continue to use the current logo on clothing etc. In general, RC is happy for the members to continue doing things as we always have done albeit with consideration in terms of making RC aware of significant events or changes.

Note: It is unlikely there will be any significant changes within the next 2 years as planning and change of use etc. will dictate to timings and Councils are notoriously difficult and slow!

Open and friendly dialogue ensued with attendees asking RC many questions - key outcomes are detailed in action log below:

From	No.	Action	Owner	Update
Jul 13	01	Update current competition boards for all sections. Submit proposal to RC as to where we would like them positioned in the clubhouse.	MM/LK/DM/MK	
Jul 13	02	Captains of all sections are to gather feedback from members regarding their 'wishlist' for change and improvements. To be submitted to MK by 29 th July and a condensed list will be submitted to RC thereafter.	PK/SB/RB/JP/MK	
Jul 13	03	Meeting date to be set for an all members open Q&A with RC. To be arranged within the next 4 weeks, ideally to coincide with land purchase development. LK and MK to liaise to provide a few date options for RC.	LK/MK	

RC and other non-committee attendees left the meeting at this point.

2. Review of actions from last meeting:

MK advised there was nothing urgent that needed highlighting and passed on review as meeting had already taken up much time.

3. Captains Update:

Sims Bowl: PK apologised to DM for the need to cancel 2nd July date as he was unable to get 8 players to take part. PK offered to arrange another date and DM advised he should speak to JP.

Captains Day: 25th June 2022 - PK thanked everyone for their support and was pleased to confirm over £2000 was raised for his charity, it was a great day.

Club Championship: PK confirmed it will be Saturday 13th August as planned and agreed with LK there will be an all-day BBQ – details tbc. LK advised board is up and members should get their names up to ensure best level of support.

4. Treasurer Update:

PW on annual leave, all up to date accounts are available on the website.

5. Competition Update:

PP on annual leave.

6. Course Update:

NS outlined his concerns mainly alluding to the shortage of manpower and clear direction as to how things are going to be set up going forward. It was previously highlighted by RC what a good job NS and his very small team were achieving and the committee suggested he remains patient and keeps doing what he is doing. It was also agreed NS would provide his own 'wishlist' for improvements and change for the course and submit to MK to be included in the members submission to RC.

NS advised new chemicals have been purchased for the treatment of the clover on the course and the work on this has already started around the greens and on the tee boxes.

NS noted his concerns for automated mowers for the undulating fairways as there is a craft and pride in the preparation and cutting of golf course fairways, this being slightly different to flat football pitches.

NS confirmed the remedial work on the 12th and 14th tee boxes is complete and just needs plenty of good watering, this is often a struggle as there is not enough hands to stand and water with hoses.

NS said unfortunately some bunkers have been left unprepared due to lack of staffing.

It was discussed about the rabbits causing problems on the course particularly tee boxes. LK said there is an 'exterminator' due to 'work' the course - the Committee felt this has been an ongoing promise and KR suggested an alternative and effective method to reduce rabbit nuisance would be to cut away foliage from bases up to 2ft on all trees/bushes surrounding tee boxes – this gives the rabbits nowhere to hide and they don't like it!!

Based on the general feedback from NS of staff shortage the Committee offered to setup a working group to help with any specific clearing projects that are being left and would benefit from helping hands. NS will revert to DG/KM or SB if this is an option of choice. PY offered FOC paint for the tee box markers, if wanted.

7. AOB

RB said how well the Juniors are doing in the regional competitions with some players being selected for the Men's Thornton Cup and playing very well. RB also noted the reducing number of the junior players and what impact has been made by having no active Professional to filter through, we miss having a 'Craig'.

8. Date of next Meeting.

Next committee meeting date to be agreed once the all member, open forum date has been agreed.

NB. The AGM is still firm in the diary for Wednesday 28th September 7.00pm at the golf club.

Thanks all for time and for attending.

Meeting closed.