

VICTORIA PARK CLUB

Minutes of the 141st Annual General Meeting held on 23 February 2021 via Zoom

Present: Edward MacMullen (Chair, EM), Claire Bartholomew, Elizabeth Bell, Owen Bennett, Paul Bloch, Tim Cartwright (Tennis Chair, TC), Cliff Dampney, David Evennett, Sue FitzHugh, Barry Flicker, Maria Goodwin, Jo Hawkins, Cath Jones, Norman King, Don Mitchell (Bridge Chair, DM), Matt Olczak, Nigel Parker (Honorary Treasurer, NP), Chris Pennington, Margaret Pickering, Morag Reeve, Jon Rycroft, Jackie Shepherd, Sue Stott, and Maggie Thomson.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Peter Cornelius, Vicki McAndrew, Mary MacMullen, Mike Wilk, and Kai Kin & Judie Yung.

2. Minutes of the 140th AGM held on 27 February 2020

EM proposed that these be accepted and all were in agreement.

3. Matters Arising

- i) Voting Methods: Events had overtaken this and an EGM held last September had agreed to give the General Committee powers to amend the Constitution in exceptional circumstances and to allow voting by whatever means appropriate.
- ii) Honorary Life Members: The General Committee had put forward recommendations as to how Honorary Life Members should be elected and this would be discussed below in Item 9, Constitutional Changes.

4. Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting held on 22 September 2020

There were no objections and EM proposed that these be accepted and all were in agreement.

5. Chair's Report

In his final report as Chair, EM said that the last year had been an interesting but challenging time. Several procedures had had to be put in place to make the Club Covid-safe, thus limiting activities. Tennis had not fared too badly, but there had been no bridge at all. It was fortunate that the Club was well set up financially and had received a £10,000 Government grant with a further £4,000 grant expected. A small contribution had been made to Jon Rycroft who as head coach was an integral and vital part of the Club.

Despite the pandemic, a fair bit had been achieved. Lighting in the clubhouse and emergency lighting had been upgraded, the carpet in the bridge room and in due course carpeting throughout the whole building would be replaced. EM thanked Sue Stott for helping us obtain a defibrillator and training on how to use it would be arranged when possible.

As no one had offered to take over as Chair, the Constitution had been amended to allow for this. It was an important role and there were some disadvantages to not having an overall Chair in place. If anyone felt they would like to take this on, EM would be happy to pass on his knowledge and wisdom.

EM thanked TC and Matt Olczak for all their work on ClubSpark and the whole Tennis Committee for policing the Club during Covid and making sure safe procedures were in place. He also thanked the General Committee for everything they did.

6. Treasurer's Report

NP reported that the accounts for the year 2020 show a healthy surplus of £25,334. The small increase of over £815 in income from tennis subscriptions shows that the tennis section continues to flourish, with us once again attracting more new members in the year. The bridge section saw a decline in income of just over £1,000 on the prior year, driven by a reduction in subscriptions predominantly due to the global pandemic.

Other income was up £4,625 on the previous year at £11,982, however a significant proportion of this increase was due to the £10,000 Government (Retail Hospitality and Leisure) Grant that was awarded to help the Club through this difficult Covid period, and without this grant our overall income would have been significantly below normal levels. The grant helped offset other lost income that would normally have been generated when fully open, and also enables the Club to support the proposed discount in subscription renewals for both the tennis and bridge sections for the coming year that will compensate members for when the Club has been closed.

Overall expenditure for the year was £17,594. This is £13,418 lower than the previous year due to there being less expenditure on maintenance, and also running costs being reduced due to the Club being closed for a number of months. A support payment of £1,000 was made to the Club coach to assist during the lockdown period whilst coaching activities were suspended and part of the Government grant was utilised for this.

On the Balance Sheet, the Resurfacing/Floodlighting Reserve and the Bridge Reserve represent money set aside by the Club for specific purposes. The Bridge Reserve equals the balance on the Bridge Bank account and the money set aside for the Resurfacing/Floodlighting is held in the National Savings Investment Account.

Overall, considering the unusual circumstances that we have found ourselves in during this past year, the Club finances remain in a healthy position, and with the ongoing uncertainty that we are likely to face during this coming year we are positioned favourably to be able to ensure that we can continue to support the Club and its members.

The accounts have been checked by Maggie Thomson and are being reviewed by David Brice and NP said he was very grateful to them both for their assistance.

EM thanked NP. DM proposed accepting the accounts, seconded by Sue Stott. All were in favour.

7. Bridge Chair's Report

As a result of Government restrictions, bridge sessions were suspended in mid-March last year and have not resumed since. As a consequence, a fair number of members decided not to renew their subscriptions at the normal time and we wait to see how many will rejoin the Club once bridge play is again permitted. Around 20% of players are participating in online bridge and report back positively on it. According to the Government's Roadmap, it will be legal to play again from 21 June but we will have to see what the detailed stipulations are. This has been the worst year in the Club's history in terms of bridge activities. All were in favour of accepting DM's report.

8. Tennis Chair's Report

TC reported that it had been a frustrating year in terms of tennis with three lockdowns, closure of the clubhouse and many limitations. However, numbers had grown and the coaching programme had run very well. TC thanked the Committee for their enthusiasm and hard work. They were all prepared to carry on for another year. He was also pleased to welcome some new members to the Committee.

ClubSpark was a free LTA platform which had been successfully brought in for online court bookings and would be used for 2021/22 membership renewals. It would make the whole process much easier to administer and TC thanked Matt Olczak for all his work setting it up.

Coaching was going from strength to strength. We were lucky to have Jon Rycroft as our head coach, and John Wills was also now available to help out with group and individual coaching.

Vicki McAndrew had done a fantastic job as Welfare Officer and in ensuring Club procedures were in line with LTA guidance for making the Club Covid-safe. TC thanked her all her time and effort. He was delighted that Alistair Macintosh had agreed to take over from her as Welfare Officer.

EM thanked TC and said how much we all appreciated everything done by him and the Tennis Committee. All were in favour of accepting TC's report.

9. Constitutional Changes

There were no objections to the Constitutional Changes suggested by the Committee. These were:

- Rule 3: To allow the Club to make payments to members if deemed appropriate and necessary.
- Rule 6: To ensure that Honorary Life Membership was not awarded lightly and should reflect exceptional service.
- Rule 8.3: To provide a mechanism in the event that no one was prepared to act as overall Chairperson of the Club for any given year.
- Rule 8.6: A technical amendment to allow election by a show of hands in the event that the number of those nominated exceeded the number of vacancies.
- Rule 9.2: To allow any member of the Club, on direction from the General Committee, to engage domestic staff to facilitate the efficient running of the Club.
- Rule 9.3: (Approved at EGM on 22.09.20). To ensure that, in the event of a national emergency or other major event, the powers given to the General Committee shall only extend to matters concerning the day to day management of the Club and shall specifically exclude matters relating to the dissolution of the Club. This would prevent abuse of power and limit the Committee's authority.
- Rule 12: Deleted as not needed and replaced by new Rule 12 allowing the General Committee the ability to alter membership classes and subscription rates during the year.

- Rule 20: To specify an Honorary Chairman report, when available, at AGM and enable wider participation by members by whatever means the General Committee deems appropriate.
- Rule 22.1: To ensure the widest possible participation within any restrictions that exist by allowing participation and voting by any means the General Committee deem appropriate.
- Rule 23.1: To specify that it is the responsibility of the Honorary Secretary to notify the Inland Revenue and Clark to the Local Authority of any changes to the Club's Constitution.

EM proposed that these amendments be agreed in one batch. This was seconded by Chris Pennington and all were in favour.

10. Nominations to the Committee

- EM was standing down as Chair and there were no nominations to replace him. As mentioned above, the Constitution had been changed to allow for there being no overall Club Chair.
- EM thanked Vicki McAndrew for all her work as Welfare Officer and welcomed Alistair Macintosh in her place.

11. Changes to Classes of Membership

TC said that some simplification of the current classes of membership had been needed in order to implement the new ClubSpark membership system and explained the following changes:

- Family Membership: This had become too complicated over the years with various discounts being allowed and the principles on which it had been set up lost in the process. The new family membership category was a flat rate for two adults and their dependent children. This would be reviewed and the Tennis Committee welcomed any feedback.
- Adult Membership: No change.
- Coaching Membership and Distant Friends Membership: These had been discontinued.
- Junior Membership: This had been split into two – Junior and Young Junior. All Juniors were required to become members to be able to join the coaching programmes. As Young Juniors had less opportunity for playing, it was felt fair to reduce their membership fee to half that of the Junior member fee.
- Limited Adult Tennis Membership: There would be a slight increase in this fee as it was felt that the difference between the amount of tennis available to them compared to that available to full adult members was not that great.
- The cut-off date for a half year discount would now be 31 August and it would be a 25% discount – this would make it fairer and would simplify the administration.
- It was confirmed that there was no discount for couples joining. General Committee members received honorary membership and other Committee members a 50% discount. It was noted that certain assumptions had had to be made in setting these new rates, which

would be reviewed in a year's time, but it was felt that each category of membership still provided very good value for money.

12. Subscription Rates

- i) Proposed Full Subscription Rates: EM proposed accepting these and all were in agreement.
- ii) Proposed Discount Rates: Tennis - All members who renewed their membership by 30 April 2021 would receive a 50% discount. Bridge - Members would have their membership rolled over automatically.

13. Honorary Life Membership

Following a proposal at last year's AGM to review the process of appointing Honorary Life Members, the General Committee had considered this and recommended that nominations be formally submitted to them in the first instance before being approved at AGM. It was important to ensure that these were granted appropriately and recognised exceptional service to the Club. EM proposed accepting these recommendations and all were in favour.

14. Any Other Business

EM thanked everyone very much for the gifts he had received from the Club, and also thanked Margaret Pickering for allowing us to use her Zoom account to facilitate the meeting. DM proposed a vote of thanks to EM for all his sterling efforts in running the Club over the last three years. This last year had been particularly challenging. EM had dealt with many difficult matters as well as routine ones, had updated many of the Club's procedures, and was leaving the Club in a much more organised state. He had served the Club very well in numerous capacities over many years and everyone joined in thanking him for everything he had done.