

RYE LAWN TENNIS CLUB

Minutes of the 90th Annual General Meeting of Rye Lawn Tennis Club

Held at the Clubhouse, Rye at 6.30pm on Saturday 11th December 2021

Chris Gorringe, President, welcomed everybody, including 5 members on Zoom - and especially new members - to the AGM. There were 26 members in attendance.

1. THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 30th NOVEMBER 2019 and THE REPORTS DISTRIBUTED TO MEMBERS IN DECEMBER 2020 were taken as read and agreed as a correct and proper record.
2. In the unavoidable absence of Jonathan Jempson, Chris Gorringe read the CHAIRMAN'S REPORT below on his behalf ...

Firstly, my sincere apologies for absence. I purposely arranged some medical treatment for next Tuesday so I could be here today only to discover that I must self-isolate for the three days beforehand.

Generally, the last year has witnessed an increased demand for our facilities post-Covid largely as a result of increased working from home, flexible working arrangements and the migration of people out of London into the country. So we've had a busy year and David will explain the financial impact in his report.

We must thank in particular Adam, our groundsman, for the marvellous grass courts (not forgetting Freddie's big input) and for Adam's other work generally, Peter Gore for helping the club adhere to the government's Covid guidelines and Ewan Hopkins for his enormous help with the padel section and for agreeing to serve on the Board of the Rother Meads Tennis & Games Club Ltd, where his presence has been very positive.

Every year we ask two of our Executive Committee members to stand down and offer themselves for re-election or not depending on their wishes. This year Cathy Bingham who, amongst other things, has run the Junior Tournament for 30 years and Fran Sharp, who has run her Ladies Doubles Tournament for 16 years and helped with lots of other things including the raffle during the Invitation Tournament, have both resigned from the committee to make way for new blood. We owe them both a lot of thanks for their work and support over many years. I should also thank Jeannie Hawkes, who has assisted Cathy over many years.*

Also our coaches, Frances Candy and Richard Pratt, will henceforth only serve on the tennis sub-committee; their constructive assistance whilst on the Exec Com has been much appreciated. We have one new nomination for the Exec Committee in the form of Amanda Hoffman who brings plenty of business experience and children with her. Is everyone happy with this?*

We are pleased that Peter Box is now the squash representative on the Exec Committee. Squash is the one sport in which we would dearly love to see a recovery in terms of membership as the courts are under-used. If anyone has any ideas as to how we might achieve this, I'm sure Peter and I would be pleased to hear from them.

However, I suspect the elephant in the room is that at peak times we do not have enough hard tennis courts, particularly in the winter months, and I'm very aware that we keep coming up with excuses for the delays.

Unfortunately, at the present time, the Rother Planning Department is in disarray with a shortage of staff, Covid etc, which means that all planning apps are taking a lot longer than they should. Indeed, I know of one architect who is refusing to take on any more work in this area because of the cost of the delays.

As regards the indoor courts, we submitted a request on 05.10.21 that we be allowed to erect a farm-barn type building to house the courts which would be affordable and more likely to be passed by our treasurer, but the principal planning officer rejected this idea. However, on the advice of our planning consultant we have submitted a reply disputing her initial response and explaining why we think she should re-consider and asking for the opportunity to engage in a constructive discussion.

The alternative to indoor courts is outdoor courts, if we felt the indoor court scenario were no longer viable, and we are working on this too. If we were to apply for three outdoor courts in the new field, it would probably take up to a year to get planning and the RPD would possibly not be keen on floodlights in this area because of extra light pollution.

So what would be very helpful for the club would be to find a member or two with experience of planning who might be able to help us push things along a bit more quickly. Any volunteers or suggestions please? This is perhaps the key frustration at the moment, so if members could please ask around that would be much appreciated.

There is some good news in that we now have the requisite planning permission for an extra padel court and we aim to get moving with this in the spring of 2022. And as soon as is practicable, we will refurbish the two astro courts whilst recognising that we cannot take them out of commission until we have more courts, or in the summer.***

Next year, as most of you will know, is the hundredth year since the first Invitation tournament was held on our courts in 1922 so we are planning two main centenary events in the form of a members' day and a junior open day, as well as one or two other things to try to make 2022 a very special year for our club.

The Members' Day is planned for Saturday 18th June when there will be a day of sport followed by a dinner and celebration in a marquee in the evening. You will be pleased to learn that this is a special event for members and it is not intended to use it for fund-raising purposes!

The Junior/General Open day will be later in the season, on Tuesday 23rd August, when Tim Henman and Dan Bloxham, the pro from the All England LTC, have agreed to join us, which will give the event a real shot in the arm.

* Chris presented a silver salver to Cathy. In Fran's absence, hers was put to one side to give to her later.

** Amanda Hoffman was duly elected to the Executive Committee.

*** Chris confirmed that it had been decided at the Board Meeting which had just taken place that the astro courts would be replaced next year with artificial clay as soon as possible after the grass courts are opened.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

David pointed out that the club operates through Rother Meads Tennis & Games Club Ltd and circulated accounts for the year ending 31st March 2021 and graphs. This had been a difficult year due to Covid. Subscriptions nevertheless held up and the club benefited from a reduction in rates and a subsidy from Rother DC, but income from other sources was much reduced. Donations were the largest source of income for the year, in particular two very generous donations - restricted to capital projects - to the value of £100,000. The financial position of the club was therefore very strong, but he emphasised that this was thanks to donations and that ideally more members generating more income were required to meet the club's fixed costs. He thanked Sharon Massey for all the work she does for the club.

Questions to the Treasurer from the Floor

Christopher Strangeways asked where the proceeds from Jonathan's opera evenings were accounted for. David said these are entered under Fundraising.

John Newton asked about the tax position of the club. David said tax is only payable on investment income including rent from the flats.

John also asked if there was any pressure time-wise to spend the donated reserves and David responded that, as a CASC, there wasn't.

4. AOB

Sally Watson asked for more encouragement of younger players and requested higher priority be given to junior court time. Chris said her request would be noted and considered.

Malcolm Wallace asked if the £1 coin machines for lights could be replaced by card machines. Jonathan, via Zoom, said this was on the agenda for the next executive committee meeting in January.

Christopher Strangeways thanked Jonathan on behalf of members for his huge contribution to the club.

5. THANKS

The President also thanked the Chairman as well as those who organised events during the past year and all who gave their time so generously to the club.