

## **Court Availability**

BFTC is a village club aiming to encourage tennis in our local community and the surrounding areas. The main users of the club are its members but our constitution sets out two ways for non-members to play at the club:

1. as the guest of a member or
2. by hiring a court.

The first instance allows members to bring friends who are visiting them or individuals who perhaps might want to try the club before joining. It is intended for occasional use and any visitor is limited to a maximum of four visits per year. As such the fee is set at a deliberately low level. Anyone wishing to play more frequently at the club will need to become a member or pay to book a court.

The constitution also requires the club to make courts 4 and 5 available for public hire when not required by the club. This condition was put in place to make sure that there is a tennis facility available to local residents who might wish to play but, for whatever reason, feel unable to join the club. In practice, provided the club does not need them for use by members, additional courts can be made available for general booking. Non-members visiting for coaching are also able and required to book a court. There is no limit to the number of times a court can be booked throughout the year but there is no access to participation in wider club activities. The price for court hire has been fixed at £5/hour for some time and will be reviewed in the near future.

In these unprecedented times we are seeing a very large increase in demand for court hire, including from players living outside the usual catchment area of the club. Patterns of demand - when, for how long and how often - have also changed significantly. Our aim is to play our part in helping people to exercise at reasonable cost while making sure that members have access to courts. But this is a fluid situation and we expect to see demand fluctuate as circumstances evolve. For a club run by volunteers this poses significant challenges.

The committee will keep the situation under review and from time to time will put in place measures to try and match court availability with the demand from different groups. That might mean putting conditions on when courts can be booked, how often or for how long. We have been reluctant to increase court hire fees at a time when families and individuals may be facing financial hardship but it remains an option.

There will inevitably be anomalies given the many competing objectives. Moreover we do not have full time staff to monitor and police court use so need the co-operation of members to make this work effectively by honouring the spirit of what we are trying to achieve and not just the letter of the rules.

(An example of something within the strict letter of the rules but outside the spirit would be a member inviting a guest while two other friends booked a court. After four visits the friends rotate and the member plays with one of the others as a visitor while the others book a court, repeating the process after four visits. Going beyond these twelve bookings would be outside the letter and spirit of the rules.)