

Minutes of Ipswich Sports Club AGM held on Thursday, 25th June 2015

Present: (see appendix at end of these minutes)

Apologies: Brenda Cowley, Alan House, Andy Iles, Alex Livingstone, Shyam Patel, Geoff Sheldrake, Mark Stallybrass and Julie Stockdale.

1. Welcome, introduction to the meeting and apologies for absence

The President Maggie Lipscombe (Mli) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. She noted that despite much local competition, membership of the club overall is continuing to increase slowly and that the club should be pleased that with the promotional work done by Andy Yorke (AY) and his team we continue to attract new members to all sections. However, retention of members is important and the club must give members value for money by offering and encouraging participation in section and social activities. She commented that with a large proportion of junior members we need to increase adult, family and corporate memberships.

Overall as shown in the club accounts the financial position over the financial year has shown a significant improvement from the start of the year. Also the club continues to be busy with social functions and the appointment of Darius and Gill with their excellent menus and value for money has contributed to a marked increase in the bar usage. She thanked them for their commitment. She went on to thank on behalf of the Club AY and his efficient office staff and the bar team for their efforts and also the members of the Council, Executive and section committees who willingly give of their time to ensure that the needs of members are met. Unfortunately it does not get any easier to find volunteers and she thanked those who do volunteer for various activities around the grounds and premises and encourage others to step forward when requests for help go out by email.

On a sad note paid tribute to two long-standing members Peter Robinson and Bob Fairburn who passed away during the last 12 months.

Mli commented on the display in the room of possible developments at the club and the Council's wish for members to consider these plans and to give feedback which will be vital in the club making decisions going forward. And finally she thanked Adrian Howell who is standing down from the Council for his invaluable input to Council discussions.

2. Minutes and matters arising from the minutes of the last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed as circulated with no amendments sought. There were no matters arising raised.

3. Chairman's report

The Chairman, Vanessa Penn (VP) summarised her report which had been set out in the Report and Statements previously circulated to members. She referred to the progress in the last two years since she became chairman and said this was a testament to the work of the Club General Manager and his team and the voluntary support from the Executive, Council and section committees. In respect of club finances the accounts show a turnaround from a deficit in 2013 of £36k to a surplus of £24k in 2014. Continued increase in function and social activity had shown a big improvement of nearly £20k from 2013 and the club is an immeasurably better position now than 12 months before.

She noted that while membership numbers overall had held it was proving more difficult to attract new members with the Club's current facilities and that Sport England statistics show a downward trend in sports but an upward swing in health and fitness in Gym and Studio classes and this is reflected in our own dramatic revenue and membership increase in the Club's fitness section over the last 5 years.

She commented that that it is important that the Council obtains member feedback about the future growth of the club and the facilities as on display at this meeting room. The club has formulated a 3/5 year plan which subject to funding will enhance facilities and provide members with an all round sporting and leisure package including a natural diversification in the club's sports and fitness activities. She referred to new activities already being undertaken including racketball, cardio tennis, squasheercise, spinning, quality studio programmes and personal and group coaching.

VP described the opportunities on the club's doorstep with the forthcoming 'New Garden Suburb' development in North Ipswich and how a new large participation sport such as swimming would enhance the Club's leisure offer and how a gym/swim package could attract new members and keep the club ahead of potential competition in North Ipswich and affect the Club's sustainability

She closed her report by thanking our corporate sponsors (whose support is key to the club which remains interested in any other member led businesses who might similarly want to lend their support), encouraging anyone interested in joining club committees as we can never have too many volunteers and congratulating those players and their coaches who continue to maintain the Club's high performance programmes.

4. Treasurer's report and financial statements for 2014

Mark Ledger (ML) presented the accounts for the last financial year to the meeting. He assumed everyone had read the report incorporated within the accounts so summarised them by saying that the Club had turned a deficit of £36,000 to a surplus of £24,400 in 2014. ML said that the Club would have been in a serious financial state if the turnaround had not occurred and was a result of hard work by all council members and sections taking a view of what is best for the Club. Increase from bar revenue and margin had been a large contributor to this turnaround which was in large part due to the success of the catering side.

ML said that there was no plan to increase then headline membership fees although some adjustments to some of the lower value packages might be made. The budget for 2015 shows a similar expectation to 2014 and current results reflect that an end of year surplus expected to be between £25,000 to £30,000. Cash reserves are accumulating gradually as a result of these surpluses but the Club is still vulnerable to something significant going wrong.

Mark Wrinch asked if all membership subscriptions were shown in one total or separated by section. ML replied that all membership subs show in the general Income and Expenditure account. Kevin Brazier asked if a section generated its own income on particular events whether it is able to spend it as it saw fit? ML responded that as a general rule this was ok but decisions always needed to be reviewed by the Executive and Council to take into consideration the overall Club position.

Tony Cookson then formally proposed that the Treasurer's report and financial statements be adopted: this was seconded by Mark and members voted unanimously in favour.

5. Election of President and Council Officers for 2015/2016 and any additional Honorary

Vice President/s

Keith Palmer (KP) confirmed that Maggie Lipscombe had been duly proposed and seconded as Club President and she was then duly elected by a show of hands in support

Similarly the following were confirmed as having been duly proposed and seconded and with no other persons standing for those positions were duly elected by show of hands in their respective positions:

Chairman – Vanessa Penn

Vice Chairman – Tony Cookson

Secretary – Keith Palmer

Treasurer – Mark Ledger

3 candidates had been duly proposed and seconded for the remaining two Council positions available to be filled. After a secret ballot Karen Watling and Claire Miller (nee Gould) were duly elected. Later, however, there was an indication generally from members present in the meeting that the Council should consider co-opting Rob Butler onto the Council and the Chairman indicated that this would accordingly be considered at the next meeting of the Council meeting.

There was one nomination from the Council for Honorary Vice President - Paul Sheldrake, who had served the Club for many years with a special and longstanding interest in the tennis section where he had served as tennis chairman for many of years. His nomination was duly supported by the meeting by a show of hands.

6. Business matters of importance to the AGM

(1) Members' approval for the Club to proceed with the proposed Air Dome over tennis courts 4-6 with associated finance

Graham Fretwell (GF) as Tennis Chairman introduced this subject. Members had before them a brief summary paper explaining that the strategy for the Club and the new blueprint for the LTA is to get more people playing tennis. The Club is adopting a new focus aimed at getting members of all age groups regularly playing tennis partly through a new exciting Club programme for all and more indoor playing facilities to maintain all year round activity. Furthermore there is a time limit on the Club's planning permission in relation to the erection of an air dome which needed to be complied with. One of the goals will be to reduce the amount of coaching in the indoor centre thereby increasing the availability of those courts for members and to use the air dome facility more for coaching and other organised tennis activities.

The total costs for resurfacing courts 4-6 and the erection of an air dome with ancillary equipment is calculated to be £135,000 of which the Club has already spent £25,000 on the resurfacing of courts 4-6. The balance of £110,000 was hoped to be raised by a 10 years interest free LTA 50% Easy Access loan of £55,000, a 5 years interest free Suffolk LTA loan of £25,000, a contribution from the Club's Tennis Centre Light Monies of £20,000 and the balance of £10,000, if needed, from members' loans. It was hoped that the total cost could eventually come out at less than £110,000. The Club was not yet assured of the success of the loan applications but remained confident that they would be offered on terms acceptable to the Club.

To meet the repayments it was proposed to recruit a Tennis Manager who will focus on

growing the tennis budget surplus by concentrating on areas such as camps, group and squad coaching, tournaments, air dome hire to 3rd parties, coaches court hire and special events. A cautious estimation was that the current tennis section surplus of an estimated £29,000 for 2015 would increase to £45,000 in 2016 although, hopefully, rather higher than that.

Presently the hire of the 3 courts in the indoor centre and outdoor courts raises c£16,000pa. The new indoor facilities will allow for new winter court hire revenue also from outside bodies including schools, disability and inclusive and local clubs so that the expected annual income from court hire is anticipated increase to c£20 -£21,000pa. It was also felt that with the stimulus of enhanced indoor tennis facilities and improved programme for members a conservative view was that membership numbers could increase by 25-30 split between seniors and juniors.

A number of questions were raised:

- This proposal involves a substantial sum of money. Will it impact on other sections wanting to invest in their activities? ML indicated that he did not think it would affect other projects.
- What market research had been undertaken to evaluate other air domes and income streams? GF said visits/enquiries had been made at Stowmarket and Frinton tennis clubs and also at a college at Bawdsey where a two court air dome provided by Covair was erected only recently.
- Is this facility aimed at increasing junior membership? GF responded that was not really the case. It was more aimed at younger and older adults, parents and families – increase in the number of memberships was more the goal.
- With regard to revenue streams, who decides when a section retains the revenue it generates? ML explained we are a single club and decisions on expenditure are normally a matter for the Executive and finally the Council.
- What is the lifespan of the air dome? GF stated that the ring beam around the courts should about 20-30 years and the air dome ‘skin’ about 7-10 years. Its current replacement cost is c£17,000.

The following resolution was then put to the meeting:

‘This meeting approves the proposed expenditure of approximately £110,000 on the tennis Air Dome project for hard courts 4-6 with associated borrowings of c£80 - £100,000 subject to the approval of the Council and/or the Executive Committee of a revised business plan’

By a show of hands the meeting voted unanimously in favour.

(2) Discussion about possible Club projects in the longer term

VP introduced a presentation entitled ‘Council members vision for the future of the Club’. It was premised on the following:

- The principal sports of the club are not able alone to generate sufficient membership income to support the Club as currently structured
- There has been movement towards more juniors and fewer adult members
- Growth of fitness memberships over last 5 years from 285 to 510, mostly adults
- Surplus from bar and functions has grown from £6,000 to £22,000 in recent years leading to the conclusion that a stronger focus on fitness and functions is required in order to support the Club’s principal sports.

VP, supported by AY on some of the membership details, presented slides showing that membership numbers over the last 3 years are marginally down or up for sections, except

for significant increase in fitness and a 30 member decline in hockey. Bar revenue and functions are significantly up and since 2008 Club borrowings have been reduced from over £500,000 to under £200,000.

She then went through a number of slides considering the following investment possibilities:

- Function room expansion from 60 – 100 ‘sit down’ guests. Current cost build estimated at £130,000
- Air Dome, which had been discussed at length earlier at the AGM
- Resurface of Tuddenham Road hockey pitch and refurbishment of the club house there. Total cost estimated at £650,000 and dependent upon grants from Sport England and England Hockey. The Club may have to contribute up to £250,000 from sale proceeds (see later) for this proposal to proceed. Claire Webb explained how critical this proposal was for the hockey section
- Fitness needs to expand capacity of Studio from 16 to 32 persons perhaps in the short term by use of a temporary building
- Indoor swimming and leisure pool with 1st floor gym and studio dependent on the sale of Henley Road hockey pitch. VP emphasised that this proposal is seen as being critical of the survival of ISC in the longer term
- Redevelopment of the under used Henley Road hockey pitch for housing. Potentially a one-off opportunity to realise this site’s potential development value. To undertake the required application for planning permission likely to cost c £55,000. Relatively benign conditions at present. Possibly only a 5 year window of opportunity but a number of hurdles to be overcome. Hopefully PP could be obtained by end of 2016. VP expressed the view that with the proposed North Ipswich housing development there was a risk of another organisation setting up in competition but equally there was the potential to increase club membership by 500 @ £65pm.

If the Club opts to do nothing then without investment it risks a gentle decline in membership numbers with the obvious implications for its future financial viability.

Questions raised included:

- How many members who currently are not full members might change? VP indicated that feedback suggests that a good number would do so. With a pool facility an extra 25/30 car spaces will be needed
- Emphasised that members regard the Club is essentially a sports club and it should not become dominated by swimming and fitness
- Will the Club have to provide an alternative pitch if the HR pitch is sold. VP indicated that was not thought to be the case but Club may have to ‘match fund’ to the tune of £250,000 any grants for Tuddenham Road. At present, however, the relevant Sport England playing field strategy is not completed, an essential requirement before any progress can be made.
- What access will there be to the housing on the HR pitch? VP confirmed that this will be via Henley Road as at present although road might have to be widened.

7. Appointment of Club auditors

It was proposed by ML and seconded by GF to continue with GMS Francis Clarkes accountants who were then re-elected.

Any other business acceptable to the Chairman

KP mentioned that the Club was having to review its current structure and income streams in the light of changes to the new rules applicable to Community Amateur Sports Clubs which the Club must satisfy by April 2016. Also the Council had started to investigate whether the Club could become an incorporated company, perhaps limited by guarantee. It is being increasingly suggested by different national sports bodies that this be considered by member clubs.

He also asked if any member was prepared to act as Minute Secretary for Council meetings to please contact him.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm

Appendix - Attendees

Vanessa Penn, Tony Cookson, Keith Palmer, Mark Ledger, Rob Butler, Kev Brazier, Dick Partridge, Phil Watts, Peter Arnot, Julie Arnot, Shirley Fairburn, Jo Howell, Karen Watling, Mike Watling, Pippa Sheldrake, Claire Webb, Rachel Webb, Roger Garrod, Chris Bird, Sylvia Khan, Kristian Day, Frank Turmel, Karen Turmel, Claire Miller, Roisin Anderson-Hurst, Sarah Logan, Alice Youngman, Minal Patel, Constance Bedingfield, Wendy Palmer, Mariette Rix, Mark Wrinch, Clive Johnstone, Emma Sheldrake, Paul Sheldrake, Sue Stenson, Helen Hendry, Richard Wrinch, Kat Blake, Andy Swindin, Allison Glading, Neil Cockshaw, Maggie Fairhead, Mandy Hearne, Damian Hearne, Andrew Cutting, Tom Wheaton, John Hauxwell, Geoff Crank, Graham Fretwell, Neville Reeder, Fiona Lane, Rob Marsh-Feiley, Alistair Livingstone, Dave Howell, Adrian Howell, Anthony Harper, Emily Ison, Mike Muncaster, Hugo Sacker, Mary Sacker, Sue Whiting, Vanessa Allen, Pascale Cadier, Andy Yorke, James Biancu