



**SOMERSET LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 Via Zoom**

**Attendees :**

Andy Fay – SLTA, John Gould – SLTA, Karuna Tharmananthar – SLTA, Simon Brand – SLTA, Julie Williams – SLTA, Neil Driver – SLTA, Sophie Butland – County Administrator, Adrian Bates – Social Media, Sharon Heeley – LTA Head of Region, Kerry Quirk – Taunton Tennis Club, Wendy Driver – Somerton Tennis Club, Matt Goatcher – Wells Tennis Club, Allison Hillyer – Brent Knoll Tennis Club, Zena Hodgson – South Petherton Tennis Club, Jon Rolnik – Wincanton Tennis Club, Gillian Dunn – Ilminster Tennis Club, Susan Rackley – Wellington Tennis Club, Stuart Mark – Stoke St Gregory Tennis Club

Andy Fay welcomed everyone to the meeting

**1. Apologies for absence**

John Barrington, Nigel Barker, Ivor Griffiths, Sarah Strawbridge, Jane Braybon, Elaine Urquhart, Marian Davis

**2. Minutes of AGM held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 circulated**

Minutes of last year's AGM had been circulated. No points were raised. Proposed to accept by Karuna Tharmananthar and Julie Williams.

**3. Chairman/LTA Councillor's Report**

The Chairman's Report included in the AGM papers was taken as read.

Andy Fay (AF) had hoped that we'd be meeting face to face, however arrival of new covid variant, Omicron has prevented this.

Registration process is currently upon us and is hoped to be easier than last year.

The LTA have introduced the Tennis Opened Up strategy, which ensures we have the best practice template for tennis which includes ongoing updates from safeguarding and Safe To Play campaign. We are also launching the LTA strategy on inclusion and diversity.

AF stated that due to successive Wimbledon restrictions and cancellations we've been struggling to find new sponsors therefore the county is falling back on reserves. This means that our ability to support clubs on improvements has been reduced. If anyone has any connection to a potential sponsor, let Andy or any of council members know.

AF thanked Nigel Barker who is standing down as president after many years as LTA Councillor and as Chair of the County Committee. Somerset Tennis would not be where it is today without Nigel's input. AF wished Nigel and Janet all the best. Secondly AF thanked our retiring treasurer, John Gould for all his hard work and supporting the county. AF wished John and Margaret the best of luck for the future. AF Welcomed Sophie Butland, who has taken over from Annie as County Administrator.

AF thanked everyone within the county for all their continued hard work and highlighted that we are looking for new County Council members, if anyone is interested, please contact Andy/Sophie.

**4. Treasurer's Report**

John Gould (JG) thanked Andy Fay on behalf of the council for all the hard work he does for Somerset.

The Treasurer's Report and accompanying papers were circulated with the AGM papers and taken as read.

The easing of restrictions associated with Covid 19 meant that during the year Somerset Lawn Tennis Association (SLTA) was able to support an expanded programme of activities. County Training sessions

were able to go ahead which saw an increase in costs. However, the loss of sponsorship that has been enjoyed in previous years meant that the Association has seen a significant fall in income to pay for its costs and has recorded a loss of £19k for the year despite a reduced demand to provide club support.

The council has agreed to take actions to reduce costs will include not making any significant grants to clubs in the county as well as reducing the costs to competitive teams. The budget is not finalised for next year as we are waiting on LTA to confirm the grant. The aim is to keep deficit around 10K compared to 20K for this year, which will be supported by the reserves.

JG announces shocking news of the death of Simon Bruce who was our independent reviewer. Alternative arrangements are being made to ensure that these accounts are independently reviewed and provide a true and fair view of the Association's financial affairs as of 30 September 2021.

JG proposed that we accept accounts, unreviewed. – JG proposed, AF second.

## **5. Safeguarding Report**

Karuna Tharmananthar thanked all clubs, Welfare Officers and Committees for all the work that has been done over the last 3 years.

KT noted that we held 3 Welfare Officer forums over the last year which has raised a few common issues, the aim is to continue those into 2022. Dates to be sent out. KT attended the National Safeguarding Forum. KT highlighted the focus on low level concerns within safeguarding.

Next year's welfare officer forum will be focused on low level concern which we are more likely to come across at club level.

KT highlighted that it may be useful to have a second person helping with safeguarding issues in the county.

## **6. Captains' Reports for County tennis**

No Winter County Cup 2020 due to Covid-19. Somerset Men's team went to Yorkshire for Summer County and competed against Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire & Nottinghamshire in Division 3. Led by the experienced trio of Manlow, Felton & Gabb and Somerset featured the Edward brothers as well as Louis Skupien, Matthew Crofts and Callum Jessett. Unfortunately, the Men lost all of their games against a very strong group of counties which puts them into Division 4 for Summer 2022. AF thanked Daniel Manlow for all his hard work with the Men's team as well as County Training.

Somerset Ladies Team were competing in West Worthing for Summer County. The team consisting of Natalie Ackland, Amelia Davies, Annabelle Davis, Francesca Davis, Bethany Lacey, Zoe Leach, Nirva Patel and Grace Piper. The ladies won their group gaining promotion to division three. They competed against Cambridgeshire, Sussex, Berkshire, Durham & Cleveland and Bedfordshire. Grace, Annabelle and Nirva only dropped one match during the week. Francesca Davis made her debut. Only negative was Zoe Leach tested positive for Covid-19 on return. Unfortunately, this meant Natalie had to also isolate and lost out on the opportunity to play in the O35's.

The ladies O35's team competed at Eastbourne in division one. The team consisted of Kerry Quirk, Liz Deem, Ellie Lewis, Alex Joy and Rachel Apsey (Captain). The team lost to Middlesex 3-0, they beat Hertfordshire 4-1 which meant they were playing Durham & Cleveland to stay in Division 1. But unfortunately, despite their best efforts they lost 3-2, this meaning that they were relegated to division two.

Men's Seniors – Over 45's captain Neil Kanka, Over 50's John Treen, Over 60's Neil Driver, Over 65's Bob Kippen, Over 70's John Barrington. These were played on a regional basis to avoid too much traveling. All the teams did well. Neil Driver stated that 60's matches were fun though unsuccessful results wise.

## **7. County Tennis Report including County Training**

A report for County Tennis including County Training was circulated with the AGM papers and was taken as read.

Simon Brand (SB) highlighted that covid-19 affected the early part of the season, however it was encouraging that when the children returned to training the motivation and dedication was there. County Cups were held regionally with juniors grouped together with Devon, South Wales, Wiltshire and Cornwall.

Battles with Cornwall were good. A review of County Training was undertaken, and the county have now employed Chris Chapman from Millfield to look at the operational aspects of Junior County Training in order to improve the program going forward. An improvement that will be implicated in the new year is steering away from gender groups in the upper age groups and groups will be divided on ability.

SB thanked everyone who supports County Training and the coaches delivering the sessions. SB singled out Dan Manlow who had stepped down from County Training in September as he was promoted at Millfield. SB pleased to report that Richard Keen another Level 4 coach at Millfield has taken Dan's role. SB thanked Millfield and the new director of tennis Alex Walker, for their support in County Training and providing the use of their facilities free of charge.

SB highlighted that one the weaknesses we see is that although children are dedicated to their training, they are not competing regularly enough. Coaches within clubs need to encourage children to play more. Trial events for U8's, U9's and U10's are running to be able to select players within those age groups. SB encouraged coaches to put forward their best players within their clubs.

Sue Rackley (Wellington Tennis Club) asked the question regarding tournaments held at Blackbrook. Sophie Butland mentioned the fun Team Challenge events that she runs at Blackbrook on a regular basis which are open to all clubs and a good introduction to those players in the younger age groups who are competing for the first time. Kerry Quirk (Taunton Tennis Club) expanded on the Team Challenges and mentioned that Blackbrook are currently advertising for another accredited referee so that they can run more higher level tournaments at the club.

Adrian Bates (Social Media) encouraged everyone to follow Somerset LTA on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter where you'll find information relevant for venues, coaches, players and parents. All the coaches are now on a WhatsApp group which has proved to be useful in sharing information and ideas. AB put the idea out about a venue WhatsApp group as a way to share club information which could be possible to set up in the new year.

## **8. County Workforce**

Our Coach Education Provider (Exeter University) has worked with us to provide the following CPD this year across Somerset: X1 Level 1 = 24 candidates X2 Coach Network Events = 49 coaches

During Covid the focus was to bring coaches in Somerset together more which has been proved successful with the WhatsApp group containing 37 coaches allowing questions to be raised and sharing competitions. Over lockdown network events were held online. A recent face to face coach network event was held at Millfield Senior School on November 5<sup>th</sup> with guest speaker Barry Scollo (Director of Tennis at Team Bath) providing some great on and off court information, on the curriculum they provide for players at the high-performance centre. The event was very successful and great to see coaches back on court together. Julie Williams (JW) thanked Millfield school for their facilities and Julie Jones for organising the event.

JW states we will be looking to hold further Coach Network events hopefully face to face 3 or 4 times in the next year. Looking to bring in guest speakers and share practice. A big aim in the next year will be to drive the coach workforce by trying to get more level 1's and 2's coming through. We will be looking to put on more tennis leader courses.

There's been changes in the LTA coach development. You can now claim independent learning points by reflective learning to gain CPD credits.

Jon Rolnik (Wincanton) asked the question whether there's any new initiatives coming through since the pandemic. Sharon Heeley (LTA Head of Region) talked about the program push of LTA Youth, the intent will be continuing the LTA Youth program and LTA Youth Schools. 5,000 teachers have been trained in the past 12 months.

## **9. Disability Report**

Restricted activity due to Covid-19. Two wheelchair events took place in Taunton towards the end of the year. Hopefully there will be a big push on disability tennis in 2022, with the merge of Tennis Foundation and the LTA. New regional lead, Harry Ashe.

**10. Election of Officers**

Chairperson - Andy Fay

- a. LTA Councillor – Simon Brand
- Other Committee roles:
- b. John Barrington - County Seniors Officer
- c. Simon Brand - County Training & County Cup / Communications
- d. Karuna Tharmananthar - Safeguarding Officer
- e. Julie Williams – She Rallies Ambassador / Coach Development
- f. Neil Driver – Accessibility
- g. Clive Ross - Grants & Loans

Proposed en bloc by Stuart Mark, seconded by Zena Hodgson and agreed unanimously.

Note vacancies exist for Treasurer and County Secretary and any nominations / volunteers would be welcome – more information from Andy Fay or other Council members

**11. Election of Independent Examiner**

White Bruce Accountants.

Proposed by Simon Brand, seconded by Karuna Tharmananthar. Unanimously agreed.

**12. LTA Update**

Sharon Heeley (LTA Head of Region) – Main objective to increase participation in tennis. Three key measures in current strategy which runs until 2023 – To increase number of adults playing tennis each year, increase the frequency of adults playing tennis once a month and increase number of children playing once a week. We have already seen a positive impact under these headlines since returning to tennis. We have seen an 8% increase in adults playing tennis. Tennis is the countries most popular racket sport and ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in participation numbers across all sports in the UK. Children’s participation data is looking encouraging which is linked to the LTA Youth programs. There has been a negative impact on disability tennis, seeing a decrease in participation, due to ongoing covid restrictions. LTA serves, community program, was also negatively impacted as some of those community centres were used as food banks/ testing centres.

There has been a recent announcement of government funding of £22million which will be invested in renovation of park courts, resurfacing and refencing.

Wendy Driver (Somerton Tennis Club) and Gillian Dunn (Ilminster Tennis Club) brought up IT issues with venue registration. Sharon Heeley reassured that the regional team is there to help along with James Deem and Julie Jones while the ongoing IT issues with the contact us form / central hub are being resolved.

**12. Any Other Business**

LTA Awards will be announced in early February along with the first venue forum of the year.

AF thanked everyone for attending the AGM.

Signed .....

Date .....