

**Minutes of the 102nd Annual General Meeting of Suffolk Lawn Tennis Association held at 7.30pm on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024 via Zoom.**

**Members of the Management Committee Team in attendance Phil Eaves (PE) Chair, Julia Waters (JW) LTA Councillor & Acting Safeguarding Officer, Pam Chrispen (PCh) Honorary Treasurer, Sarah Elliott (SE) Secretary, Paul Cansdale (PCa), Megan Law (ML) and Steven Law (SL), outgoing Committee Member.**

**Representatives for the following clubs and organisations;** Nicholas Holloway (Holbrook), Fiona Foreman & Frances Paul (Saxmundham), Isabelle Hunter (Wortham), Mike Watling (Copdock & Washbrook), Keith Ruttle (Newmarket), Robert Brown (Stowmarket), Sue Marzael (Lavenham), Mark Cooper (Felixstowe), Paul Elliott (Framlingham), John Harvey (Newmarket URC), Janie Taylor ( Adastral Park), Simon Thackery (Halesworth), Karen Watling (ISC) and Kim Phyllis-Kirk (Sudbury).

Item	Summary	Action
<b>1.0 Introductions &amp; Apologies</b>	PE introduced himself and thanked everyone for taking time to attend. Apologies Ken Fish (Exning), Keith Palmer (Ipswich Sports Club), Ronnie Hall (Sudbury) and Eric Maule.	
<b>2.0 Approval of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023</b>	Minutes of the AGM were agreed as a true record, they were proposed by Karen Watling and seconded by Fiora Foreman.	
<b>3.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes</b>	Matters arising not covered in the agenda. None were raised.	
<b>4.0 To Receive and Adopt the Statement of Income and Expenditure Balance Sheet for 2023</b>	<p><b>Treasurer's Report to SLTA AGM 2023 – Pam Chrispen.</b></p> <p>PCh reported that it was her first year presenting the accounts. She thanked her predecessor Robert Brown for doing such a sterling job over a quarter of a century commenting that he was a very daunting act to follow. The LTA completely changed its funding system at the start of 2023 and, in order to fall in line with LTA requirements SLTA has changed its financial year from ending on 30<sup>th</sup> September to ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December, meaning this set of accounts relates to a 15-month period and there are some differences in presentation relating to the change in funding agreement. This makes it difficult to cross-reference to previous accounts however next year there should be a more straightforward comparison. SLTA has recently undergone a County Governance Review, there were no concerns relating to its financial systems and processes. A Reserves Policy and an Expenses Policy are published on the website.</p> <p>SLT's total income for 2023 was £96,074 of which £65,000 was the block grant from the LTA. Other income came from tournaments and coaching income, and a small amount of commercial income.</p> <p>Expenditure is all badged against the four domains which the LTA have nominated as core activities for counties, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• Participation</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteering (includes operational expenses)</li></ul> <p>Of the £65,000 the LTA expects us to spend as follows:</p> <table><tr><td>Competition</td><td>£39000</td><td>60%</td></tr><tr><td>Performance</td><td>£10000</td><td>15%</td></tr><tr><td>Participation</td><td>£15000</td><td>23%</td></tr><tr><td>Volunteering*</td><td>£1000</td><td>1.5%</td></tr></table> <p>The percentages SLTA actually spent in 2023 were:</p> <table><tr><td>Competition</td><td>76%</td></tr><tr><td>Performance</td><td>29%</td></tr><tr><td>Participation</td><td>19%</td></tr><tr><td>Volunteering*</td><td>5% (volunteers expenses claims are pitiful)</td></tr></table> <p>The shortfall is made up by income as outlined above. E.g. the County Closed tournaments run at a slight loss however the LTA block grant clearly is not going to cover the required activities.</p> <p>The obvious outlier is competition where we have very little choice but to enter teams in all the age categories and support accommodation, travel and subsistence costs, all of which are rising. For example, this year SLTA's Ladies will play County Cup in Ilkley and the men at Roehampton. The cost of these is anticipated at approximately £6,000 each, which SLTA does not have the budget for.</p> <p>In respect of Performance, SLTA considered it a priority to completely reorganise and invest in its delivery programme to ensure a much wider cohort of juniors across the county are being properly supported and developed. The TGP Contract is delivering this and has already increased participation on the development ladder.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the vast majority of SLTA's funds have to be spent on a very few people participating in tennis across Suffolk, SLTA would like to do far more for participation for instance. PCh acknowledged that SLTA's senior teams receive very little financial support. To deliver more support SLTA would need to increase its income independently of the LTA. SLTA welcomed interest from New Partners and Patrons.</p> <p>The Balance Sheet shows a £6,000 surplus for the 15/12 however this includes a one-off £9,000 repayment for loans during this period: together with some accrual adjustment the underlying position would be a deficit. Looking forward to where we are in 2024, it is pleasing to have two partners (sponsors) who are supporting the County. SLTA has also reconnected with its Patrons and has used the Gordon Blake Legacy Fund to support the Centenary Doubles and Patrons events. PCh thanked those who have supported SLTA financially. No monies have been spent from the Stimulus Fund.</p> <p>A review of the amount spent on Competition and Performance will need and be undertaken and other funding models investigated to ensure that Teams are suitably supported, and that no-one is excluded for financial reasons, whilst trying to ensure the percentages spent for each domain are more in line with LTA expectations. The current budget for 2024 is forecasting an £8000 deficit but it will be worse if any of SLTA's juniors successfully progress to national finals. Good for the County but bad for the balance sheet.</p> <p>Pch reminded clubs that loans are available for Facilities projects from Suffolk Tennis Funding Limited. The threshold has increased to £15,000, usually for a 10-year period. Clubs will need to demonstrate that they can pay back the interest-free loan. PCh thanked Eric Maule for his work as Honorary Examiner for many years.</p> <p>PCh recommended the accounts to the meeting for approval and invited questions from the floor.</p> <p>Mike Watling questioned the huge jump in participation costs. PE explained TGP's programme. SLTA had recognised that the programme would cost more</p>	Competition	£39000	60%	Performance	£10000	15%	Participation	£15000	23%	Volunteering*	£1000	1.5%	Competition	76%	Performance	29%	Participation	19%	Volunteering*	5% (volunteers expenses claims are pitiful)	
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	<p>in the early stages, justifying the increase necessary to address the under performance of the Junior programme and the need to reboot it. PCh reported that a sponsor is giving support to the Junior Programme and gave assurance that Performance costs would continue to be carefully scrutinised and a full review would take place later in the year. PCh expressed her concern that the funding of county teams was not equitable across Junior and Senior teams and needed to be addressed, pointing out that Juniors no longer contribute to competition costs.</p> <p>Simon Thacker queried how counties were graded within the tier structure and if it was possible to move up a tier? Steven Law (who had been a member of the working party) explained that counties were graded by size i.e. number of clubs and participation in the county. SL said that the LTA would regularly review the system. PCh said that Suffolk had done very well out of the tier system but would make enquires as to how counties could move up a tier. PE advised that other counties benefited from substantial sponsorship.</p> <p><b>Formal Adoption of the Accounts</b></p> <p>The adoption was proposed by Simon Thacker and seconded by Frances Paul.</p>	PCh
<b>5.0 Treasurer's Report as to the financial position of the Association</b>	Report addressed in Agenda item 4 above.	
<b>6.0 Chair's Report</b>	<p>PE reported that it had been a remarkably busy year. The Management Team had accomplished a great deal, a new 3-year strategy had been put in place (it can be accessed on the website). The Committee Structure has been revised and as a consequence the number of committee members has increased. Sub committees have been set up in 5 areas: Governance, Finance, Participation, Performance, Competition, involving more volunteers and a spread of the workload. PE welcomed more volunteers.</p> <p>Outsourcing of the Junior Performance Programme. A review was undertaken following a period of unsatisfactory management. The committee agree to appoint TGP. Run by a group of county coaches, to date there has been positive feedback, importantly participation has increased.</p> <p>Change to Committee Members. PE thanked Sally Gooch for her hard work on the committee particularly on the County Senior Review and in her role as Safeguarding Officer. Sally resigned In March this year. The Committee bids goodbye to Steven Law who decided to retire from the SLTA committee, after 30 years of service. PE thanked Steven for his commitment and dedication to SLTA. PE welcomed Emily Stebbings as the EDI lead on the committee, reporting that she liaised with clubs and coaches to deliver the programme. PE welcomed interested parties to join Sub Committee Groups.</p> <p>Governance Review. Because of changes within the LTA, SLTA has been subject to a very stringent governance review. The review's aim is to ensure all aspects of SLTA's operations are compliant with LTA guidelines. PE was pleased to report that initial feedback had been positive.</p> <p>Engagement with Clubs. SLTA held three Cluster meetings in April in two locations. Fifteen clubs attended. The meetings were deemed useful to SLTA and to clubs alike with two- way conversation on a variety of topics. A second round of meetings is planned for the second half of the year. SLTA set an objective for Suffolk tennis venues to be visited by a committee members. PE reported that most clubs had received a visit. Sally Gooch contributed enormously to this objective, visiting a huge number in her role of Safeguarding Officer.</p> <p>Padel is growing fast in the UK. Currently there are four hundred courts, three of them in Suffolk. PE is Suffolk's Padel Ambassador. LTA loans are available to clubs wishing to install padel courts.</p>	

	<p>Dunlop Ball Deal. PE reported that the deal had been negotiated for a second year and explained how the deal operated and resulted in free balls being available for county training and competitions. PE encouraged Clubs to take advantage of the deal and order Dunlop balls from Stringers World and Top Spin.</p> <p>SLTA has striven to improve communication. Events and news items have been promoted via, email, the website, Instagram and Facebook. PE urged members to follow SLTA via the Instagram page which posts newsworthy items on a regular basis, its number of followers has grown. However communication continues to be an issue, with the flow of news and information slow to reach club members. PE plans to set up a WhatsApp group for Club Chairs hoping that this will facilitate better dissemination of information.</p> <p>Seniors Tennis Review. This was led by Sally Gooch, the report is available to view on the website. PE reported that Sally did a very thorough job, the objective of the review was to identify if the current programme could be improved, to have a more open recruitment process and to support teams in their training and development. The findings: Janie Taylor leads a well-managed Ladies programme where teams are represented at all age levels. Men's teams. There is no representation for the 40 – 55 age groups, four age groups are not represented. Recommendations.: Run an ID Day. In April SLTA held an ID Day for both genders in all senior age groups at which over 10 new players were identified to join our teams. A 2<sup>nd</sup> ID Day is planned on 9<sup>th</sup> June for men aged 40 – 60 to address the lack of representation in this age group. PE went on to explain that funding of £400 is available for each team per season with teams typically playing five matches, indoor courts are available at a reduced price for matches and training. SLTA provides balls for matches and training.</p> <p>PE reported that SLTA has a clear plan on what needs to be done, with more money and volunteers its objectives could be achieved quicker. PE appealed to clubs to encourage their members to consider becoming a Patron or Sponsor.</p>	
<b>7.0 LTA Councillor's Report</b>	<p>Julia Waters introduced herself and explained that she had completed her first year in office following Steven Law's 9-year stint. JW reported that the LTA had a new Strategic Plan. Its mantra - to be Welcoming, Enjoyable and Inspiring. It's aim is to put tennis at the heart of communities, grow and diversify audiences i.e. fans, players and the volunteer workforce. It wants to inspire the next generation. Last year JW was placed on the Safeguarding DTAG, this year she has been assigned to the Volunteer Engagement DTAG, a subject close to her heart. Currently JW is tasked with assisting in updating and improving the Awards Nominations process. JW is also part of the Tennis Foundation thinktank group which aims to bring different groups into tennis (such as Parkinsons, Mind, Dementia groups) and to provide support for the organisations and help develop their facilities. (Worham Tennis Club held Marathon Charity event to support the charity last year). JW was also assigned to the Inspire Women's Group and placed on the Sandi Proctor driven course to give women the skills to take on more senior positions within British Tennis. This year Emily Stebbings, SLTA's new Diversity lead was one of the 12 candidates selected for the 2024 cohort, she has also been assigned the LTA Disability Advisory Committee. JW reported that there has been an increase in Participation by 11% within the East Region, Suffolk has forty five venues and eighty three Accredited coaches. The LTA aims to get more women and girls into tennis, playing and coaching. Volunteers are the most important people in British Tennis. There are 25,000 volunteers across five thousand venues.</p>	

	<p>JW emphasised that the Volunteer Engagement DTAG had been tasked to revamp the National Awards programme and make the nomination process easier. Clubs cannot function without volunteers, JW encouraged club committees to make nominations from within their volunteer groups for the next Awards Programme so that their hard work and dedication can be recognised.</p> <p>JW reported that Sandi Procter (LTA President) paid 2 visits to the county last year. She presented the Suffolk LTA awards which STLA held at East Bergholt Tennis Club (Suffolk winners of Club of the Year). East Bergholt went on to become Regional and also National Club of the Year. Sandi was extremely impressed with the what can be achieved with just three courts and a shed! Demonstrating that if the right people are at the helm of a club, anything can be achieved. Sandi's tour included visits to Stowmarket and Newmarket Tennis Clubs, both previous winners of Suffolk club of the Year. She moved on to Wortham Tennis Club where a sponsored marathon for the Tennis Foundation was being run (it raised in the region of £4000), before finally visiting Culford School, home to Suffolk's Regional Performance Development Centre. Sandi has been blown away by all the fantastic things that are happening within the county. Her second visit of the year was to Framlingham Tournament, winners of the National Competition of the Year. Another National Award winner was James Trotman born in Suffolk, coach to Jack Draper, he was recognised as the National Coach of the Year. JW's fellow councillors were amazed by the success of such a small county, boasting 3 national winners. JW reported that Suffolk had punched truly above its weight, making JW a really proud councillor. In the 2024 Awards, Mike Watling is to be awarded an LTA Meritorious Award for his services to tennis within his club, county and beyond. Sandi Procter fully endorsed Mike as a worthy recipient of the award.</p> <p>National Volunteer Week celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the first week of June. SLTA is hosting an event to say Thank You to its volunteers. The event will be held at Risbygate Tennis Club, Suffolk Club of the Year on Sunday 2 June, when two volunteers from each club are invited to attend.</p> <p>JW drew attention to the LTA's Social Media channels and national Facebook pages for Parents and Volunteers.</p> <p>On behalf of the LTA JW thanked all volunteers, in particular she thanked Phil, Sarah, Pam, Sally, Steven, Paul, and Megan for doing such a great job as a management team which had made her life as a councillor much easier when cascading information down from the LTA which usually involved a huge amount of additional committee volunteer hours. JW invited questions. Mike Watlings queried how the loss of Leo Tutt from the LTA regional team might impact SLTA? JW explained that any question/issue would need to be raised through a contact form which would be sent to the regional team, this would apply to the Management Committee too. JW envisaged that this would result in more work being passed down to the Management Committee.</p>	
<b>8.0 Proposal to Change SLTA's Organisational Status</b>	<p>PE reported that the LTA was founded in 1888 and in 2010 became an incorporated entity. More recently the LTA has encouraged County Organisations to review their organisational status and liabilities. Under the new funding agreement, county officers are being held more accountable in areas of compliance and governance. Where children are involved. safeguarding is paramount and is it important that SLTA's officers and volunteers are protected. It is the committee's view that incorporating the Association will be beneficial in the following areas; it will safeguard the organisation for the future, provide greater security for volunteers and limit their liability and exposure and will improve financial management as banks view organisations who hold an incorporated status more favourably. i.e. STLA</p>	

	<p>will be able to apply for a credit card and will more easily be able to book and pay for travel for county teams. Legal advice will be sort, the LTA has provided funding towards the cost. PE invited questions.</p> <p>Mike Watling believed that there would be significant cost implications. PE said that he had received an estimate in the region of £5000 to £10,000. Mike Watling questioned if Suffolk Clubs as a consequence of a change to SLTA Status would be required to make the same change in status? The consensus was no. All clubs answer to their own constitution and indeed some already are registered as incorporated or limited entities. PCh commented that it was important to consider how a change in status might affect SLTA's relationship with Suffolk clubs. PE asked for approval for the Management Committee to move ahead to review what form of organisation SLTA should become i.e. CIO, Limited by Guarantee or a Limited Company. PE filed for approval of the motion. An online poll had been set up, one member from each club voted anonymously. The poll recorded 10 clubs in favour, the motion was carried. Four clubs abstained unable to cast their vote without consulting their committee. Club representatives asked for information to be disseminated to clubs with regard to changing status. It was suggested that cluster meeting could be set up to impart information to help clubs decide if it would be wise to change their status. Wortham has already changed their status and would be happy to share details of their experience. An EGM will be called when a proposal to change SLTA's status has been prepared.</p>	SE
<b>9.0 Proposal to adopt a new Constitution</b>	A new constitution will be prepared in line with the change in status proposal and will be considered for adoption at an EGM.	SLTA MC
<b>10. Election of Management Committee &amp; Honorary Accounts Executive</b>	Nominations had been received for the position of Chair Phil Eaves, Treasurer Pamela Chrispen, Secretary, Sarah Elliott and Committee Member Mark Cooper. No nominations were received for the position of Vice Chair, The were no objections to those persons taking up the posts, accordingly all four persons were elected. Clare Baxer was elected as Honorary Accounts Executive.	
<b>Close of Meeting</b>	JW expressed her sadness in sharing news of the untimely passing of Neil Songer, a well-respected Suffolk referee. The County's sympathies go to his family. SLTA gave posthumous thanks to Neil to for his contribution to Suffolk Tennis. It was agreed to rename one of the Club County Doubles Trophies after him. The meeting concluded shortly after 8.46pm.	