**Newton Abbot Squash, Racquets and Lawn Tennis Club**

**Annual General Meeting, December 13, 2022**

**Chair Report**

Taking on the Chair role a year ago I saw three key objectives

1. Ensure the house was ‘back in order’ following the disruptions of the COVID outbreak where understandably the committee had to focus on the immediate
2. Raise the profile of the club to encourage new members to join and ensure the sustainability of the club
3. Look for efficiencies to keep our costs under control and increase our financial security.

Regarding the first, I believe we have made very good progress in a number of areas:

* Andy Lloyd picking up from the great work led by Denise O’Donnell to ensure that our Safeguarding policies were up to date and that our volunteers supporting the junior activities were DBS compliant and up to date on training.
* Pauline Allsop as Membership Secretary to ensure membership lists are fully up to date and membership renewals ran seamlessly, particularly with all the changes that were made to the membership fees over the year as we caught up from the COVID era and put through additional changes reflecting the local market.
* Steve O’Donnell and Dan Gough set us up with electronic storage capability so that going forward all the club records can be stored electronically and tracking down paper files will be a thing of the past. As an example, all the excellent risk assessment work completed by Matt Whalley relating to COVID are now on this site.

Regarding the second objective to raise the profile of the club, I feel we have made some progress but we need to do a lot more:

We’ve refreshed / updated the club website, made regular postings on social media and our communications director Sam Phillips worked with the local press regarding special events such as when world class squash players came to the club for training.

With the support of our coaches, we’ve seen membership increase by around 13% over the year which is a promising start but increasing the profile of the club will be the prime area of focus for the coming year. Financially we are basically covering our operating costs as long as we have no major repairs to deal with. The recent hike in utility costs is challenging and unfortunately, we have to increase court fees in January to recover some of that increased cost. Regarding repairs, the tennis courts need resurfacing and we are currently in the second phase of a grant application to cover the £55k required.

To increase the profile of the club going forward, I am looking for two further members to help us out. One is to support Maddie with more regular postings on social media to highlight our tennis activities. The second is someone with perhaps a Marketing background who can lead on new initiatives to promote the club. One idea is to have a well-publicised open day. We are also making contact with local schools and exploring the potential of corporate memberships. In the meantime, I would ask all members to be ambassadors of the club to encourage people to drop by and take a look at what the club has to offer, particularly through one of our club nights.

And while we want to encourage new members to the club it’s important that we maintain the best possible club experience for existing members through club competitions, coaching, social events, etc and I’d like to thank Sam Phillips, Dave Palmer and Steve O’Donnell for stepping up in this area with the departure of Curtis Corby in September. We also want to maintain our focus on developing our junior membership though the group sessions led by Richard Thomas, Jon Sharpe and Rob Alford for squash and Maddie Ramsey, Julian Nathanson for Tennis.

Finally, regarding my third objective of looking for efficiency projects, probably the one change that has had the biggest impact on the club overall this year has been to link the lights to the court booking system and switching to 20 min booking sessions. This allowed us to dispense with the archaic card system, get better control of court bookings and provide members greater flexibility on how long they want to play. It also provides us with a ‘pay and play’ capability for members of the public to book the courts online. Dan Gough has led this initiative from the start and completion of the project in July was a key milestone for financial well-being of the club.

I would like to close by thanking all the committee members for their excellent support to the club and me personally over the past 12 months. I continue to be very impressed with the willingness / flexibility of each and every member to find time to get the work done with great energy and efficiency. And finally, a special mention to Malcolm who been our very longstanding Treasurer who has agreed to stand for one more year to ensure the club has fully transitioned to the new norm following the COVID lockdowns.

Tim Villis

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