

**Cringleford Tennis Club
Annual General Meeting**

Minutes from the meeting of the Cringleford Tennis Club AGM held on Saturday 18 November 2023 at 12:00 (*The Red Lion* meeting room).

Minutes: Holly Setchell (**HS**)

Apologies: Jenny Chambers (**JC**), Chris Hardwick (**CH**), Nick Brewin (**NB**) Ann Starky (**AS**)

Committee Members In Attendance: Holly Setchell (**HS**), Hon. Secretary Fraser MacMillan (**FM**), Paul Henery (**PH**), Amanda Bailey (**AB**), Sally Hardwick (**SH**), Hon. Treasurer Rob Hall (**RH**), Hon. Chairman Chris Mitchell (**CM**), Malcolm Clark (**MC**),

Club Members In Attendance: Glenn Earl, Steve Wright, Tony Chater, Tony Hall, Rosy Hall, Alison Simpson, Andrew Young, Nicki Michell, Debbie Mann, Andrew Hardwick, Ralph Barker, John Jewell, Margaret Robins, Malcolm Robins, Isobel Brewin, Thomas Tsang, Stephen Cox, Lindsay Byford, David Stephenson

STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR: - Chris Mitchell

The chair welcomed all to the AGM.

The minutes of previous meeting (24th November 2022) were approved:

proposed: Nicki Mitchell

seconded: Andrew Hardwick

Matters Arising:

1. Defibrillator training – this did take place earlier in the year and members were invited to participate.
2. Membership categories have been extensively reviewed by the committee and the newly formed membership sub-committee. This will be discussed further in the membership section of the current agenda.
3. Guest fees for U.10s: As will be seen in the membership section of the current agenda a proposal has been made by the membership sub-committee to have these fees lowered to £1.25 in line with members suggestions at the previous AGM and after the full committee reviewed this provision, in line with other clubs in the area.
4. Grass courts – winter improvement work with the Cromer grounds man has started. The grass courts will be discussed further later on in the agenda.

Statements

The Chair's report was published to members in advance of the meeting both via email and on the club website. The Chairman was thanked for providing a comprehensive report of the season. As the report had been circulated to all members in advance **CM** did not repeat its content but simply asked if there were any questions related to specific points contained within the report. No immediate questions were raised, but **CM** did encourage those present to share their views on the clubhouse project in the upcoming items on the agenda.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION

1. Chair's Report – Clubhouse Project - a summary of members views is set out below

- i) Concerns were raised about the financial implications of embarking on such a large-scale project and whether this would be at the expense of maintaining the quality of the current facilities. The club needs to be financially future-proofed and with costs increasing, this may be hard to achieve.
- ii) At the last AGM, the auditor's advice was that currently we do not have the financial resources for any large-scale infrastructure projects therefore what has changed to make this more plausible? Membership numbers have decreased this year and hence less money has gone into the club's sinking fund this year so finances are a real concern.
- iii) **CM** outlined to those present that professional cost projections for a single hard court were £60 - £70k, whereas a proposed 'phase one' for the Clubhouse project could be more financially viable at potentially only £40k. Transfers to the sinking fund this year have also been impacted by a number of one-off costs which may not impact contributions to the sinking fund in future years (see treasurers report).
- iv) It was suggested that externally funding such a project could be possible through various grant applications from e.g., Sport England, the LTA and other potential but not-identified sources. One alternative view was expressed that Phase 1 in itself may be financially too small a project to actually interest grant funding bodies. Volunteer fundraising could also help but it was the committee's view that it could potentially be possible to achieve Phase 1 of the project without it.
- v) It was queried what the actual purpose of the clubhouse project would be. We currently have access to sufficient facilities in the Cringleford Pavilion. The size of the proposed clubhouse would not necessarily provide this benefit.
- vi) The tennis club is considered by Cringleford Parish Council to be a community asset and we may struggle with planning permission for a clubhouse as there is already an

existing pavilion. This may also impact our rental agreement with the parish council under which we currently pay a peppercorn rent.

- vii) **CM** outlined that the committee has sought early advice from South Norfolk Council about the likelihood of planning permission but are still waiting for a response and members will be advised as to the response once received. **CM** also confirmed that the peppercorn rent is unlikely to be impacted as our lease does not include any provision to increase the rent in these circumstances.
- viii) The question was posed: “What do we want our purpose to be as a club?” We have always been a community-based club that serves the residents of Cringleford and by becoming more commercialised with increasing facilities, would we be trying to achieve something that is already being done by larger clubs in the area?
- ix) It was pointed out that our current court utilisation (across the year) is ~30% overall. Court capacity is reached at peak times, especially during the summer months but very rarely at other times of the year.
- x) It was again suggested that a clubhouse project may not be necessary if we have full access to the pavilion which has excellent facilities. We obviously don’t have exclusive access so could this be addressed instead?
- xi) **CM** outlined that our usage of the pavilion is subject to £14 per hour hire charge and any bookings need to be made in advance. Ultimately the pavilion is hired commercially to earn Cringleford Parish Council money and attempts at negotiating a reduced rate have previously been rejected. It was also pointed out that the pavilion is hired by regular users mid-week (at peak times for the tennis club) and has precluded use by the tennis club for social events which necessitated the purchase of the gazebo, making social events trickier to run.
- xii) The point was raised that we do have a larger proportion of ‘more mature’ players. If this were to continue, the club could become extinct so do we need to address the membership proportions first?
- xiii) Would a proposed playing wall potentially attract younger players as they will be able to play on their own? Grass courts don’t seem to be improving so would an additional hard court be a benefit to attracting younger members?
- xiv) It was suggested that we need to clarify what the club stands for. What is our mission statement as this may impact our course of action? Club facilities vary from club to club around the county. The benefit of having a space (no matter how small) would be helpful to foster the sense of community within the club. We don’t need a bespoke facility, but something would be helpful. The club shouldn’t be about fostering a service for Cringleford, it just happens to be in Cringleford.

- xv) Having a club house could bring a sense of community and a meeting place at the tennis club which may be beneficial to all members. It would make Cringleford TC stand out compared to other 'pay and play' facilities that are currently being developed in the city.
- xvi) Facilities accessible in the pavilion are currently inadequate for our purposes – toilet facilities are not safeguarding appropriate, it is difficult to fill water bottles if needed and accessible access is a challenge via the sports entrance. Some, but not all, members consider the grass courts to be hazardous due to injury implications. Lack of clubhouse could be putting members off from joining the club; a clubhouse could be a big draw.
- xvii) It was clarified that the current initial costings for phase one did not include any costs for a toilet.
- xviii) Is there a possibility of liaising with the Parish Council about extending the pavilion by building another floor, which could be for the use of sports clubs and be more suitable for their needs?
- xix) **CM** responded that he had previously had discussions with the Parish Council about the tennis club financing a small extension on the side of the pavilion for use by the tennis club. Cringleford Parish Council advised that they would not allow any area to be used by one sports club.
- xx) Is it worth the outlay when the initial financial investigations suggest that such a small structure is all that is viable?
- xxi) Finally, it was agreed that a feasibility study would be conducted, to investigate planning permissions, potential grant applications and costings involved in the different phases of the project. This would then be shared with all members and discussed at a proposed EGM early next year so the full membership can share their views and vote on whether to pursue the project.
- xxii) Concerns were raised about no action being agreed following the AGM and that the project would be allowed 'to drift'. A date should be set now for an EGM so that there was a target to work towards to avoid delay.

CM advised against setting a date now for an EGM as it was not known how long it would take to deal with the Planning Authority and Cringleford Parish Council and obtain the necessary information from the statutory undertakers in relation to the services required. It was confirmed that **CM** assisted by **ND** would expedite any work required to complete a feasibility study with a view to finalising this as soon as realistically possible. Whilst the study was ongoing members would be kept up to date of progress through club newsletters.

It was also agreed that a review of our club mission statement would be included within this process and the Honorary Secretary proposed wording as part of the discussion:

“Our mission is to promote and encourage the playing and enjoyment of tennis for all ages, abilities and backgrounds to the population of Cringleford and surrounding areas by offering a vibrant and sustainable tennis club encouraging player development with both competitive and social tennis in an inclusive and friendly environment”.

2. Treasurers Report

A password protected summary of the club accounts was circulated to members via email prior to the meeting.

Highlights:

Income – generally income has dropped in relation to membership and guest fees which is a reflection on slightly lower membership numbers. Although membership numbers have dropped, our overall membership does seem to be relatively in line with pre-Covid figures.

Expenses – most expense costs (e.g., electricity and maintenance) have increased in line with the current financial climate. Maintenance this year has included some one-off payments (e.g., the removing of token boxes and replacing with switches for the floodlights) and some other payments that are only required every few years (e.g., 5-year electricity certificate).

Q – Why are there no figures under coaching? This is because there are no costs or income related to coaching. All fees go directly to the club coach, **KB** and she manages her own coaching programme.

Q – Why are there low figures in relation to match fees? This is due to the timing of monies being received (collected by individual team captains who as volunteers must chase individual members to pay their match fee dues, which can often be a laborious process) as the club accounts are run on a ‘cash’ basis and only include fees received in a specific financial year. We do not accrue for outstanding fees that are paid in after the end of the financial year end (which is Sept 30th) so figures for an individual year can appear misleading. Monies received after the year end are included in the following year’s accounts. All outstanding match fees up to the date of the AGM have been collected and received.

Q – What do we pay for in relation to league registration fees? In the summer City League registration is £15 per team, Veterans league is currently free (but court usage is assumed)

while the winter league costs £120 per team for registration since it includes at least 3-4 indoor matches making use of the commercial facilities at Easton College. This is an accepted agreement across all teams in Norfolk who compete in this league (the most popular in Norfolk) since tennis in winter is often subject to inclement weather and this ensures that the league can be completed in time for the summer leagues to commence each spring. Thus the discrepancy between these registration costs is simply because winter league teams are guaranteed indoor matches at Easton College to ensure that the league can be completed irrespective of such inclement weather. These bookings are paid for centrally by the league organisers, rather than clubs. The committee has reflected on overall costs (registration and cost of tennis balls) and is currently considering increasing match fees for next year (from £2 to £3) to ensure that increasing costs in relation to both ball purchases and league registration breaks even or possibly earns money for the club. Team tennis does also provide *one-time* used balls for many club social tennis events paid directly from team player match fees.

Q – Do Smith & Pinching give us money for the club tournament? Yes, this is received under sponsorship and is used to support the club's finals day.

One member raised that it is important for those receiving coaching to ensure **KB** is paid promptly following the sessions. The committee are happy to support with this if any payment issues do arise from members.

3. Membership Fees for 2024/25

Membership categories have been reviewed by a sub-committee, who have taken into consideration what other local clubs offer in terms of categories and membership benefits. This included adding a membership category for young adults and those in full-time education. Proposed membership increases have been calculated in line with current inflation. The proposal has also been discussed subsequently at a full committee meeting.

The proposal from committee containing proposed changes in membership fees has been circulated to members prior to the AGM.

Category	2023 Price	2024 Renewal Price	2024 New Members
Adult 26-64 (incl.)	£106	£106	£117
Adult over 65	£84	£84	£92
2 adults (same address)	£200	Remove	Remove
Family (1 adult, 4 juniors/students)	£127	£126	£140
Family (2 adults, 4 juniors/students)	£227	£216	£240
Young Adult 18-25/Full time education	£66	£66	£72
Junior 11-17 (incl.)	£26	£27	£30
Junior U. 11	£26	£12	£15

Questions were invited from those present.

Q – Is the young person needing to be in full-time education to be eligible? No, it is an either/or category.

Q – The research into the offering at other clubs is applauded. What are we doing in terms of publicity to recruit members? **CM** said that publicity and marketing is a priority for future committee meeting discussions. Members said they would happily distribute promotional materials to help with this.

Q – What is considered the optimum membership of the club? It is difficult to determine this due to our court usage. Previous LTA indicators would suggest 60 players per hard court but this figure may now be outdated.

Q – How many players actually use the courts? We do have more detailed data available via ClubSpark but this has not been studied at the moment. It is also difficult to monitor at times as typically only one person books the court on behalf of others.

The proposed membership fees structure was put to the AGM and

proposed: Tony Chater

seconded: Thomas Tsang

There was unanimous agreement to implement the proposed fees.

4. Election of Committee Members

The existing Committee was standing for re-election (with the exception of ND, KB and RH who are standing down). This was

proposed: Ralph Barker

seconded: Nicki Mitchell

and supported by unanimous decision.

As per the constitution the Honorary Secretary had received a duly signed and seconded formal proposal for the election of a new committee member: Kevin Woolrich is being proposed to stand for the committee.

Proposed by: Sally Hardwick

and seconded by: Amanda Bailey

This was supported by unanimous decision.

The re-election of the club auditor John Stanley:

Proposed by: Andrew Hardwick

and seconded by: Paul Henery

This was supported by unanimous decision.

5. Any Other Business

- i) It had been suggested that the current Ladies Friday morning coaching be moved to a Wednesday. This group have really appreciated the help and support **KB** has given during the sessions but would like this to continue on Fridays, if at all possible, as there are players who cannot move to a Wednesday. Could the committee investigate the possibility of having a different coach available to continue to deliver sessions on a Friday?

KB stated that she had made enquiries as to whether another coach might be interested in taking the Friday session however she had drawn a blank. **Action: CM responded that he would take this up to see what could be achieved.**

- ii) Tennis balls at club events - why do social tennis sessions have to use balls that are of poor quality? We purchase balls using the discount deal arranged by Norfolk LTA – they approve a ball make

and we receive discount per tube for buying through their initiative. **JC** was not present to share exact financial figures for this. These balls are used for league fixtures and then added to the circulation for club nights and social events. It was mentioned that some people thought that the expectation is that these balls are used 6 more times before then being recycled. This is not the case and **JC** will be happy to ensure balls are replaced on a regular basis far sooner than is currently the case. It was mentioned that these balls, especially if used for Men's A matches, may not be considered fit for use after a single match and also may not be left in a suitable condition if played with during a wet match. While it will prove impossible to track the original of match balls, team captains will be made aware that wet balls need to be taken home to be dried before being added to club night circulation.

It was considered beneficial to review the number of times balls are expected to be played with following matches before recycling. **Action: Committee**

- iii) Can members take advantage of the discount tennis balls by buying them via the club? This is something we have offered in the past but are not currently able to provide as we buy balls in bulk on a couple of occasions per year to cover our club usage. Estimating member purchases as well would make it challenging to avoid wastage.
- iv) A vote of thanks for the entire Committee for doing a good job in running the club, especially acknowledging the voluntary time they put into their roles was proposed and accepted.

Date of next AGM Meeting: TBC

Meeting closed at 1:50pm.