

SENIOR MEMBER FORUM MEETING

Wednesday 11th December at 10am in the Fountain Room

Forum: Marc Newey, David Blackburn, Sarah Owens, Anne Wilkinson,
Patricia Jamal, Jane Peel and Cheng Yoe

In attendance: Simon Baker, Debora Drago, Helen Bolt, Dan Lott and Carolyn Ward

Apologies: Richard Storer, Sarah Owens, Penny Egan and Stuart Reeks

1. Welcome

Marc welcomed the Forum; apologies were noted, and Marc introduced the new members, Patricia, Jane and Cheng.

MN explained to the new members that staff come along to the forum to give report updates and to answer any questions that they may have. The idea of the forum is to bring your ideas and that of other members of the Club. They have been asked for pictures so these can be added to the Senior Members Forum poster, so members know who they are being represented by if they have anything that they want to raise. Any issues or problems that need sorting quickly the Senior Members Forum members can contact either Simon or Debora.

MN congratulated the new members on their appointment and stated that they had received 13 applications which is quite rare and therefore a summary of each candidate was put together for the Board to select from, the only steer that was given was that two women and one male be chosen so there were an even number of both male and females representing the Senior Members Forum. As well as the chosen members from the Board the Forum consists of two Board Directors which are Anne and Penny.

Quick introductions were made:

SB – 10 years at the club, remit is golf and games, health club, Security and IT, recently with Peter Bradburn from Course & Grounds reporting into him and general day to day running of the Club.

DD – Remit is looking after reception, housekeeping, F&B and kitchen and day to day running of the club, has been at the Club for 3 years.

DB – Has been a member of the Club since 1987, likes to play golf, go to the gym with the occasional swim. Has recently retired.

AW – Board Member for a second year, connected to several committees, Chair of Board's Disciplinary Panel, important to listen to members.

HB – Marketing and membership, looking after new members, and communications, has been with the club for 10 years.

CW – As only been with the club for 9 months, working as Marc's PA.

DL – Oversees Racquet sports; tennis, padel and squash and has been in his current role since 2019.

PJ – Has been at the club since the early 90s, attends the club with her daughter and grandchildren. Enjoys playing tennis, pickleball, swimming and all other activities at the club.

JP – Member of 50 years and now an honorary member, likes to play golf, tennis, padel and pickle, bridge and gym. Uses the club a lot and can see the club at different stages, evenings and at the weekends, wants to represent people's different points of view.

CY – Has only been at the club for 2 years, a vibrant place to be, enjoys playing tennis, padel and bridge. Is a Trustee of FISH (Friendship, Independence, Support & Help) which is a local charity that supports the older community with dementia, assisting them with shopping, taking them to hospital etc.

2. Review Minutes from the meeting held 22nd May 2024.

Due to time constraints the previous minutes and actions were not reviewed.

Action: Health Club Committee to review charges – HCC

Action: DL to check it out and see what can be done – DL

Action: Each section to do their own activities, invite other Clubs etc. – ALL

Action: Will advertise for people to join the SMF – consult with CN and AW for a good balance – MN

Action DEC24/01: Minutes of 22nd May and actions to be reviewed at the next meeting.

3. Health Club

SB updated the Forum on Stuart's behalf.

It was noted that the outdoor pool closes tomorrow for pool maintenance and will be back open 3rd January 2025.

The Sauna repairs should be finished next week.

Stuart is looking at doing seated Pilates and has had a request to remove some of the swimming lanes whilst Aqua classes are taking place. One lane will remain whilst Aqua classes take place, but another Aqua class may be added.

The outside pool has had the temperature reduced from 28 degrees to 27 degrees for the winter period at a request by the Environmental Committee which has received a lot of positive feedback. There has been a few people who have said that the pool is a bit cold, but the recommended temperature is between 25 – 29 degrees so we have pitched it in the middle. The indoor pool temperature remains at 29 degrees.

The outside pool pre-covid closed at 1pm and then post-covid closed at 4pm. The pool closed timings have changed to 2pm but this may change to 3pm at the weekends for January and February and after that the hours will be extended. Decisions have been based on the usage, environmental impact and cost.

AW asked if there was an override button for the Sauna. It was noted that Saunas can be the biggest cause of fires, they are currently having a new heater being fitted.

SB reported that they are looking to extend the gym floor space by looking at a different layout for next year with the assistance of Nick Bunn and Colin Hector.

JP had received some feedback from members that some of the classes for the seniors had been dropped such as one of the spin classes and Mature Movers.

PJ informed the Forum that the Mature Movers class had been renamed and was now called Forever Fit.

MN thought it would be good to advertise in January some of the classes highlighting what would suit best for different age groups / restrictions. It was noted that it should be advertised on competences rather than age.

Action DEC24/02: HB to review class content and advertise to those who are 50+.

It was noted that the Forever Fit was very popular as also good for those who have had a recent injury.

MN thought that there maybe a need to add more classes and asked SB to review what classes are popular and those that do not have much take up.

Action DEC24/03: SB to review how popular different classes are and where appropriate add more classes.

DB mentioned that some 80-year-olds could be fitter than a 50 year old and the messaging to members is important. Teachers are fantastic and give what people need.

4. Food and Beverage/Social Events

DD gave an update and commented that following feedback from last year, they have improved the healthy offering in the Juice Bar. Families using the Juice Bar still wanted pasta for their children. Members had also wanted energy drinks rather than snacks. DD believes that the prices are very competitive which have been benchmarked against other clubs.

They are now offering a new range of salads in the Club Café, fish of the day and special of the day.

MN advised that the House Committee had made a policy to freeze the prices in order to increase volume but that has not been evident and in January there will be a 5% increase. The bar prices remain low compared to local pubs and other clubs.

The Club has remained competitive on pizza prices to help with families and are offering good quality food at the Bistro. Most people have liked the themes, and this is working well. Have received many compliments on the food for events and day to day dishes on what the chef is producing and Debora probably has her best team and the Club is making a lot of effort to retain them.

PJ announced that the price of coffee worldwide is due to go up quite considerably.

Action DEC24/04: MN to talk to their supplier.

It was noted that they do need to subsidise food and beverage, but MN wants to improve the experience and keep the food quality high.

PJ mentioned that if for example you have a birthday lunch and maybe there are ten of you and have received really good service, how you go about tipping staff, have offered to buy the staff member a drink but they always decline.

MN advised that to introduce a tipping system would be complicated which would also have tax implications. MN informed the Forum that there are Comment Cards which are regularly reviewed and staff members who have been complimented get rewarded on their side by a way of a voucher which does not have any tax implications. MN explained that there is also a staff fund, with two payments per year and those who are not on any disciplinary would receive the payment as a thank you from all the members. The fund comes from the subscriptions that are made by members.

It was noted that several members on the Committee did not know about the nominations, and it was agreed that this should be advertised in the Recorder.

Action DEC24/05: HB to advertise the Comment Card system in the next Recorder.

JP advised that for events such as Curry & Quiz night members are always asked for their feedback.

5. Racquets Update

DL advised that the Airhalls are now up.

It was noted that the 'Ladies mornings' scheduled 9.30am – 11am have not been popular and there have only been two or three ladies playing tennis. DL thought it was important to keep the 'Ladies mornings' going but tended to be more older ladies that attended.

The Forum discussed if this could be because of pickleball being played at the same time, as 16 people on one court so quite noisy. In general Tennis players do not want to play next to Pickleball.

Dan informed the Forum that a lot of members play all three sports: Tennis, Padel and Pickleball. The Padel session for over 60s on the Friday is fully packed every week. Next year this session will be bookable 8 days in advance so more members will have more chances to attend.

DL explained that if they get more padel courts, they could do a lot more activities. Pickleball is packed for the 1½ days that it is organised for.

Padel & Pickleball Hub

MN informed the Forum that there was a demand there and a padel/pickleball working group has been set up to look at this project. An area has been identified, the grass courts on the right-hand side, low current usage plus tennis do not want pickle next to them, padel do not mind.

MN explained that they wanted to develop another five padel courts on top of the two they have which will need to go over three tennis courts. First choice would be those three grass courts, with court 28 nearest to the road to make an outdoor pickleball court. They are pushing to get covers for the Padel courts. At some point they would like to extend the sunbathing area using court 25.

Ideally would like an Airhall on Courts 4 – 6 but would need to get planning permission.

Would keep the six grass courts (19-24) as they need to be kept together for rotation.

It was noted that grass courts 26 – 28 would offer a viewing area on the southside looking at the Padel and they would have more chance of getting flood lights because Rosslyn have already floodlights, would bolt on pickleball to see how it goes.

Second choice they would look at Courts 12 – 14 (blue courts) but would probably receive objections from Woking Close so would not look to use Court 11 for Padel.

MN explained that they will probably only get covers for three out of the five Padel courts because of the impact on openness.

MN advised that he had met with the Chairman of Fairacres to explore the possibility of using some of their land, but this is a non-starter.

CY asked if there could be an extra day for over 60s put on for Padel.

It was noted that there are just not enough courts as tennis is popular at peak times.

6. Golf Update

Sub-committee looking at utilisation, who playing when and using Tagmarshal to look at pace of play.

SB explained that the technology highlights those who are playing slow and who is playing at pace, they are currently monitoring groups.

The Golf Marshalls get a map and when Red the players are highlighted as playing a slow pace. Course has been set up for play to take 3 hours, 45 minutes but they are looking at the data to see if that is accurate. Amber would indicate that players are being held up, with Green indicating that players are on time, the Marshall would know who to speak to and if players are holding up more than one group.

New technology to help the Golf Committee to make some strategic decisions going forward, i.e. looking at handicaps.

SB advised that they are meeting next Thursday to review the data.

SB informed the Forum that they are also looking at tee-times, those who are booking anonymous and no-shows. SB advised that those who cancel within 24 hours receive a note from Matt and Louis advising them that repeated no-shows may result in their booking rights being removed. SB commented that there is no problem if this is a one-off maybe due to illness and they also take the weather into account.

The Forum discussed the different playing groups that go out, 2-ball and 4-ball playing groups.

MN stated that members are booking prime 18-hole slots and then only playing 9 holes.

It was noted that during Covid the 9-hole days were very popular but afterwards they went back to 18 holes, but people are playing 9 holes anyway. May need to change the tee times.

MN was asked if they had a 4-ball rule, i.e. match up 2-ball with another 2-ball.

JP said that it would be good if they could book the back 9 holes.

MN stated that they have informally allowed people to tee-off on the 10th tee but to do this every day would cause issues for the greenkeepers who need time to prepare the course.

It was noted that when players book, they should state if they are booking 18 holes or 9 holes.

DB didn't think people were being policed but it was noted that having a second Marshall in the Summer and using the technology is helping.

The Forum was informed that Peter Bradburn is looking to extend the path between 7 and 8 and looking to put down a winter path so buggies can be used. He is looking for a six-hole route for senior members.

Preparations are being made for two test bunkers, these will have a capillary concrete bunker lining with new sand located by the 3rd hole as a trial, if members like them then they will roll them out. They are continuing with the greens drain project and will do the bunkers at that time.

SB advised that he had attended the Golf AGM and Ricky at announced that he was going to put some dates in January for those members who have not used a simulator.

IGC Project

MN stated that they are digging trial pits on the golf practice ground to ascertain what old building foundations lie down there plus the exact location of service pipework. They have received planning permission and once they get the report back from Sports Clubhouses who are assisting with the tender process, tenders will be sent out end of February to three or four contractors who will come back with costs by April and then they will go out to members for consultation and feedback.

There is an AGM in May so MN will give an IGC update then. This is a complex project, and still have a way to go.

7. Masterplan 2035 Update

MN showed the Forum the Bar design.

Bar and Function Rooms Refurbishment

MN explained that on 6th January the function rooms will be closed until April, a corridor and new Bistro room will be created. The Bridge Room will stay open for members to use throughout the works period until the last month when it will be refurbished last. Doors leading to the Bridge room will be changing, they will be up to the ceiling and have sliding doors.

The main bar will have a permanent wall instead of the current curtain in the Piano Bar.

House Committee is making decisions on the carpet and furniture choices. Bridge Committee wants certain chairs which will be different to those chosen for the Bar. We are looking to keep the blue chairs which will be stored on site for events that require a lot of chairs.

JP asked if they could make sure that the chairs were at the right height.

It was noted that a door will need to be put in the Garden Room Bar for access whilst the works are taking place, it will be open in the evenings for members to use and drinks will be available in the Club Café during the day.

It was noted that the last time the Bar furniture was refurbished was 14 years ago.

Terrace Project

MN explained that the Terrace is going to be now shortened due to fire regulations and cost.

Terrace will be partially covered so can be used all year round but will be a bit chilly in the winter as they can only have spot heaters.

The proposed lights need to be reviewed because of the bats as the terrace runs alongside their flight path.

An update on the project will be given in the Recorder tomorrow.

8. Marketing Update / 125 Committee Celebrations – Summer 2026

HB advised that she was doing the Recorder monthly and also setting out the top 10 fortnightly to give an overview of what members can get involved in. Will be looking at fitness, art classes etc.

A suggestion was made that it would be good if when advertising certain classes to put in brackets what it helps, i.e. Tai Chi is fantastic for balance for all ages.

PJ thought Senior Members should be encouraged to do something in the afternoon, maybe 1pm – 3pm before picking up the grandchildren.

HB informed the Forum that they are doing quite a bit of work on members only Instagram with Daniella working on that with short snippets of what people are doing.

125 Committee Celebrations

Further discussions around the party have taken place, they were originally aiming for something in the ITC, which was costed up by member Arjun Varma, but alternative ideas have been expressed as dressing the ITC would be quite costly, so Arjun does have a couple of other ideas.

HB informed the Forum that the Brand identify had been signed off with regards to the colour scheme and Club logo, not done too much with that. They have also created a rose motif as we have ordered a bespoke Roehampton Club rose and Daniella has also created a pattern to use on ties, scarves, interior for gift boxes or a pocket square. They are in the process of costing up other items as giveaways and trinkets such as a coin to do coin toss for croquet tournaments, bridge cards and a whole list of other things. The Committees need to decide on what items should be giveaways and what items can be for the members to buy.

9. AOB

CY asked how many senior members there was (60+).

MN estimated that out of the 4000 adults there were probably between 1500 – 2000- actual is 1750. The average adult male age at the club was 52, with the average for women 54. It was noted that there are 990 juniors, and the YMF represented members aged between 19 and 35.

Action DEC24/06: HB to find out the data and distribute information to the Senior Forum.

PJ asked if the Club wanted to give some type of 'Social' membership.

MN explained that there is a category 'Other Sports' where members can use the Health Club, play Bridge and Croquet but due to demand it is only one in and one out. Members cannot just downgrade because they do not want to play Golf/Tennis anymore, there needs to be a specific reason, and priority is given to those on the waiting list with a medical exemption.

Membership Committee are thinking about having a 'Social' membership category, but this does have consequences on carparking, but they are looking at mid-week / off peak times.

PJ asked if there could be updates on Backgammon, Snooker and Poker to see how successful and important these activities are to the Club.

Action DEC24/07: LL and MF to be invited to the next meeting to give updates with possible invites being extended to Geoffrey from Chess and Chris Bray.

DB informed the Forum that he had recently given up his weekend membership and asked if they wanted Seniors to play in the afternoons to offer some kind of discount. JP commented that maybe offer a free coffee afterwards if they play in the afternoons.

10. Date of Next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting is scheduled 1st April 2025.

The meeting closed at 12pm.