

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

17 March 2008

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth & Arts**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 POULT WOOD GOLF CENTRE (PWGC) – MARKET SURVEY RESULTS

Summary

This report provides Members with the results of the 2007 market survey at PWGC. In overview, the results are very encouraging, reflecting the continued popularity of the Golf Centre amongst its users.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 A comprehensive market survey is undertaken at PWGC on a biannual basis, as part of the approved market research programme.
- 1.1.2 The 2007 survey was undertaken in the late summer/early autumn, and involved 301 of the Centre's users, who were willing to complete a survey form at the time of participation.
- 1.1.3 The survey was produced and analysed in liaison with the Council's Improvement and Development Unit. Taking into account the number of questionnaires completed and returned, Members can be confident in the validity of the results.
- 1.1.4 In general terms, the survey covers three main areas:
- Characteristics of market and patterns of use.
 - Customer assessment of the existing services.
 - Meeting customers' needs in the future.

1.2 Comparison of Results

- 1.2.1 As with the 2005 survey, questionnaires were issued by the Course Wardens on a supervised self-completion basis, which allows both Discount Card and non-Discount Card holders alike to complete the survey. The 2005 and 2007 surveys were carried out at a similar time of year, were of a similar length, and included

the same core questions. This allows a direct comparison between the survey results, and provides the opportunity to identify any changes over the last two years.

1.3 Survey Results

- 1.3.1 Attached at **[Annex 1]** is a summary of the results for Member's consideration. The full survey report is a substantial document and is, therefore, not reproduced in these papers, although it can be made available on request. The comparative results for the 2005 survey are shown in **[Annex 1]** against this year's scores. Overall respondents were extremely happy with the facilities with 91% of respondents tending to be satisfied overall (scoring 4 or 5 – Very Satisfied, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is Very Dissatisfied and 5 is Very Satisfied). This compares to 84% in 2005 and shows a significant improvement.
- 1.3.2 Attached at **[Annex 2]** is a summary of the survey highlights for 2007.
- 1.3.3 The following factors are the main drivers of overall satisfaction with Poult Wood taking into account all other factors covered by the survey, in descending order by strength of association. These highlight the areas that, if only one change is made, should bring about the greatest improvement in overall satisfaction.
- Range of food in the bar/restaurant - This in turn is associated with the age of respondents, with those aged 66 and over more likely to rate this favourably.
 - Fairways on the 18-hole course - This in turn is associated with the age of respondents, with those aged 66 and over more likely to rate this favourably.
 - Decoration in the clubhouse building – This in turn is associated with the age of respondents, with those aged 66 and over more likely to rate this favourably.
 - Etiquette on the 18-hole course
 - Where the reason for visiting Poult Wood is 'Quality of Facilities' – This in turn is associated with the age of respondents, with those aged 66 and over more likely to rate this favourably.
- 1.3.4 The age of respondents is significantly associated with the rating they gave for various questions throughout the survey. Older respondents (aged 66 and over) are more likely, for example, to rate the 18-hole course favourably, more likely to rate booking arrangements favourably, more likely to rate prices favourably, and are more likely to be satisfied overall.
- 1.3.5 Characteristics of the market and patterns of use – Of the users surveyed 39% held a Discount Card (this is a decline of 6 percentage points from 2005).

Females represent approximately 24% of all respondents, a slight increase compared to 2005, where the equivalent figure was 18%. Approximately 65% of users are aged 50 or over. The average age of users has risen by two years to 56 in the last two year period, this trend indicated an ageing customer base. Encouragingly, it should be noted that 14% of users are under 18 years of age, an increase from 10% in 2005. However, in overall terms, the usage of Poult Wood continues to show a significant bias towards an older age profile. Approximately 45% are retired, compared to 21% that work full time, 14% of respondents stated they had a long term illness, disability or infirmity.

The vast majority of respondents (59%) have played as a member of a group, and approximately 25% have done so as a member of Poult Wood Golf Club, and 14% have played as a member of a Society. This illustrates the important role the Golf Club and Societies play in the ongoing success of the facility. These results provide useful feedback on patterns of use and support the Council's policy of targeting junior and female golfers.

1.3.6 Customer assessment of the existing service

- 18-hole course – satisfaction levels were high with 70% of respondents tending to be satisfied overall. Users were least satisfied with winter tees for which 40% of respondents tended to be satisfied compared to 16% who tended to be dissatisfied; in 2005 the proportion of respondents rating winter tees favourably was the second lowest. This may reflect the difficulties experienced that have been picked up in Viewpoint Cards with compaction of tees, but Members can be reassured that this has now been addressed. Customers were most satisfied with greens (75% of respondents tended to be satisfied) and opening hours (75%).
- 9-hole course – satisfaction levels with this course were lower, compared to the 18-hole course, for all aspects of the course with 54% of respondents tending to be satisfied overall. Users were least satisfied with winter tees (26% of respondents tended to be satisfied) and etiquette (41%). The issue of winter tee mats has already been identified for funding and so Members can be reassured these will be replaced progressively on this course. Etiquette is a more difficult aspect to deal with. This aspect will be addressed by the wardening team and golf professional who will be asked to offer advice to customers.
- Wardening – 79% of respondents tended to be satisfied with the golf wardens overall. 77% of respondents have had their ticket checked about once a month or more often.
- Clubhouse – overall 81% of customers tended to be satisfied with the Clubhouse building overall. Customers were least satisfied with the car parking (69% tended to be satisfied) and decoration (72%). Within the bar/restaurant 76% of respondents tended to be satisfied overall.

Respondents tended to be least satisfied with disabled access (54% tended to be satisfied), this is despite the lift, sloped access and automatic doors at the Centre. Other relatively low scores were for prices (72% of respondents tended to be satisfied) and range of food (70%). The Clubhouse contractor, Par 4, has already proposed changes to menus which will be updated shortly. Overall, 57% of respondents tended to be satisfied with the changing rooms. Only 39% tended to be satisfied with the showers; this is despite the recent investment in new showers and so is a disappointing result, but is likely to reflect problems with hot water supply that have now been overcome.

- Golf Shop – overall, 69% of respondents tended to be satisfied with the Golf Shop. Customers were most satisfied with the opening hours (75% indicating they were satisfied) and customer service (72%). Customers were least satisfied with online booking and hire equipment, although these had the fewest respondents that indicated that they had used these services. Hire equipment and prices had the lowest satisfaction scores, based on only those respondents that have used the facilities.
- Driving Range – the driving range, which has been in place since 2007, was not present during the last customer survey in 2005. Overall, this question had the lowest response rate, with the largest proportion of ‘not sure’ and blank answers. However, overall 30% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the driving range overall and only 1% tended to be dissatisfied.
- Squash Courts – The majority of respondents did not answer this question or answered ‘not sure’ and it is, therefore, difficult to draw any conclusions from these answers. Between 6-8% of respondents tended to be satisfied with all aspects of the squash courts, although this does represent the majority of respondents that answered the questions. An Open Taster weekend and the Clubhouse contractor’s proposal for a junior squash tournament are both initiatives which should improve this area.
- Marketing – 98% of respondents would recommend the Centre to others. Disappointingly, two-thirds of respondents have never visited the Poulton Wood web site. However, it is worth noting that the web site is well used with statistics showing that there are 900 unique visits to the main page on average each month (data for the last six months). 41% of respondents had seen our newspaper advertising, although those aged 66 and over are more likely to have done so. These factors, combined with the increasing average age demographic indicate a need to increase marketing to a younger audience in order to retain our future customer base.

1.3.7 Meeting customers’ needs in the future - Users were asked in the survey to identify specific improvements they would like to see. The main improvements (identified by 10 or more customers) related to the following areas:

Maintenance and long term repairs of the greens and fairways

Toilets (including provision on the golf course, and ventilation in the ladies toilet)

Wardens/staff

Bar/restaurant (including making better use of the area and entertainment)

Improve the quality of the bunkers

Winter tees (both 9 and 18 hole course)

Car park (including more spaces, more disabled bays and resurfacing)

Changing rooms

Teeing off times

1.4 Key Issues

1.4.1 Taking into account the survey results, the following key issues are identified for further consideration, in liaison with the on-site contractors:

- Improve marketing to target younger potential visitors
- Review the range of food in the bar/restaurant
- Improve the fairways on the 18-hole golf course
- Decoration in the Clubhouse building
- Improve etiquette on the golf courses
- Maintenance of the Golf Course and repairs
- Customer care training for staff
- Winter tee replacement on the 9-hole course
- Improvements to the car park, including relining
- Consider the options for accessing a toilet from the middle of the 18-hole course

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 None.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 The cost of the survey was met from existing revenue budgets and was undertaken “in-house” with the assistance of the Council’s Improvement & Development Unit.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 Taking into account the number of questionnaires completed and returned, Members can be confident of the validity of the results.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Communications, Customer Contact, Healthy Lifestyles

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 The 2007 survey results generally indicate a high level of satisfaction amongst the respondents and it is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that the results of the 2007 Market Survey at Poulton Wood Golf Centre be noted, and the key issues be considered further in liaison with the on-site contractors.

The Chief Leisure Officer confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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File LF 4/3

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