A NY of us are fully aware of the Government's intentions regarding compulsory competitive tendering for golf courses, but a lot of the public course clubs do not realise they have to protect themselves and their members.

This they can do by insisting with their local authority that they have the right to see and read the specification that has been drawn up by the local authority, who have to list "how things are to be done and when they are done" the club's must use their right to insist that their rights are protected by ensuring the local authority put into their spec's i.e. clubs booking arrangements, captains days, charity days and any tee times that have been allocated to them, failure to see that the points mentioned are in spec could mean that whoever has

"We are trying to get a message over before we witness the downfall of municipal clubs as we know them."

the right to take over the course does not have to honour any of these arrangements as they will only work to the spec; laid down at the time of the tender, whereas if the club get these included they have some protection.

In this feature Greenkeeping Management is attempting to get this message over before we have to witness the downfall of municipal clubs as we know them.

Demands are already being made on the clubs that have failed to find out these facts and are now tied down with red tape. The National Association of Public Golf Courses is at the forefront of the fight and it is with their help that Greenkeeping Management is presenting this feature.

Mike McIlennan
Editor

W ITH the explosion of interest in golf in this country in the past five years - due mainly to the media exposure and success by British players in international events such as the Ryder Cup and American Masters - the club's must use their right to insist that their rights are protected by ensuring the local authority put into their spec's i.e. clubs booking arrangements, captains days, charity days and any tee times that have been allocated to them, failure to see that the points mentioned are in spec could mean that whoever has

At Panshanger Golf Complex, which is run by Welwyn Hatfield Council, we get players leaving the public house, which is situated in the middle of the Golf Course, at 11.00 p.m. on a Saturday night and waiting in their cars until the shop opens at 6.00 a.m. the following day, to try and secure a round for that day.

This surely cannot be tolerated as in any other sport it would be unthinkable.

Some Municipal, especially in the South, are reporting over 70,000 rounds per year which by any Greenkeepers standard is 20,000 rounds too many, as the wear and tear on the course becomes very difficult to control.

In fact the STRI recommend that 45,000 rounds per year is the most economical level to maintain a Golf Course. However, in saying this there is a need to improve a lot of the existing Municipal Courses in this country, and to bring them up to the standards that the public expect as media exposure is showing courses at the highest quality, and the golfer expects this to be the standard on his own course.

Having travelled round the country and visited many Municipal Courses there is a considerable variance in standard, and it is apparent to me that some Local Authorities do not see the benefit, whether it be financial or prestige, in providing a Course of the highest quality. We at Welwyn Hatfield believe in providing quality and the investment in Panshanger has paid off, with many members of the public unaware that it is a Local Government provision.

At Panshanger, which is situated in the green belt on 110 acres we provide a thriving 18 hole Golf Course, Public House, Function Suite, 3 Glass Backed Squash Courts, Pro Shop and other associated areas, and I would suggest to many people that our model is one that can easily be developed should the Local Authority be prepared to invest. The Course, and all the associated facilities, now cover its costs including all its debt charges, and still is able to make a contribution back into the Rates or what is now called the Poll Tax Fund.

Continued on page 13
Their courses, for it they do not then the Private Sector will take those where maintenance of some courses. I hear some Authorities say that they welcome this but, as we all know, the maintenance of a Golf Course is not only a job but a hobby as well to dedicated Greenkeepers, and when Golf Course maintenance becomes a commercial issue then there is the danger that the specification could suffer and investments which have been made in the Course over the past years could go overnight.

Having said this, there are a lot of Municipal Courses which will benefit from CCT especially those where maintenance in the past has been sadly lacking. And it is these courses, I believe, that the Private Sector will be trying to win.

Having given my broad views on the future of Municipal Golf, and to the future, I would welcome any comments from readers as to their views as I have only touched on some of the nerve ends which need debating and would welcome greater debate through this magazine.

PETER KIRKHAM
Assistant Director of Recreation, Welwyn Hatfield Council

FOCUS ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES

continued from page 11

The Specification

The specification is a very detailed document giving information and setting standards on every aspect of the service provided. If the specification is perfect and the contractor adheres to it, the customer using the service should not be able to detect any difference in the service, whoever is carrying out the work.

The specification for managing sports and leisure facilities might cover the following areas:

(a) Description of area, description of service, changes in policy, improvements/expansion of the service, pricing, monitoring of performance, financial records, management information, sponsorship, purchasing, stationery, management, staffing levels, staffing qualifications/validity. Experience, standards of dress/uniform, training, open hours, programming, booking system, advertising, security, upkeep of facilities.

Action for Clubs

This note is not necessarily exhaustive, but is intended to act as a reminder, or checklist, of issues which clubs based on municipal golf courses should discuss with their local authority. Remember, if anything is not included in the specification, the person or company who wins the contract is under no obligation to provide it.

Because of the financial objectives which have to be met, anything outside of the specification will be the subject of a variation order which could be expensive.

(a) Seek an early meeting with officers of your council’s Leisure Services or Recreation Department to discuss the club’s position in relation to competitive tendering and, in particular, the specification.

(b) Find out how the local authority intends to package the contracts and what the timescale for going out to tender will be.

(c) It is likely that the local authority will be taking the opportunity to review its policy and operation. Find out if this is the case, what is under review, how it will affect the club and how you can help in that process.

(d) Is the local authority reviewing the contracts and what the timescale for going out to tender will be.

(e) Has the club any arrangement to book the first tee for club members? What about other charges — lockers, hire of equipment etc? Are juniors protected?

(f) What are the booking arrangements? Will they remain the same? How much notice will be given for regular bookings and special occasions?

(g) Is there a formal route for consultation between the club and the local authority? If not, use this opportunity to establish one. Don’t appear to be in the position of always asking for something. Your expertise may help the local authority in preparing a specification or monitoring the contractor’s performance.

(h) Are there rules about priority on the first tee? More than one starting point? Competitions having priority etc? Often these rules are not written down, but in future they may need to be.

(i) Has NAPGC competi-
tions been considered? If there are existing arrangements, are they included in the specification? What about future possibilities — hosting the NAPGC Open?

(j) Are the arrangements protected?

(k) Does the club have any arrangements for visits, coaching etc? Make sure that they are protected in the specification.

Legislation areas to be watched

In this article we examine the myriad of ways in which Government legislation could affect the running of municipal golf courses. Thanks for the information goes to the National Association of Public Golf Courses.

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Continued on page 15