

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE TENNIS SECTION OF THE AVENUE LAWN TENNIS, SQUASH AND FITNESS CLUB - held on Thursday 27th October 2016

Present: David Baggott (Club Chairman), Mike Colbourne (Tennis Secretary) and 28 other tennis members: Richard Ainscow, Paul Brown, Simon Cole, Nigel Coote, Neil Crawford, Sally Anne Denton, Mark Fullstone, Andy Gilliatt, Mike Hodgetts, Vince Ibbs, Imogen Karas, David Moakes, Rob Mort, David Perks, Lynda Pine, Helen Piper, Martin Read, Sue Reucroft, Sara Robson, Irene Smalley, Jonathan Smith, Ros Sotnick, Sue Sparshatt, Linda Wainwright, Jenny Ward, Doug Yelland and Inneen Young.

David Baggott chaired the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies were received from Michael Benson, Jenny Bulled, Tony Callum, Brian Foster, Russell and Rebecca Howarth, Tony Jones, Sue Kent, Roger Manvell and Jane Thurston.

2. MINUTES OF LAST TENNIS SECTION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (held 22nd October 2015)

2.1 Minutes of the last meeting were accepted. Proposed by: Doug Yelland; Seconded by: Nigel Coote.

2.2 All actions from the last meeting have been completed.

3. MATTERS DISCUSSED:

3.1 **Subscription differential: Full v Hardcourt Tennis.** Martin Read, our treasurer, gave a presentation where he explained that the present £165 fee for hard court tennis membership is too low compared to the £300 for full tennis membership. The difference between the two fees needs to be closed over the next few years. The presentation was very well received.

3.2 **'Fraise Mowing' of grass courts.** Neil Crawford explained why the Club intends to have the 10 grass courts 'fraise mowed' over the next two years. The courts were inspected by the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) and the Head Groundsman of Wimbledon on 21st May 2015 and their report to the LTA concluded that the grass courts at The Avenue were in excellent condition. However, to make further improvements to courts they would need to be re-surfaced - this would correct minor deviations in levels across the two blocks. This involves use of a Koro Field Topmaker - a machine that removes material to

a depth up to approximately 50 mm. The process removes 100% of thatch and organic build-up that accumulates each season. At the same time, the machine removes the poa anna plants and seed accumulation while leaving the crown grass for regeneration. Surfaces are then levelled and new tennis soil added. After levelling courts are sown with a perennial ryegrass mixture. The whole process, known as Fraise Mowing or Laser Levelling, needs to be completed by the beginning of September to ensure that new surfaces can establish whilst growing conditions are good.

Why should we do it? Neil Stubley the Wimbledon head groundsman said: *"If you 'Fraise Mow' the courts in the early Autumn they will be in better condition the following Spring than our current courts are now. They will play better and wear better than the non-fraised courts."*

The decision to do this was made at last year's Tennis AGM on the proviso that the LTA would pay to have this work carried out. Written confirmation from the LTA that they will pay for this work to be undertaken over the next 2 years has been received by the Club. Resurfacing of courts will take place as follows: one line of courts (5) in Autumn 2017 and the other 5 in Autumn 2018. Team fixtures and the Club's closed tournament would need some rearrangement.

3.3 One task that the Club will have to pay for is the renewal of the post anchors - (a post anchor is the part underground that supports the net post). These were installed about 20 years ago and are so badly corroded that they now need replacement. A Project Team consisting of Neil Crawford, Steve Nightingale, Mike Colbourne and Richard Steeds will manage the whole process of renewing the post anchors and fraise mowing the courts. Mark Ferguson of STRI will visit The Avenue to conduct a survey of the post anchors - needed to produce a specification for sending out to potential contractors.

4. GROUNDS REPORT

4.1 The Tennis Secretary reported that the new hardcourts (4 Synthetic Clay and 3 Artificial Grass) are playing well and proving to be very popular with members. The Club is currently waiting for Chiltern Sports to return to the club to complete various works before final payment is made.

POST MEETING NOTE: Chiltern Sports attended The Avenue on Monday to resolve issues associated with the new Synthetic Clay courts. They have successfully removed the sharp edges from the concrete kerbs around the perimeter of the courts, eliminated bumps in the carpet and topped up the sand level on all four courts. The courts are looking good and with the additional infill added they should be playing at their best. They have advised that drag brushing / line sweeping should **not be carried out in very wet conditions** as this will just clog up the equipment. Rain actually does the job for us!

4.2 A VOTE OF THANKS FOR THE EFFORTS OF THE PROJECT TEAM WHO DELIVERED THE NEW COURTS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND UNDER BUDGET WAS AGREED BY ALL PRESENT. Chairman to write a letter of thanks to the Project Team.

ACTION 1: Chairman

4.3 The head groundsman Mike Brooks will be retiring at the end of the year. Graham Brooks (no relation) will be taking over the lead. The Tennis Committee believe that a new contract should be offered to Graham Brooks because of his long experience in working with Mike and his knowledge of the club. Graham intends to start looking for an assistant early in the New Year.

4.4 All grass courts have been scarified and seeded. The final task will be to add the top dressing in the next week or two.

POST MEETING NOTE: Top dressing was applied to all courts during week commencing 31st October.

4.5 A VOTE OF THANKS FOR THE EFFORTS OF THE GROUNDSMEN OVER THE LAST YEAR WAS AGREED BY ALL PRESENT. Secretary to write a letter of thanks to the groundsman.

ACTION 2: Tennis Secretary

5. COACHES' REPORT

5.1 Roger Manvell provided the following report:

We currently have a team of 6 coaches which include Chris Green, Sara Robson, Ben Horton & Harry Aldred who help Tracy and myself deliver a coaching programme throughout the year for both adults and juniors.

We have entered 2 junior teams into the County Winter Leagues with a further 2 teams proposed for the 2017 County Leagues.

For the adults we continue providing cardio tennis on Wednesday evenings and a new free to access class on Saturday lunchtimes - perfect for new members.

We have just returned from another successful trip to La Manga in Spain where Club members enjoyed a week on the clay - with sun and sangria!! Look out for details of next year's trips in March and October. Next up is a trip to the Royal Albert Hall to watch the Champions Tour in early December.

Over the summer Chris spent time with some of the teams helping with tactical advice and running a men's team in the Portsmouth league. His contribution was appreciated and we aim to continue assisting team practice in the future. My Hampshire men's team had a good season winning 3 out of 5 matches.

For the next 12 months we aim to continue to help grow the membership of the Club with a special focus on developing the junior programme.

6. CAPTAIN'S REPORTS

6.1 Men's Report.

I took on the captaincy this time last year, and have thoroughly enjoyed the 12 months. In that time Sara and I have run the Winter and Summer Avenue closed tournaments, both of which were well attended and seemed to generate a good buzz around the club. I did manage to win the Men's Handicap Doubles final back in the summer, having set the handicaps, but I can assure you that was just a happy coincidence!

Competitively we have had a very successful year, with 11 teams earning promotions across all the leagues in Men's, Mixed and Ladies. I have posted the certificates on the wall if anybody wants to take a look later. We should be very proud of what we have achieved as a club, and I am sure that warrants a round of applause.

Moving forward, we are trying to become more organised and professional around team match practice. Over the summer we managed to get 1 hour a week tactical coaching from Chris Green, and the feedback from the squads was that they found it very useful. We are now trying to expand this over the winter, to a 2 hour coach-led session. This will offer new members a route into team tennis, and also encourage progression up through the squads for existing players. I have recently spoken to 2 former Avenue members who left because they felt that the competitive element at the Avenue was being overlooked. Introducing coach-led match practice will be our first step to try and turn this around, hopefully attracting new members, and even enticing former members back.

Getting a coach is our first issue, as no one is available on a Wednesday. We have offered to move the session to Monday or Friday, but again no one is available. We are working with Roger to try and progress this. The second speed bump is lighting. I had hoped that the club would provide the lighting for the session, this is what most of the clubs we play against do, but I have been told no, so we are looking at other options, sponsorship from a local business being one. If anyone has any thoughts or suggestions then please do find me afterwards.

6.2 Ladies Report. The Ladies' Captain, Sara Robson, read out the following:

Ladies tennis has experienced many up and downs over the last year.

Our 1st and 2nd team were in the bottom half of their divisions in the Portsmouth League last winter. However, the 4th team came second in division 5 and the 3rds won division 4. Jenny and her team are to be congratulated.

During the summer our roller coaster continued - Ladies A struggled in division 1 of the Hampshire League and sadly have been relegated. However, it has to be said that this is not an abnormal event as the A's tend to yo-yo between division 1 and 2 in the Hampshire League. Our ladies 1st maintained a respectable middle table position in Portsmouth League division 1. The 2nd team worked hard in division 2 and avoided coming last thanks to a stoical performance in their last match of the summer. The 3rd team come 2nd in division 5 and were particularly proud that they managed this with very little input from players in the higher squads.

Our Ladies Vet B team have continued to play in the East Hants League with much success. They narrowly missed out on promotion by just 1 point - how frustrating! For Ladies A, you will have probably noticed that our higher team have not had the easiest of times over the last year. As a club we are suffering from our young players going off to university. As a consequence we have had to withdraw our ladies 2nd team from the 1st division of the Portsmouth League this winter. This was done with a sad heart, however, the challenge must be to get more ladies playing competitively and to develop the skills of the ladies playing. With this in mind we need to focus on developing coach-led match practice, which so many other clubs have.

I would like to thank captains: Sadia, Leane and Jenny for their support. I would also like to praise all the ladies from the lower teams who played for the A team over the summer. It was quite often the case that Sadia would have to call on these ladies to make up the 3rd pair in her team for the weekend. Having experienced playing in this position, it can be daunting to play at division 1 standard, but I think they all did it in good spirits.

In my last year's report I crowed about Alice's successes in the club summer tournament. This year I want to commend Sadia for taking the Ladies Singles title in impressive style. She has made the final several times and been thwarted. My impression is that Sadia had put a lot of effort into her tennis over the years. This year she gained success in not only the Ladies Singles but the Mixed Doubles title, with her soon-to-be husband Jason. Congratulation to them both!

6.3 Lynda Pine commented that there were several players, including herself, who would like to play in ladies' teams but are not being given the opportunity. Lynda was asked to provide names of other players. **ACTION 3: Lynda Pine** Ladies Captain promised to investigate. **ACTION 4: Ladies' Captain**

7. SOCIAL TENNIS REPORT

7.1 As a former team player Imogen Karas explained that Social Tennis is equally important as competitive team play and is often the entry point into the club for new tennis members.

7.2 Thanks to Imogen's efforts a new programme called 'Time4Tennis' has been introduced at the club. The hour long session at 12.00 am on Saturdays is a short, sharp tennis lesson aimed at younger, fitter, busier members which focusses on drills, specific shots, tactics and the odd masterclass (e.g. service). It precedes the Saturday afternoon mix-in. The sessions are run by Roger Manvell our head coach and are free to members, but also open to non-members for a small guest fee. To cover the cost of coaching, funding was obtained from the LTA - in a competition won by The Avenue. Numbers have been good (12 to 16 on average) and some non-members are considering joining.

7.3 Imogen would like the Time4Tennis sessions to carry on through the winter when the money runs out. If we do get any new members from this perhaps that could provide the necessary funding. Treasurer to investigate.

ACTION 5: Treasurer

7.4 Imogen would like to organise a Bank Holiday tournament next year on the same lines as the successful event organised earlier this year.

ACTION 6: Social Tennis Rep

7.5 Also Imogen is planning to write an Etiquette Guide which will provide clearer guidance on how mix-ins should be conducted.

ACTION 7: Social Tennis Rep

7.6 The question of whether the club should provide free floodlights for Tuesday and Thursday night mix-ins during the winter was discussed. It was agreed that it encouraged more players to come along and has certainly revived winter evening social tennis. Timings of lights on / off is being investigated together with checking data on court usage. One suggestion being considered is to provide free floodlights for all and to recover the costs by increasing the tennis subscription (£5 extra per head would easily cover this).

ACTION 8: Tennis Committee

8. MAJOR EVENTS - SEEK APPROVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP TO STAGE OPEN SENIORS' TOURNAMENT FROM 19TH JUNE TO 23RD JUNE 2017 AND COUNTY WEEK (MEN'S DIVISION 2) FROM 17TH JULY TO 21ST JULY 2017.

8.1 As these events have already been agreed and are in the programme it was decided that there was no need to seek approval from the membership.

9. ELECTION OF TENNIS COMMITTEE OFFICERS

9.1 The following officers were re-appointed:

Honorary Tennis Secretary: *Mike Colbourne*

Honorary Match Secretary: *Rob Mort*

Men's Captain: *Andy Gilliatt*

Ladies' Captain: *Sara Robson*

Honorary Junior Secretary: *David Moakes*

Grounds Committee Chair: *Marc Blake*

Social Tennis Representative: *Imogen Karas*

Members' Representative: *Doug Yelland*

Proposed: *Vince Ibbs*

Seconded: *Lynda Pine*

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 The Avenue has been shortlisted (1 of 3) to host an Aegon-sponsored LTF Challenger Ladies grass court tournament between 26th and 30th June 2017. This is the week after the club's Open Seniors' Tournament. Because the grass court season has been extended and Wimbledon starts a week later next year, Eastbourne has become (again) a men's and women's event. With the women's draw reduced, the women ranked around 60-80 in the world can play in this new event. This would be a small tournament with a singles draw of only 16, and a doubles draw of 8. It would be a very prestigious tournament (\$100,000 prize money) with some high ranked tennis players likely to be interested. It could include: *Ana Ivanovic, Julia Georges, Jelena Jankovic, Francesca Schiavone, Kristyna Pliskova, Kirsten Flipkens, Naomi Broady and Heather Watson.*

The widespread publicity; signage; kudos, etc would put The Avenue firmly on the map, nationally and internationally and be a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of the club locally and attract more active members. It would provide much-needed club income - a 'facilities' fee likely to be in the region of £5-8000 and ticket sales could bring in between £4000 and £8000. Additional income

can be made from catering franchises and from the opportunity to attract collateral significant additional sponsorship.

We do not yet know if we are the preferred bidder or what the actual impact on the club would be if we were to host this tournament. It is a really exciting opportunity for The Avenue, but we are very conscious that, as a membership club, we could not proceed without the support of all members. The meeting voted to support our application but recognized that the whole membership would need to be consulted at an Emergency General Meeting (EGM).

POST MEETING NOTE: EGM arranged for Wednesday 14th November, 7.30 pm.

10.2 Paul Brown congratulated the club - very proud to be a member. New courts look great.

10.3 The club has successfully passed its Tennismark accreditation - thanks go to Justine Brown and Jenny Ward for their hard work.

10.4 Meeting closed at 9.50 pm.

Mike Colbourne

14th November 2016

Honorary Tennis Secretary

Summary of Actions

<u>Action Number</u>	<u>Actionee</u>	<u>Brief Description</u>	<u>Remarks / Progress</u>
2016/1	Chairman	Write letter of thanks to Court Renewal Project team.	
2016/2	Tennis Secretary	Write letter of thanks to Groundsmen for their hard work over the year.	
2016/3	Lynda Pine	Provide names of ladies players available for team selection.	
2016/4	Ladies' Captain	Investigate whether ladies identified can play in ladies' teams (see above).	
2016/5	Treasurer	Identify funding for more 'Time4Tennis'.	
2016/6	Social Secretary	Arrange Bank Holiday tournament next year.	
2016/7	Social Secretary	Write 'Etiquette Guide' for mix-ins.	
2016/8	Tennis Committee	Investigate funding of 'Free Floodlights'.	