

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 29th October 2018

8.00 pm at the Squash Club

PRESENT

Committee: Mark Groves Gidney (Chairman), Rollo Bramwell (Treasurer & Secretary), Dean Newberry (Membership Secretary and Club Captain), Roger Kent, Mark Gates, Mary Scott-Miller

Members: Approx 40

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Will Burke (Committee), Vicky Watterson (Committee), Mike Colenutt, Miles Montelius, Chris Winning and Alan Nicholson

2. ADOPTION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

These were proposed and approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising.

4. CHAIRMANS REPORT

A briefing as to the year past shows:

- Membership is stable ó usual losses at renewal time but already going back to c 240 members of which c 50% are active players.
- Court bookings are down 2.5% but this can be tied to the bad winter weeks and the hot summer weather. Ignoring these periods then bookings are up 2%
- Bar takings (not easy to land historic comparisons as so much went through the bar that was not itemised) but generally up 3% and since May up 20%. Needs to be upø as the cost of running the bar has gone up and we only cover 50% of Timø remuneration from the bar. There was then a show of appreciation for the great work Tim Donald has done over the year
- We have continued to improve the club house facilities ó Mark Gates has done a great job with the downstairs revamp representing a £10k investment: we are not stopping there as the kitchen is due an upgrade with new cooker, dish washer etc
- The teams and internal competitions are thriving. Brian Hunt has done a magnificent job over the last 6 years making our internal competitions worthy of winning. The Chairman then stated the sad news that Keith Spurgeon is very poorly and is not expected to get back to the Club ó Keith was acknowledged for his great work running the box leagues for many years. Dean Newberry is to take over the management role of the tournaments and is already doing the box leagues. Dean is

also now responsible for all the teams albeit supported by very able team captains & all the teams have performed well over the year and we have way more competition for places now. This reflects the coaching being delivered to members by Jason Barry and Dean.

It might appear that everything is plain sailing, but it has been a tough year for the Committee and here are some of the trials and tribulations.

We started with a funding issue for last years Pro Tournament and then walked into the middle of a country wide -safeguarding of Juniors- concern and this in turn led to a revamp of our inadequate insurance. Your Committee has dealt with these issues head on so we are now at the vanguard of being one of Kent's best run clubs. This result has only been achieved due to certain members stepping forward, notably:

Jonny Powell with his company Select Gaming supporting us with £3,500 a year sponsorship for the Pro Tournament. This relieves the need for extra funding and avoiding fund raising at functions - which the Chairman recognised there was some discomfort with and such activity would not occur again.

Chris Winning & taking on the role of Safe Guarding our Juniors and writing 11 policies for the Club. The Junior issues have caused considerable debate and discomfort within the Committee, but we have found a way through and we are cutting our own path of -best practice- whilst maintaining our insurance cover should there ever be an issue.

Tim Donald & has taken over and been trained to be our HSE officer

Alan Scott Miller – took on hours of laborious but critical work to make sure our insurance is fit for purpose including making sure that Committee members do not personally take on the financial burden of defending any claim being made eg around Juniors in the Club. Alan has advised and managed the entire renewal process & there was a warm round of applause!

Mark Leader – and his colleagues **Dale Curtis, Nick Donald and Giles Membrey**. This sub group of property and finance experts took on, at the request of the Committee, to analyse, without emotion, the options for using the land behind the club house. This work is presented later.

The Chairman then moved on to thank his fellow Committee members notably:

- **Mark Gates** & for looking after all renovations in the Club house
- **Dean Newberry** who stepped in to help Will Burke and manage the Membership data base. Dean took on the role entirely after the membership renewal - as Will struggled with work commitments but he hopes, as he looks forward to a more active coaching role, to hand over the role to Alison Barton.
- **Dean Newberry (again)** – for stepping forward to fill the big hole of Junior coach/manager & a role left vacant by **Richard Morris** who has done a fantastic job looking after the Juniors for many years but has temporarily left the Club as he focusses on his new job. Dean is also looking after the Ladies coaching.

- **Roger Kent** for taking on the role of communications óall agree we are in a better place with knowledge transfer between the Committee and membership. A tough job handled with great care and attention
- **Rollo Bramwell** ó who has a steady hand on the tiller (and till) and completely understands the financial drivers of the Club and has developed a good set of management accounts which has included revamping the bar takings. Rollo was recognised to be a Chairman in waiting and it was noted that a two year tenure for key roles was something the current Chairman was keen to introduce.

Upon finalising his talk, the Chairman noted the Club had supported two charities close to members hearts ó the Hospice in the Weald and a new mental health effort in Tunbridge Wells <https://www.twmhr.org.uk/>

5. TREASURERS REPORT

First thanks were made to Chris Thain, and his accounting firm, for preparing all our accounts, and to Chris Winning who has very kindly audited them for us again this year.

The past year...nothing very special in the day to day gathering and spending of your money. However, some areas do stand out, and are of significance. This was our first full year of having a full time Club Manager instead of a part time Bar manager, hence the wage bill increase. We also hosted another Pro tournament, but this time with equal prize money, to total £4k.

These two items required increased revenues, which were found by Markø drive to gain sponsorship (the New Year party fundraising, and the general sponsorship including the seats you are sitting on, or on the court walls and tins). This sponsorship drive is now a permanent feature, not in a New Year party, but in advertising from our great sponsor friends, including a significant offer of support from Jonny Powell. This sponsorship drive yielded £5.5k last year, but will be £9k next, a level we will strive to maintain.

The final area of significance is capital expenditures/ maintenance. We will have spent around £100k over the past 5 years on the club facility, and have now updated virtually everything. The final major portion, the downstairs electrics, hallways and doors, cost around £11k, but most of this cost will show up in next yearø numbers as it was completed during July and Aug.

So, we like to keep a cash buffer of £15-£20k. We started last year with that, and all things being equal, our budget for next year indicates we would finish next year with that , despite no increase in the subs.

In summary, the club is in a solid financial position going forward and should be in a position to handle the unexpected and keep ahead of the need to refresh the facilities.

Questions arising involved defending why members subs have not been increased ó because we are making a profit despite inflation and no subs increase for many years. Court usage and revenue from lights is up so our gross revenues have been fairly stable and enough to keep up with inflated costs. The increase in miscellaneous costs was explained away by the cost of

shirts (ultimately creating a profit as they were sold off) and it was also noted that the notes in the accounts were not consistent and need to be amended.

6. CLUB CAPTAINS REPORT

The loss of Richard Morris was commented on ó his departure means we have lost a Team Captain and the man who has built and managed our Juniors. This role now falls to the Club Captain who also overseas all the teams. We have not suffered a relegation in the 7 adult team entries across the year and with our great club house we can consider ourselves the strongest and best 3 court club in Kent. As we re start the Junior programme we have entered just one team (not two) in the Kent leagues. Jason Barry looks after the Friday night Junior sessions and that works well as it links into the local schools programme that he engages with via the Club.

The improvement in the teams and the fact that we have greater competition for places is also a result of a couple of new high-quality players joining the Club ó reflecting the high status the Club. One of the efforts for the future will be to build the Ladies section up ó something Jason started and Dean will take forward.

Regarding the upcoming Pro Tournament, we are lucky to have Alan Thatcher ó a media guru ó joining us to help manage and promote the event. It will be an official PSA event, but we will not hold a Ladies competition this year. Last year did not work well due to the low number of entries and we do not expect a strong field if we do it again this year. We will hold a Ladies Exhibition match at the same time as the Men's final. The event will be re branded to recognise both (the memory of) Colin Payne and the fact that it is also now the Kent Open.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLUBS LAND - OPTIONS

The Committee requested a team of 4 club members with knowledge of the construction and/or finance industries to identify and consider all possible development options for the land behind the Club house. This Sub-committee were asked to:

- solely consider projects from a financial perspective
- be entirely independent of the main committee
- not be asked to comment on the preferences of any proposed option outside of financial considerations
- refer to the Chairman for ongoing guidance and
- will make its findings available to the club committee at formal meetings.

The findings were duly presented to the Committee ahead of the Club's AGM and the sub committees coordinator (Mark Leader) was asked to present at the AGM. The members of the sub group are:

Dale Curtis ó Construction and renovation
Nick Donald ó Corporate Financier
Giles Membury ó Property Development
Mark Leader ó Investment Management

The Rationale for this review was that the Club:

- has a core membership of 120 active players (200 including social & juniors)
- premises are freehold owned by a company owned by the members
- has no onerous covenants on the land that we are aware of
- is currently in good physical and financial condition

There are a number of reasons for analysing options to best utilise the club's existing assets:

- future financial position
- an additional court would allow the potential for increased funding through more tournaments, grants and sponsorship
- more space would allow better facilities for junior members
- numerous member enquiries have been made into the possibility of gym and/or spa facilities

The Options considered were:

The JVIP Extension

Building a two-storey extension over the waste ground and use this for various purposes (offices/ residential/restaurant/health-club). Note: insufficient space to construct an additional court here.

Town Centre Car-parking

Can our prime location could be used to generate additional revenue?

Use of Shipping Containers

Converted TEU shipping containers placed on the disused space behind Picton

Additional Court

One new court built over existing parking area and connected to existing facilities with parking retained below.

Do Nothing

Always an option

Relocation

We have been approached by a cricket and tennis club and a golf club

The Findings were as follows:

The JVIP Project

Cost of development estimated at between £200-£250k

Funding cover = £3500/m

Best use = office space, generate £3000/m max.

(we also considered, health clubs, residential, commercial and restaurant use)

Given this does not account for running costs, legals, agents' fees, parking and other overheads, the recommendation is to take this option no further unless another funding source becomes available

Car Parking Facilities

Station parking in RTW costs between £1200-£1400 /annum

Can the introduction of off-peak stacked parking be run at a profit and what is the payback?

2 responses and both declined to quote as our space was insufficient

Recommendation is to take this approach no further

Shipping Containers

Considered as a supplementary project after seeing them effectively used for apartment complexes. Local Tonbridge operation contacted
They use new 20øTEU & 40øTEU containers and fully fit these out to tailored specifications. Following a site meeting (with ML & MGG) in early September, they have put together a preliminary design for us to use as an outline of what can be done.
The anticipated cost for our requirements are £1,000/linear foot.

There would be additional costs to clear the site initially. They can be built up in a flexible, modular way (2 x floors?) and connected to existing real estate. They are a portable asset that can be re-used.

Expected cost approx. £80,000 ó *cannot be ruled out.*

Additional Court

Building a new court supported above the existing parking space is feasible. The additional court could be easily keyed into the existing structure and include various gym/spa facilities as needed. Price for constructing a standard court is between £100k-£180k (standard or glass backed.)

Construction on pillars would increase the costs but not substantially (to be confirmed)

No further work has been performed on this design at this stage as there are no plans available. However, the Committee felt that currently we struggle to fill 3 courts so an additional court, at this time, may not be a good use of money.

Committee instruction to take no further

Do Nothing

Club finances are sufficient, and we currently generate a modest annual surplus

Implications:

There is a need to create changing facilities for juniors in existing space but if we do nothing we run the risk of an ever-aging club leading to insufficient finances or considerable increases in membership fees

Suggest that doing nothing is not a good option if the members want the club to have a sound financial footing for the future.

Relocation

Alongside these investigations we have been made aware of a number of membersøclubs in the area that are keen to discuss a merger. Such a move could lead to a relocation of the club, construction of modern facilities and has the potential to be cost neutral to members.

This is a long-term project which Nick Donald is coordinating on behalf of the Club. Nick has been incapacitated for a few months now and intends to pick this up once on the road to recovery.

The next steps would be to obtain a quote for clearing and preparation of the ground for the Shipping Container option and pay for (refundable) a design/spec to be produced. At the

same time we would should continue discussions on a confidential basis for any feasible relocation option.

Other ideas can be investigated as they are raised

Funding could be done via:

Bank Loan

Members' loans

Membership debentures

Increased Membership Revenue

Increased number of members

Increased subscription fee

Fund raisers

Roger Kent then represented the Committee to start a consultation with members to seek their views and desires. Roger raised some ideas that had already been proposed and noted the need for Junior changing rooms:

- Exercise bikes and rowing machines
- Sauna
- Steam room
- Hot tub
- Exercise room with weights
- Some bedrooms for members to pay on a nightly basis

Roger Kent went on to outline some of the finance options being considered which are:

- An additional fee to Club membership of say £50/year for those that want the extra facilities
- Offer non Squash Club members access for say £150/year
- A bond offered to members for say £10k yielding a return of 6% per annum. Capital to be repaid over 7 years
- Increased membership fees for all 6 say to £300/annum
- Commercial mortgage
- Rent the exercise facility out to a third party

There was a discussion around these items and finance options but it was stated that to go forward the plan will be for Roger Kent to approach all members via the website/e mail to seek a consensus.

Some of the key points that were raised by the members present at the AGM were:

- parking is a real issue if we increase membership
- storage containers may work as a means to generate revenue but access would be a problem

- John Croft raised a good point that the Committee should make discrete proposals and not leave it to the members, but the consensus was that members would like to have the opportunity to comment and make suggestions

The Chairman concluded this session by stating that the Committee would approach members, probably in a two-phase way to seek ideas and then make recommendations.

8. RESIGNATION, RE-ELECTION & ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

Miles Montelius and Richard Morris left the Committee during the year and Will Burke and Vicky Watterson are resigning from the Committee.

Mary Scott-Miller and Dean Newberry are due to retire by rotation, but both offered themselves for re-election. A vote was taken for the re-appointment of both with a unanimous vote in favour for each.

New committee member and future Membership Secretary, Alison Barton was proposed by Mary Scott Miller and seconded by Mark Groves Gidney. A vote in favour was unanimously carried.

New committee member Jeremy Speechley was proposed by Roger Kent and seconded by Mark Groves Gidney. A vote in favour was unanimously carried.

New committee member Adam Barnes was proposed by Mark Groves Gidney and seconded by Dean Newberry. A vote in favour was unanimously carried.

9. AOB

The Chairman asked whether there was support for the Club Night to be resumed and after some discussion it was agreed that it was deemed worthy of further effort by the Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm