

STEEP LAWN TENNIS CLUB

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 25 November 2021

At Steep Village Hall, Church Road at 7.30 pm

item	Present	action
	<p>Matt Trench (MT) Chairman Carol Norris (CN) Club Secretary Michele Mangham (MM) Membership Secretary Christine Lally (CL) Treasurer David Panton (DP) Grounds Secretary Christine Musker(CM) Welfare David Gaterell (DG) Coach</p> <p>and 22 other Members.</p>	
1.	Chairman's welcome	
	<p>MT opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He said that there would not be a vote for the Secretary role today as Mike Boyce has withdrawn his nomination and in any event as there are fewer than 40 Members attending the meeting is not quorate.</p>	
2.	Apologies for absence	
	<p>Apologies for absence were received from: Lesley Whyte, Jennie Azevedo, Diana Cornish, Brenda Walker, bDavid Walker, Rosemary Swan, Graham Swan, Martyn O'Kelly, Mark Shbabber bpley, Richard Perry, Cathy Robinson, Anila McDonald,Jen Pigden and Mike Boyce.</p>	
3.	Minutes of AGM 20 November 2019	
	<p>It was noted that these have been published on the Club's website since early 2020 and no comments have been received.</p>	
4.	Matters arising	
	<p>MT gave an update on the 10 year maintenance plan. He said that the courts and club grounds were in extremely good order; in the past year courts 1,2, 5 & 6 have been repainted and courts 7&8 have been resurfaced. In addition the paths have been relaid and ambient lighting installed and the car park has been re-gravelled.</p>	

	<p>berHe gave an update on the planned work as follows:</p> <p>An application has been submitted for lighting on courts 7&8, MT said that he is in contact with the Planning Officer and expects to hear the result of the application within the next 2-3 weeks. CL has confirmed that the Club has sufficient funds to meet the cost and all being well we hope to install the lights by next Summer. MT commented that lighting on all courts would be very good for a club of our size.</p> <p>b</p> <p>Robin Shaw (RS) asked what type of lights were proposed. MT replied that these will be LED; as part of the application the Club has undertaken a very detailed light survey and has proposed LTA approved light fittings.</p> <p>MT said that it was also planned to replace the existing halogen lights with LED on all courts over time. This is in part because the parts are becoming harder to source and also because LED lights are more energy efficient. The planned replacement is as follows:</p> <p>Courts 1 & 2: 2022 Courts 3 & 4: 2023 Courts 5 & 6: 2024</p> <p>Finally, work to improve the boundary surface between courts 2 and 3 will be started in 2022.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Chairman’s overview</p>	
	<p>MT said that he was initially nervous about taking on the role of Chairman but the Committee Members have been amazing. There is a great team spirit and everyone works together very well. All existing members of the Committee are keen to stay on and continue to run the Club. MT commented that as relatively few Members were in attendance tonight he concluded that overall the membership was happy with the way that the Committee are running the Club.</p> <p>MT ran through the key achievements of the last two years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Club has survived the pandemic very well; • membership is up; • free floodlighting was introduced following the last AGM and has been very well received; • there has been more maintenance than previously; the club courts and grounds are in very good condition; and • the lighting application for 7&8. <p>MT then outlined the Committee’s objectives for the next two years:</p>	

	<p>EGM It has been recognised that AGMs are rarely quorate and that there is an increasing expectation amongst Members to vote remotely on resolutions and elections. The Committee agreed at their last meeting to call an EGM in 2022 to discuss these issues in relation to the Club's Constitution and any changes that might be made.</p> <p>Expand Committee membership MT also noted that there is generally a lack of volunteers to sit on the Committee. Whilst the existing Committee Officers are happy to continue for the time being, this presents a problem for the future when Officers retire. It was agreed at the last meeting to invite a further two Members to be co-opted onto the Committee so that they can get experience of the work that the Committee does.</p> <p>Membership survey Within the next 6 months the Committee intends to do an email based survey to find out what the membership likes/dislikes about the club and ask for any suggestions.</p> <p>Committee email system Specific email addresses will be introduced for each Committee member so that Members know who to email and also so that the club has a record of email correspondence that is accessible for the future. MT said that this would be easy and inexpensive for the club to set up.</p> <p>Social media The Club's social media presence is being developed by Matt Higson (MH). MH reported that Instagram and Facebook accounts have been set up and he is working on animating these.</p> <p>Website MT said that despite requests the role of Website Officer had been vacant for more than two years and consequently the website is not being fully utilised. The Committee has been discussing ways of addressing this and has identified a potential candidate.</p>	
6.	<p>Committee Members' and Officers' Reports</p>	
	<p>Membership MM reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Club is in a healthy position with the number of members at 560, exceeding this time last year by 34. She said that this was likely to increase as membership enquiries are still coming in. • Clubspark is attempting to change the way members log in to book 	

courts. In future log in will be via Members' LTA account. This will mean Members will have to change their password and join the LTA. MM said that it was not yet clear when this would become effective

- Court occupancy is around 50% but there are periods of congestion on Monday and Wednesday evenings when matches and coaching take place.
- The Club is looking to move the membership administration from the current Access database to another system. MM has been investigating a couple of possibilities but it is proving difficult to link membership and booking in a way that meets the Club's requirements.
- The Wimbledon ballot will no longer happen at the Club but instead will be run by the LTA; MM reminded Members that they will need to opt in to be eligible.

Secretary

CN reported as follows:

Since we were last here in 2019 we have gone through three lockdowns necessitating closure of the Club for three periods; from March 2020 to May 2020, in November 2020 and (we hope) the final period of closure from January to the end of March this year.

Each time the club has re-opened we have had to operate under quite onerous regulations and restrictions, and these have been different each time. Despite the suddenness with which changes have been brought in, we have been able to react and adapt quickly to each new set of rules. For my part this has included trawling through the LTA advice on a regular basis, identifying how this applied to us and working with the rest of the Committee to put appropriate measures in place in line with this advice. It has also involved keeping a Covid risk register and drafting the communications to members each time the advice changed.

Lockdown brought home how important social tennis is to all of us. Consequently, we worked hard to ensure that mix-ins were reintroduced as soon as possible (generally we had very short notice). In particular we tried to keep the impact of restrictions as light as possible whilst complying with the legal requirements.

In July 2020 when we were allowed to restart social tennis and put in place a detailed event delivery plan for mix-ins and guidelines for stewards. We had a great response from members volunteering to steward the mix-ins and this enabled us to continue mix-ins until the second closure in November.

Mix-ins restarted again in May 2021, this time we were able to implement in a way that placed minimal restrictions.

I think I can speak for all of us on the Committee that we are very proud that we managed to keep the Club open as much as possible through this period whilst maintaining a safe environment. We are looking forward to a return to normal service next year.

Grounds

DP reported as follows:

In addition to the items covered by MT, other completed and planned works are:

- the hard courts will be treated with algicide shortly;
- the hedges are due to be cut by the end of January 2022;
- new line brushes have been purchased for the clay courts and it is hoped that these will be more effective;
- a new shoe brush tray has been placed outside the clay courts to reduce shoe contamination and others may be bought to stop gravel getting onto the hard courts;
- Testing on the portable appliances in the Club House was done earlier this month;
- the outside tables and benches are due to be varnished;
- the sinkhole by the entrance to court 7 is due to be filled shortly; and
- the kerb on court 2 has been cemented into place pending more permanent repairs to the flaunching and slope adjoining court 3.

Jonathan Graham (JG) asked if it would be possible to provide better drag nets for the clay courts and offered to send a link to the type used at the Avenue in Havant. There was also a discussion on the ideal length of ropes on the drag nets. It was agreed to review these when details of the nets above were received. CN to add to next Committee agenda.

Tournaments

CN read a report on behalf of Jen Pigden (JP):

This year's tournament was a great success. There was a high number of entries across all draws.

Men's singles	28
women's singles	9

CN

Men's doubles	18 pairs
Women's doubles	13 pairs
Mixed doubles	18 pairs

Entries and publication of the draws was in the club house and on a specific whatsapp group. The whatsapp group was a great place to post draws, updates and reminders.

Finals Day was a really great day, special thanks to the umpires (Colin and Christine), the amazing teas (Lesley and Jennie), the cup presentations (Eric), official photographer (Paul), all the players and supporters. The games were hard fought and fantastic entertainment.

We had a double page spread in the Petersfield Post, which was great publicity for the Club and the tournament.

One issue arose about the running of the tournament, which was referred to the Committee. It has been agreed that the tournament rules will be updated regarding substitution of players.

Congratulations once again to the winners, in particular Anila and Owen, the triple and double winners.

In 2022, we are planning to run the tournament over the same period with Finals Day towards the end of September, as a nice end to the afternoon tea season.

Social

CN read a report on behalf of JA and LW as follows:

Our Italian evening held at Ruby and Monty's on 14th October was a great success attended by 19 members. The food and service were excellent and it was great to meet some new members.

We have booked the Cricketers for our informal pre Christmas drinks on Tuesday 7th December. This will follow on from the usual mix-in session on Tuesday.

A suggestion has been made to have a "retro tennis afternoon" with wooden rackets and tennis whites for everyone followed by a Pimms afternoon tea. This could be held on a Saturday afternoon once tennis teas start again.

Jennie and Lesley are always open to new ideas for expanding the Club's social events so don't hesitate to contact them at any time.

CN

<p>Sadly, for obvious reasons, our annual quiz will have to wait for another year.</p> <p>Julie Hart asked if there will be a Jumbles tournament next year. MT replied that this was possible but might need a volunteer to come forward. RS suggested that this could be run over a period of time as a league type structure.</p> <p>CN said that JP had previously indicated that she might be prepared to run one. To be raised with JP.</p> <p>Coaching and juniors</p> <p>DG gave an update on the coaching team and the performance of the teams as follows:</p> <p>First of all I'd like to thank the members of the club for giving us their support as always. I often comment to other coaches at different clubs, that we have a large membership base, that by and large consists of very nice people, who come on court with us to work hard and learn, and it makes our job a pleasure.</p> <p>I'd also like to give my thanks to the committee, who do an awful lot of behind the scenes work that goes overlooked and unthanked - not because members are ungrateful, but because so much of their efforts in their day to day operation of the club make it seem like smooth running - but that's because of the culmination of all those small efforts. The committee also support the coaching team, which makes it much easier to deliver a program of coaching and competitive opportunities, so thank you.</p> <p>Given the not inconsiderable disruption caused by various lockdowns, and players being absent due to either having Covid or isolating or looking after someone in their family who is isolating - we have had quite a successful year, with players performing well in tournaments and teams, and a high level of participation in coaching and and there such events.</p> <p>In Team Tennis this year, we had mixed success.</p> <p>Our Junior team sadly had to withdraw mid season due to some injuries in our team.</p> <p>Our B Team had many 'learning opportunities' this year - which is what we call 'losing' - and came last in their division. So they learned a lot!</p> <p>Our A Team did a bit better finishing 3rd of 6 teams. On paper we had a very strong team for the Div 1, but unfortunately there were no matches where all our top picks were available on the same day, so we had a couple</p>	CN
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of losses in that team.

I intend again to run multiple teams next year in the Team Tennis event, as it offers the opportunity for our best players to 'play up' and running more than one team gives players who aren't quite there yet to participate and develop into the future A team.

Speaking of development, you will have noticed that one such player who has been working hard this year is junior Owen Palmer, who is now the Men's Singles and Doubles champion - so congratulations to him and to Joe who has been coaching him.

Owen, along with Pat Smith - another hard working junior, have both been the recipients of bursaries from the club - having had their LTA level 1 Assistant Coach qualifications paid for. They are both a big help in our coaching program.

There are other juniors that also help in the program, but they either have their qualification already, or are too young to go on the course yet, but the club and I will in future look to assist other young players who have been contributing and want to pursue their qualifications.

Other successes from our junior and young adult players this year include Noah Taylor who competed in the Hants County Closed, Aaron Butcher who did the same and made the semis of singles and the final of the doubles at the same event.

Both Oli Fernandez and Issie Barfoot have begun scholarships to US universities at Portland State and Montevallo, Alabama respectively.

Oscar Goldblatt has also made the team at Oxford Brooks.

We had a successful junior club tournament in September again this year - and next year I will be assessing the format, and may run the event alongside the senior tournament - but that's to be looked out later.

Group coaching participation has been very busy, to the point of having waiting lists for several sessions. Tennis Camps in the holidays have also been pretty much full. These serve as a great 'gateway' for new young players to enter our club, with many players as usual joining the club and the term time program, often along with their parents joining the club as well.

On the personal front this year, I haven't played as much myself - working more to make up for so much lost time due to Covid - but I did manage to compete in the British Grass Court Nationals at Wimbledon, where I made semi's of doubles, losing to the eventual winners, and again I was asked to play for Hampshire in the over 35's County Cup in Eastbourne.

I have also been asked to continue in my role as 12/U Hampshire County Captain, which is a great opportunity to work with some of the county's best youngsters.

As for Joe, in addition to his tireless efforts in delivering coaching to many members, if you hadn't already heard, he has become a father again, with the birth of baby Olivia!

A final note, in the broader British Tennis world, you may have heard of the ITF's World Tennis Number. This works a bit like the LTA's outgoing and outdated rating system - but is a global rating system. It looks to be a very good set up, that should allow players to match up well in tournaments, and also serves for tournament and match organisers to accurately 'rank' their players for the purposes of team selection. Literally every vaguely official match that a person plays - singles or doubles - can be submitted and helps toward the accuracy of their World Tennis Number. I would recommend if you play matches for the club, or compete at all, that you get yourself one, if you don't already have one, and look into how it works. There's a bit more to it than I can explain here, but I think it is likely that all players, even in club matches, will soon be required to have one.

MT commented that effort the coaching team put into looking after the juniors was very effective at promoting the Club and introducing new members. He said that in recognition the Club have renewed DG's contract for three years and that this provided better stability and continuity for the Club.

RS asked whether the coaches and Club had claimed any assistance from the government as a result of the pandemic.

DG replied that although he was able to claim personally, Joe was not due to the timing of his return to the UK.

CL said that the Club didn't claim but had been automatically given two grants by the Council because the Club pays business rates. Some of this money has been used to help the coaching team by paying DG's retainer upfront to help with cashflow and by paying for Joe to update his qualifications (Joe has paid this back over time).

MT commented that the Committee had debated whether to accept the grants but had decided to keep them on the basis of the ongoing additional costs for cleaning and decrease in subscription income that the Club has experienced.

Social Media

MH said that he had nothing further to add to what MT had covered but he

<p>will continue to develop the Club's profile.</p> <p>MT said that it was much appreciated that MH had volunteered.</p> <p>Fixtures</p> <p>David Mangham (DM) reported that in addition to the Team Tennis the Club continues to have very strong participation by its members for inter-club matches in the East Hants Tennis League.</p> <p>More than 60 people have been involved in matches and the results have been somewhat mixed.</p> <p>Last winter, the leagues were cancelled due to Covid but in the summer there was a full program.</p> <p>There were three Men's, two Ladies, one Mixed and a Vets teams entered. The Ladies B won their division but unfortunately the Men's B team and the Mixed team came bottom of theirs.</p> <p>The positions of all other teams were unchanged.</p> <p>DM said that there were a limited number of teams because of court space in the evenings when matches are played. It might be possible to increase the teams when lights are installed on 7&8.</p> <p>Julie Hart (JH) asked how members can get into the teams. MT said that the best way was to contact the team captains, approaching the lowest team first.</p> <p>DM would be able to direct anyone to the appropriate captain and it was agreed to update the team captains on the website.</p> <p>RS suggested that coming to mix -in was a good way of getting to know captains.</p> <p>DG confirmed that he would always push prospective team players forward to the captains.</p> <p>It was suggested that team trials would be a good idea. CN agreed to minute for the next Committee meeting.</p> <p>JH asked whether it would be possible to have a friendly league with other clubs.</p> <p>MM said that although putting another team in the East Hants league presented difficulties with evening play, it might be possible to join another league if there were enough Members interested in forming a team.</p>	<p>MM</p> <p>CN</p>
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	<p>However this would have to be weekend matches. Anyone interested should contact DM with a proposal.</p> <p>Welfare CM explained that she shared the Welfare Officer Role with Lesley Whyte and that this role is required by the LTA in all affiliated clubs. The main focus of the role is safeguarding for juniors and vulnerable adults and ensuring inclusivity. As all issues are dealt with in confidence she could not go into case details but confirmed that they have dealt with a number of issues and have put in support measures where necessary.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Treasurer's Report</p>	
	<p>CL reported as follows:</p> <p>The club is in a strong financial position despite the pandemic. We currently have around £58,000 in cash, which is sufficient to install the lights on 7&8.</p> <p>CL referred to page 5 of the Financial Statements at 30th September 2021, covering income and expenditure, which show a loss of £7554, however this is after the rebuilding of 7&8 and the work on the paths.</p> <p>CL noted that the Club's maintenance costs had increased in the last year; this down to increased cleaning costs (since July 2020 the Club now employs a commercial cleaning firm). However utility costs are down due to decreased use of floodlights during lockdown.</p> <p>Approval of the financial statements CL proposed and MT seconded that the accounts are accepted. This was agreed by those present.</p> <p>Appointment of Auditor The auditor has expressed his willingness to continue to act. CL proposed and CN seconded that the auditor, John Forgan FCA, be appointed for another year and this was agreed by those present.</p> <p>Subscriptions for 2022 CL confirmed that the Committee are not proposing to increase subscriptions for the coming year, so they will remain at the same level as last year, with subscriptions due on 1 April.</p> <p>CL gave an update on the Recyclaball scheme. This has been managed by Ralph Lambert since January 2020 and to date has raised over £100. All monies raised by the scheme have been donated to local charities.</p> <p>Those present congratulated Ralph for his time and effort in managing the</p>	

	scheme.	
8.	Election of Officers	
	<p>MT confirmed that, as stated previously, there would not be a vote for the position of Honorary Secretary as Mike Boyce has withdrawn his nomination.</p> <p>MT said that all the elected officers due for re-election this year have confirmed that they are willing to continue in their roles for another 2 year term. CN confirmed that nominations proposed and seconded in accordance in the manner proscribed by the Committee had been received for all posts therefore the existing Officers were duly appointed for another 2 year term.</p>	
9.	Item for discussion	
	<p>JG has proposed that the Club takes an “online digital first approach”.</p> <p>JG said that he would like to see the Club reinforcing the use of digital technology but recognises that as the Club is run by volunteers, the issue cannot be forced. However he said that younger members will expect more on line presence and that this would be a good way to keep the young involved.</p> <p>MT said that the Committee will always consider options and noted that some areas were already under review.</p>	
11.	Any Other Business	
	<p>Eric Dempster thanked the Committee for the fantastic work that they have done through this difficult period. He also thanked the coaching team for all their work.</p> <p>RS asked whether consideration could be given to installing a Padel court at the Club, as he considered there was potentially space on the current and old practice wall sites. It was agreed to minute this for consideration.</p> <p>RS asked what the club could do to offset the environmental consequences of using more electricity by offering free floodlighting. MT replied that the plan to replace the existing lights with LED will reduce electricity usage by approximately 90%.</p> <p>He also said that the site does not allow for solar panels as it is too shaded</p>	CN

	but the heating for the club house should be looked at to see if there is a more economic solution. CN to minute for 2022.	CN
12.	Date of next meeting	
	<p>The date of the next AGM is Thursday 24th November 2022 at 7.30 pm at Steep Village Hall.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.</p>	