

DRAFT

HACKNEY CITY TENNIS CLUBS (HT) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2019 AT THE CLISSOLD PARK TENNIS PAVILION, 3 QUEEN ELIZABETH'S WALK, STOKE NEWINGTON N16 OBF

Present

Directors: Howard Bennett (Chair), Francesco Caselli, Daniela Aramu, David Harrison, Maurine Lewin, David Smith.

Management: Christian Coombs, Natalia Brebu

Members in attendance: Loui Anderson, Yvonne Bennett, Michael Coombs, Jamie Caprice, Elizabeth Del Prete, Hazel Fraser, Justine Hembury, Tess Gorman, Agnieszka Guzy, Daniel Guzy, David Harrison, Abu Sufian, Mirka Tumova, Colin Weekes, Nadia Weekes, Josh Whitehead, Cristian Winder, Paul Ridgely, Miki Puccioni, Seth Eadie, Simone John-Baptiste, Phil Semper, Alison Hunter, Jen Hyatt, Elena Kosseva, Guy Krenger, Julia Lord, Yvonne Milne, Lisa Watch.

Apologies:

1. Opening Remarks

Howard Bennett (Chair) welcomed Directors and Members to the AGM and provided the following update:

Agreement with Hackney Council

The new agreement with Hackney Council is for five years with an option to extend for a further two years. The agreement formalises our arrangements with the Council, gives Hackney Tennis (HT) more control and responsibility over maintenance, and commits us to growth targets in respect of the community, outreach and performance programme and for public participation. Target groups are the over-50s, girls and women, black and ethnic minorities, disabled players, under 10s and 13 to 19-year olds. In terms of competitive and performance tennis we have targets for the number of regularly competing adults, the number of development and performance squad players and the number of regional and national ranked players.

One challenge which HT will be focussing on is to improve the diversity of tennis participation to better reflect the diversity of residents in the Borough, both ethnic and socio-economic. Around 40% of Hackney's population is Black or Minority Ethnic, around 15% reported that they had a long-term illness that limited their daily activities, and whilst Hackney has become significantly more gentrified, there is lots of Hackney that is not prosperous, and of course around 50% of Hackney residents are female. HT will be expanding the schools programme, along with liaising with the LTA and the Tennis Foundation Serves programme (which uses pop-up tennis courts to give access to local community groups). Links

with religious after schools' clubs and youth clubs will also be formed. This is also a priority of Hackney Council.

In terms of employment, HT is committed to mentoring its coaches to ensure that we achieve targets for the number of LTA level upgrades each year and to provide apprenticeship and employment opportunities from within Hackney.

Venue Improvement and Programme Expansion

Currently one of the recurring complaints we have is the lack of availability of spaces on coaching courses and the difficulty in booking courts at peak times. This is a much bigger problem at times when the only playable courts are floodlit.

HT's aim is to increase the programme usage of courts at other venues than Clissold Park and Hackney Downs by improving facilities, having coaches based at these venues and floodlighting where planning and local concerns allow.

HT would like to add floodlit courts at Hackney Downs, and floodlight London Fields and Spring Hill. However, all of these are likely to be opposed by residents so this may not be possible, certainly in the short-term.

Developments this year and next

Membership – this is now free, and it is hoped this will encourage more tennis players to join. HT are experimenting with an adult team subscription which works in the same way as junior squad membership. The annual cost is now only £45 above the old membership fee and includes all match fees. The only way this will work is if nearly all adult members join this way, and do not pay on a match-by-match basis. The cost, in terms of office admin time, of chasing unpaid match fees will make this experiment unviable if a significant number of team players chose not to get adult team membership. There is now a £40 annual cost to playing in the box leagues and ladder, which is £15 above the old membership fee and contributes to paying for the Spin App.

Using Xero as the accounting system, which is integrated with Openplay and Stripe has allowed HT to take the bookkeeping in-house. This saves money and provides timelier access to management accounts.

The Board intend for Hackney Tennis to become either a charity or a charitable incorporated organisation in the coming year. This will mean we do not have to pay corporation tax on any surplus, as well as get rid of any risk of having to pay higher business rates. This will require a General Meeting to approve whatever change we decide upon.

Staffing changes

HT coach Raquel returned to Spain under sad circumstances this year when her partner died, and Howard thanked her for all her hard work as both a great coach and excellent mini tennis co-ordinator. As a result, Simone John-Baptiste has joined as mini-tennis co-ordinator. Simone is doing a great job both as mini-tennis coordinator and as part of the coaching team for the older junior players.

Operations Manager of 5 years, Kara Day, returned to Sydney last month. Kara has been at the heart of Hackney Tennis, was a tireless and efficient manager, made a huge contribution in many aspects of the club, particularly over the last year when she made a huge contribution to our tender submission amongst other things and was a beacon of stability and brightness in the clubhouse. She will be missed by all and Howard wished her and her family all the best for their future in Australia.

Natalia Brebu was the most able candidate of over seventy applicants for the Operations Manager position and HT are very pleased to have employed her. Natalia was previously General Secretary of the Moldovan Tennis Federation and Chief Executive of the Moldovan National Tennis Centre. Natalia is settling in well and has already demonstrated great efficiency and ample initiative.

The most significant departure is going to be Christian Coombs who finishes as Director of Tennis this week after nearly twenty years at Hackney Tennis. The position Hackney Tennis is in today is largely down to Christian, firstly as Head Coach alongside Jan, and for the last few years as Director of Tennis. His influence has been enormous, having built up the performance programme into the most successful park-based programme in the country, having mentored over 80 coaches, having personally coached many of the players who have gone on to achieve great success at Hackney Tennis and beyond and generally having guided the club to the strong position it is in today. Christian was instrumental in our successful tender and he hands over Hackney Tennis not only in excellent stead but also with enormous potential. HT are very glad that Christian has agreed to continue coaching the performance squad, at least for next season. Howard concluded by thanking Christian for all he has done for HT.

Francesco Caselli then provided details on the recruitment process to find Christian's replacement. A job description was put together by the Board with the assistance from the LTA. Andrew Lewandowski from Middlesex LTA was involved throughout the process and helped look through CVs and sat in on the interview panel for two days. Forty-three applications were received that were filtered with phone conversations which lead to a shorter list of seven candidates who were brought in for a full interview with a panel of four board members. The interviews were run over two days and lasted an average of 90 minutes each. Two finalists were selected and brought in for a second interview of 90 minutes.

The successful applicant was James Mills who is currently the Tennis Manager at Cambridge Lawn Tennis. Along with his experience running a large and successful club, James is an LTA level 5 Master Club Coach and has a BA in Sport and Leisure Management. James presented an understanding of community tennis and a strong vision to reach deeper into the community. Francesco asked all members to welcome James.

Howard highlighted that James has a three-month notice period, so will not be able to start fully until the 10th March but will be advising in the interim period.

2. Ordinary Business

2.1. Consideration of the income and expenditure account and balance sheet to 31st March 2019

Howard presented and explained the accounts of HT to 31st March 2019.

HT had a surplus of £68,000 compared to last year, due to significant increases in programme income, anticipated cost savings as a result of system improvements and losing staff and then an inability to hire staff due to impending tender – council were concerned that increases TUPE exposure would affect competing bidders.

HT now has reserves of over £217,000. Howard suggested these funds could be maximised by getting them match funded when they are used for developing the facilities and programme.

Howard asked if there were any questions on the accounts.

Q1. How much was the auditors fee?

The auditors fee increased from £3,500 in 2018 to £4,790 in 2019 because of additional work involved in the audit. If HT were to become a charity or CIO the audit fee would be expected to increase by an additional £1,500, but would save us in risk and tax. There were no caveats in the auditor's report.

Q2. Bank charges have reduced by £2000, is there any way to reduce them further?

Howard highlighted that bank charges also includes gateway charges from Stripe, who provided us with a good deal because HT is a community organisation. Howard did not see much prospect in reducing these fees further.

Howard asked for approval of the accounts, the auditor's report and to appoint Knox Cropper as the future auditors. All three items were unanimously approved.

Approval of the 2018 AGM minutes was then requested and approved unanimously.

Report of Director of Tennis

Through Council funding, some of the HT Coaches were able to attend LTA courses and in return they provided ten weeks of coaching in local schools. Through this work HT has managed to get a couple of additional schools involved in the HT programme.

Competitions- the box league has improved a lot this year with the Spin App and there has been positive feedback from players.

HT was involved in hosting the LTA fed cup legacy in April which enabled HT to send coaches into schools to deliver free taster sessions and provide tennis equipment kit bags. Some of the children were invited to a meeting with the GB fed cup team, which was an incredible experience for the youngsters.

HT continued to receive performance funding support from Middlesex LTA that assists HT's county, regional and national players. The adult programme has grown, and two new woman's session have been introduced.

A new adult team membership has been introduced to help cover the match fees and improve administration.

Coach updates- three HT coaches have left. There have been a number of new assistant coaches who have joined, and Simone John-Baptiste has stepped in to take on the role of mini tennis co-ordinator.

2.3 Election of members of the Board of Directors

Howard thanked David Smith and George Howe who both stood down as directors this year.

Howard outlined that nominations were invited by 6pm on 5 December and 4 nominations were received. One was from Alison Hunter, who stood down as a director as dictated by the Articles and is re-standing.

Q. What percentage of the Board must stand down each year and is it the longest serving that must stand down?

It was confirmed that one third of the Board must stand down each year and that as one of the longest standing Board members Alison had stood down.

The nominees introduced themselves:

Justine Hembury

Involved in Hackney Tennis for thirteen years with her three boys who have gone through the HT coaching programme. Justine mentioned that she plays regularly too and is passionate about community tennis. As a former HT employee Justine commented that she has a good working knowledge of the organisation.

Alison Hunter

Alison's daughter went through the HT performance programme and her son plays regularly. Alison has been an active board member and has legal and personnel skills that are of use to HT. Alison said that following the tender process she would like to help HT continue to develop.

Lisa Watch

Recently stated playing tennis at HT and has two young children who also play. As the Head of External Affairs at Sport England, Lisa is responsible for policy and getting people involved in sport and physical activity. Lisa's role involves building relationships at a national and governmental level. Lisa felt she would bring to the Board, her passion to engage people to sport, particularly groups that are underrepresented in sports.

Cristian Winder

Cristian's sons are involved in the coaching programme and has seen first-hand the development at HT over the last ten years. Currently working for National Citizens Service and previously worked for the LTA for some years as manager for Essex tennis and responsible for the development of over 100 clubs. Worked for the Local Tennis Leagues and at Westway as part of the M1 Active Leisure Group, marketing their sports. Westway's schools and disability programmes were very successful and Cristian felt that this knowledge could be used positively at HT.

Questions

Michael Coombs- clarified that schools work has been going on at HT since its inception. Michael advised that professional organisations are now delivering sport in schools which could make future access to schools more difficult.

For HT to counter these difficulties Lisa Watch suggested investigating dedicated funds to help get women and children involved in sport.

Q. What do the Board think of the social media presence of Hackney Tennis?

Alison Hunter said that this is an area that HT needs to improve, and the newly appointed candidates will be asked to develop this.

Howard highlighted that the HT management team has been under resourced for some years, but the appointment of an assistant operations manager will provide future scope in this area.

Christian Winder mentioned that he had managed the social media at Westway, and stressed the importance of doing it well, which requires a great deal of time and resources.

A ballot was held, and Cristian Winder, Alison Hunter and Lisa Watch were successfully voted onto the Board.

3 AOB

Howard asked if there was any other business.

Q. Why do players have to wait until 12 midnight for the new day of court bookings to open?

Christian Coombs responded that this would be changed.

Joshua Whitehead- Where is the HT plan for padel tennis?

This would be passed on to the new MD

Q. What is going to happen to the fences at Clissold that are in a state of disrepair?

Howard said that the Council have recognised that the fences need repair at a variety of HT sites. It is hoped that more rigid fencing will be installed at Clissold, but it is the Council who are responsible for this and are in control of timing.

Q. As a team and social player, new balls are only provided every three weeks can these be replaced each week?

Christian Coombs responded that this had already been changed to every two weeks. Only team training has balls more frequently. Christian also highlighted the importance of controlling costs.

Q. Can we have the name of who to contact at the Council if there are complaints or can it be put up on the HT website?

The Board did not think this would be appropriate.

Q. Annual club tournament was not well supported this year can anything be done?

Howard recognised that the format needs to be looked at to try and engage more people and cited Highbury's system as a possible case study to investigate.

Phil Semper said that the men's 40+ club champs had excellent support.

The meeting was then closed.