

Forrester Park Golf Club
Annual General Meeting 20/09/2017

COURSE COMMITTEE REPORT

The committee has met regularly through the year, with the minutes posted online and on the section noticeboards. Thanks are due to Tim, Jeff and the section representatives for giving their time to these meetings, and to members for submitting their ideas and suggestions, each and every one of which is discussed. Thanks specifically to Craig as Chairman and to Reg Brunt, who stepped down after many years' service –our loss is the Junior Section's gain! This year has also seen three 'volunteer' sessions when members have directly contributed to the process of upkeep and development, while engaging with the greenstaff and generally getting a deeper appreciation of the work involved in managing the course.

The mainly drier and benign weather during the last autumn through spring period has greatly benefitted the greenstaff's hard work (when in some previous years it has done the opposite!). The fairway grass has been stronger, more consistent and the greens have been nothing short of superb – the envy of many of the county's courses and duly acknowledged by the Essex Golf Union. It is right that Jeff's achievements should be noted in a number of areas:

- Extensive clearing of bramble and other ground cover, to improve the visual appeal of the course, while promoting better airflow to the land (and speeding up play with fewer lost balls ...)
- Protection of the greens by maintaining the 'white line' policy on the approaches, with further creation of aprons and the varying cut heights to provide fringes around the edges.
- A new shelter between the 10th and 11th
- Better sight-lines around the 7th pond, clearer definition to the OOB line
- Practice net renovated
- Investment – over £100k spent on equipment e.g. a tractor, variable-height greens mower, green "iron".

Other issues, however, continue with slow progress:

- Bunkers: Although regularly re-filled with sand, there are two core problems: one is drainage: a thorough renovation to provide long-term relief from flooding in even the most affected sites is time consuming and very expensive: two is clay contamination, which mixes with the sand to create a hard, unforgiving mass – Jeff is doing the best he can with available resources, but it will be a long process.
- Tees: Some progress here, but re-seeding and levelling are other significant tasks. Members are urged to give assistance by using the seed-mix to repair damage on the par-3s. The committee would like to see (and has recommended for several years...) a phased programme to establish permanent winter-tees. We have also advocated landscaping to 'show-case' the visual appeals of the 1st and 10th tees – these projects have been 'on the list' for some time now.
- Trees: In several locations, the problems associated with mature trees and their overhanging canopies continue. Jeff and his team can only tackle the lower branches (as has been done..) but there are plans to engage a tree surgeon to tackle the higher reaches – again, this and the equipment necessary is expensive and will have to be undertaken as funds and time allows.

Work is also progressing in an area perhaps not widely recognised – in preparation for a national 'slope system', our course needs adjustment to ensure its length, degrees of difficulty etc. comply with regulations. This all involves issues from tee positions to the dimension of the greens and thus a further challenge in addition to everyday maintenance.

The committee urges members to continue their support of the course by repairing pitchmarks (we think carrying and using a pitch repairer should be mandatory!) and replacing divots whether they are yours or not – this alone would save the greenkeepers a huge amount of time to better use elsewhere. Keep submitting suggestions and if possible, find the time to join at least one of the coming year's 'volunteer' afternoons.

Concluding, it has been noticeable how much positive comment has been heard this year in relation to the course and its overall excellent condition - clear testimony and credit to Head Greenkeeper Jeff and his team.