



HACKNEY TENNIS 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON MONDAY 20th NOVEMBER 2023 7:00PM. THE MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY USING ZOOM.

Present

Directors: Howard Bennett (Chair), Lisa Watch, Roger Waite, David Pagliaro, Cristian Winder

Management: James Mills, Luke Barker, Natalia Brebu

Members in attendance: Eloy Mora Vargas, Philip Semper, Ivan Bennett, Josh Whitehead, Roger Waite, Yvonne Benette

Apologies for Absence: Paul Harrison, Maurine Lewin, David Harrison.

Welcome

Howard Bennett (Chair) welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining the meeting.

Howard noted that there would be a poll at the end of the meeting to determine with next year's AGM would be in person or virtual.

Ordinary Business

Approval of the 2022 AGM Minutes

Howard asked if there were any questions on the 2022 AGM minutes and as there was none, a poll was conducted, and the 2022 AGM minutes were approved.

Howard said that the year had been less eventful than the previous, and the management team were continuing to make good progress. Howard introduced HT's new Head Coach Luke Barker and commented on the energy and has brought to the programme, in particular the schools and disability programme. Howard thanked James, Natalia and the whole team for their work during the year.

Howard handed over to James Mills (Managing Director) who provided some instructions to members on Zoom procedures and outlined the Zoom polling feature that would be used to cast votes during the meeting.

Howard highlighted that there would be a motion to change Hackney Tennis's articles which would require 75% positive votes to be carried and noted that any abstentions would count as negative votes.

Approval of the 2022 AGM Minutes

Howard asked if there were any questions on the 2022 AGM minutes and as there was none, a poll was conducted, and the 2022 AGM minutes were approved.

Consideration of the Report of the Directors and Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Howard outlined the key highlights from the accounts.

Net income of unrestricted funds of £39k vs £88k in 2021. The decline can be attributed to the tailing off from the COVID lockdown surge and reduced court rental at Spring Hill and Millfields. There has been a normalisation but good growth is expected as the programme grows.

Unrestricted Reserves: £416k vs £355k, the change reflects £39k of unrestricted income and £21k transfer from Restricted to Unrestricted Funds (£21k release of funds for work on shop)

Our reserves have risen and are further above the maximum range set in the Reserves Policy of £300k. Our intention is to use these reserves to develop facilities and the programme. However, there are constraints and processes, which are mainly binding on the Council rather than us, and there is the issue of the end of our agreement to manage tennis in Hackney, which currently terminates at the end of next September. We need the surety of tenure to be able to commit to a project and be confident that we can complete it during the term of our agreement. The relatively quick project we initially had in mind, had been agreed in principle by the Council and involved renovating half of the old cricket changing rooms by the London Fields courts as a base and store for our coach based there. This has been derailed by the Council's larger project to add an instruction pool at London Fields Lido, which we have a members question to address later.

Hackney Downs, Millfields and Spring Hill courts all require re-surfacing.

The Council is very constrained in terms of capital budgets and does not have resources available to carry out this work.

We have proposed that the Council extend the agreement for 2 years and that this will then enable HT to use part of its reserves (£75k) to contribute towards the required work. We believe the Council has a restricted funding pot which means they may be able to contribute a similar amount and we will try to raise the other third from a third-party funder.

Howard concluded that the reserves held will be spent on improving facilities.

Managing Director's Report

It has been an extremely busy year for Hackney Tennis with continued high demand for tennis carrying through 2021 & 2022. The Hackney Tennis team of coaches, operations staff and volunteers have worked well as a team to meet this demand and provide HT players with lots of tennis opportunities.

HT's coaching team has successfully delivered our community tennis coaching programme, which comprises of over 90 group coaching classes each week during term time and an additional 10 weeks of junior holiday camps. The coaching programme has involved over 2500 players of all ages and abilities and sessions have been well subscribed and well received, which is thanks to the success of our coaching team.

HT's disability tennis programme at Stormont House School headed up by HT coach Allan Bairstow has continued to flourish and the programme's success resulted in the school being awarded the Lawn Tennis Association Middlesex School of the Year award.

We have expanded the free parent-and-child sessions, which now run at three sites (Clissold Park, London Fields, and Hackney Downs), which provide free court time and tennis coaching to parents and their children. The sessions have been an enormous success and can currently accommodate 64 players each week.

A volunteer project was established that provided local community members with in-house training and funding to apply for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. This programme will enable suitable volunteers to assist Hackney Tennis's coaching team with school and community sessions.

School links have been re-established and Hackney Tennis has delivered 11 hours per week of coaching to Hackney schools during term time providing over 175+ school children with tennis coaching either onsite at their school or at tennis courts within Hackney's parks. We have recently piloted a scheme to provide primary school children who receive free school meals with free places on our holiday tennis camps and this programme will be put in place in 2023.

HT's Junior Performance Programme continues to provide a high-quality performance pathway for players aged 4yrs-18yrs. The performance team suggested we bring in a fitness trainer and we found fitness coach Don Allen who has been an excellent addition to our academy and squad sessions.

There have been some excellent results from HT's players and below are some highlights:

Shanice Weekes- Accepted to American Uni Wayne State University in Detroit

Marucs Weekes- played in his first ITF event

Amani and Alyia Osman- recently played in their first Tennis Europe event in Greece

James thanked HT's coaches for their commitment and work on court throughout the year.

Operations

During the financial year, Hackney Tennis has managed over 45,000 tennis court bookings made by over 7000 members of the public. HT's new website was launched this year and provided a fresh new look that has received good feedback from our players. Operations Manager Natalia Brebu and our team of Ops assistants have done a sterling job keeping the systems running in the background. The recent move to the ClubSpark booking system has gone pretty smoothly and the Operations team have made that possible. A big thank you to Natalia and our Ops team for all their hard work and flexibility this year.

Facilities

Clissold Park's new tennis fencing was completed in March 2022, and the new fencing is higher, more robust and provides a significant improvement to the site. Thanks to Hackney Council for funding these works.

Court maintenance company ETC carried out the annual jet washing and moss spraying of the courts effectively and has provided an end of year report on the condition of all of HT's courts. ETC identified several courts that need refurbishment, and HT will work with LBH in early 2023 to book these works in.

Hackney Tennis won a grant from the council for £25,000 to refurbish Hackney Tennis's community tennis shop. Works have started and the new shop will be relaunched in Spring 2023 and will offer

racket re-stringing services, racket demos and equipment sales. The plan is to utilise the shop to create more links with the local community through training and volunteering opportunities.

Competitions

HT fielded 10 Summer league teams and 16 summer National League teams provided lots of competitive opportunities to HT's players and 9 HT teams managed to win their divisions. A huge thank you to all our adult & junior team captains who have put in so much effort and time over the year.

School competitions have also been run including a Middlesex Inclusive Team Challenge competition at Stormont House School and starter events at Sir Thomas Abney School for yr 5 & 6 students.

HT juniors represented Hackney at the London Youth Games competition.

We held the LTA's 14U Play your way to Wimbledon event- county finals Amani and Aliyah reached the quarter finals Kenzo reached the semifinals.

Spin Tennis App Singles league grew to 387 players in the summer (72% increase from 225 in 2021)

New matchplay sessions have been organised by Gino.

The adult and junior Club Championships had 15 events and entries grew this year compared to last. Professional LTA umpires were again invited to help oversee the finals day and make it more of an occasion. Thanks to everyone who took part across all the events.

James thanked HT's team for the successful year which has seen considerable progress and growth made. James thanked the Board for their support, advice, and assistance throughout the year. James thanked Howard for all his time and patience as Chair.

Election of Trustees

Howard noted that Trustee Kate Garvey stepped down in June and thanked Kate for her contribution. On third of the Trustees in to step down each year and Howard as the longest serving member was standing down and seeking re-election. Howard said that in line with the articles, that this would be his third and last term on the board, Howard stated he felt this was a good policy that ensured new ideas and perspectives on the board. Howard said he would like to complete a third term and explained that he has a lot of knowledge and experience about what it required at Hackney Tennis and has developed some good relationships with key stakeholders, which will be important when trying to develop HT's facilities.

Howard introduced trustee nominee Roger Waite who is a parent of two HT junior players and works as a charity lawyer.

Roger gave an outline of his involvement with HT and explained his interest in looking at the governance of HT and his professional background for the last ten years as a specialist charity and philanthropy lawyer working for some of the UK's largest charities including Cancer Research UK, British Red Cross, and sporting charities like the British Olympic Foundation. Roger said he feels he will bring relevant knowledge to HT as it is finding its feet as a charity and would be delighted to join the board.

Howard asked if there were any questions, there were none. James ran the poll to elect Howard who was re-elected and then the poll to elect Roger who was voted onto the board.

Appointment of Knox Cropper as auditors for the current financial year

Howard said the board were happy with the auditors' work during the year and they have extensive experience working with charities. The poll was run to re-appoint the auditors and this was approved.

Other Business

Phil Semper asked for clarification on how players get selected for competitions. James asked which competitions Phil was thinking of. Phil said that several men who regularly attend men's training do not get invited to take part in adult league matches while others who are not as committed to HT are selected.

David Pagliaro asked James to broaden his response and explain more generally who gets to train with the teams and how.

James outlined that HT has three men's teams in the summer and two women's teams. There is huge demand for league tennis and thought needs to be given to how best to manage three men's teams when there are so many HT users. With regards to having full transparency on selection for teams James said that he would like to sit down with Phil and look at all those who are playing and work with the captains to decide if procedures and policy need to change to ensure the fairest system possible. James pointed out that there are a lot of positives about the HT teams and that they provide a lot of players with competitive opportunities.

Phil said all team captains should be involved in any discussions, and James agreed.

James said that team trials were run this year, and this would be repeated to help provide access routes for players new to the teams.

Howard read out a question from Fatemeh Beyad given in advance on the meeting, 'I was very disappointed that you have removed free courts before 10am on weekdays and 9am on weekends, was this done in consultation with LBH and LTA? I did not see any consultation with members, users, or Hackney residents. The only thing I have seen are minutes noting this change and that Howard felt that people just played in the mornings so they could go to work after - again was this just his experience or a wider consultation? Howard of course can get free courts as an Islington resident who is over 60 at Highbury Fields so perhaps it's not such an issue for him. I feel that given you are a monopoly provider, making a surplus, with reserves above your maximum level it is hard to justify and simply not fair!

Howard said he is not over 60 and explained that all increases to HT court fees are discussed and agreed by LBH, the LTA is not involved in court fee discussions.

The early morning fee was introduced to tackle the issue of players booking courts and then not turning up to use them. HT received regular complaints from players who could not book courts but were cycling past to see them unused. A three-month trial period was implemented, and HT players were asked to provide feedback on the new morning charge.

The plan is to use all additional revenue from early-morning courts, to establish additional HT community programmes specifically for disadvantaged members of the community. The thought behind this is that it would be more targeted, measurable, and hopefully have better outcomes than the free courts before 9/10am scheme.

James added that we had asked members to give feedback during the three-month trial and three players had written back to express their disappointment.

Howard read out another request from Fatemeh that the pavilion be opened to the local community as a warm space, and explained this would be reviewed by the Trustees at the next board meeting.

Howard thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.