

VICTORIA PARK CLUB

Minutes of the 145th Annual General Meeting held on 27 February 2025

Present: Tim Cartwright (Chair & Tennis Chair), Lance Cresswell (Honorary Treasurer), Alistair Macintosh (Safeguarding Officer), Don Mitchell (Bridge Chair), and Liz Bell (Honorary Secretary); Elizabeth Ambler, Owen & Joan Bennett, Don & Sarah Branton, David Brice, Peter Cornelius, Barry Flicker, Margaret Fuest, Adrian Gaunt, Alan & Ethel Grateley, Mary MacMullen, Cheryl Mitchell, Dominic Roman, Jon Rycroft, Mike & Sue Sanderson, and Joan Taylor.

1. Election of Chair of Meeting

In the absence of an overall Club Chair, Tim Cartwright was appointed Chair of the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Joan Bolden, Zal Clewer, Julie Crichton-Smith, Gail Dixon-Smith, Jo Hawkins, Garon Heslop, Diana King, Edward MacMullen, Jill Murdoch, Matt Olczak, Chris Pennington, Sue Stott, Ulla Ward, and Simon Witts.

3. Minutes of the 144th Annual General Meeting held on 19 February 2024

Mary MacMullen proposed that these be accepted and this was seconded by Cheryl Mitchell.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising. Don Mitchell confirmed that legally the three new Trustees were in position but that the details had still not been registered with the Land Registry due to administrative delays.

5. Chair's Report

The Club remained in a good position with tennis membership subscriptions buoyant and 50 on the waiting list. This healthy position allowed the Club to:

- Run full adult and junior coaching programmes, social sessions and teams.
- Accelerate the Club's planned maintenance programme – for example, as well as renewing the old section of the clubhouse roofing, it had been decided to replace the majority of the single paned and slowly rotting wooden windows with double glazed uPVC which would be easier to maintain and would reduce heating costs.
- Accommodate any unplanned maintenance such as renewing some of the floodlight brackets due to corrosion which had been discovered after a regular service last year, and also repairing the car park wall after a partial collapse in the autumn.
- Ensure that funds are set aside in advance to cover court resurfacing, building and light renewals as well as any other unforeseen maintenance required.

The Chair also reported that a thorough Asbestos Survey had been carried out at the Club involving investigation both inside and outside the clubhouse. Of 29 inspection points looked at, 6 samples had been taken and 5 came back negative. One small area of the rear wall cladding to the tennis lounge/bar area had, however, been found to be clad in an insulating board containing a very low level of asbestos. The recommendation was that it was safer to leave it in situ rather than removing it, which could possibly release asbestos dust, and to overlay the area with suitable weather and fire resistant cladding. The General Committee had agreed to follow this recommendation and the Club would be closed for one day whilst the work was carried out.

6. Treasurer's Report

The accounts for 2024 showed a surplus of £15,588. Tennis subscriptions and coaching income was £81,192 and bridge subscription income was £2,181. Other income was £9,155, up on last year predominantly due to increases in room hire and advertising.

Overall expenditure for the year was £76,172, an increase on last year due to higher coaching costs and the cost of repairing and servicing the floodlights. Roof repairs and window replacements to the clubhouse had also been carried out at a cost of £11,868. Electricity and gas expenditure had reduced to £4,098 due to now being on a better tariff and replacing a faulty meter.

On the balance sheet, the Resurfacing/Floodlighting Reserve and Bridge Reserve represented money set aside by the Club for specific purposes. The Bridge Reserve equalled the balance on the Bridge Bank Account and the money set aside for resurfacing/floodlighting was held in the National Savings Investment Account. A further £10,000 had been transferred to the Resurfacing/Floodlighting Reserve as we continued to build reserves for the future.

Overall, the Club finances remained in a very healthy position with a strong balance sheet, stable bridge membership and a good tennis membership with a waiting list in place as mentioned above.

The Treasurer thanked David Brice and Nigel Parker for all their help in preparing the accounts and the Chair also thanked the Treasurer very much for taking on this role which was a big commitment. Barry Flicker proposed accepting the accounts and this was seconded by Peter Cornelius.

7. Bridge Chair's Report

The Bridge Chair reported that membership of the bridge section had stabilised over the last year following national and regional drops in activity following the pandemic. Attendance at sessions was a fraction lower than last year, but also settling down. Over the year, two teams, captained by David Brice and Stephen Schlich, had been entered into the Devon East Section League. There had also been co-operation in several activities run by or jointly with Exeter Bridge Club, all designed to increase local participation and play, and also to help our own numbers grow in the longer term. Over the coming year, ways of rebuilding our membership would be explored.

8. Tennis Chair's Report

The courts were very good indeed, and had good drainage. Social sessions were going well with very often all four courts in use and it was good to see players from the Sunday improver sessions attending the Saturday social afternoon. A new Social Secretary was needed on the Tennis Committee and anyone interested was asked to please get in touch.

Team tennis – a new mixed team had won their league this winter which was a great achievement as many had not played team tennis before. There were now 5 men's teams, 2 women's and one further mixed team. Monday practice evenings were now split into two sessions, at 6 pm and then 7.30 pm, and it was hoped that in due course this could be administered through ClubSpark. Tim expressed a massive thanks to Jon Rycroft for all his work providing such a strong coaching programme for both juniors and adults. Sadly Lee Burrell had left the Club but had been replaced by two university coaches thus enabling the adult sessions to continue as before. Individual court bookings were good although with some gaps but generally showed good court usage.

9. Nominations to the General Committee

All had agreed to stand for another year. This was proposed by Mary MacMullen and seconded by Barry Flicker. It would be very helpful to have an overall Chair in place and any nominations for this or any other position would be very welcome.

10. Proposed Membership Categories and Subscription Rates for 2025

It was proposed that the membership categories remain as they were with the exception of the Family Membership category which it was proposed be extended to allow for up to four juniors and students (in full time education and under the age of 25). It had previously been limited to just children under the age of 18. This would allow students who were away much of the year to continue to play when they were at home without impacting numbers. A question was asked as to whether the Family Tennis (Ukraine) category should be continued. It was agreed to keep this in place for the time being – Edward MacMullen, the previous Chair, had gone to great effort to bring it in. All were in favour.

It was proposed that subscription rates remain the same for 2025 but that the 5% early discount be removed – this had been left in place last year to compensate in some way for the inconvenience caused by the court resurfacing. However, it created extra administrative difficulties on ClubSpark as well as more work for the Membership Secretary and it was felt, with the current waiting list of prospective members in place, was no longer needed. Barring a single abstention, all were in favour.

11. Honorary Membership

There were no nominations for Honorary Life Membership. Further to nomination by the Tennis Committee and approval by the General Committee, it was agreed to give the following members Temporary Honorary Membership for the year in recognition of all their work for the Club: Barry Flicker, Matt Olczak, and Jon Rycroft. Enormous thanks were expressed to them. The Chair also thanked everyone on the Committee very much for all their work, and thanks were expressed to the Chair himself for everything he did for the Club, particularly in dealing with the many maintenance issues arising.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.