

MINUTES OF SLTCC 47th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 9th NOVEMBER 2023

Present: Gillian Bartlett, Chair, the following Board members: Katharine Beaudry, Vikki Chambers, Ray Franklin, Keith McMillan, Simon Taylor, plus 20 other members

Apologies: Vikki Courtney, Craig McEwan, Marian McEwan, Dez Lewington, Barbara Seabrook

Introduction

Gillian welcomed everyone present and thanked them for coming to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year ending 31 March 2023. She introduced the other members of the Board, and advised that Dez Lewington (Club Manager) was unfortunately unable to attend due to illness.

Minutes of the 2022 AGM

Gillian confirmed that the minutes of the 2022 AGM (held on 3rd November 2022) 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 2022 to 31 March 2023 and the accounts cover this period. The Chair's report also contains a lot of detail about Club developments subsequent to April 2023.

The Club is in a healthy financial position and at the end of the financial year 31 March 2023 had record reserves of £200k - Ray to provide more detail in the Accounts agenda item and take any questions. These reserves had enabled the Club to invest in the Club's facilities subsequent to April 2023, most notably the squash court building.

Progress on Tennis Court 8 has unfortunately been slowed down by having to wait for Bromley Council to approve application for Lawful Development – if this is obtained it will avoid obtaining planning permission, a longer and more complicated process. We hope to have Court 8 ready around Spring 2024 – assuming that Lawful Development is granted.

The New Clubhouse project has been impacted by the capital expenditure on squash courts and wider economic factors - this will be covered later in agenda item 5.

The Club has a total of 661 members and is running a waiting list of about 70 (for tennis). The Chair's Report also provides information on the tennis and squash sections, tennis coaching and camps, sporting and social events, the bar, reception and facilities hire.

2. To receive the Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023

Ray stated that the year ending 31 March 2023 was the first normal year after Covid. During the pandemic, the club received many grants which reduced the financial impact. However, Covid had one positive aspect, with more people started playing sport – there had been no waiting list prior to the pandemic. During Covid memberships were extended due to the Club needing to close – these extensions have now ended.

Also, it was the first year without any contribution from croquet – following the closure of the croquet lawn and their move to Mayow Park.

The total income stood at £269k, broken down to:

- membership subscription - £119.6k;
- coaching income - £112.1k;
- hall lettings - £27.7k.

In the year to 31 March 2023, operating expenditure was roughly in plan, though the Club did face substantially higher utility costs and in general all costs are increasing due to higher inflation. Expenditure on the grounds comprised the completion of the installation of LED lights for all squash and tennis courts (the Club charges no court fees as the annual membership covers lights). Other works on the grounds were maintenance works on trees and a new path between the squash court building and tennis courts 3 and 4.

After all expenditure and an allowance for depreciation, the accounts for the last financial year show an operating surplus of £35k, which is a very positive outcome. As a result the Club had record cash reserves of over £200k at 31 March 2023 – noting that this has subsequently been depleted by the expenditure of £90k on the squash court building. Ray explained that the Club endeavours to maintain cash reserves in the range of £50k to £100k.

In the current financial year the Club will look to set overall subscriptions (effective on 1 January 2024) taking into account inflation; and for squash members, the need to increase income after the major expenditure on the squash court building. The expenditure on the squash court building will be in the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024.

A question was raised as to the level of wage increases for employees and contractors. Ray explained that this is an issue for discussion by Board, noting that last year wage increases were in line with inflation.

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. Previously one third of the directors had to retire at each AGM by rotation. The new Articles provide that each director will be elected for a fixed term of 3 years only and must then stand for re-election.

At the 2022 AGM, under the old rules half of the directors (Katharine Beaudry, Keith McMillan and Simon Taylor) resigned and stood for re-election so their posts will now run to 2025. At the 2021 AGM the other three directors (Gillian Bartlett, Ray Franklin and Vikki Courtney) resigned, so under the new rules they will need to stand for re-election in 2024.

At the 2022 AGM Vikki Chambers expressed interest in becoming a director and after attending as an observer at one board meeting, she was co-opted as a director by the other directors at a Board

meeting in February 2023. Vikki fulfils the role of Premises director. Under the Articles a co-opted director's term can only run to the next AGM, and Vikki stands for election at this AGM.

This requires an Ordinary resolution with a simple majority of those present at the AGM. The AGM voted and approved Vikki Chambers as a directors for a three year term running to the 2026 AGM.

4. Election of Bar Committee

In accordance with the relevant statutory requirements, each member of the Bar Committee retires Vikki Chambers, Keith McMillan, Stephen Roden and Simon Taylor have all been on bar committee since last year offer themselves for re-election.

The AGM voted and approved the aforementioned members of the Bar committee.

5. Club Development Update: New Tennis Court, Squash Court Building, New Clubhouse

Squash Court building

There have been longstanding issues with the squash court building since it was built in the mid-1970s. Underpinning was carried out in the early 1990s, but this did not stabilise the building permanently and there have been continuous problems with movement and cracking in both the inner and outer walls, particularly in dry and hot summers.

Closure of the squash building would involve the loss of the squash section and its income; the building also has wider value to the Club beyond the squash section – it has the changing rooms and toilets, the light meters for most of the tennis courts and the squash courts are used by coaching groups in wet weather.

After considering advice obtained since 2018 from surveyors and specialist contractors, the Board decided to stabilise and refurbish the squash court building thus retaining the squash section (and its membership income), and support the use of the building by the wider club membership.

Accordingly, in April 2023, the Club instructed a specialist company to inject a geopolymer foam under the building to support the foundations. Another specialist was then instructed to instal helibars, stainless steel reinforcing rods, into the external south and west walls, as well as the along the crack in the internal wall of court 2. To bind the double walls together, special cable ties were used. Finally, the floors of the squash courts were relaid and some walls armour painted.

The total cost of this work amounts to around £90k which, inevitably, make a significant inroad to the Club's reserves. However, this investment should secure the squash building for many years to come and will mean, not only that the Club will still be able to offer squash as an activity, but the building can continue to be used for the other purposes mentioned above.

It was questioned if the works had been guaranteed – Gillian explained that we were unable to obtain a guarantee for the stabilising work due to the soil quality being just below the level required for a guarantee and so the Club has taken some risk. However, Ray explained that the expenditure is

based on payback in around three years and the Club expects a lifespan of ten years from the renovated building.

Ten Year Financial Position

Ray has updated his rolling ten year analysis capital expenditure planning over the next ten years and advised the AGM that the Club is sustainable with its current membership and can generate operating surpluses sufficient to pay for ongoing maintenance and repairs of the playing facilities.

The question is how much additional funds the Club can generate for big investments such as a new club house. In addition to the squash court building expenditure of £90k, the building of a new tennis court will cost around £70k, taking cash reserves down to about £120k.

However, the Club expects to grow squash membership and the new tennis court should bring new income of £25k pa (a mix of subscription and coaching income). Thus cash reserves should recover to reach £425k in 2027-28.

To fund a building project on the scale that we were previously considering (£500k to £700k) would require the Club to take out commercial loans. Given increased construction and borrowing costs this would not be possible in the near- mid future. Therefore it would be necessary to wait many years to progress a new Clubhouse at the top of the site.

However, Ray concluded that the Club could potentially fund a building costing around £200k from our own resources to include obtaining grants, where possible.

New Clubhouse

The Club has looked over a number of years at building a new club house at the top of the site. However, this has faced growing challenges in terms of planning, increased costs and interest rates.

The Pre-planning application for a new clubhouse was submitted to Bromley Council in November 2021 and looked to incorporate two squash courts into the new building. There had been strongly negative feedback from Bromley Council on the basis Clubhouse;

- it was too large/high – the new building “mass” was too great
- it was too near the perimeter of the site and the trees in this area

Board then decided it was necessary to remove the squash courts from the proposal and new plans had been drawn up for a smaller building. However, as explained above, Board then had to consider the future of the squash building leading to the £90k expenditure on the building.

Meanwhile, the directors are looking into the practicalities of an alternative option, which is more affordable - Gillian stressed that this was at an early stage. The concept is to convert the existing men’s and women’s changing rooms and the workshop in the squash building into a bar/café (and a small external area), new toilets and shower/changing cubicles and a smaller workshop. Mark Barnard – an architect, has been liaising with Dez; Mark advised the proposal benefits from using the existing structure and walls; provides open facades with views over most of the tennis courts; and keeps the existing services provided to the building.

This option would meet the main requirements of a new Clubhouse – a bar/cafe with good sight lines over most of the tennis courts. A secondary benefit is that the toilets would be separate from the changing/shower cubicles meeting safeguarding requirements for children (the current changing room have showers and toilets in close proximity). This option has the advantage of using an existing building – part of the Bromley Council pre-planning feedback was that the Club should make use of existing buildings. It is also better for the Club's carbon footprint to develop an existing building rather than undertaking a new build.

It was again stressed that the plan is at an early stage of consideration – as plans are developed there will be further engagement with the members, including a meeting.

Observations from the AGM were:

- is the building sustainable in view of the work on the squash courts? Noted that the main area of subsidence is on the walls furthest from the changing rooms; also the changing rooms and workshop were built after the squash courts, and have better foundations;
- what will happen with the existing club house? In the short term, the hall will continue to be used for large events and meetings – e.g. quiz nights, AGMs, with bar stock taken to the current bar. In the longer term a second storey could be added to the proposed bar / cafe to provide a function room and office.

New Tennis Court

The Club has submitted an application for a Lawful Development Certificate to Bromley Council and is waiting for the result of this application. The new court is planned to be a tarmac court. Two pickle ball courts will be marked on the new tennis court.

The meeting asked the number of new members that could be supported by the new tennis court – advised that LTA guidance is 50 people per court. The use of tarmac surface was queried – Gillian advised that the proximity of trees would make clay court maintenance impractical, also a clay court is considerably higher cost.

Initially, there will be no floodlights as this would require planning permission and could be an issue with neighbours, given that court 8 is close to housing and is on high elevation. It may be possible to look into lighting that goes along the sides of court 8 at a future date.

The AGM asked if the Club has considered matched funding for the new tennis court? In particular "Courts for London / Marathon Trust" was mentioned – this will be passed to Dez to investigate. The AGM was advised that Dez had looked into some matched funding and that this was certainly something we were considering.

Peter Lewis asked what would happen to the site where the new club house was to have been built – could this be preserved for some future use, such as a mini-court.

In terms of possible timelines, it is hoped that the new tennis court is built in 2024 with the cafe/bar in the squash court building perhaps 2025.

A query was raised as to the breakdown of the extra income to be obtained from the new tennis court. Ray explained that this was from extra membership and coaching and this was a fairly conservative estimate.

A query was raised as to whether Ray's analysis took into account future capital expenditure and he confirmed it did – mentioning resurfacing courts in future.

6. Volunteer Recognition Award and Special Recognition Award

At the 2022 AGM a vote took place to remove the Presidents and Vice-Presidents from the Articles. In conjunction with the removal of Presidents and VP's the directors also proposed a revised Awards system - announced at the last AGM:

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

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

Gillian advised that new Honours boards for past Presidents and Vice Presidents are up. There will also be separate honours boards for the new awards of SRA and VRA. The current Volunteer of the Year honours list will be maintained. There will also be a Board listing the current directors, with their photographs.

Due to the changes made last year it was decided not to make any awards in 2022. Since last year Board approved criteria for both awards and these were circulated to the Club and members were asked to put forward nominations for both awards – nominations have been received and agreed by the Board for both the SRA and VRA, which Gillian proceeded to announce..

Special Recognition Award:

The recipient of the SRA is a very long-standing member with decades of service to the Club:

- First became a director on the Board in 1978;
- 5 years in the 1990s when he had a rest from the role;
- re-elected in January 1997, he served continuously as a director since then until finally resigning finally in September 2018;
- From 1978, he served 3x5 year terms as the Chair of the board, only resigning in January 2017, when Gillian took over this role and he became Vice-Chair until September 2018;
- Made significant contributions to the club in this time, dealing in particular with premises and organising re-surfacing of courts prior to 2016, obtaining LTA loans, Board meetings and AGM's, dealing with bar staff and contractors, contributing to the 2013 business plan, representing the Club at external meetings and recruiting other volunteers to help
- Keeping the Club going over many years before the Club Manger
- Dealing with appointment of club manager – to get where we are today

This person is Peter Lewis. Simon presented the SRA award to Peter.

Volunteer Recognition Award

This award also goes to someone who has been involved with the Club for many years and is an honorary member.

He was first Membership & Accounts Admin from 2008. Although this was a paid role it was very much a nominal payment. Since 2017 his work for the Club has been purely voluntary. He assisted Dez with the transition to a professionally run Club when he started as Club Manager in April 2017.

He checks the bank statements every day, runs the working spreadsheet that shows income and expenditure, and reconciles against the bank statements – used by Dez daily to monitor the Club's financial position. He produces a report that Ray uses to supply the Financial Analysis for Board.

He used to write all the cheques and since the change to online banking makes all online payments to contractors once authorized. His work is invaluable to the Club and acts as a check on the finances.

At the 2018 AGM just after he became a volunteer was considered for VOTY at that stage but because he had only recently been a volunteer and we were only giving out one award each year and there were other strong candidates, he did not receive one then. Instead he was given a special mention at the 2018 AGM and in particular, due to his diligence, thanked for stopping a substantial fraud earlier that year.

The VRA award is therefore awarded to Chris Brooks – Simon presented the award to Shelagh Brooks on behalf of Chris.

7. Any Other Business

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. New volunteers are always welcome and those interested in joining the section committees should speak to Katharine for tennis, Simon for squash and Keith for the Bar/Events.

Anyone else interested in becoming a director is invited to approach Gillian or any of the directors after the meeting.

Another sad death occurred in 2022 with the passing of Andrew Lewis a previous Club chair. Andrew's mother has kindly paid for a bench to be provided to the Club in memory of Andrew. This has been installed and replaces the existing green benches by courts 6 and 7.

At the 2022 AGM it was reported that Alistair Putt's parents (Alistair was a squash member who died in August 2022) had donated £500. This was used for two trophies for squash and racketball tournaments, and these have been awarded this year.

Other questions from the meeting:

- Does the Club pay its employees the London Living Wage? With Dez not present the exact position will be checked. Ray stated that wages had been adjusted in accordance with inflation last year and that we took inflation into account on wages.
- Can the Club consider Climate Adaption given changing weather patterns? This led to a question whether it is possible for the Club to have more trees, perhaps rewilding the site where the new club house was to have been built; or perhaps a more formal garden could be laid. It was mentioned that some trees had been cut down for the new clubhouse and were these going to be replaced. Gillian mentioned that a lot of shrubs had been removed and some old trees. Whilst not detailing the trees that had gone, Gillian advised that there were some tree preservation notices on some trees now.
- Will the Club run Junior competitions as it has done in the past? This is something that is being considered by the tennis committee.
- Could the Club make more of table-tennis? An attendee had attended evenings where table-tennis had been advertised, but no other players there. It would be helpful to have a group of names circulated of those interested in table-tennis. Gillian noted that table-tennis will form part of the pizza night event on Friday 17 November. This will be discussed at a bar committee.
- It was asked if there could be a physical list of members in the lobby (as used to be several years ago). Gillian pointed out this is not possible given data protection laws. Also mentioned many other outside groups used the lobby. There is a list of members available on MyCourts.
- Can the Club website be redesigned given that it is now old fashioned? The Club is aware that that the website is rather outdated. We used to employ Liam to look at communications but he is no longer with the Club. A couple of members suggested that perhaps a club member with the appropriate skills could assist. Gillian advised that it has been discussed and agreed the website is outdated and that Dez had been looking into this but without him present she could not provide a further update.
- Could members advertise services on the website? Gillian mentioned that Dez was organising a Sponsorship agreement so that businesses could advertise on the website but without him present couldn't provide an update on the current position.
- It was asked if we could consider a physical board where club members could advertise their services. This was generally considered to be a good idea.
- The meeting did query if the Club could have a padel court. The AGM was advised that a padel court is very expensive and we were not considering this. Ray also confirmed this.

At 9:30pm pm Gillian closed the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.