

LANSDOWN TENNIS, SQUASH AND CROQUET CLUB LTD
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY, 26th NOVEMBER 2020
Start Time: 7.00 pm

Present:

Andy Ewings (AE)	Chairman
James Scully (JS)	Deputy Chairman
Jeremy Goulding (JG)	President
Mark Groves (MG)	Treasurer
David Barnes (DB)	Fabric Manager
Mark Radley (MR)	Squash Secretary
Rupert Larkin (RL)	Tennis Secretary
Howard Grove (HG)	Croquet Secretary
Claire Ackerman (CA)	Committee Member
Jean Wilson (JW)	Committee Member
Jon Foulds (JF)	Committee Member
Philip Torjussen (PT)	General Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jeremy Labram. This was accepted.

2. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting dated the 6th October 2020 were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

CoronaVirus – As everyone knew, we were in tier 2 and we had accepted guidance from the Government. We were now waiting for further clarification from ES and LTA. AE had spoken to Banes and we are not seen as a pub or a bar but if we wish to serve alcohol it must be purchased with a full meal and should be table service.

There will be tennis activity and will need a member of staff or a committee member in the club when opened (for insurance reasons) once we know more from the governing bodies.

Membership was healthy before but 8 members had cancelled their DD's since November 1st. It is likely we may be under some pressure to increase any rebate before the March renewal date.

5. ACCOUNTS

MG confirmed that we are still making profit, but a decision has yet to be made regarding any rebate and in which year this is charged. Our accountant has suggested that it is offset in 2020.

We have had some big expenditures over the last 6 months and the club is in great shape. Clubroom savings have been made but it is still making a loss. Office payroll down by £21K.

We currently have just over £400,000 in the bank.

JG: If we were to make a credit this year of, say, 10 weeks membership, are we likely to be breakeven or loss making? MG confirmed that it would not be a massive loss and we could breakeven. It would be that the cash that we have has not been eroded by COVID-19 – but we just have not contributed to the future.

AE: If we lose the cash next year, it may mean delaying any future investment. We are likely going to have to give back at least 12 weeks given that's the length of time that the club has been fully closed for so far.

MG: He did not recommend that we delay the resurfacing of the tennis courts 1, 2 and 3 and he was trying to form a decision on whether we can invest in Padel. It should mean that we will have approximately £200K to invest in the provision of additional facilities assuming of course that the investment would help to generate additional funds.

JF suggested that the refund could be spread over several years as this might help our cash flow but AE confirmed that we currently do not have a cash flow issue but this may be useful to retain members. It was agreed that we can discuss this in January as a committee. JG said that this was a good point, but no decision has been made and everyone should have a think about what we should do. It will be a case of 'this is what we are offering - but it would be good if you could pay your normal subs'.

JS asked if this was an issue to be discussed by the finance team or committee? It was agreed that AE, JF, MG and PT would discuss and give options to the committee. JG asked if he could be involved with the proposals and everyone agreed with this.

RL asked if there had been much questioning from members and AE confirmed that the feeling was that we had mainly done a great job but some had also asked about the refund. He had received approximately 10 - 20 emails over the last 9 months related to refunds.

JG said that there was a trust in the management team to be fair.

JS asked if we had included anything in the budget for the floodlights on courts 8 – 10. PT confirmed that we had allocated £70K.

6. SQUASH UPDATE

MR confirmed that all seemed to be going okay before lockdown.

He confirmed that they were trying to get a second quote for the heaters on courts 2 and 3. He was hoping to get this work done soon.

He was waiting on England Squash to update on regulations for tier 2. Previously we would have had coaching, household play and solo practise but it remains to be seen what happens. This will be discussed with the COVID-19 committee as soon as possible. If guidance is the same, then do we open, and if so, we will have to come down heavily on those who do not conform. Numbers of people coming in will drop and this may well influence what we offer from the clubroom. It was agreed that we will discuss this during the next COVID-19 group meeting.

MR asked about the selection of members on a squash subcommittee - what is the position on this? AE agreed that we should have a cross section of members, but that MR could choose those that he wanted on the subcommittee.

RL confirmed that on the tennis subcommittee, no-one has formal roles but they do have specific responsibilities and this has helped us get to more done. It would also help if we had a good cross section of people in the group. Busy people are better!

JG suggested that each time someone is added AE was to be advised and that minutes should be kept of all meetings. MR would only need to come back to the committee if expenditure required.

7. TENNIS

RL confirmed that before lockdown, court utilisation was good and there was some pressure at busy times. They had a draft new tennis calendar which TT has been involved with and there was something for everyone. They may not be able to start this immediately. Hopefully, it will be quite quick to get everything back to normal.

Courts 1 – 3

RL, JS and Richard Leutchford were committed to the resurfacing project. They had investigated the base of the court and this is in a good condition. They were on target to get something done next April and will be inviting contractors to bid for it. The work will be within budget at approximately £60k. The surface will hopefully be Tiger Turf and should be good for ten plus years, and a vast improvement on the current surface.

MG asked if the work could be done in February or March rather than April, and JS confirmed this was all under review but we've been advised to avoid at least Jan & Feb. There would be a 2 or 3 week outage and a summary will be given to the committee soon.

Floodlights

Lee West is an expert on behalf of the LTA and this was discussed with him today and he could be used to help us in the future.

Planning Permission – Lights on 8 – 10

JF confirmed that he had spoken to the planning officer and the situation was very much up in the air. The planning officer was a tennis player himself. He needs more comprehensive information and needs to defend his position. We have had some letters in support of our application.

JF is implementing a topographical survey which will cost approximately £2K. This will also include laser heights for windows so we can validate the information. The planning application is likely to be dealt with by committee. John Morgan has been particularly useful in putting information together. Es Murray has also been of assistance and will be happy to look at the topographical information for the Club. JF suggested that we get all this in digital format as it removes some uncertainty regarding levels etc. and he will get the survey done as soon as possible. He was asked what our chances of success were and he wasn't sure but it would be prudent to go for lights until 8.00 pm and then perhaps extend later if there was demand.

RL confirmed that he will advise JF on information from Lee West.

Padel Tennis

JF said that Planners get twitchy when there are several applications going in for one site. He suggested that we hold off the Padel application until we know for sure what is happening with the flood light application. Lighting for Padel is less than tennis so it may be an idea to go for a pre app process with the Planning Officer to start with.

There was some discussion about the usage of courts, coaching, etc. LTA have taken it on because this is on the increase and tennis is not doing as well.

JG: In previous EGM's our membership was very conservative and we would need to have an enthusiastic committee and membership involvement for it to go through.

JF suggested that we go for a Pre app without going to the membership. This will give us an indication of what might happen if we did put in a formal planning application. This was agreed but JG suggested we start selling it to the membership soon to avoid any backlash.

MG suggested delaying it because there is a lot going on at the moment. It was agreed that JF and AE would work on a draft for the membership. JF to provide information to the committee. JG to check on articles for voting information.

8. CROQUET

HG had noted that the paving repairs have been done and a serious amount of shrubbery has been cut down to allow light on the part of the lawn where growth had been stunted.

The lawn looks good and the facilities have been brought up to a good standard. All we want now is to return to competitive interclub play.

9. SAFEGUARDING

There were no issues to be discussed.

10. AOB

There was no other business.

11. NEXT MEETING

This would take place on Thursday, the 14th January at 7.00 pm

12. CAFÉ/BAR

AE thanked everyone who had made comments on his report. It had highlighted one or two recurring themes. MG said that we shouldn't do anything hasty. Small decisions had been made which was getting us through this difficult period but changes suggested are for the long term.

JW suggested we vote yes or no on simple choices and this can be done in the future.

PT was asked for his comments and he too suggested that we shouldn't do anything hasty and that we should be looking at all income raised and not just at specific aspects of catering. He felt that the answer would be to have a good social committee who would arrange more social functions when we could, and this would result in greater turnover, profit and member satisfaction.

At this point, PT was asked to leave the meeting.

Subsequently, there was a reasonably lengthy discussion around the challenges we face on the bar and report with contributions made from all committee members. In the end it was unanimously agreed by all committee members to look to replace the current catering manager position with a new one of Clubroom Manager role reporting directly into the committee. It was agreed that the existing catering manager Jo Bray should be given the opportunity to cross-train into this role should she wish

Signed _____

Andy Ewings, Chairman