

MINUTES OF SLTCC 48th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 7th NOVEMBER 2024

Present: Gillian Bartlett, Chair, the following Board members: Katharine Beaudry, Vikki Chambers, Ray Franklin, Keith McMillan, Simon Taylor, and c.25 other members

Apologies: Michael Suchanecki, Ian Moody, Annie Clarke, Lee Kirby, Monika Mitchell

Introduction

Gillian welcomed everyone present and thanked them for coming to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year ending 31 March 2024. Gillian confirmed the quorum is 17 which was comfortably exceeded by the attendance. She introduced the other members of the Board, and Dez Lewington (Club Manager).

Minutes of the 2023 AGM

Gillian confirmed that the minutes of the 2023 AGM (held on 9th November 2023) had been approved by the Board and advised attendees that the minutes are available on the Club website. She thanked Simon Taylor for preparing these minutes.

1. Introduction, Directors Report and Chair's Report

Gillian advised that the financial year relevant to this AGM is 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and the accounts cover this period. The Chair's report also contains a lot of detail about Club developments subsequent to April 2024. The AGM will be voting for three directors and bar committee under agenda items 3 and 4.

The Club is in a healthy financial position and for the financial year to 31 March 2024 income before expenditure was £276.9k and an operating surplus of £34.5k. Further detail is in the Accounts agenda item presented by Ray. These reserves had enabled the Club to further invest in the Club's facilities (notably structural repairs to the squash court building) and build reserves for the new tennis court, refurbishing tennis courts and funds towards new Clubhouse.

Progress on Tennis Court 8 has been slowed down by having to wait for Bromley Council to approve our application for Lawful Development (the transfer of use of one sport [croquet] to another sport [tennis]). We have followed this course to avoid the necessity of obtaining planning permission – a longer and more complicated process requiring consultation with neighbours.

This has taken much longer than expected, partly due to issues with communications with Bromley Council who asked for more papers. Dez explained that we had to provide both a plan of the site and elevation plan to show the height of the fencing around the court (the croquet lawn did not have fencing). Everything has now been provided and is in order and the Club hopes for approved shortly. Quotes have been obtained for a new tennis court with artificial clay surface. We hope that tennis court 8 can be built in the spring of 2025 which will allow the Club to increase membership and generate extra income.

The New Clubhouse project will be covered under a separate agenda item when questions can be raised.

A Club survey of members has recently been held - 120 members replied and the information gained is very useful. Many helpful comments were received. We will be analysing the data in board and separate committee meetings where relevant. Indications are that the new project for the Clubhouse is popular amongst most members. Some important issues arising from the Survey:

Change of Name: The Board is considering changing the Club's branding and logo as this still refers to croquet which is no longer played at the Club. The Board has also been considering whether to change the trading name to recognise the squash section, as well as the tennis section (the Club's official legal name is Sydenham Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club Ltd and this will not be changed).

Different options were given in the survey and the most popular amongst those replying was Sydenham Tennis and Squash Club with the current name Sydenham Tennis Club coming second. At the Board meeting earlier this month the Board voted to change the trading name to Sydenham Tennis and Squash Club. This recognises the significant squash membership and facilities for squash.

One member – Will Richardson - runs a branding agency, and has offered their services free of charge to undertake work on the rebranding and logo. Now that the decision has been made on the new trading name, this work will commence.

Volunteers: In the survey many members said they would be interested in volunteering in the Club in various ways, including on the committees. This is very welcome as the Club relies on volunteers to assist with many aspects of the Club and its activities. The Bar and Squash Committees in particular are short of members – attendees were invited to speak to Simon for squash, Keith for Bar, (or Dez) if they would like to join. Some 15 people expressed an interest in joining the tennis committee – speak to Katharine (chair), Dez or another member of the committee. Gillian stressed that our section committees considers all members' interests irrespective of their playing abilities.

Sustainability: A lot of discussion on this topic was held at the last AGM. Due to this interest we sent an email out after the AGM and also called a meeting in May. Sadly, there was very disappointing attendance, only two directors and Dez in attendance. Nevertheless we drew up an Environmental Sustainability Plan which is on the members' area of website. This provides a framework for possible actions to deliver eco-friendly sustainability and Dez informed that it includes current actions already in place.

We now need some other volunteers not on the board to take this forward and form a subcommittee to consider and implement the action plan. We are looking for someone to lead this group and take it forwards. In the survey 12 members expressed an interest and attendees were invited to speak to any board member or Dez after the meeting.

Fundraising: Six members expressed an interest in this aspect and we would ideally like to form a fundraising committee to raise funds for the clubhouse project – speak to Dez or board member.

Members are Invited to read the report – any questions will be taken under Any Other Business.

2. To receive the Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

Ray stated that the year ending 31 March 2024 showed the Club in a healthy financial position. It was the second normal year after Covid and the Club has attracted more members both for tennis and squash. Major expenditure of £90k was undertaken to the structure of the squash courts – without this, the future of the squash courts would have been in doubt. The expectation is that with the work successfully completed, squash membership will continue to grow.

For the year ended 31st March 2024, there was an operational surplus close to £35k; similar to the surplus in 2022/23 and the budgeted surplus for 2024/25 is also for a similar amount.

Total income stood at £277k, the largest income stream being coaching activities (£118k) slightly ahead of income from member subscriptions; both tennis and squash membership income was healthy. Lettings income (mainly Witty Kiddies) grew by 10%.

Ray explained that there is still a waiting list for tennis; the hoped for completion of court 8 will allow the Club to take on more tennis members. In response to a question as to how many new members could be taken, Dez explained that the LTA provides guidance that a court with floodlights can support 60 members (the Club bases 50 adult members/court to take account off juniors and off-peak membership). However, court 8 will initially not have floodlights so it will enable 40 new members.

Dez explained that once built the Club will look at floodlight options for court 8; its proximity to neighbours means that floodlights on pylons may not be suitable, but we could look at Tweener LED lights positioned on top of the fence surrounding the court.

Gillian explained that there is no need for a vote to approve – the accounts are deemed to be received by the meeting. Gillian thanked Ray for his work on the accounts.

3. Election of Directors

Gillian recalled that the Club's Articles were amended at the 2022 AGM to change the rules for the terms of appointment for directors. The Articles now provide that each director will be elected for a fixed term of 3 years only and must then stand for re-election.

In 2021 Gillian Bartlett, Ray Franklin and Vikki Courtney resigned and were re-elected and now their three year term has run and they all stand for re-election.

Katharine Beaudry, Keith McMillan and Simon Taylor's 3 year terms run to 2025 and Vikki Chambers runs until 2026.

This requires an Ordinary resolution with a simple majority of those present at the AGM. The AGM voted and re-elected Gillian Bartlett, Ray Franklin and Vikki Courtney as directors for a three year term running to the 2026 AGM. There was one proxy vote from Michael Suchanecki who voted in favour of all appointments.

4. Election of Bar Committee

Dez explained that the Club's bar licence requires the election of a new Bar Committee each year. Vikki Chambers, Keith McMillan, and Simon Taylor have all been on bar committee since last year and offer themselves for re-election.

The AGM voted and approved the aforementioned members of the Bar committee. There is one proxy vote from Michael Suchanecki who voted in favour of all appointments.

It was noted that one member, Patrick Horgan had attended a Bar Committee meeting as an observer. Gillian advised that he can join the Bar Committee by being co-opted as a member – and then be formally voted on at the 2025 AGM.

5. Club Development Update

The board has been considering options to either build a new clubhouse or improve or provide a new bar/ café area for many years, given that the current bar is in a poor position and the building is old and not in the best condition. Our initial plan to build a new Club house (including squash courts) at the far end of the Club did not find favour with Bromley Council.

At the 2023 AGM Gillian had mentioned that the Board was considering an alternative proposal by converting the changing rooms and workshop. This year we have been considering the plan further – we have drawn up specification setting out the club's operational requirements and provided to Mark Barnard – Architect and member (who prepared the initial plan that was shown at the last AGM). Mark has drawn up a revised plan for consideration.

The plan replaces the current male and female changing rooms and part of the workshop with:

- Bar area and social space with windows overlooking the tennis courts. Outside seating area;
- Access to social space when bar not open/locked, potentially with a drinks machine;
- 4 individual cubicles for showering or changing and 3 toilets, also extra lockers for those not showering.

Having a bar/café in a central area of the club with the ability to look out over the courts both from inside and an outside seating area, is a popular option amongst most members..

The current communal changing rooms are a potential safeguarding risk with many children now on the coaching programme. Although signs have been put up and Changing Room policy introduced, having individual unisex cubicles and universal toilets (toilet and washbasin in same cubicle) will remove the current risks of children entering changing areas when adults are changing or showering.

Gillian stressed that the development is at a preliminary stage. The next step is that some directors are meeting with Mark on 21 November to raise queries and then there will be a wider consultation with members.

A few squash members are concerned about the loss of the current changing rooms, which are seen as a useful social space, whilst other squash members are keen on the overall plans. Peter Lewis had requested the opportunity to speak to this AGM which was granted.

Peter gave a short overview of the history of the development of the current changing facilities. Originally, the changing facilities were in the current club house; in 1974 the squash courts were constructed and squash proved very popular. It was considered sensible to have the changing facilities close to the squash courts, and the current communal changing rooms (one male, one female) were constructed in 1976.

Peter requested that in the interest of transparency the plans for the new bar/cafe and new changing facilities be circulated to the squash section for review.

Peter raised a particular concern that there does not appear to be a lot of space for male squash players (and presumably women) to cool down during or after the squash game. This is important given the strenuous nature of squash. He pointed out that the bar/cafe area is not a suitable space for squash players to cool down.

Other members views were sought:

- Mark (present at the AGM) stated that the plan was for the current changing rooms to be the bar/cafe area and that we need to focus on the individual changing and toilet spaces. He noted that new facilities at sports clubs are generally unisex;
- Women squash and tennis members at the AGM reported very low use of showers in the women's changing room;
- The draft plan does have some space for squash players to cool down – the cubicles (the level of ventilation of the individual cubicles is important here);
- There may be scope for the balcony area to be improved to make it more suitable as a rest area;
- Dez stressed the importance of Club facilities meeting modern safeguarding requirements – the LTA does regularly visit the Club to discuss safeguarding and this is part of our venue registration;
- Can solar panels be placed on top of the squash court building – this will improve the Club's sustainability – Mark said this could be looked at, as the building has a flat roof;
- Full planning permission is not required for this project as we are making use of an existing building;
- It was asked what would happen with the existing bar and hall. Dez advised we did consider construction an additional floor above the proposed bar/cafe, however the foundations of the changing rooms are not deep enough to support the additional floor. Accordingly, the current hall/bar will still be used for larger events – quiz nights, AGMs, Christmas Party;
- Simon noted that the proposed bar/cafe and squash courts would be in close proximity and was noise migration an issue; Mark stated that the plans would consider how to minimize noise break out / break in;

- Mark emphasised that this is a much more sustainable option than the original plan rejected by Bromley Council who were concerned about increasing the footprint on the site as we would be utilising an existing building;
- Gillian advised that Ray/Dez will revisit the ten year finance plan which models expected capital expenditure (including tennis court 8, resurfacing existing tennis courts and the new bar/cafe / changing facilities. Dez said we may look to get an interest free LTA loan for the courts as we could not get such a loan for the Club house.

6. Volunteer Recognition Award and Special Recognition Award

Gillian thanked all who volunteered to assist in the running of the Club, the current volunteers are shown on the Key Roles list circulated with the AGM papers.

There are two categories of award for recognising volunteers:

Volunteer Recognition Award (VRA) – to be considered each year but not granted unless suitable candidate. To recognise shorter and long term contributions.

Special Recognition Award (SRA) – to recognise especially outstanding service over a long period of time – only granted periodically when deserving candidate.

The criteria for both awards is in members' area on website and these were circulated to the Club and members were asked to put forward nominations for both awards. Some nominations were received and were then considered by a sub-committee of the Board.

It has been decided not to make a Special Recognition Award this year.

Volunteer Recognition Award - Gillian advised that there would be two awards this year.:

Katharine Beaudry

Secretary of the Tennis Committee from 2012 and served on the committee for a few years before that. Chair of the Tennis Committee in July 2018.

On the Board as Tennis Director since July 2018.

Doing the Fixtures for all team matches since Winter 2016 – time consuming job.

Helped organise the annual club tournament since 2016.

Captain of Ladies 1 team since 2016.

Simon Taylor

On the Board 1997 -2000 in quasi financial role.

He rejoined Board 2014 as squash director moving to Bar and Lettings Director later that year and then back to Squash director in 2020– as no other volunteer from squash to take up that role.

Became Club Secretary 2017 and since then prepared excellent minutes, organised agenda for every meeting and prepared action points – efficiently.

Bar Committee member since late 1990's providing financial information / stock-checks, he chaired Bar Committee 2014 to 2021.

On the Squash committee for many years since at least 2014. Chaired squash committee from 2021.

Ray presented the Volunteer Recognition Awards to Katharine and Simon.

Gillian advised that we now have the following Honours boards in the bar:

1. Presidents and Vice-Presidents up to 2022 (discontinued at the 2022 AGM);
2. For previous and current Chairs of the Club;
3. New board for SRA and VRA awards from 2023;
4. Volunteer of the Year – last award 2021 (discontinued at the 2022 AGM).

7. Any Other Business

Other questions from the meeting:

- Can the Club consider providing an automated squash ball thrower? Can periodic coaching (perhaps monthly) be provided at Squash Club Night. Gillian advised that the squash committee should consider these points.
- Can the Club explain the rationale for Court 8 to have an artificial clay surface given that is expensive and requires high levels of maintenance? Dez explained that initially the Board considered tarmac, artificial clay and acrylic, they also considered an astroturf surface. The acrylic option was discarded as it was very costly. Astroturf is a more challenging playing surface and there also seemed little benefit in the Club having just one astroturf court. The clay surface is more expensive than a tarmac surface, however, clay is more popular with members and can be used in most types of weather, accordingly the Board decided that court 8 should be installed with artificial clay.
- Another member advised that one of the clay courts (court 4) has a hole / depression which is an injury risk. Dez explained that the clay courts are not far from the end of their life-span of ten to twelve years. Also, courts 3, 4, and 5 are vulnerable to land movement in dry summers. However, when land movement occurs, it can reverse once there is wetter weather (this occurred when there was movement in the dry summer of 2022, which largely reversed over time). Dez advised that the condition of the courts are constantly being monitored.

Given where the Club is there will be ongoing issues on the court playing surfaces. Dez advised that when there is an issue, members should not try and fill a hole themselves, they should report the issue to Dez who will investigate and monitor. It was suggested that Dez will reinforce this message in one of the Club Manager's newsletters. If necessary, the problem area can be re-patched; then every 10-12 years the court is completely relaid. Dez is the person to contact in relation to any queries in relation to the courts.
- Does the Club pay its employees the London Living Wage? Dez explained that the Club employees are the Bar/Reception staff and himself (the rest are contractors who invoice the club for the services they provide). We currently pay the Bar/Reception staff above the

Minimum Wage, but below the London Living Wage (which is an advisory standard). The next Board will review the pay for our employees as from 1 April 2025.

At 9:10pm Gillian closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.