**Annual General Meeting Minutes**

**Date: 25th August 2020**

**Venue:** Warlingham Sports Club, Church Lane, Warlingham, CR6 9PR

**Attenders**

Rod Gemmell, Sean Doyle, Michael Steer, Aaron Holmes, Rick Roberts, Paul Webber, Graham Norton, Paul Masters, Chris Holliman, Jason Hutchings, Andrew Thorpe, Matthew Smith, Bryan Foss, Eric Stevenson, Mark Fuller, Awtar Jandu, David Verlander, Robert Stevenson, Charlie Toogood, Gill Millman, Gerry Murphy, Kunal Nagpal, Duncan Morris, John Smith, Paul Bigwood, Paul Webb, Debbie Hutchings

**Apologies Received From:-**

Chris Canham, Nick Coole, John Mottram, Michael Roberts, Dick Waite, Pooky and Tom Hesmondlagh, Saurabh Agurwal, Ron Terry

Rod Gemmell as current Chairperson opened the meeting and officially closed nominations for the vacant committee posts.

**Minutes from Last Meeting** The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true representation and a copy signed by RG.

**Matters Arising**  At the last AGM a question had been asked by Michael Steer about the subsidence on Court 1. This has now been resolved- the cracks have been pinned, trees removed and court re-plastered.

A question also came from the last AGM about compensation for the period of closure caused by the fire (Matthew Smith). Players were given 6 weeks with no booking fees which the committee felt the fairest way to compensate and thereby benefit those that used the club the most.

Michael Steer also asked a question about upgrading the water fountain and installing lockers at last year’s AGM. The water fountain was upgraded to one with a cooler and after much discussion at Committee meetings it was agreed that lockers would be impractical for numerous reasons.

Jason Hutchings asked a question at the last AGM about installation of a new fire alarm. A modern alarm has now been installed which auto-dials Jon Rolfe and other Sports Club personnel in the event of an activation.

**Chairman’s Report**

Rod commented that it has been an interesting nine years.

First in 2013 the club was modernised with a Sport England grant and then in 2019 we were struck by fire.

Among the improvements we did last year after the fire was to increase the capacity of the hot water system, and completely redecorate all areas outside the changing rooms. The club was fully rewired bringing it up to present day safety standards and we put in a modern fire alarm system.

We reopened the club just in time to have the best racketball players in England, Daryl Selby, Tim Vale, Deon Saffery and Loren Selby come and exhibit themselves with some stunning competition of both singles and doubles play. All eight of those who came to watch thorough enjoying the evening ending in these stars coming over for a drink and a chat in the bar.

Then on the 23rd March life changed for us all. We had to close the club and only reopened in a limited form a month ago today. In a nice twist when Rod came to close the club in March playing on court were Nick Triggle and Nasrat Kamal. I let them finish their game but promise to turn the lights off as they leave. A month ago he came up to open the club and the he first on court was Nick Triggle and Saurabh Agarwal. Last off, first on, Nick.

Rod commented that during his nine years as Chairperson he has been enthusiastically supported by a great team of members both on the committee and around the club and he expressed his sincere thanks to all for their time and effort in helping to build what is the best most friendly club around.

Rod went on to say that he has loved being Chairperson and enjoyed the challenges ….and there have been a few ….and he enjoyed meeting new members and some of the old ones. Rod felt it was time for a change and was very happy to hand over to Dave who Rod felt sure will bring fresh purpose and vitality to the club. Good luck Dave and to everyone else Rod looks forward to seeing you on court.

**At this juncture Paul Masters expressed a huge debt of gratitude to Rod who has taken the club to a new level and given 9 years of outstanding service. Rod has an easy charm which has been great to boost membership and welcome players into the club.**

**Treasurer’s Report**

It should be pointed out that the accounts are not audited, the Treasurer’s Report is the adoption of the Club accounts.

The accounts were circulated and Andy Thorpe commented that the expenditure was basically the same as the previous year with the exception of the improvements to the Club following the fire. Andy also pointed out that £10k has been donated to the Main Club to support them during the Covid lockdown.

Eric Stevenson queried why the amount paid to England Squash had doubled. Andy explained this as we are now paying for each actual member instead of the previous arbitrary amount. Eric asked whether we would receive a rebate from England Squash for the lockdown period? Chris Holliman stated that we have not had to pay during the lockdown period and England Squash were due to review in January.

Rod thanked Andy for all his hard work with the accounts and emptying the token machines.

**Membership Secretary’s Report**

Chris Holliman stated that we are down nine members from this time last year. The demographic of the club remains much the same with the majority of players in the 40- 50’s age bracket. There are still 43 members in the system where the Date of Birth is not known and Chris will be following-up on this.

Chris revisited the comment regarding England Squash. Players only get the benefits of membership (such as personal accident insurance and training videos) if they activate their membership. Around 50% of our players have not activated their membership and 10 members have actively opted-out.

The recent push to ‘Be a Responsible Member’ during Covid 19 has seen most members sign-up. 30 or so have not yet done so and their fobs are deactivated. Chris is periodically checking the fobs compared to booking sheets to ensure players are all listed and everyone using their fobs for track and trace purposes.

Chris explained that a sub-committee had recently looked at encouraging young players into the club but this was a difficult project and was halted by Covid. An outside organisation had contacted the club and wanted to use the courts for local youngsters but this was also stopped by Covid.

Chris reported that we have had 9 new members since re-opening the club which is fantastic.

Charlie Toogood asked whether getting schools to visit would be an option to encourage younger members? Chris replied that this had been looked at but most schools are only interested in primary sports. Aaron Holmes commented that Surbiton Squash Club have offered free membership to local schools and run coaching clinics. They therefore have a buzzing juniors section – why can’t WSRC do the same?

Chris said this was something which could be considered by the new committee but the key thing is having coaches available to provide this. Eric Stevenson commented that we did have a school using the facilities 2 or 3 times per week and in the past Farleigh and Warlingham schools have used the club- however the uptake of new members was low/ non-existent.

Aaron Holmes also asked what the club’s social media presence was like as this is a free tool to increase membership. Chris Holliman stated that it is poor but the committee had looked at other means of advertising such as the CR magazines delivered locally.

Aaron commented that Surbiton was not a better club than ours so wondered why they do so much better at recruiting youngsters. Paul Masters said that the issue was recently discussed at Surrey Squash committee meeting and Surbiton have become a ‘Super Club’ – they have 3 schools in walking distance, paid coaches and players in League 1. Their club is in an enviable position but is arguably very different to WSRC.

**Rod thanked Chris for all his hard work on membership.**

**Club Captain’s Report**

Because of covid-19 there is currently no team squash or racketball which might give us time to regroup. We need to.

Over the last ten years we have shed many team-standard squash players, for three reasons:

1. Young people moving from Warlingham for lifestyle reasons (City careers or affordable housing)

2. Older players dropping out because of age and/or injury

3. Emigration.

We have not yet replaced the quantity of those players and are well short of the quality. We are not the only club to face a challenge like this. In 1996 65 Clubs entered 169 teams in the Surrey leagues. By 2018, this had fallen to 34 Clubs fielding 114 teams. What one might regard as “super clubs” like Surbiton or Surrey Sports Park have paid pros, 6 teams and hordes of talented youngsters. But the majority of clubs have fewer team players than they once did.

Over the same time period, team racketball (officially squash 57) has evolved. Initially, the county leagues were elite only. Now they offer much more scope for players from clubs like ours and racketball has been an increasing outlet for aspiring team players from Warlingham.

My grateful thanks – and those of the Club - go to John Smith, Duncan Morris and Mike Roberts who have captained individual teams

Focusing on activity since the last AGM:

Summer 2019

Our squash teams

Our team in Kent was placed in the very strong Division3 (despite coming last in it in 2018!) We lost 16 of 18 matches and even Rob Stevenson and John Smith found this Division challenging.

Our first team in Surrey came 5th of 8 in Division 6. Rob and John won most of the games they played, but few others managed to win any games at this level.

Our second team in Surrey finished 7th of 8 in Division 8. We didn’t have enough quality to win matches, although the campaign gave some of our less experienced players the chance to play matches against other club sides.

The racketball team won Social Division 2 with the team (Mike Roberts, Nick Raeburn-Ward, Sean Doyle, Nick Coole, Dave Calvey) winning all seven of their matches.

Winter 2019/20

We withdrew our squash team from Surrey Division 6 at the mid-way point. Having lost Mark Pope and Clint Moore last autumn – two players who were needed for this team, we could not withstand the further departure of David Hobbs.

We put a “development team” into Kent Division 6. Last time we did that Kent 6 was a happy home. But the standard has risen and we finished last, winning 3 and losing 9 matches.

We won 4 of 6 racketball matches in Social Division 2. But finished 3rd of 4, as we never won a match comfortably.

**Rod thanked Paul for all his hard work as Club Captain and also representing WSRC at the Main Club Committee.**

**Election of Committee and Officers:-**

Those standing for re-election were all re-appointed; namely

Chris Holliman (Membership Secretary)

Andy Thorpe (Treasurer)

Paul Webber (Building and Maintenance)

Matthew Smith (Racketball Leagues)

Kunal Nagpal (Squash Leagues)

David Verlander put himself forward for the Chairperson role and was duly elected.

John Reeve put himself forward as Safety and Welfare Officer and was duly elected.

Eric Stevenson and Chris Canham both put themselves forward for the role of Honorary Secretary. With a majority vote (proxy and personal), Eric Stevenson was elected.

John Smith and Paul Bigwood both put themselves forward for the role of Club Captain. With a majority vote (proxy and personal), John Smith was elected.

**Rod congratulated all of those joining the committee then passed the Chairmanship over to Dave, congratulating him in particular and wishing him well in the role.**

**Any Other Business**

Mark Fuller welcomed Dave as Chairperson and expressed that he was excited to see someone new in the role. Mark asked Dave if he has a manifesto or definite plans for the club? Dave replied that as yet he does not. He doesn’t want to change a huge amount as it works well as it is but wants to make subtle changes.

Mark also asked whether Dave was considering using his contacts to bring elite players to the Club and asked for assurance that these would not be at detriment of existing members or funded by the Club. Dave stated that he has no plans to do this, although elite players would be happy to come as they like the courts at WSRC. Dave said that it would be nice to have some exhibition matches at some point but this will be looked-at beforehand as it hasn’t worked here (or at Limpsfield) in the past. Aaron Holmes mentioned Purley club who have some top class players and exhibition games are very popular.

Aaron Holmes asked if there were any plans to increase the social evenings/ sessions at WSRC – other clubs have a lot more. Mark Fuller offered to resurrect the home and away social doubles games with other clubs. Dave assured Aaron this would be considered if members want more club games. Dave to Speak to Aaron separately. Dave mentioned that he would like to develop the Juniors Section more and will be having a discussion with Paul Mullin.

Sean Doyle asked Dave why he wanted to be Chairperson? Dave replied that he feels Rod has done a good job and felt that he would like to give something back to the club and make a few improvements, having been a member for so long. Sean expressed the support of the club for Dave.

Bryan Foss congratulated Dave on his appointment as Chairperson and asked if Dave would be willing to attend Friday night Squash Club if it is re-instated? Dave replied that this may prove difficult due to family commitments but he would try to come at some point. Bryan expressed thanks to Graham Norton and Paul Webber who have kept this going for such a long time.

Michael Steer asked whether consideration would be given to compensating members fees for the period of Covid lockdown? Dave explained this would be looked at as a committee and various options explored. An Emergency General Meeting will also be set for members to attend. Paul Bigwood stated that Limpsfield have given members 3 months free and half price courts for a while which seems fair. People don’t expect free membership.

Charlie Toogood asked if we could consider the installation of a vending machine? Ideally to sell new grips, balls, drinks, socks, towels. Dave questioned whether this means paying more for products but Charlie felt that with P&P ordering online can be equally expensive. Dave said this would be given consideration.

Michael Steer asked if consideration could be given to reviewing Covd restrictions as the lack of showering facilities seems pointless when soap and water kill the virus. Dave promised this would be looked at during the next Committee meeting.

**Gerry Murphy thanked Rod and the other Committee members who were standing-down on behalf of members and wished the new committee all the best.**

**Dave Verlander formally closed the meeting.**