

A GOVERNANCE GUIDE FOR GOLF CLUBS

VERSION 2.0



A VISION FOR A MODERN BOARD

REFINE THIS VISION FOR YOUR GOLF CLUB...



CHAIR



VICE-CHAIR



FINANCE



HOUSE/F&B



MARKETING &
MEMBERSHIP



COURSE &
GREENS



GENERAL
MANAGER



UP TO 2 MORE DIRECTORS
(8 MAX) TO OFFER
DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.



OTHER
STAFF
WHEN
RELEVANT

STEP 1 RECRUITMENT

- > Openly recruited Board members based on the skills required, **page 18**
- > Board members are inducted and supported, **page 23**
- > Defined roles & responsibilities, **page 49**

STEP 2 STRUCTURE

- > Become incorporated, **page 40**
- > Set Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct, **page 49**
- > Set terms of office, **page 49**

STEP 3 PROCESSES

- > Sub Groups report in 7 days before, **page 13**
- > Run effective meetings six times per year, maximum 90 minutes long, **page 16**
- > Operational decisions delegated to staff (or individual directors), **page 25**

STEP 4 CULTURE

- > Create a diverse Board to reflect the club membership and the local community, considering age, gender and ethnicity, **page 18**
- > An open and transparent culture, **page 33**
- > Be focused strategically with a long term plan. Monitoring and evaluating progress along the way, **page 34**

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GOLF CLUB GOVERNANCE FOREWORD

If asked to define governance in golf clubs, there will be as many different answers as there are golf clubs in the United Kingdom. This is entirely understandable, as each members' club is governed by their own constitution, traditions, practices and ambitions.

Strategic decisions are taken by club Management Committees or Boards, made up of volunteers elected by their fellow members to lead the club. These bodies are often referred to by different titles, but we have used the term Board in this guide. There are not many industries in which strategic decisions are made by the customers, but that is the peculiar nature of governance in members' golf clubs.

This guide to good club governance, now in its second edition, is the result of collaboration between the industry partners listed below. They all recognise the crucial role that good governance plays in success for our sport and our industry.

The guide is not a replacement for one-to-one support from partners, neither does it provide specific legal or accountancy guidance. But it does provide tools, activities, discussion points and best practice for clubs to consider.

It sets out 9-holes of Excellent Governance for Golf Clubs as a blueprint for you to follow, starting with questions that will quickly tell you whether you can improve.

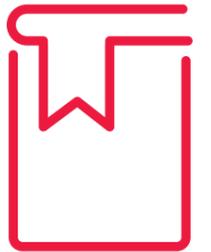
How to use the guide

We encourage you to:

- > Commit to and work through the principles and advice set out in the guide.
- > Seek one-to-one support from your membership bodies to adopt best practice.
- > Provide feedback on additional governance topics you would like help with.

We hope this guide will provide you with the knowledge, insight and tools to help you improve your governance and secure a successful future for future generations at your club.

HOLE 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNANCE



Why is good governance fundamental to golf clubs?

A golf club is run by an elected Board which has the responsibility to make decisions that will benefit the members and ensure a sustainable future for the club.

The Board should interact and work productively with a range of different people including paid staff, fellow volunteers and club members.

Having good governance in place (processes, systems and practices) will help to ensure accountability of the Board and transparency of its actions to the membership.

Golf clubs that focus on their governance practices are often ahead of the curve and in a strong position to face the ever-changing challenges that emerge, including shifts in membership preferences, changes to local government policies, statutory obligations and evolving communications platforms.

Excellent governance can be defined as:

- > Putting in place policies, procedures and processes to meet legal requirements.
- > Taking responsibility for setting your own standards, driving your own improvement.
- > Continually developing the culture of your organisation.

WHAT ARE THE **BENEFITS** OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR MY CLUB?

- > Well governed clubs will be sustainable for the future – financially and administratively.
- > It establishes the club's purpose, which will drive decision making.
- > A business like approach to delivering the club's aims.
- > It helps recruit future Board members, as well as staff.
- > Industry surveys have proved that a well-run club is key to membership satisfaction (second only to the golf course).
- > Many funders, commercial sponsors and golfing partners require organisations to meet minimum governance standards and legal requirements to ensure their investment is protected and they are providing money to well-run organisations.
- > It helps organisations to make the best use of people's skills, and avoid being totally dependent on one person.
- > It creates an organisation which is well regarded by its stakeholders.



Discussion Point: **Do you discuss club governance?**

Is governance a new concept in your club? Many people are confused or put-off talking about this subject and as a result the club could be missing out on the opportunity to be more effective. When was the last time your Board spoke about governance? Could someone external provide an objective view on how to improve decision making practices?



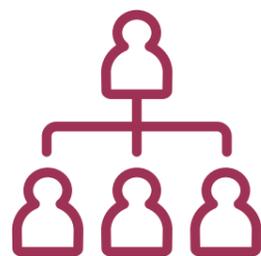
Activity: **9-Holes – some quick club governance questions**

Use these quick questions when considering excellent governance within your club. Share them with your Board and compare answers:

1. Can every member of your Board easily and consistently define why the club exists and what makes it special, standing out from the rest?
2. Has the club engaged widely with members to find out what they think makes the club special, and why they want to retain their membership?
3. Do you have a plan showing where your club wants to be in five years?
4. Have you created and communicated realistic and measurable short term goals that will focus your Board on achieving your plan?
5. Do your staffing levels and Board positions reflect the priorities of your plan and have you given each position a modern, relevant role description and ideal skill set?
6. Is the agenda and supporting paperwork always well prepared and circulated at least seven days in advance, making for effective 90 minute Board meetings?
7. Are Board vacancies widely advertised to highlight the skills required and do you pro-actively seek suitable candidates, rather than rely on a popularity contest?
8. Has your Board created and adhered to a written set of rules for meetings and do members sign a code of conduct confirming their commitment to effective business-like practices?
9. Are your club policies and plans based on providing customer (member) satisfaction and is this tested annually, with corrective action taken in line with your plan?

HOLE 2

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



No matter what their legal status, golf clubs are generally similar in organisational structure. There are usually two key groups: the Board and the senior management team of staff.

The success of a club will largely depend on that leadership team working well – both independently and together. Central to this is the work of the Board and its various sub-committees.

If the club is incorporated the individuals on the Board are referred to as the directors of the company.

The size and scope of a Board and its sub-committees will vary and can often be influenced by the scale of operations at the club, and the resources it can call upon. The following diagram outlines a typical set up and structure.



Activity: Your club's organisational structure

Create a similar diagram for your club. Be sure to include the various sub-committees, club (operational) committees and the staffing structure.

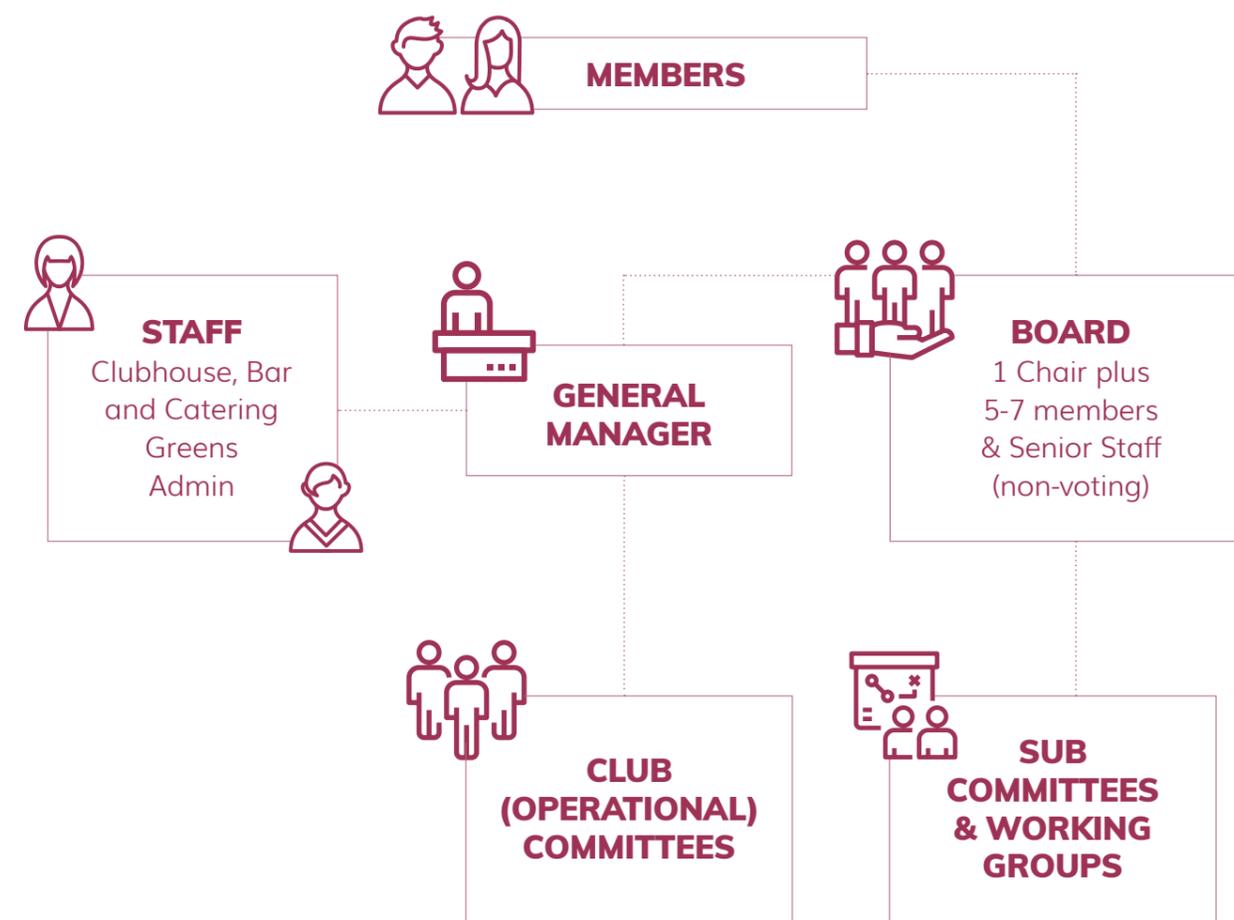
Are they all still relevant? Have changes shifted over the years sufficiently to warrant a revised structure? Are there gaps you need to fill to fulfil the club's obligations and potential?



Discussion Point: Staff on committees

If your club has a senior management team of staff you must establish their role within the decision making structure and process.

If your club wants to have the best information on which to base decisions, senior staff should be encouraged to attend the monthly Board meetings. They will provide much needed insight based on their years of training and experience. If you choose not to involve senior staff in these discussions, what would be your explanation to the membership?



THE BOARD

The Board is the primary strategic decision-making committee.

It is the most high-profile of the committees in a club, but it is unlikely to be the only one. In all but the smallest of clubs, the range of activities, scale of operations, and delivery of specific projects will necessitate other committees to complement the Board and deliver their strategic decisions.

Composition of Board

The ideal number of members on a club's Board is often discussed. The simple way is to ask how many key roles exist at the club that are fundamental to its success, and should come together on a regular basis.

There are many examples of club committees that have grown over time to a dozen or more representatives. This makes for unwieldy and lengthy meetings that often fail to focus on the key strategic decisions facing the club.



Discussion Point: Creating a modern, strategic Board

The role of any Board is to make strategic and policy decisions to ensure the organisation can be run effectively and sustainably for the long-term.

In busy and long-established golf club governance situations this can sometimes be forgotten; the Board may enter into operational discussions that should be dealt with at sub-committee, working-group, or operational committee level.

Each club will decide on the ideal number to sit on their Board, but it is difficult to justify more than half a dozen areas of responsibility that warrant a seat at the decision-making table every month.

A typical Board structure may look like this:

- Club chairperson
- Club vice-chairperson
- Finance representative
- Course representative
- Clubhouse representative
- Membership representative
- Another strategic representative

Does your Board need to review who is part of this group?

CLUB SUB-COMMITTEES

Sub-committees should be created by the Board to assist them in carrying out their duties. The primary purpose of sub-committees is to focus on specific areas of the club and make recommendations to the Board for approval. Common examples are finance, course, clubhouse and marketing.

Sub-committees will usually include members of the Board as well as people invited to join for their specific expertise.

Whilst sub-committees might have some clearly defined delegated authority they should be accountable to the Board and should be chaired by a Board member to ensure continuity. Sub-committee members should understand that they do not have authority over the management of staff. The terms of reference for the group should also highlight the importance of working to an established strategy and delivering against clear objectives.



Activity: Defining Committees

Evaluate which category each committee / group at your club falls into (Sub Committee, Operational Committee or Working Group), before determining the optimal level of resource and skills required for the group to meet its objectives.



Activity: Which sub-committees to have?

The remit of the Board may feel wide reaching, but there will be perhaps three to five key activities that underpin the success of the whole club.

What are your club's core activities? Sub-committees must be set up for these activities to keep the club focused on its priorities. They should be resourced and scaled depending on their importance. The Match & Handicap Committee may need many more volunteers than the Finance Committee, because it is often also an operational committee (see below). However, the Finance Committee will benefit from having more than one pair of eyes looking at the crucial financial statements that underpin everything at the club. Have you resourced your committees to reflect their importance?

OPERATIONAL COMMITTEES

These will be established by the Board or by management staff to help run the operational aspects of the club. An example could be a competition committee whose remit can range from simply the allocation of handicaps, right through to the preparation and delivery of all club competitions and opens.

Another example may be the sustainability committee, with members whose passions for the subject have encouraged them to commit time to this evolving area of interest.

Membership of the operational committees can include Board members, but will probably be made up of other people, guided by the general manager to carry out specific duties to benefit their club.

If Board members are appointed to operational committees they must be aware that they have a dual function for the club. Their role on an operational committee is to implement and do the work, as opposed to their role on the Board, which is to oversee the work. Operational committees will generally report to the general manager.

WORKING GROUPS

These may be established for short term projects by the Board. They are similar to sub-committees in that they are accountable to the Board, which can determine their membership.

Examples may be Celebration, Special Events, or Course Renovation.

Unlike a sub-committee, a working group is established to deliver a specific project or need for the club, for a specified period of time. After the project is complete, the working group will not continue to meet or exist. Working groups mean clubs can engage people with relevant skills for specific projects.



Discussion Point: Volunteer workload and priority areas

If it is proving difficult to recruit volunteers, consider what you can do to make roles more attractive and how to promote opportunities.

Demonstrating the opportunity to help improve a specific area of the club may motivate people to volunteer.



Discussion Point: Members' role in club governance

You might think that most golf club members have little interest in the governance of the club. However, according to the biggest ever survey of golf club members in the UK (conducted by Scottish Golf), well over 20,000 placed 'club management' as the second most important aspect at the club. It was second only in importance to the golf course.

It is important to remember that:

- Members own the club and so are ultimately responsible for the strategic direction it takes
- Members elect individuals to sit on the committee to represent their interests and to execute their strategy
- Members clearly care about the success of their club and consider the management of it to be a high priority.

Does your golf club have mechanisms in place to listen to the views of its members?

AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE

Establishing or developing committees (Board, sub-committees, operational or working groups) that are as effective as possible is of the utmost importance. It is the foundation that allows good work to happen.

An effective committee:

- > Has an appointed chairperson.
- > Empowers the chairperson to enforce agreed meeting rules created annually by the committee to increase effectiveness.
- > Implements a mandatory induction programme and offers educational opportunities.
- > Works from a well-documented strategic plan, with supporting financial information.
- > Embraces its responsibility to achieve the SMART goals established at the start of each year within the overall strategic plan.
- > Documents and implements a clear set of core policies and procedures.
- > Embraces a set of job or role descriptions that clearly establish accountability and authority.
- > Is clear on the different responsibilities of paid staff and appointed volunteers.
- > Schedules a minimum of four committee meetings a year, including one dedicated to the review of the strategic plan and goals of the organisation. Meetings should be carried out in an environment and atmosphere that recognises the contribution of volunteer members.

- > Undertakes an annual evaluation of committee performance, involving external input.
- > Manages a staggered rotation system with a minimum/maximum term of office.
- > Embraces a diverse Nominations Committee to promote volunteer opportunities to every segment of the golfing market place and then identifies and attracts representatives, based on their skillset and experience.



Activity: What is an effective committee?

How many of these statements does your club satisfy?

What could you do over the next three years to ensure that you meet them all?

Terms of reference

Every committee, from the Board to operational committees should have terms of reference which will often be guided by the club constitution. This is the foundation upon which their work can be carried out. Their goal is to:

- > Clarify the committee's purpose and activities.
- > Set out how the committee members are appointed.
- > Define the limits of authority on spend and activities.
- > Outline the roles and responsibilities of committee members.
- > Include reporting frameworks so there is sound oversight by the Board and transparent communication between each sub-committee.



Activity: Reviewing terms of reference

Set aside some time to undertake a review of the clubs terms of reference, involve the committee members to gain their insights, and identify ways to communicate with them more widely and improve the focus and importance of your committees.

You may also want to revisit the constitution to ensure it is up to date, and supports the club's aims.

Code of conduct

A committee's effectiveness is determined by who sits on it, what it does and how it acts. Many organisations adopt a code of conduct for their Board and committee members to help regulate and manage their behaviour. This is sometimes known as a behavioural framework and should be linked to the organisation's values.

A code of conduct can help to foster an environment where committee members feel they can openly debate matters and are clear about how meetings are run and what is expected of them. The chair of the committee also has a key role in creating the right environment and running meetings effectively.



Discussion Point: Utilising a code of conduct

There will, inevitably, be points when a committee meeting strays 'off-track'.

Given that the room is full of volunteers, there is often a reluctance for a committee chair to be seen to criticise those volunteers and bring the meeting back on track.

How prepared is your committee chair to intervene, and would they feel more empowered by a code of conduct? If a committee signs up to a code of conduct, they are empowering the chair to intervene and those moments are far less awkward when seen as simply ensuring effective governance.

HOLE 3

RECRUITING THE RIGHT PEOPLE ON YOUR COMMITTEES



An organisation's success or failure ultimately depends on the performance of its governing body. A well-balanced Board, with an appropriate mix of skills and experience, and sufficient diversity to explore complex issues from different angles, will help ensure its success.

Getting the right people into the right roles is critical to your club's success. Planning for the recruitment of members on to your Board is therefore time well spent.

Recruitment is not without its challenges. Some members may be reluctant to join the club's governing body because of concerns over the time it will take, the responsibilities involved and the challenges they will face. However, these concerns can be alleviated through good recruitment practice and by implementing good governance procedures.

By recruiting high quality volunteers with the right skillsets, operating with effective governance practices, it will become considerably easier to attract the right volunteers in the future.

So, how do you get the right people taking on the positions in your committee?

Creating Effective, Diverse Boards

When looking at the composition of the Board it is important to consider diversity and whether the Board adequately reflects the different perspectives among your club's membership.

The benefits of a diverse board are:

- Diverse Boards make better decisions as they are based on a wider 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.
- Boards which represent their customer base understand what their wants, needs and constraints are.
- A visibly diverse board can improve the perception of the golf club in the community.

Creating a diverse board 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. A good starting point is to evaluate if your current Board reflects the balance of your club membership - age, gender, golfing ability, social background - or, if you are seeking to increase membership in your club, the targeted demographics.

The home unions recommend that in order to demonstrate you are a truly egalitarian club, there should be representation of at least 30% of both genders.

Checklist: Committee recruitment

To help you to get the right people on your committees you should consider the following as priorities:

- ✓ Undertake skills-based recruitment.
- ✓ Establish role descriptions for committee positions.
- ✓ Establish committee member values.
- ✓ Establish a Nominations Committee.
- ✓ Create a succession plan.

SKILLS-BASED RECRUITMENT

To help identify the best candidate for the position there should be a role description which lists the technical abilities, experience and knowledge required.

For example; a house chair may need to have experience from the hospitality industry.

In addition each representative, regardless of role, should demonstrate complementary 'soft' skills such as:

- Listening – to understand each other's perspectives and promote healthy debate.
- Communication – oral and written, enabling clear, concise and constructive communication, especially in meetings.
- Analysis – the ability to prepare for meetings by understanding the key issues and asking constructive questions.
- Demonstration of club values – lead by example with the values and leadership behaviour visible to staff, members and visitors.
- Integrity and confidentiality - keep in confidence the issues, discussions and actions of the Board.
- Understanding of the collective responsibility owed to the club and the membership.

Co-opting for Committee Roles

Co-opting can fall into one of two categories: The most common example is to replace a member of the committee who is no longer able to serve their term of office. This place is filled by invitation of the existing members of the committee in-line with the constitution of your club. This newly co-opted member assumes all the responsibilities of the previous postholder

The second example may be, when the committee co-opt additional members with specific skillsets for special purposes. This is to assist the club to address a specific challenge or opportunity, and your club constitution will guide you with regard to the eligibility and authority.

Role descriptions

Role descriptions should be used to recruit, appoint and guide the Board and sub-committee members. They should provide clarity to members on their function and outline the expectations of the roles, including term of office.



Activity: Creating a role description

Whilst template role descriptions are available through your industry partners, it is good practice to tailor these so that they are specific to your club. By doing this, they will remain relevant and engaging for prospective candidates. Start the process by asking the current committee members to provide a list of their duties. Consider giving them ownership of the document as part of their role to find a suitable successor.

ESTABLISHING COMMITTEE MEMBER VALUES

When recruiting new people for committees it is important that they have a common set of values and attributes so decisions are made in the best interest of the club. They also need skills and knowledge to help the club reach its strategic ambitions and objectives.

Checklist: The Nolan Principles

The seven principles of public life, known as the Nolan Principles, were defined by the Committee for Standards in Public Life. You may wish to use these to define the values expected of your committee members.

> Selflessness

Act solely in the club interest. Do not gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

> Integrity

Do not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in their work.

> Objectivity

Act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. This may include making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.

> Accountability

Be accountable for their decisions and actions to the club and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their role.

> Openness

Be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider club interest clearly demands it.

> Honesty

Be truthful. They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their club duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts that arise.

> Leadership

Promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Establishing your club values can be an ideal way to help identify the most suitable candidates that will represent your club. The volunteers you select should reflect the type of club that you are, and the values you would like the club to be known for.

A NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Rather than relying upon volunteers to emerge, successful clubs identify their committee members based on a set of criteria, and a Nominations Committee can be created to help identify potential candidates.

A Nominations Committee should reflect the diversity you are trying to achieve at Board level. Having a Nominations Committee does not exclude other candidates from applying, but should ensure that each vacancy has at least one candidate who has been picked for their ability to contribute to the club in that specific role.

One benefit of using a Nominations Committee, is that the representatives on that group ensure that every member is made aware of the volunteering opportunities that exist to serve the club's interests. Once the opportunities have been promoted widely, it is then best to select based on skills.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Committee members should not be expected to hold a role at the club forever. There are examples where roles have been held by individuals for repeated terms - either by choice or necessity - to the detriment of the club.

Succession planning is the process of looking beyond the current incumbent and preparing for a time when they will not fulfil that role.

Undertaking succession planning will:

- > Enable a smooth handover of key positions.
- > Develop a more appealing environment for volunteers and creates a pathway for volunteer progression.
- > Provide continuity for the club and ensure the service levels are maintained.
- > Improve the club culture and help the club to recruit and support the most skilled volunteers available.
- > Develop and prepare successors, which in turn can enhance role satisfaction and retention.
- > Support the development of more effective recruitment strategies.

Checklist: Committee support and performance

The people on the committees should be supported and developed to be the best they can be. This can be achieved by:

- ✓ Committee induction and support.
- ✓ Evaluating committee performance.



Discussion Point: Term length

Two terms, each of three years, is recommended to allow a volunteer sufficient time to fulfil their role effectively. This means an individual will serve on the committee for a maximum of six years before stepping down and allowing someone else to contribute. It is important to keep continuity on the Board and therefore it is a good idea to stagger terms so that only one third of the Board is replaced and refreshed each year.



Activity: Club succession planning

List the full range of Board and sub-committee roles you have, together with their official term. Next detail the current incumbent, their current tenure length and the remaining term that they have. Finally, list the successor you have in place for when the term concludes. If you do not have a successor detail the steps you will take to get one.

BOARD MEMBER INDUCTION

All clubs will have an annual turnover of committee members and should provide support to help them have a productive and enjoyable start to their term in office.

A suitable induction for a new committee member may include:

- > A handover period with the previous incumbent of the role.
- > Scheduled meetings with key people in their area of involvement (e.g. meet the greenstaff).
- > A new committee member pack containing things like plans, policies and governing documents, the previous 12-months of meeting notes, profiles of fellow committee members and staff.
- > A dedicated informal 'getting to know you' meeting for all committee members and senior staff - perhaps including a game of golf.
- > Invitation to attend relevant training or networking events - such as those put on by golf bodies.

Election to the Board or one of the club's sub-committees should demand a half day or full day induction to ensure that the volunteer is comfortable with their remit and ready to hit the ground running at their first meeting. This is also an excellent opportunity for the club captain and club manager to get to know the new volunteer and let them see behind the scenes of club operations.



Activity: Creating a committee induction

A committee induction does not have to be a burden. It can be a fun opportunity for committees to get together informally and reflect on what makes the club they volunteer for so special. A day spent discussing many aspects of the club will set the tone for the year ahead, and can include a full tour of the premises (including back of house and greenkeeping sheds), an opportunity to engage with the senior staff and some informal social time such as a meal or a few holes of golf.

MANAGING COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE

It is important that the Board and sub-committees evaluate their own performance, both as individuals and collectively. This can also identify changes that could help the Board to achieve better results.

Committee evaluations are best where strengths are recognised and can be built upon; but also where weaknesses are identified and addressed.

There are no hard and fast rules about how committee evaluation should be carried out. However, there are several factors worth considering:

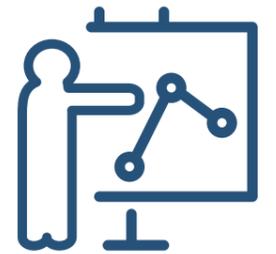
- Evaluations need to be a genuine exercise of exploring areas for improvement.
- Evaluation requires a positive attitude to change and improvement. It has no value if it is viewed as a 'tick-box' exercise where everyone ticks the 'we are doing well' box without exploring potential areas for improvement.
- Evaluations need to be specific for the organisation. Each organisation should evolve a process that is right for it.
- Evaluations should reflect the organisation's current stage of development, future plans and its complexity.
- Evaluations need to allow for feedback from members and staff. It is important to recognise how the performance of the committees impact on the members and staff of the organisation. To do this the organisation needs to decide how to get feedback from the members and staff – either throughout the evaluation or towards the end of the process.



Discussion Point: Underperforming committee members

Sometimes addressing a weakness may create a challenging environment such as needing to ask an individual committee member to step down for the good of the organisation. If this is framed with evidence from a committee evaluation it may make the conversation easier. Are you prepared to undertake that difficult process? Would you consider bringing in a third-party to assist with the honest process of committee evaluations?

HOLE 4 WORKING WITH STAFF



Golf is a sport blessed with clubs of all sizes – from those where the management and day-to-day running is done almost exclusively by volunteers, to those with a large number of staff and a manager for each department.

In most clubs there will be staff members who fulfil a management role – whether it is in their title or not. These individuals manage the day-to-day running of club operations, such as head greenkeeper, office administrator, bar person or a PGA professional.

The titles and role descriptions that these people have will vary from club to club but one thing is certain - it is critical that the relationship between these staff and the Board is clearly defined and all are working in the best interests of the club to achieve mutual goals.

The staff therefore have a crucial role to play in effective collaborative governance. As described elsewhere in this document, the staff should be called upon to provide insight and expertise to best support decision-making. It is important to note that presence in the committee room rarely extends to a member of staff having a vote at meetings.

The role of the staff is to guide the decision makers by providing them with high quality reports which include recommendations based on industry evidence and expertise. Doing this generates a much greater sense of partnership and co-operation between staff and volunteers, and also helps attract additional volunteers who can see that the staff are there to handle the 'heavy lifting'.

The senior member of staff in most clubs is the general manager. Again there are multiple job titles that cover a variety of different types of manager in the club industry.

Checklist: Keys to establishing a good working relationship with staff

- ✓ Clarity of accountability – who is accountable for decisions is one of the most common grey areas in clubs. By clearing up where the 'buck stops' you will have a more effective team approach to resolving the club's challenges.
- ✓ An organisational hierarchy will provide a clear understanding of the chain of command, which is particularly important to employees who need to know who their boss is, and who it is not.
- ✓ Set targets for the staff, and make it clear that you are here to support them to achieve those targets.
- ✓ Hold the staff accountable to deliver on those targets, and remind them they are your targets too.
- ✓ Good communication – formal and informal communication is the key.
- ✓ The Board is committed to conducting formal reviews and evaluations of senior management staff performance, leading to training and development opportunities.

GENERAL MANAGER

Larger clubs may have a general manager to manage their day-to-day operations. The general manager is the de facto CEO and is responsible for the recruitment and management of the employees, under the direction of the Board.

Today a general manager can be expected to:

- > Maintain buildings and infrastructure.
- > Have a working knowledge of agronomy.
- > Provide golf and competitions for members and visitors.
- > Employ a team of employees and contractors.
- > Exercise marketing skills to promote the club locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally.
- > Run a successful bar and catering service.
- > Manage the club's finances prudently and proficiently.
- > Be abreast of all current legislation.
- > Run a large estate.

The role differs greatly from club to club which means that there is no one single job specification for the role.

It is therefore of paramount importance for the Board to understand the priority areas of the business they expect the general manager to lead; the skills, knowledge and experience they are seeking; and educational expectations they have for the person.

> Honorary secretary/part-time manager and/or volunteers

A club's financial position can dictate that a part-time or even voluntary manager is the only option open to them. If the club can operate, in general, without any visible shortcomings and, provided there is adequate cover during busy periods and emergencies, the members may be content with this management option.

> Full-time manager

Clubs are demanding more of their manager in the increasingly competitive and challenging business environment. A full time appointment can be seen as essential to the efficient management of the modern golf club, ensuring the necessary time is devoted to the overall objectives and providing a satisfactory customer experience.

> Qualified Full Time Manager

Most occupations of the magnitude of a golf club general manager, essentially a managing director or chief executive, have qualifications that reflect the job role. To be a professional manager, a thorough understanding of all the disciplines involved is necessary, supported by a recognised qualification. The qualified manager will be fully committed to continuous personal development and, through membership of a managers' association, will keep abreast of industry developments through seminars, conferences and networking. A qualified manager will allow the Board or owners to concentrate fully on governing the organisation and delivering the strategic goals by delegating, with confidence, the day-to-day responsibility to the general manager.

COURSE MANAGER / HEAD GREENKEEPER

The golf course is the primary asset owned by any club, the place where customers spend the majority of their time, and the most important factor in member satisfaction. It is the area of greatest expenditure and the most publicly critiqued aspect of any club.

As the old adage goes – a club with 500 members will have 500 greenkeepers. This is the unfortunate truth for the staff who are the actual greenkeepers at your club.

Greenkeeping is the oldest of golf's professions. Greenkeepers undertake years of training and qualifications in agronomy, turf science, machinery operations and irrigation systems as well as the management of staff and finance in order to maintain the course they provide.

Your club Board and sub-committee responsible for the golf course have a central role in establishing the strategic direction for your golf course. Like any other aspect of the club, the ambition should be to establish an achievable and sustainable, long-term strategic plan based on a sound appreciation of the course infrastructure, available resources and the skillset of the greenstaff. To achieve this the Board needs to engage with appropriate stakeholders (e.g. via a customer survey), and by seeking appropriate expert input from those who have experience in managing golf courses (start by asking your greenstaff).

Critical to this is having a skilled workforce and therefore recruiting the right staff is essential. The British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association is a key port of call in this regard.

<https://www.bigga.org.uk/careers/employing-a-greenkeeper.html>

When the strategic direction of your golf course is established the primary role shifts to the course manager, as a member of your staff, reporting to their direct line manager. The Board and Green Committee then have a duty to avoid becoming operational and remain focused on their strategic responsibilities, as well as providing the support needed by the course manager to communicate the direction of the club's primary asset.

By doing this, you will build a stronger relationship with your greenstaff, provide them the clarity they need when presenting the course, and allow them the opportunity to use their expertise.

PGA PROFESSIONAL OR DIRECTOR OF GOLF

A PGA professional has received formal education and training to the highest level in their field. That training and education has been specifically designed to empower them to deliver support and services to enhance your customers' experience, and therefore grow and retain business. For more information around the role of the PGA professional and the impact they can have at your club please follow the link below:

www.pga.info/growing-the-game/why-employ-a-pga-professional/the-roles-of-a-pga-professional.aspx

PGA professionals command a variety of skills and competencies, therefore it is essential that a club identifies the roles and responsibilities required from them. This will allow you to recruit an individual whose skills and competencies align to the objectives and aspirations of your club.

A PGA professional may be an employee, a worker or a self-employed contractor. Correctly recognising status is a statutory requirement covered by employment legislation. Accurately identifying status will help you determine the rights of the individual and the obligations that you have towards them. This, in turn, will determine the contract/service level agreement (SLA) that exists between you and the PGA professional. Please ensure you seek professional legal advice regarding the employment status of your PGA professional and the contract / SLA legitimacy.

Guidance around all points above is available to your club directly from The PGA. Please refer to the contact details listed on page 47.

CLUBHOUSE / CATERING / BAR **MANAGER**

Households in the United Kingdom now spend more money eating out than they do eating in their homes. This creates a much higher level of expectation for a club's food and beverage service than was the case 20 years ago.

Clubs regularly make changes in this area, ranging from new-look menus to outsourcing or seeking new suppliers in a drive to increase profit; perhaps short-term working parties are set up to drive event revenue, non-member functions are invited and sometimes clash with member expectations of their club.

Your clubhouse staff are central to this operation and by developing their skills they can work with you to establish a clear strategy for food and beverage at your club, including clear achievable targets.

Identifying a trained, knowledgeable manager in clubhouse operations who can work in tandem with the club committee, will significantly assist in this high profile area of operations.



Activity: Hold a committee and staff retreat

Schedule time for the Board to hold at least one meeting per year away from the club. This is often called a retreat. It is an opportunity to step back and review progress at the club, review the strategic plan, and agree the priorities for the year ahead.

A retreat can involve a variety of activities and perhaps include independent experts and facilitators to allow the entire committee and invited staff to contribute equally.

HOLE 5

ENGAGING YOUR STAKEHOLDERS



Stakeholder management is the process of identifying the people who have a vested interest in the club and putting in place a plan or a strategy to secure their support.

Stakeholder management can involve:

- Understanding stakeholder interests and needs.
- Being responsive to stakeholder needs or requests.
- Using stakeholders to help shape the club's governance structure and strategic plan.
- Being open and honest about why the club exists and what it is trying to achieve.
- Empowering stakeholders to make good decisions by giving them the information they need about the club.

Communication with your membership

Members are key stakeholders for your club and good communication with them is vital. You may want to consider appointing a Board member to be responsible for the communication plan or consider using external support.

Why is transparency and open communication important?

- Transparency is vital to increase participation and membership.
- Transparency is vital to gain trust from stakeholders and important in the success of the organisation.
- Being transparent makes it easier to work with stakeholders and get further investment into the club.
- Transparency can also help to achieve good decisions because everyone must be open about their motives and not make decisions without being able to justify them.

In theory, most people understand and see the benefits of strong communication with members and support the idea of being transparent. However, in practice it can be difficult to achieve for several reasons:

- Some information is not suitable to be publicised, such as commercially sensitive information. Finding the right balance between transparency and confidentiality can be challenging.
- For an organisation to be transparent you need to be able to share information with members and other stakeholders.
- Some organisations will struggle to find the right media or the right time to share the information.

Checklist: Good member engagement

Where Board members are appointed by the members, the committee should make sure that the organisation:

- ✓ Has clear, accurate and up-to-date membership records that are legally compliant.
- ✓ Keeps members informed about the club.
- ✓ Seeks, values and takes into account members' views on key issues.
- ✓ Is clear and open about the ways that members can participate in the club governance including, where applicable, being elected to the Board.



Discussion Point: Member surveys

It is important to have quantitative, objective information to undertake effective membership analysis. There are a lot of different ways of engaging with your members and getting their feedback and input. A combination of formal membership surveys and informal interviews is ideal. It's best to start with broader surveys. Once you've analysed the results, you can ask a handful of members to schedule informal interviews so that you can get a better understanding of why the surveyed participants responded the way they did. How often do you survey members and how do you respond to the feedback?

WHY IS EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Managing stakeholders effectively can be a huge benefit to your club. If stakeholders have timely access to important information about the club, they will be in a better position to promote and support the club and help it develop.

Aim to provide sufficient information to stakeholders to enable them to have a good understanding of the club's governance, structure, strategy, activities and financial position.

Clubs should not be afraid to disclose information about where they need to improve, as well as publicising and celebrating their progress and achievements. Being able to define limitations and challenges is just as important to external stakeholders as hearing about successes.



Activity: Engaging external stakeholders

It is good practice to identify a list of key external stakeholders for your club and then plan how to engage with each of them. Some will require more time and information than others and it is important to tailor what you provide to fit their needs. Work with your Board members to identify your list and then look at how you currently interact and consider other ways to engage with them in the future.

WHAT DOES A CLUB WITH AN OPEN AND TRANSPARENT CULTURE LOOK LIKE?

Below are some indicators of a club with good communication and accountability to its members:

- > Publishes minutes and reports on its website.
- > Arranges multiple member informational events each year, one of which should be the AGM, but also information events for projects and more general communication.
- > Board members receive and learn from regular reports on the positive and negative feedback and complaints given to the club.
- > Board members ensure that there is a transparent process for making and handling a complaint and that any complaints, whether internal or external, are handled constructively, impartially and effectively.
- > Board members demonstrate that the club learns from mistakes and errors and uses this learning to improve performance and internal decision making.
- > The Board keeps a public register of interests and communicates how these are managed.
- > Its communications and record storage are legally fully compliant.



Discussion Point: Should you publish minutes of meetings?

Best practice states that a Board should be absolutely transparent and open to its members. But sometimes it is difficult to live by this in terms of publishing minutes of meetings when sensitive or confidential matters have been discussed. Boards are not expected to breach confidential discussions. However, it is important that a way of communicating decisions and a summary of Board meetings are available to members. This does not need to include sensitive or confidential discussion points but should give enough information for members to feel they can hold the Board to account adequately. How does your club go about publishing minutes?

HOLE 6 STRATEGIC PLANNING



WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN?

The saying goes, “fail to plan, and you plan to fail.”

One of the most important questions your Board needs to ask is where you see the club being in five or 10 years’ time.

Once that has been answered the way to achieve those goals is through a strategic plan.

A strategic plan can fit on a single piece of paper or it can stretch to a dozen or more pages. Its success is not dependent on the size of the document or the level of detail it contains, but the sense of direction it takes.

Why is it important?

Due to the nature of the governance structure in clubs, the elected leaders change on a regular basis and in the absence of a plan, this can result in inconsistency of mission.

Having a strategic plan in place will help to safeguard the priorities of a club by providing consistent aims and objectives that all elected Board members need to work continuously towards.

This new consistency will help the club focus its resources in the areas identified by the membership as key priorities for the club, and will help to prevent individuals acting on their own views instead of agreed common objectives.



Activity: Why bother with strategic planning?

If you need a compelling reason to start this process, a good exercise is to spend ten minutes as a Board identifying the negative aspects of your experience of committee meetings. Then ask whether those challenges would be more easily overcome if everyone in the club were working to one plan.

A strategic plan is really a master plan which maps out where you are now, what goals or objectives you want to achieve, and what you will do to achieve your goals.

It is a plan for success. Many organisations will already have in their minds an approach they are taking, but it is important that this is enshrined in a document and created as a forward looking plan.

Strategic planning is essentially a disciplined process for getting to the important decisions, and the plan is simply the document that frames these decisions. A strategic plan allows you to put effective collaborative governance into action at your club, and set about achieving the high levels of customer satisfaction that will dictate your future success.

Who develops the strategic plan?

The Board should engage with members and then create a strategic plan on behalf of the club and its membership. The plan should also be informed by the knowledge of professional staff and insight from supporting organisations.

The strategic plan should involve the Board:

- > Envisaging the future of their club.
- > Developing the structures and procedures required to achieve that future.
- > Acting as custodians of the strategy on behalf of the membership.

HOW TO CREATE A MEANINGFUL STRATEGIC PLAN

The process of creating a strategic plan is geared up to establish answers to three core questions:

1. Where are we now?

A club is surrounded by information to establish where it is now, including the trends within financial statements, membership churn, and customer feedback. Of course the club also has the institutional memory gained by successive Boards and front line staff.

A wider perspective of a club's position in the local marketplace can be taken by evaluating the relative strengths and price comparisons with clubs in a 20-mile radius, and national governing bodies have tools that can assist clubs to understand their potential customers in their locality. You should contact your national organisation for access to these tools.

Strategic planning tools such as SWOT or PESTLE can be used to help frame discussions with as wide a group of stakeholders as possible.

The start of a strategic planning process is an ideal time to engage the full membership in a survey. Further analysis can be hugely meaningful within a members' forum, when all members are invited to offer their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the club right now. Gaining such a mandate from the stakeholders/members is crucial in remaining loyal to the established direction of the club.

Consulting with visitors and other customers, as well as members, will offer additional insight and often a different perspective. Remember, these people could be your future members.

Whilst some clubs may fear asking their customers to voice their concerns, this is a crucial part in establishing a wide buy-in to the process of addressing the key challenges, which may help the club achieve its goals.

2. Where are we going?

From each of the steps involved in this analysis will emerge a clear picture of what makes a club special, and this can be referred to in the plan as the core purpose, or even just how the club wants to be known. Some clubs prefer to move beyond a simple statement that summarises their purpose, and establish a vision, mission and core values.

Core Values

Core values are the guiding principles which apply across the club and underpin how its work is carried out. The values of a club are basic beliefs about what really matters to the individuals at the club and what binds them together. They should guide how things are done across the whole club. The values of a club can form a key building block to creating a strategic plan.

Vision

Before you start to think about creating a strategic plan it is important that you have a single shared vision for the club that everyone is aware of and working towards. This enables everyone to see the common goal for the club.

A vision is the long-term change the club would like to see if its work is successful. It should motivate and enable individuals to see how their effort contributes to an overall inspirational purpose. It is a clear and inspirational hope for the future and is often about the effect your club will have on the external world and environment if it is successful.

Mission

Once you have agreed a vision for the club you can then look at defining the mission of your club.

The mission statement should clearly define the purpose of the club. It is a short, formal statement about what the club aims to do and why it is trying to do it. It is the reason the club exists and helps to keep everyone focused. It is essentially what the club will do to make its vision a reality, or to move closer towards achieving its vision.

3. How are we going to get there?

The task of establishing how the club will reach its goals is one of the easiest parts of the process, as most members will want to volunteer their ideas for improving the club.

A business plan is a more detailed action plan which focuses on helping the club achieve its overall purpose, as directed by the strategic plan. Each department or function of the club such as the course, clubhouse, pro shop or competitions should create a section of the business plan that links back to the strategy, and provides more detail on the activities that need to be done to achieve the strategic objectives. The staff members in those departments will be crucial to creating this action plan, and delivering a product and service that is in demand from your customers.

By remaining faithful to the overall goals established within the strategic plan, the Board can focus its attention on those priority areas. For each priority area an action plan and realistic targets can be drawn up in conjunction with the senior staff.



Activity: Creating a vision

Step 1: Challenge each member of the Board to describe the long-term change they would like to see, brought about by your club's work.

Step 2: In pairs, map out on a large piece of paper what your club would look like if it was doing everything you think it should and had all the resources it needed.

Step 3: Compare and contrast the results with the full Board. Are the groups of one mind? What are the differences? Is there a collective picture of the club's vision? If not, can one be agreed through further discussion?

Example: Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

Vision: 'Tennis opened up.'

Mission: To grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. We're here to govern and develop tennis in Britain, from grassroots participation through to the professional game.

BENEFITS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

There are significant benefits for a club when working to a strategic plan, including:

- ✓ Greater unity throughout the club on what makes your club attractive, and why people would want to join and remain as members.
- ✓ Identification of a manageable number of key performance indicators for evaluating club performance and individual performance at all levels of the organisation.
- ✓ Less crisis management, with the Board kept busy working on the business, rather than in the business.
- ✓ Agreement on accountability for each important area of the club's business, and identification of any training gaps to help achieve those goals.
- ✓ Improved selection of committee members identified for their knowledge and commitment to specific areas of the strategic plan.
- ✓ Greater unity and morale amongst staff who will welcome a consistent approach to the established direction of the club and will have clarity in their roles.
- ✓ More focused and efficient committee meetings, with an agenda driven by the strategic plan.

- ✓ Continuity of aims when handing from one committee to another after annual election.
- ✓ A more professional approach to the collaborative governance of the club resulting in a more rewarding term of office for volunteers.



Discussion Point: The value of membership

There will be times when golfers ask why the membership fees are increasing – or a prospective new member is looking to justify their investment.

The relationship with golfers will be improved if you can quickly outline the excellent work that you carry out on their behalf, show them evidence that you are achieving your goals, and even paint a compelling image of the club as it will improve in coming years. Displaying a scoreboard in your club, showing the targets set at the start of each year and your progress, and sharing the long-term vision for the club can help you do that.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Why is financial management important?

The financial policies and procedures of an organisation are an important part of the overall control framework. Effective policies and procedures that are understood by the Board, staff and volunteers will help to ensure effective management of the club's finances.

- ✓ Debtors policy, accruals policy.
- ✓ Audit requirements.
- ✓ Insurance obligations and requirements.
- ✓ Financial policies are communicated to relevant people across the club.

Checklist: What does a club with good financial management look like?

The financial policies should be appropriate for your club and, whilst these may differ slightly from club-to-club, they should include:

- ✓ Planned budget and long-term forecast which is aligned to the strategic plan.
- ✓ Controls on expenditure – who can spend how much and on what; what expenditure needs special permission. Limitations on credit card use.
- ✓ Controls on travel and subsistence – when and what expenses can be claimed by staff and volunteers.
- ✓ Banking – how income is banked, who can authorise direct debits and how bank accounts are reconciled.
- ✓ Procurement – how an organisation ensures that effective competitive procurement processes are in place.
- ✓ Reserves – target levels and how these will be monitored.
- ✓ Accounting software used, password protocols and back up procedures Management accounts, frequency, timeline and level of detail required.
- ✓ Cash handling procedures, including limitations on cash in safe or private dwelling.
- ✓ Record keeping, including the fixed asset register (if applicable) and depreciation policy.



Discussion Point: Communicating financial policies

Communication of the policies to key people across the club will be important to ensure they are understood and followed. Clubs may want to consider including relevant policies within their induction processes and making policies readily accessible.

Do you have an open and transparent financial policy which will instil confidence in those entrusted with significant club funds?



Discussion Point: Capital planning and financing

Even just replacing existing assets is an expensive business and prudent clubs are those who plan for this expenditure. Does your club have an up to date asset register and a timeline for replacement or renewal of major expenditure?

HOLE 7

LEGAL STRUCTURE OF A CLUB AND INCORPORATION



The legal structure of your club is how it is constituted in the eyes of the law. Golf clubs will take different legal forms depending on their structure and size, along with decisions taken historically.

Here is a list of the different legal structures available for a golf club:

- > Incorporated (usually company limited by guarantee)
- > Unincorporated
- > Registered society
- > Registered charity
- > Incorporated charity

Whatever the size of your golf club, you should consider the possibility of incorporating. Clubs are highly advised to incorporate to get the benefits of limited liability, especially if they employ staff and hold any land.

Why should a club incorporate?

Many clubs are run by volunteers who give their time and effort. However, they may not be aware of the potential legal action they are exposed to if their club is unincorporated.

The club constitution should provide the club officers with an indemnity from the members and appropriate insurance should be put in place. However, there are likely to be incidents potentially not covered by insurance and clubs should consider incorporation to gain the benefit of limited liability. No officer will want to be in the position of having to take legal action against members to recover liabilities they have personally had to bear.

The advantages and disadvantages of incorporation versus unincorporated organisations are outlined here.

UNINCORPORATED ASSOCIATIONS

Advantages

- > Simple administration. Unincorporated associations (unless also a charity) do not have the same legal and administrative requirements that companies have (e.g. the requirement to file accounts or an annual return).
- > Flexible. The rules of an unincorporated association can be whatever they choose, provided they are lawful and can be easily updated. Remember that the rules of your governing body, or the requirements for grant funding may need your constitution to contain certain clauses.

Disadvantages

- > No separate legal identity. An unincorporated association is not separated from its members in the eyes of the law. This means that committee members or trustees will have to enter into contracts, or hold assets, on behalf of the club rather than the club itself. In the event of a claim against the club or breach of contract, members of the committee or trustees, or wider club could be personally liable.
- > Transfer of assets. As assets are held by individuals on behalf of the club, rather than the club itself, they must be transferred if that person leaves the club.

INCORPORATED ASSOCIATIONS

Like an unincorporated association, a club set up as a company limited by guarantee will be owned by its members. The main difference is that the club will have a separate legal identity allowing it to enter into contracts in its own right and it therefore offers protection for club members.

This structure is well suited to clubs operating on a non-profit making basis where membership changes regularly. Members agree to pay a minimal amount if the club becomes insolvent, limiting their liability.

Advantages

- > Separate Legal Entity. This allows the club to enter into contracts and hold assets or investments in its own name.
- > Limited Liability. Members are protected and only required to pay an agreed sum (typically £1) if the club becomes insolvent. Having limited liability will protect the directors (of the company) and members against a claim, provided the directors have been compliant with company law requirements.

Disadvantage

Additional administrative work needed to comply with legal requirements. These include filing annual accounts, annual returns and providing directors' information to Companies House.

- > There are fines for missing deadlines - including filing annual accounts, annual returns and providing directors' information to Companies House (public authority responsible for managing a register of all companies across the UK). Companies House has more information on starting a company and the on-going requirements. Directors must also ensure they and the club adhere to the governance obligations set out in the Companies Act (2006).



Activity: Your constitution

Is your club constitution there to help you or hinder you? Review the document to identify what changes it would benefit from – what would you add or remove?

What is the procedure for changing the constitution?

HOLE 8

POLICIES



AREAS OF LAW

TO CONSIDER

Does the law apply to a golf club?

Clubs are membership organisations and, regardless of their legal structure, they are subject to legislation. Clubs need to be aware if they are undertaking an activity that has potential to breach legislation and to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to manage the risks.

This list is not exhaustive but it highlights some key legal considerations:

- Company law - If your club is incorporated as a company it will need to comply with Companies Act 2006. Usually this concerns reporting requirements to Companies House but it may also require some updating of Articles. A list of directors' general duties is shown below but bespoke legal advice may be needed for your club.
- Directors' duties under the Companies Act 2006 (CA06) – provided by the governance institute, ICOSA
 - Duty to act within powers
 - Duty to promote the success of the company
 - Duty to exercise independent judgement
 - Duty to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
 - Duty to avoid conflicts of interest
 - Duty not to accept benefits from third parties
 - Duty to declare an interest in a proposed transaction or arrangement
 - Declaration of interest in existing transaction or arrangement.

As a golf club, it is important to have a good understanding of the legal environment you operate in and the policies required to deliver golf.

In addition, there are also a range of policies that, whilst not legislative requirements, serve the club's governance and management and can prove significant strides towards excellent governance.

Throughout all aspects of running a golf club, appropriate policies and procedures should be adopted to mitigate risks and enhance the members' trust in the management.

You should consider the following areas of law when deciding which policies you need:

- Company law
 - If the golf club is incorporated, then it will be required to comply with the Companies Act 2006. This includes the duties which directors must fulfil.
- Health and safety
 - By providing an activity and employing members of staff, the golf club must comply with certain legislative requirements concerning health and safety.
- Employment Law
 - Clubs must be aware of their duty of care to staff, ensuring that appropriate policies are in place alongside accurate contracts of employment and a comprehensive staff handbook.
 - Clubs should ensure line management is clear to avoid confusion, abuse or bullying.
 - Clubs should ensure that all staff are appropriately trained and qualified for the roles they perform.
- Safeguarding
 - It is vital that the club has a safeguarding policy so children and vulnerable adults are able to participate in golf and any risk posed to them is managed effectively.
 - Every club should have a trained Club Welfare Officer who will be responsible for the reporting of all safeguarding/welfare issues. However, all staff members involved in working with children should have an awareness in this area.
 - Clubs need to ensure they are aware of the process to be followed when reporting a safeguarding concern, and if further action needs to be taken.

- Equality
 - Clubs must comply with the Equality Act 2010, and a well-written equality policy, of which staff and officers are aware, will help protect the club in respect of claims under the Act.
- Data Protection
 - Clubs must be aware of their obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018, which brings the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) into UK law.
 - Clubs must make sure that they hold and use personal data in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

This guide covers the foundation blocks of organisational structure, committees and strategic planning, with tools to help you improve in these areas.

But, as you work to improve your governance it is likely there will be a number of other areas where you will need to develop policies and procedures.



Activity: Club support

To satisfy yourself that these policies are in place, and protecting the club, work with a volunteer to review your current policies, in priority order.

CODES OF CONDUCT

The national organisations will provide you with example policies and template policies to help you. Here is a list of policies you may want to consider:

Club support

It is important to have a policy in place which outlines, in a clear and transparent way, any financial support or assistance that is available to members. If your club offers other types of support to members this should be clearly documented and available to all.

These can be developed for captains, coaches, players, volunteers, spectators and parents. They are a way of holding your membership to account and to ensuring standards of behaviour are maintained.

You should also develop a code of conduct for your Board, reflecting the values of your organisation and the principles needed to be good committee members.

Code of ethics and commitment to service statement

This is a code which holds people to account for their behaviour and ensures they act in a way which supports the values of your club. It should outline what is in the best interests of your club and what is required of your club members, to show they are committed to the common objectives and values of the club.

Conflicts of interest policy

This policy sets out the process for managing the potentially conflicting interests of Board members to ensure that decision making is not unduly influenced.

It is natural that conflicts of interest will occur and it is therefore important to have a policy in place which ensures fair decision-making can happen and that any conflict is managed and registered appropriately.

Data protection policy

Golf clubs will manage personal data of all their members. This makes them a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act and they are responsible for complying with the legal requirements of the Act. A data protection policy sets out the procedures for handling data and ensures a club is meeting its legal obligations.

Equality, diversity and inclusion policy

Golf clubs are required legally to ensure everyone is treated equally and fairly. This policy outlines the approach a golf club takes to equality, diversity and inclusion and sets out how the golf club complies with legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010.

Equality is about managing differences so that everyone has equality of opportunity through a fair and consistent approach to the application of rules, policies, and procedures. Diversity is about understanding, recognising, respecting and valuing differences. Inclusion is about attracting and developing talent wherever it exists and allowing everyone in the organisation to reach their full potential.

All three aspects should be referenced in this policy to help ensure a golf club is legally compliant and acting in an equitable and fair way.

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

This policy is part of the internal controls and governance arrangements for an organisation. Together with a risk register, it allows a committee to monitor risk and plan for potential risks to the future of the organisation.

Risk is an everyday part of any organisation and managing it effectively is essential if the Board is to safeguard their club's funds and assets. Managing risk means reducing the likelihood or impact of any identified risk and/or putting in place contingency plans in case a risk materialises.

Clubs should regularly review and assess the risks they face in all areas of their work and plan their management. If a club was facing a claim in court it would not be helpful to say that it had not carried out a risk assessment when this is standard practice across business. It would be equally unhelpful to identify risks and then not do anything about them.

The risks that a club faces depend very much on the size, nature and complexity of its activities and on its finances. Generally, the larger a club, the more difficult it will be to identify the major risks that it faces and put proper systems in place to manage them. Therefore, the risk management process will always need to be tailored to fit each club. However, size is not the only factor since smaller clubs will likely face the same risks but on a smaller scale.

This guidance provides some key pointers on how to manage risk. However, it is important that each club works with a framework for risk that is appropriate to them.

Business continuity plan

This is really an emergency plan of how an organisation will deal with any adverse event that could prevent it from operating in its usual way.

What should a business continuity plan include? A good plan will clearly state the essential functions of the club and the basic infrastructure and services it needs to operate. For example, maintaining the membership database will be vital. Have those records been backed up and a spare copy available in an emergency.

Safeguarding policy

Creating a safe environment for everyone to participate in your club is important. It is vital to implement a safeguarding policy which ensures proper processes and systems are in place to allow children and adults to participate and any risk to their safety is managed.

Having this policy in place will help a club meet its legal requirements in terms of safeguarding.

Please contact your national association for assistance with these areas.

Bribery and anti-corruption

Clubs are subject to the Bribery Act 2010 and are required to keep a gifts and hospitality register. It is important to have an anti-bribery policy and a gifts and hospitality policy.

Whistleblowing

People have a right to report wrongdoing and be protected by the law. Clubs should have a whistleblowing policy so this situation is handled appropriately.

Disciplinary

Clubs need to have clear regulations and procedures for managing any disciplinary cases of their own and hearing any appeals. Clubs should be able to call on independent, qualified people to hear any cases or appeals. This tends to be a legally qualified chairperson and two side members with experience of the particular subject matter.

Handicap appeals

Protecting the integrity of the handicap system is vital and support and guidance is available from your national governing body.



Discussion Point: What constitutes risk, an emergency?

Much like a fire-alarm test, it can be helpful to undertake a 'dry-run' of an emergency to test the club's readiness and identify areas where you might not have a contingency plan.

Use this as an example:

On the morning of the club's largest two-day open event (with 180 golfers and guests) the greenstaff find the golf course has been significantly vandalised by a vehicle. The pro-shop and clubhouse have both been broken into with stock and electrical goods stolen and the fuel storage tank has been damaged and is leaking after an attempt to steal fuel.

In each area of club operations, challenge the person responsible to create an action plan?

Legal advice and support. Please note: this guide is not legal advice and should not be used in place of bespoke legal advice.

HOLE 9

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES



Industry support for your club

There are a number of sources of support available to Board members, staff and your club. If you need further assistance about club governance, please contact your national organisations or membership body listed below:

England Golf

National Golf Centre, The Broadway, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, LN10 6PU
Website: www.Englandgolf.org
Tel: 01526 354500
Email: info@Englandgolf.org

Scottish Golf

The Dukes, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 8NX
Website: www.scottishgolf.org
Tel: 01334 466 477
Email: info@scottishgolf.org

Wales Golf

Catsash, Newport, NP18 1JQ
Website: www.walesgolf.org
Tel: 01633 436040
Email: office@walesgolf.org

Golf Club Managers Association

Bristol & Clifton GC, Beggar Bush Lane, Falland, Bristol. BS8 3TH
Website: www.gcma.org.uk
Bob Williams, CEO
Tel: 01275 391153
Email: hq@gcma.org.uk

British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association

BIGGA House, Aldwark, Alne, York, YO61 1UF
Website: www.bigga.co.uk
Tel: 01347 833800
Email: info@bigga.co.uk

Professional Golfers' Association

National Headquarters, Centenary House, The Belfry, Sutton Coalfield, West Midlands, B76 9PT
www.pga.info/contact-us.aspx
Tel: 01675 470 333

Golf club governance templates & tools

The principles of delivering excellent governance apply to almost every golf club. However, the practical implementation of this must be tailored to your own club, its situation, and how the Board and stakeholders wish their club to be governed.

The following templates have been referenced in the relevant sections of the guide:

- > Change management template
- > Incorporated vs unincorporated
- > Terms of reference for Boards
- > Role guidance for staff and volunteers
- > Skills matrix for Boards

As noted, these templates are for guidance only and relevant expert guidance should be sought for your own situation.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN GOLF CLUBS

Managing change in your club can be challenging and require you to follow a staged process.

This template provides you with a theoretical approach to change management and how it could be applied practically in your club.

Kotters 8 Steps to Successful Change



TEMPLATE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A BOARD

When developing terms of reference for the Board it is important to check your club constitution to ensure the documents don't conflict. You should consider every element of the document and whether or not they suit your purposes.

PURPOSE OF THE BOARD

- The Board is the guardian of the assets and resources of the club. It provides leadership and strategic direction focussing on the vision, core values and goals of the club in addition to ensuring that the objectives set out in the [Constitution/Articles] are met.

GOALS OF THE BOARD

- The goals of the Board are:
 - To run the club in accordance with the constitution/articles of association and in accordance with the objectives, values and strategy of the club
 - Set out what the club wants the Board to do: e.g. be commercial, run for members, develop juniors, host championships etc.
- The deliverables of the Board are:
 - A three-five year strategy
 - Annual plans
 - Annual budgets
 - Annual reports and accounts
 - Other specific outputs required/ requested

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

- The responsibilities of the Board are: What authority does the Board have/ not have and from whom do they get that authority? Much of this should be taken from the club constitution and will include its powers in respect of financial management, spend limits, property and people. What are the bounds of responsibility and authority of the Board? What does it need to address and what is outside its area of concern? What can it decide on and what does it need others to input?

Here are some examples:

- Establish the vision, values and long-term strategy for the club for a three to five year period
- Draft a business/operational plan for the next 12 months, including the diversification of operational activities and the adoption or elimination of major programmes
- Delegate the day-to-day running of the club to the general manager
- Monitor progress annually (at least) against agreed goals and objectives. Review the vision and core values at least every four years
- Create the club governance structure
- Set out and consider appropriate amendments to the Board manual/ handbook and club bye-laws

- h. Monitor performance, financial expenditure, risk and resource allocation against the business/ operational plan at least quarterly
- i. Maintain financial solvency and integrity through:
 - Robust controls and policies
 - Personal integrity
 - Ensuring the borrowings do not exceed a certain percentage of the assets of the club
- j. Appoint and support the senior members of staff
- k. Oversee management of the golf course
- l. Manage risk and help identify new opportunities for the club
- m. Develop and oversee high level policies
- n. To have a duty of care to children and young people at the club by ensuring the club has robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place
- o. Ensure that the club has disciplinary procedures in place that are in line with those of its national governing body
- p. Review and enter into major contracts
- q. Decide on the purchase, lease or sale of any property
- r. Appoint sub-committees, (including a nominations committee) to maintain effective committee performance and propose general meeting resolutions
- s. Build effective relationships with external partners as required by the club to undertake training as appropriate and participate in an annual evaluation process and individual evaluation
- u. Attend events and meetings as appropriate and act as hosts to partners, sponsors and other stakeholders as required

TIMELINES OF THE BOARD

5. The following are key dates for the Board:
 - a. Hold an Annual General Meeting in [XXXX]
 - b. Prepare and circulate annual accounts and an annual report [Xweeks] in advance of the AGM
 - c. [Other dates and deadlines]

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

Membership of the Board should be taken from the club constitution/articles and reflect the strategic goals and allow people with the necessary skills to serve. This might include the chairs of sub-committees as well as skills-focused appointments in core business areas, e.g. marketing, business development. Chairs from sub-committees could be ex-officio members (i.e. a place as of right due to their sub-committee status), whilst other members could be elected or appointed against a role description that seeks to fill professional skills gaps.

6. It is best practice that the Board is composed of a minimum of six and a maximum of nine members and includes the following appointments:
 - a. the chair
 - b. the general manager and where applicable senior staff (should attend but without a vote)
 - c. [XXXX]
7. Appointment to the Board should be skills based. However, it is also important to consider gender and other diversity on the committee to fully represent the current and future membership. Evidence suggests that diverse boards make more effective decisions.
8. Club staff should be invited to attend and support the Board. The Board may establish sub-committees, which will report to the board and will adopt procedures consistent with these terms of reference.

BOARD PROCEDURES

9. The Board will meet as often as required to deliver its purpose by the deadline and in order to meet the key dates. The dates of meetings will be set by the chair, or in their absence, by the general manager.
10. A quorum for the meeting will be 50% of voting members of the Board.
11. Every effort will be made to reach decisions by consensus, but if a vote is needed it will be by show of hands and a decision made by a simple majority. All members of the Board will have one vote and, if necessary, the chair will also be entitled to a casting vote.
12. A summary of the minutes of each meeting will be available to club members and the Board will prepare an annual report to the club members, which will be presented at the same time as the annual accounts.
13. It is important for the Board to reflect on its own performance. This can be a simple self-assessment against the terms of reference, a review of the competencies and skills on the committee.
14. Otherwise, subject to any contrary direction or intention provided by the articles or these terms of reference, the Board will be free to determine its own procedures.
15. The club will meet all reasonable expenses of the Board in line with its expenses and other policies.

Approved by the Club General Meeting [date]

ROLE GUIDANCE

Role Guidance

Here are some key considerations when creating role descriptions:

- ✓ Discuss with new volunteer how much time would be required for the role and ensure it aligns with their availability.
- ✓ Determine what the 'period of office' should be for each role.
- ✓ Consider what will make roles attractive to potential candidates; the opportunity to influence the direction of the club is a key motivation at a decision-making level.
- ✓ Refine template role descriptions to ensure they are relevant to the club and it's objectives.

A. Chair

The chair should be able to demonstrate skills in facilitation, strategic planning and team development. This leadership role is critical to the long-term success of the club as the chair leads the Board, lives by the club values and encourages the membership to engage in the club's future. The chair is also the line manager for the general manager who has day-to-day responsibility for the club.

Role summary

- ✓ To provide leadership and direction to the Board enabling it to fulfil its responsibilities in providing sound governance and strategic direction for the club.
- ✓ Ensure the club pursues its core purpose as set out in the constitution as well as meeting the club's bye laws and relevant legislations/regulations.
- ✓ Work in partnership with the general manager to support employees; helping them achieve the aims of the organisation; and to optimise the relationship between the Board and staff.
- ✓ Facilitate Board meetings with well-rounded and carefully considered decision-making.

Responsibilities:

- ✓ Lead the formulation of club strategic plans and put in place regular reviews of the long-term strategic goals.
- ✓ Ensure the Board fully understands and implements good practice in respect of governance and leadership.
- ✓ Chair and facilitate meetings ensuring:
 - These are properly convened with due notice and are quorate.
 - There is open discussion and all members have an opportunity to contribute.
 - The majority vote of members is taken and declared.
- ✓ Monitor decisions taken at meetings and ensure they are implemented.
- ✓ Liaise regularly with the general manager and committee member with responsibility for finance to maintain a clear grasp of the club's financial position.
- ✓ Build a high performing team of committee members, drawing on each person's skills and knowledge as they contribute to club goals.
- ✓ Lead the development of club values and ensure they are embedded in the organisation.
- ✓ Provide constructive support to the general manager, guiding and supporting their work.
- ✓ Maintain careful oversight of any risk to reputation and/or financial standing of the club.
- ✓ Represent and be an ambassador for the club and its members at appropriate events, meetings or functions.
- ✓ Build positive relationships with club members, understanding their diverse needs and uniting their voices.
- ✓ Lead the process of evaluation for the Board and its members.

B. General manager

The general manager is the key link between the Board and the day-to-day operations of the club, being the de facto CEO of the club. They must ensure all decisions; activities and investment meet the vision and deliver the strategic goals. In addition, this role is critical in maintaining a welcoming, member focused experience through the core business areas including the course, bar and events.

Here is a summary of the roles and responsibilities. However, a more detailed job description may be required. It is recognised that not all clubs have a budget to pay a General Manager, but options for management of the club are laid out in Hole 2 and Hole 3 of the guide.

Role summary

- ✓ Be responsible for the day-to-day management of the club and all operational activity.
- ✓ Lead the implementation of the club's vision and strategic plan.
- ✓ Lead and manage all club staff, who report to the general manager, and all operational volunteers.
- ✓ Ensure the club facilities are maintained to the highest standards.
- ✓ Set and manage budgets in respect of club facilities and services.

Responsibilities

The role of general manager should be clearly defined with agreed division of responsibility and delegated authority in the areas of decision-making, expenditure, purchasing, staff/volunteer management etc. They should report directly to the chairperson and, together, they should agree the general manager's annual objectives, as well as the ways in which the chair will support them. This includes review meetings to discuss the general manager's progress.

- ✓ Ensure efficient and effective implementation of the club strategy through the development of annual operational plans.
- ✓ Set annual budgets for core areas of club operations including the pro shop, bar and restaurant which include targets for revenue generation.
- ✓ Lead and manage staff/volunteers, providing clear direction and support for them and their areas of work.
- ✓ The general manager should hold a monthly meeting with each department head where a Budget Variance Analysis (BVA) is carried out. Once this has established the major sources of variance, the general manager and department heads can take measures to ensure that it is on track to achieving its budget for the year and overall strategic plan.
- ✓ Provide timely and accurate reports to the Board against the club strategic plan.
- ✓ Work with the finance manager/ treasurer to ensure accurate finance information is available to the Board and sub-committees as required.

C. Captain(s)

The captains have a critical role in creating a positive and dynamic environment for members. They should consistently demonstrate the values of the club and also encourage members and visitors to adhere to these. Captains provide a point of contact for the playing membership and, through the membership sub-committee, a place where playing matters can be addressed.

There should either be one club captain, representing men and women, who is appointed from male and female members; or a men's captain and ladies' captain with equal status.

It is not good practice to have a male club captain and a ladies' captain with a hierarchical imbalance.

Role summary

- ✓ Provide leadership on all golfing aspects of the club.
- ✓ Build and maintain positive relationships with all club members.
- ✓ Act as an ambassador for the club, to host and attend relevant events.

Responsibilities

- ✓ Maintain the integrity, standards and ethics of the club and of the game of golf.
- ✓ Build positive relationships with club members, understanding their diverse needs and uniting their voices.
- ✓ Chair members' sub-committee to enable playing and membership matters to be raised and addressed.
- ✓ Assist the Board in understanding the needs of all sections of the membership through representation on the captain's committee.
- ✓ Be an ambassador for the club and its members at appropriate events and functions e.g. captain's dinner.
- ✓ In conjunction with the club chairman and/or the general manager, when appropriate, resolve confidential or sensitive club and membership issues.
- ✓ Handle correspondence and disputes as appropriate.

D. Treasurer/Finance Director

Essential role in managing the club's financial resources.

Expertise and qualifications in the fields of finance and accounting are essential, as is the ability to communicate financial concepts and systems to non-financial members.

Role summary

- ✓ Be responsible for the financial supervision of the club.
- ✓ Operate as the chief financial management officer.
- ✓ Set annual budgets for the club with the general manager and relevant Sub-committees for approval by the Board.
- ✓ Set and oversee financial systems and controls.
- ✓ Whilst each committee may be in charge of their own finances it is important that there is a standardised process and/or guide in place on spend and honorariums.

Responsibilities

- ✓ Prepare annual budgets for the relevant committees to deliver the club strategic plan. This to be approved by the Board and will include: > course > house > marketing.
- ✓ Set finance controls and systems to ensure efficient and transparent management of club resources. Review the financial controls and systems on a regular basis to ensure they are robust and to encourage continuous improvement.
- ✓ Assess the financial implications of significant spend including capital expenditure and new employment positions within the club.
- ✓ Prepare five-year cash flows to incorporate into the strategic plan.
- ✓ Support audit processes
- ✓ Monthly financial reports – present at monthly Board meetings.
- ✓ Act as signatory on the club account.
- ✓ Provide advice to the Board in their management of the club finances.
- ✓ Administer all financial affairs of the club. This would include regular meetings with the general manager and the finance committee in relation to on-going financial matters including:
 - Review of outstanding subscriptions on a monthly basis. Ensure policies in relation to collection of outstanding subscriptions are followed.
 - Review of income and expenditure in comparison to budget and prior year on a monthly basis.
 - Liaison with the club's bankers with regard to the club's debt/overdraft position (if applicable).

SKILLS MATRIX FOR BOARD MEMBERS

This skills matrix is designed to help golf clubs recruit Board members with the knowledge and expertise which enable the club to achieve the ambitions and objectives set out in the strategy.

Experience, expertise or attribute	Required level of expertise	Board member name 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Some general examples are listed below. Add to/delete as appropriate for your club/organisation									
Marketing and communications									
Strategy development									
Financial management									
Understanding of golf facility target market(s)									
Human resources									
Customer experience / service									
IT & technology									
Governance									
Sales									
Reporting and analysis									
[add relevant skills]									

Example of a rating system for skill / knowledge level:

- 0 = No capability
- 1 = Basic level of knowledge
- 2 = Intermediate level of knowledge / some experience
- 3 = Field of expertise / highly skilled

E. President

The club president is the figure-head for the club and their role largely focuses on external representation and profile building for the club. It is a ceremonial role and they are not required to attend Board meetings. They can attend Board meetings but they do not have a right to vote. Often they will have responsibility for fostering good relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

The club president should be able to demonstrate skills in public speaking, networking and relationship management. They are accountable to the chair and the Board and so must be capable of representing the best interests of the club to external stakeholders.

It is vital they are a good communicator with strong interpersonal skills, and committed to the club's objectives, aims and values. The president is an elected position.

Role summary

- ✓ Act as an ambassador for the club and represent the club at invited events.
- ✓ Support, encourage and champion the club.
- ✓ Maintain and protect the club's reputation.
- ✓ Commit to and devote time to carrying out responsibilities in line with the club's objectives, aims and values.

Responsibilities

- ✓ Attend the AGM and formally open the meeting, attend Board meetings, competitions, coaching, social and fundraising events as required.
- ✓ Attendance at award meetings or dinners whilst optional should also be seen as a key element of the role.
- ✓ Take interviews and create a good impression of the club.
- ✓ Build and maintain a network of personal relationships with individuals in key stakeholder organisations to the club.
- ✓ Keep up to date on issues relevant to the club.
- ✓ Promote the club in the local community and ensure it is well networked with the county organisations.
- ✓ Develop a good knowledge of the structure of national, county and club level activity.
- ✓ Make links across the county with other golf clubs and ensure where appropriate the club has wider involvement with the voluntary sector and other networks.

GOLF CLUB GOVERNANCE CASE STUDIES

These case studies feature golf clubs across the UK which have put the principles of excellent governance into practice.

This section contains the following golf club governance case studies:

St Ives (Hunts) Golf Club, England

Find out how the club went about a thorough review and created a clear and resourced strategy.

Heaton Moor Golf Club, England

Find out how the club changed governance and management structures to run in a more effective manner.

Forres Golf Club, Scotland

Discover how the club engaged with members and recruited new volunteers to tackle declining membership.

Newport Golf Club, Wales

Hear how the club changed its governance structure to address a lack of decision making.

CASE STUDY:

ST IVES (HUNTS) GOLF CLUB, ENGLAND

The club

St Ives (Hunts) Golf Club was founded in 1923 and for 87 years had a 9-hole golf course. In 2010 it relocated to a brand new 18-hole facility on the outskirts of the town.

What is the case study about?

With relocation came uncertainty: fluctuating membership numbers and, more critically, a general loss of strategic direction within the club.

This was tackled with the appointment of a new general manager in July 2016 and by working with England Golf and the Golf Club Managers Association.

What was the issue they had?

The areas that required immediate direction were:

- > Establishing a clear and accurate membership baseline and database for regular communications.
- > Creating an effective marketing plan to attract new members and additional income streams, including green fees.
- > Raising the club's profile in the community, including establishing links with local businesses.
- > Creating a strategic plan with clearly defined SMART objectives to put the club on a business-based footing and lead to positive outcomes.

What changes were made to overcome the issue?

A thorough review of the membership database was conducted, providing an accurate record of all members by category and full understanding of this primary income stream.

A strategic plan was developed from the bottom up, driven by members, coordinated by the general manager and based on a full and detailed analysis of the club. Delivery of the plan includes an annual review.

The club underwent a full governance review and is planning to become incorporated, with a new management structure to reflect this change. Members were consulted during several stages.

A number of business initiatives were undertaken, such as facility redevelopment, new membership opportunities, online tee booking, engagement with local schools and charities, junior and Get into Golf coaching, developing the PGA professional service, and training for staff.

What was the impact of the changes?

The club has been successful in a number of areas:

- > Overall increase in playing membership of 9%.
- > Junior membership has increased by 143%.
- > Increased green fee yield of 20%.
- > A family fun day attracted 750 people.
- > Links created with over 20 local businesses.

CASE STUDY:

HEATON MOOR GOLF CLUB, ENGLAND

The club

Heaton Moor Golf Club, near Stockport, was founded in 1892 and describes itself as an oasis in suburbia.

What is the Case Study about?

The club wanted to change its governance and management structures to run in a more business-like way, without individual liabilities.

What was the issue they had?

The General Committee, chaired by the club captain, consisted of 15 people all of whom were elected annually. This made decision making and forward planning difficult. The committee members were also individually exposed to any liabilities that might be incurred.

What changes were made to overcome the issue?

The steps Heaton Moor followed were:

1. Created a positioning document which included a situational analysis.
2. All members received a copy in advance of the AGM when the secretary made a short presentation with recommendations.
3. A small steering group, representing various sections of the club, was formed to define the governance changes.
4. Met other golf clubs to learn from their experiences.
5. A members' forum was held, including a presentation on the challenges facing golf and golf clubs. Members' reactions and priorities were sought.
6. A further forum looked at specific club issues, challenges with the current business model and the ageing demographic.
7. An online survey asked all members to show their support for/against the proposals.

8. Voting members agreed to all proposed changes in management structure at a Special General Meeting.

What was the impact of the changes?

The proposal was supported by 85% of members via the online survey.

The new committee structure consists of a five-man Board plus the non-voting club secretary.

Three sub-committees were set up which report to the Board and are each chaired by a relevant Board director.

Clear role and responsibility statements were published for all Board members and the three main committee and sub-committees. This ensures meetings are focused and more effective.

Financial control and budget management has improved, as has marketing activity and clubhouse revenue.

A club feedback survey gave the club management a Net Promoter Score of +84, compared with the national average of +73. The NPS is a way of measuring customer satisfaction.

Positive comments from members included: "the club is run very well and seems very pro-active in improving and developing all aspects of both golf and other activities"

There is an improved atmosphere at the club and the membership is positive towards the management following the restructure.

CASE STUDY:

FORRES GOLF CLUB, SCOTLAND

The club

Situated inland from the Moray Coast, Forres Golf Club is a parkland course with a rich history and a picturesque beautifully maintained course.

What is the case study about?

Forres was facing a number of challenges typical of a traditional club operating in the modern golf industry. Its solution was to increase the members' engagement to protect the future of the club.

What was the issue they had?

At the club's peak the club boasted a membership of over 1000. However, this had dropped to around 500, whose average age was above the Scottish average.

Member engagement was poor, with many simply playing golf and leaving. The club was struggling to see its way forward and needed to identify new people to help with its future direction.

What changes were made to overcome the issue?

The club decided to survey members and visitors to gain feedback to guide its future direction. This was followed by an open member forum asking for feedback, ideas and priorities.

The feedback was significant, varied and clear. It helped the club develop short and long-term plans, including 20 development initiatives to undertake over 18-months, action plans for each sub-committee and working groups, a list of willing volunteers to help undertake club development work, and a benchmarking process for measuring improvements in the club.

What was the impact of the changes?

The club identified 23 new volunteers willing to join the club management committee or sub-committees, and a further 48 willing to join short-term working groups.

Members became significantly more engaged in the club generally – becoming more active in competition golf and social events, as well as taking an interest in the club more generally.

Conclusion

"The customer survey and forum helped in terms of membership retention and engagement. I can feel this year more people are engaged in the club, and more are playing in club competitions and opens."

Murray Drummond, Club Captain

CASE STUDY:

NEWPORT GOLF CLUB, WALES

The club

Newport Golf Club in South Wales was founded in 1903 and is located 300 feet above sea level, amongst the birch, beech and oak trees of the ancient Llwyni Wood.

What is the case study about?

Newport tackled key governance issues including failure to make effective decisions, member communication and engagement, and unfair burdens on individual committee roles.

What was the issue they had?

The golf club went through a period of 'no decision making' when matters were left too long to be acted upon. The members felt they weren't being listened to and it was decided that the club needed to look at how it was operating.

The club had three failed attempts at changing its governance structure from a committee structure which lacked the efficiency to the move the club forward in today's competitive world.

There was also a heavy burden on the club captain for their year in office, and the annual change in this position did not make business sense. In addition, the decision making process was very slow and, with no strategic plan in place, decisions were taken in isolation.

What changes were made to overcome the issue?

A task force was set up and visited six golf clubs across the UK, taking detailed information on how they operated. They then visited a further six and from this recommended a new operating model to make Newport Golf Club fit for the future.

Nine presentations were made to the membership bringing them up to date with the thinking of the task force and engaging them in the process.

What was the impact of the changes?

The committee structure was divided up into a Management Board and a Captain's Committee.

A new role of club manager was introduced, to be accountable for the day to day running of the club and framework for the future.

All roles were recruited on a skills basis and combined with a strong office team overseeing the change and communicating regularly with the members.

A five year business plan is in place, combined with a five year golf course plan as this is the club's main product. Each board member and sub-committee member fully understands their roles and how they contribute to the future of the golf club.

As a result, the club has thriving membership numbers and improved engagement with members. For example over 50% of member surveys are now returned.

Conclusion

The club's top tips for others:

- > Use skill-based recruitment procedures for committee members.
- > Involve your club members in the process.
- > Communicate widely throughout the change process.
- > Expect it to take a while but you will get there!

