

BECCLES TENNIS CLUB
MINUTES of CLUB Committee
Tuesday 5 September 2023 at 7.15pm
At the clubhouse

PRESENT

Philip Tye, Emily Drake, Kate Murray, Tim Morton, Max Fawcett, Linda Green and Matthew Thompson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

George Caplin, Sarah Payne and Brent Pearson

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING - matters arising

No matters arising from the minutes of 20 July 2023.

CHAIR REPORT

We were just waiting for the lease to be signed. The Council were asking for the solicitor at Sprake & Kingsley to confirm that he can accept service of any Landlord notice on behalf of the Club. Emily had now confirmed this so we should expect it be signed shortly and to receive the solicitor bill.

Most of the emails suggested in the last minutes had been sent out apart from the one about the Whatsapp group and the Family Days. Emily had delayed sending these given the holiday season but she would now sort these. She did however need some assistance with setting up the Whatsapp group as she believed that she would have to have everyone saved as a contact in her phone. This was fine but it would obviously take some time.

Emily had amended the website to remove Masha as she had returned to Ukraine.

A big thank you to Linda for sorting out the smart meter. We were still having problems with the estimated bills but Emily had contacted Pozitive Energy today and they had details of the start units and those of 21 July when they came to install the new one. On this basis, they can provide bills for the difference in those units and from 21 July they can take actual meter readings.

Also a big thank you to Matt for sorting out the sign which looks really great. We also discussed having another one at the top of the road which Matt will look into. It was agreed that we should try the writing in black print. Matt noted that the pole that the football club sign was on was quite low but he would have a look and see where it was best to affix it.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Linda provided a copy of the accounts but confirmed she was still working on a reconciliation as it was slightly out. The main costs were in relation to two lots of rent (as we had got behind given the negotiations of the lease) and we had started to pay for some of the coaching prizes from the Open Day and the Wimbledon Day. We had also not been paying the electricity bills as a result of the queries we had raised. It was likely that this was going to be around £600 from Emily's conversation with the company as above. It may be the case that we have to clear those and then make sure that from 21 July, we are getting the right consumption based bills based on the smart meter. We would keep this under review.

COACH REPORT

George was unable to attend the meeting but had sent through his report. The Summer camps had gone really well averaging 17 roughly per week which was very pleasing for both him and Ross.

He is looking forward to the programme starting again and there were no significant intended changes other than he wanted to stop the adult beginner session on a Tuesday morning, as it had been poorly attended, and move it to an evening session so it may appeal more to working people. It was agreed that if George thought this was best, we would support him.

He confirmed that he was willing to put on some match play sessions for the Club, primarily for those who were going to play league matches. He had asked if the Club would cover his cost of attending or if he would be being asked to provide his time for free. It was agreed that the Club would cover his costs as this we were encouraging other members to get involved in the league matches.

He also asked for some feedback on Club night. The committee discussed that Wednesdays had improved recently but we thought it would still be good if we could have George facilitate some sessions and to integrate some of the juniors etc. It was therefore agreed that we could afford to pay for him to attend one a month to see how it goes.

CAPTAIN'S REPORT

Matt would liaise with George about getting the match play sessions set up so we can invite members and advertise accordingly.

It was agreed that we would have one Whatsapp group for the league matches as that was an easier way to communicate. Philip and Matt would be administrators as Philip is acting as A team captain for now. The AGM for the Winter League takes place on 6 September and we should therefore get the fixtures then and can start getting the teams organised.

Max confirmed that he may be able to play some Winter league matches and so he would look to join as a member.

WELFARE REPORT

Max confirmed there was nothing to report in relation to Welfare. He was still working on getting his DBS check sorted as he needs his birth certificate but this hopefully should be completed soon.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Emily had circulated the application form for the proposed interclub league with Southwold tennis club. She explained how it was to work and, if it was successful, how we would look to include different competitions such as singles and mixed doubles. The club would need to provide the balls and book the courts but players would cover the costs of the lights. It was only to run for October and November. It was agreed that this was a good idea and we should go ahead.

The increase in electricity costs meant that we may need to increase the cost of the tokens for the lights. They were currently £2 for half an hour but we agreed that, as we now have the smart meter, we would monitor this until December and decide whether or not a further increase was required. An email would need to go out to members to confirm this. Club sessions would remain at £2 per person.

Philip confirmed that we usually buy new balls from Mark Websdale and we would need some for the upcoming Winter League. Emily said she would contact him for a new order.

Philip confirmed that we usually have a court clean around this time of year so he would contact Gary Crook for this.

Re the new signage, it was agreed that we should probably also update the website directions to the club.

Brent had sent through some points for discussion. Firstly, a discount or free membership for committee members. This was discussed at the meeting and those in attendance did not think that this would be appropriate. We were volunteers and did not think there should be a financial reward

for being on the committee. The second point was in relation to making our meetings available online or having some other meeting environment for those who could not attend in person. Again this was discussed and it was agreed that the minutes would be published on the website and circulated to members. As we were only attending meetings every quarter (approximately), they were diarised well in advance and we had the whatsapp and email groups to deal with urgent matters, those at the meeting wanted to still keep the in person meetings. Whilst online meetings were ok occasionally, we did not think virtual meetings would work as well.

Funding for Court upgrade

It was agreed that, if we were to swell the membership and have the ability to host more tournaments etc., we should have a serious look at complete resurfacing and upgrading of the courts. This could also include having an electronic entry system for all, negating the need for the key at the newsagents for non-members. Emily was waiting for a general costing of smart access through Clubspark but there did appear to be different options depending on whether we wanted full wifi access. Any of these systems would mean that everyone would have to book a court to gain access to the courts but she did think that certain people (e.g. George) may be able to have their own pin that worked at all times. The basic system gave you a pin to open the gate which was live 5-10 mins before your court booking time. The system could also regulate the lights too.

Emily also confirmed that the firm that had provided the new lights quote discussed at the last meeting had been back in touch and confirmed that the quote was their top spec. They could therefore give us some different options depending on our budget. They also suggested that they could assist with any funding applications.

Tim said that he had been contacted by a firm in Witham who dealt with resurfacing and they had suggested that for the three courts, which included taking the top off and redoing it all, would be in the region of £53,000. It would be worth getting some more quotes but he thought they might also do lights and it would make sense, if we were going to apply for funding, to have everything done at once. We also discussed what would need to be done re the hedge as we needed to stop the roots from damaging the surface again. Emily confirmed that we did have a quote a little while ago to take it out completely and she would try and dig that out again. We obviously needed something there and although the hedge was good re wind and noise, the roots were causing damage.

Tim had had a discussion with one of the trustees for the Beccles Townland charity and they confirmed they had an online form for us to apply for funding. The issues we were likely to face were in relation to the length of the lease, the demographic of the club and the need for the Council to contribute. It seemed likely that with the resurfacing, new court surrounds, new lights, removal of the hedge (or something done to the roots) and smart access, we are probably looking at £90,000 - £100,000.

In terms of demographic, Brent had circulated the membership details prior to the meeting and we had a really healthy junior section which is going to be a key point on demographics. Emily also confirmed we had plans to expand this and to concentrate on expanding the adult section which we could refer to.

Re the lease, we were told by the Council that the Charity which owned all the land in the area did not give any lease longer than 7 years as this would engage the Charity Commission and they did not think it could be agreed. This must therefore apply to all the sports clubs in this area but they did say they would provide a letter of support to confirm that they were not planning to move us off the site.

Tim believed that the Club and the Council would need to put some money into this especially if the Council required the public access. The courts had not been resurfaced for 30 years since they were first laid and so, as they were gaining a benefit of the new courts on their land, they will also have to pay towards it. Emily thought that the Club could put in something like £10,000 but we may also need to look at some club fundraising.

The parking issue was something that we needed to raise also as the situation was getting worse and it is a real barrier to new members.

Emily confirmed that we were supposed to be having a nominated Councillor attached to the Club, Steve Sherwood, so it may be worth speaking with him directly about this issue and the funding generally. If we could get access to the land next to the nursery, we could also put in a padel or pickle ball court which would improve membership as well.

It was agreed that we needed to have a fully costed application ready to go by Christmas and so we needed a few people to assist with this.

DATE OF NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 28 November at 7.15pm at Philip's house.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm.