



# Merrow Lawn Tennis Club Annual General Meeting Minutes

14<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
At the MLTC Clubhouse

28 members were present and therefore the meeting was **quorate**.

Ian Campbell, the club President welcomed everyone to the AGM meeting in the club's 100<sup>th</sup> year. He highlighted the centenary events that the club had planned for the year ahead.

## 1. Apologies for absence:

Susan Beardwood, Margaret Clifford, Alison Craze, Susie Duncan, Helen Farmer, Roger Humphries, Erez Kaplan, Helen Marlow, Amanda Miller, Joan Palmer, Robert Stewart, Di Stewart, Cindy Simnett, Steve Simnett and Peter Tappin.

Several members had thanked the committee members for all of their hard working in running the club.

However, the Chairman advised that he had heard from an anonymous source that some felt that the club officers remained in post for too long and that individuals were reluctant to put their names forward or nominate others in their place for fear of causing offence to those currently in post.

The Chairman stressed that all those in post would happily make room for others who wanted to serve, provided they enjoyed the confidence of the members, were duly elected and able to give the necessary time and commitment. There was a process for nomination which was encouraged. This had been communicated on several occasions. The Chairman added that any member could attend committee meetings if they wished to see what happened and to think about standing for election next year.

Indications were that generally there was satisfaction with the way that the club was managed and the achievements of recent years, but members were encouraged to speak up if they felt that was not the case.

## 2. Minutes of the 2022 AGM

The minutes of the 2022 AGM were approved.

## 3. Matters arising from the minutes.

- It was asked if Club Solution could send a reminder to members 15 minutes before their court booking time. There was a cost involved with implementing

this and it had been decided not to proceed with this but instead to leave the responsibility with each member.

- There was a new pothole in the access road and the club would be discussing this with Horizon Leisure, the firm now leasing what was Sports Direct gym. The Chairman had hoped that someone from Horizon would have been at the AGM to speak to members. The club wanted to build a positive relationship with Horizon.
- The Chairman informed the meeting that Alison Craze was writing about the history of the club for the centenary year.
- The club had successfully appealed against the refusal of the planning permission for the 7<sup>th</sup> court. However one of the conditions of the planning was that the “finished playing surface of the tennis court hereby approved shall be an artificial grass/carpet. This shall be retained for the lifetime of the development.” Some members had said they would like the 7<sup>th</sup> court to have a clay surface. Members would be consulted again as to whether it should be artificial clay or an artificial grass. The club would have to apply for a variation of the condition of planning if they wished to have an artificial clay court surface.

**Q- A member asked how long the planning permission lasted for the 7<sup>th</sup> court** - Building of the 7<sup>th</sup> court needed to start within 3 years of the planning application being approved.

#### **4. Chairman’s summary comments**

The Chairman wanted to again thank everyone who helped run the club.

He added that an intention was to establish a social committee with individuals taking responsibility for specific events. Anyone interested was asked to get in touch.

The Chairman advised that following the recent members questionnaire committee had set up a Strategy Group to develop a strategic plan which covered the next 3 to 5 years. Members could get involved if they wished to. The final plan would be considered at the 2024 AGM and reviewed annually thereafter.

It was also mentioned that there had been a decline in attendance at club sessions due to members arranging to play in their own groups. Members were asked to attend some club sessions too as these were an important part of the club.

#### **5. Secretary & Estates Comments**

The estate developments that had taken place during 2022 were highlighted.

The club had received three tenders from LTA recommended contractors for installing the 7<sup>th</sup> court.

The club would like to start the building works as soon as possible, ideally in July after the marquee event. However if the club decided to have an artificial clay court then the application to vary the planning condition might delay matters. There were several questions from members about the 7<sup>th</sup> court and associated courts.

**Q - Would the cost of an artificial clay court be different from that of artificial grass?** The club had received a quote showing that artificial clay was £6k more.

**Q- How much did it cost to maintain clay courts?** One member thought that it was no more than artificial grass.

**Q- Was there a difference in how long artificial clay courts and artificial grass courts lasted?** Probably not.

**Q- Were LTA grants available to build the new court?** The Treasurer had looked into this and loans were available but only if the courts were also opened for public use.

Dave Clarke highlighted how much time he had spent on estates works and asked if anyone could help.

**Q - Why had there been a gate installed by court 1.** This since there was concern that people were using the club grounds as a shortcut. There will shortly be a sign on the gate stating 'members only'.

**Q- Was the hitting wall being removed?** The hitting wall was staying in place for the time being. However, less than 10 people had stated that they wished for it to remain. The club were looking at alternative options as the hitting wall in its current place was not ideal – it was noisy and when playing or having coaching on court 5 it could be dangerous when balls rebounded.

The Chairman repeated his appreciation for all the estates work Dave Clarke had undertaken.

## **6. Treasurer's comments**

The accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 had been circulated.

The highlights were:

- A surplus of just over £30k. This was less than the previous year when the club had received several government grants.
- Over £200k was in cash held at Lloyds, Skipton, and Metro banks. The Treasurer had not looked at transferring money elsewhere as the club would need a large amount of money for the 7<sup>th</sup> court.
- The Treasurer had introduced a formal sinking fund for the refurbishment of the courts and clubhouse. The club needed to transfer £24k per court per year into the fund.

The Treasurer had taken into account that the LTA recommended budget of £70k to build a new court. However as stated earlier the court would cost considerably more than that.



As well as the quotes mentioned by the Secretary earlier in the meeting, there would be the costs for earth removal and those associated with accessing the site and making good at the end. Therefore, the Treasurer estimated that the total cost could be £140,000.

**Q - Did the cost include floodlights.** It was confirmed that it did.

**Q – How much longer the current artificial grass courts would last?** The top three courts were resurfaced in 2015 and the bottom three in 2017. It was thought that the courts would last between 10 and 15 years.

**Q – If the club spent £140k on the 7<sup>th</sup> court would there be sufficient funds to refurbish the other courts?** The maintenance programme for the current courts was currently working. It may be that membership fees might have to rise more in the future. The committee was recommending that membership fees increased by 2.5% this year and last year they had not been increased.

**Q – How much did it cost to resurface the 3 courts in 2017.** It was thought around £50k but this should be checked.

The Chairman confirmed that the club could afford to build the 7<sup>th</sup> court and meet the costs of future resurfacing of the current courts. A new clubhouse would require additional funding.

The Treasurer expressed his appreciation for the book keeping of the Club Administrator and to Philip Corning for reviewing the accounts.

**a. Approval of accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

Chris Smith proposed the approval of the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 which was seconded by David Clegg. The accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 were **approved**.

**b. Approval of proposed subscriptions for year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023**

The Treasurer recommended that the subscription rates for 23-24 be increased by 2.5% (rounded up). There had not been any increases in 2022-23. Rachael Goodworth proposed the subscriptions for 23-24 and was seconded by Justin Hovington. The subscription rates for 23-24 were **approved**.

**c. Approval of 7<sup>th</sup> Court Expenditure**

Adrian Rees proposed that expenditure of up £140k (including VAT) for construction of the 7<sup>th</sup> court be agreed. This was seconded by Tony Hall and **approved nem. con.**

The court surface would be a matter for further consideration.

**Q – Would membership numbers be increased once the 7<sup>th</sup> court was built?**

The Chairman advised that this was not planned, the construction of the 7<sup>th</sup> court being to ease court booking pressures and allow junior coaching to continue at its present level.

## 7. Administrator's Comments

The Administrator highlighted the following:

- There were similar membership numbers to the previous year.
- There were 91 people on the waiting list currently which included some that were currently members of Pit Farm, Horsley and David Lloyd tennis clubs.

## 8. Coaching

The coaching report was noted.

**Q – How many coaches were there at MLTC? - 6.**

**Q – If the juniors wanted to compete more, would there be space for this on court?** They would not be competing in many matches and as prior to Covid, these would happen mainly on Sunday afternoons when there was usually space.

## 9. Matches

The club had 12 teams competing in Summer 2022 across three different leagues. Two teams were champions of their leagues - the Woking Mixed A team and Surrey Ladies 1. There were a couple of weeks remaining in the Winter 22-23 season with possibly two or three teams becoming champions of their leagues. MLTC had 10 teams competing in the winter competitions.

Eugenia thanked all the team captains for their hard work and the Chairman in turn thanked her organising.

## 10. Social

It was reiterated that the club needed members to organise social events at the club.

## 11. Election of Officers

The following officers and committee members were elected unanimously:

**Ian Campbell (President), Adrian Rees (Chairman), Dave Clarke (Secretary), Jeff Saunders (Treasurer).**

**Committee: Louise Blakeborough, Julie Dickson, Rachael Goodworth, Julie Pearn, James Tufts and Eugenia Wachters.**

**Jorge martin Munoz** by virtue of his position as Head Coach.

## 12. Any Other Business

Ball Machine



**Q. A member had asked if a new ball machine could be purchased?** The current one was being repaired but if it broke again a new machine would be purchased.

There was no other business.

The meeting finished at 8.20pm

**Alison Faulkner  
Club Administrator**

Members present: A Birch, D Birkett, L. Blakeborough, I Campbell, C Campbell, D Clarke, D Clegg, , J Condick, J Dickson, A Faulkner, M Hall, T Hall, J Hovington, R Lamble, K Lewis, P Morton, J Pearn, A Rees, J Reid, D Reid, J Saunders, D Searle, C Smith, M Spiring, M Stones, I Strawson, A Strawson, and E Wachters.



**Extraordinary General Meeting  
Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 8.00pm  
In the Clubhouse**

**MLTC Members present:** S Beardwood, A Birch, L Blakeborough, M Brown, D Clarke, D Clegg, S England, W England, A Faulkner, K Goodrich, T. Hall, R Holberton, N Lecoutre, H Marlow, A Miller, N O’Driscoll, J Pearn, A Rees, A Strawson, I Strawson, J Tufts, E Wachters and D Wright.

1.	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from P Barnes, D Birkett, P Burton, J Davies, H Farmer, M Hall, P Hollands, A Kell, S Luscombe, D Luscombe, L Myers, J Reid, D Reid, A Robinson, G Sutton, K Sutton, P Tappin and N Trobridge.</p>
2.	<p><b>7<sup>th</sup> Court</b></p> <p>Adrian Rees, the club Chairman welcomed everyone to the EGM which had been called to give members the opportunity to hear the committee’s views and voice their opinions on the need, cost, and surface of the proposed 7<sup>th</sup> court.</p> <p>There had been a small but quorate attendance at the recent AGM when the approval for expenditure on the 7<sup>th</sup> court had been given.</p> <p><b><u>i. Why the need for a 7<sup>th</sup> Court?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over the past nine years the adult membership had grown by 200 adults (not all of these have court booking rights) and 250 junior members.</li><li>• This had substantially increased the club’s income and consequently annual surpluses.</li><li>• The club had resurfaced the courts and refurbished the clubhouse and still maintained a healthy bank balance.</li><li>• Despite the increase in members and coaching provision for both adults and juniors the club had largely coped with the demand for courts but there were pinch times on weekday evenings and at weekends.</li><li>• The committee felt that the 7<sup>th</sup> court would ease the pinch points and mean that coaching need not be reduced.</li><li>• The club had the land and the money to build the court and would recoup the costs in the next few years. Therefore, the Chairman asked the question of not why build the 7<sup>th</sup> court, but why not? Questions or comments were invited.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Members Comments</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Even if there were no pinch points a member agreed, why not build a 7<sup>th</sup> court?</li><li>• Weekday mornings were also busy.</li></ul> <p>The consensus was that there was need for the 7<sup>th</sup> court and there was no reason not to build it.</p>

ii. **What will be the cost of the 7<sup>th</sup> court?**

- The cost will not exceed £140K, broken down as (excluding VAT):
  - £67k for the court (£48k quoted 2019)
  - £20k for lighting.
  - £20k contingency. This might be for soil removal or access to the site.
  - £7.5k for clay.
- Costs will not get cheaper.
- After spending £140k there would still be £100k in the Merrrow Tennis bank account.
- The club had sufficient funds to meet any emergencies not covered by the insurance.
- Courts 1-3 were resurfaced in August 2015 and courts 4-6 in August 2017. Tiger Turf advise that the courts will not need resurfacing for 10 – 15 years.
- A growing population means demands for tennis facilities is unlikely to reduce.
- The popularity of our Club will not diminish provided the culture is maintained.

**Members Comments**

- A member questioned whether a full-size doubles court could be built on the site. The answer was that a survey using LTA dimensions confirmed this as possible and planning permission for such a court had been granted.
- One member felt it important the court be built soon as costs were rising.

iii. **How will the court be constructed and what surface should the club choose?**

- Work will begin in September 2023.
- Agreement had been reached with Horizon Leisure (HL) to access the site behind the clubhouse. The barrier will be removed early June to help with the 1/07 plans. There will be a HL membership discount for MLTC members.
- The court fencing will be against the trees on the western side. On the eastern side (the gym) there will be a gap between the wall and the fencing.
- On appeal against the GBC refusal to grant permission for the 7<sup>th</sup> court, the club was advised that success would be more likely if the application was made on the basis that the surface would be the same on the courts currently in use. Even so the chance of success on appeal had been deemed to be 50/50.
- David Clegg was thanked for his work which led to the Planning Inspector accepting the appeal, but a condition was that the surface be the same as those currently in use i.e. - "The finished playing surface of the tennis court hereby approved shall be an artificial grass/carpet. This shall be retained for the lifetime of the development."
- If the members wanted a clay surface, there was a need to formally apply for the planning condition to be waived - even though it would still be a type of carpet. (Examples of court surfaces were available for members to see).
- Applying to vary the planning condition would cost approximately £200-£300.
- In support of the application the club would have to demonstrate that artificial clay was no noisier than artificial grass.
- It was not known how long Guildford Borough Council would take to decide on the application.
- The construction of the court would not interfere with current activities at the club.



- The court can be built to base level while the club waits to see if there is a choice as to which surface the club can use and a decision by members then made.
- Lights will be installed at the time of the court construction.

#### Members Comments

- A member asked if refusal of an application to vary the planning condition would affect the possibility of having clay on the current 6 courts. It was explained that they were two different issues. For the 7<sup>th</sup> court the club needed to apply for a planning condition to be waived. It was not known if an application to change the other surfaces would be necessary if desired in due course - it was a decision for individual local authorities. Some authorities had not required a formal application.
- One member stated that although they would prefer the 7<sup>th</sup> court to be clay, if it was going to take perhaps 18 months or to obtain this permission, this might alter their view.
- Another member stated that many joined because they liked the artificial grass courts.
- It was also said that when the club had previously considered court surfaces a decision against clay had been made due to the proximity of the trees and falling leaves etc.
- One member asked why if the 7<sup>th</sup> court was simply to relieve the stress on court availability, a different surface was being discussed. It was suggested that as there were maybe 50 or so members wanting clay then as they would choose, when possible, to play on the 7<sup>th</sup> court it would still free up some of the remaining courts.
- The 7<sup>th</sup> court was also an opportunity for members to play on a different surface and able to make an informed decision about whether to change any more courts to clay.
- The construction period for building the court was approximately 2 months.
- If the 7<sup>th</sup> court was clay it would allow club team members to practice on the surface on which they often play when at other clubs.

#### **Summary**

It was agreed that there was a need for the 7<sup>th</sup> court; that the cost of construction was acceptable and that it be ascertained whether an artificial clay/carpet surface was an option.

If it was established that there would be a lengthy period before a decision as to the clay option could be given by GBC, the membership would be consulted again as to whether the preference was to await this or lay an artificial grass/carpet surface.

The meeting finished at 8.40pm.