

Margate Bowling Club

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held at Margate Clubhouse, 7.00 pm on Friday 25th November 2016

Present: Trisha Ball, Ryan Cooper, Anne Gascoigne, Jackie Hayes, Roger Hayes, Geoff Holmes, Miriam Ibbotson, John McDonald, Beryl Stapley, Bob Taylor, Sheila Taylor, Philip Todd, Terry (Memories)

Apologies: Lynn Beedie, Rosemary Davenport, Neil Kemp, Doug Levy, Allan Moore, Alison Ruff

The meeting began at 7.09 pm.

1 Chairman's welcome

John McDonald gave the Chairman's welcome.

2 Apologies

See above.

3 Minutes of last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM, held on 27th November 2015, were passed with no amendments.

Proposer: John McDonald

Seconder: Trisha Ball

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Annual report of the committee

The general committee met on seven occasions.

Full membership as at the end of October 2016 was sixteen, comprising nine men and seven women.

The *total* membership (full, associate and juniors) was 19 men and 11 women, which broke down as follows:

Men	2016	2015
Full	9	7
Associate	7	2
Junior	1	1
Junior Associate	2	0
Non playing	1	0
Total playing men	19	10

Ladies	2016	2015
Full	7	8
Associate	3	1
Junior	0	0
Junior Associate	1	0
Non playing	0	0
Total playing ladies	11	9

Although total membership was up from 2015, the Club still has a long way to go to build up the number of players to the point where it can be considered to be "thriving".

This year we decided to hold competitions, which were co-ordinated by Neil Kemp. Thanks to Neil for his efforts. Sadly, due to withdrawals only one competition was actually played through to the end – this was won by Trisha Ball. It was also decided that the men’s competition had been played through despite the champion (Ryan Cooper) having played just one game.

The Club continued to receive money from the original grant of just over £19,000 made by the People’s Health Trust. However, there will be no more money from this source going forward and the Club will need to find ways to obtain outside funding if it is to make any major changes such as building alterations. At present there is one community group – the Memories dementia support group – which uses the Club regularly. Other groups – SpeakUpCIC, Mindful Thanet and the Cliftonville Community Choir - have gone elsewhere.

The Friday night quizzes, held roughly once a month, have been a successful social activity for the Club – the average profit for each quiz night is around £120. Any profit from this and similar activities is put in the Club development fund. Thanks to Neil for taking over as question master for the quizzes. The Cameo church group has also used the Club as a venue for social events, and Mencap has also held monthly bowling sessions at the Club.

The Club established links with a local initiative called Ageless Thanet, which sponsored Sunday morning roll-ups that were attended by up to eight people. A few of the attendees have filled out membership forms and it is hoped that they will become regular players in 2017. Sheila Taylor, Trisha Ball and Miriam Ibbotson came to the roll-ups and helped the attendees.

To avoid the administration needed for PAYE, the Club decided to de-register as an employer and to use the services of volunteers or self-employed contractors for any jobs that need doing. In other words, the Club no longer has a regular caretaker, but is largely reliant on its own members to help out with cleaning and other chores. Thanks was also given to Doug Levy and Geoff Holmes for their work in trimming the hedge this summer – it was getting out of control and desperately needed attention! (During the AGM, Terry was thanked for cleaning the clubhouse after Memories’ meetings.)

The condition of the green suffered a marked deterioration this year and the committee decided to engage the services of County green specialist Ivan Hoile. His labours are now bearing fruit and Bob Taylor has sown extra grass seed to fill in any small “gaps” at the edges. Thanks was given to Bob for his maintenance work on the green during the summer.

6 Treasurer’s report

Bar sales were down this year, from £1,837 to £1,304. This is because we didn’t have as many home games this year, and also because the community groups who used the Club didn’t want the bar. Roger thanked John and Trisha for their work in running the bar, and achieving a creditable 51% return on sales.

The bowling account made a loss of £952 this year, compared to a considerably greater loss of £2,842 the previous year. The reduced loss was down to the increased membership this year, with a corresponding increase in subscription income (£1,818 in 2016 as opposed to £1,442 in 2015). Green fees were down this year, because we had fewer home games.

Green maintenance was the single biggest expenditure. However, it was significantly less than in 2015 (£3,157 compared to £4,802), when we were paying the outside

contractor. The 2016 figure includes Ivan Hoile's fee and the skip hire, which totalled about £2,400. Over the summer the Club had also spent £360 for removal of green waste. We had not spent a lot on greenkeeping supplies this year, because there had been some supplies left over from the previous year.

Affiliation fees were up this year, due to the increased membership. We didn't enter as many competitions this year, so the cost of these went down by over 50%.

The social account income this year was £7,265, and the expenditure was £9,848, giving an overall loss of £2,583. (This compares with a loss of £3,973 for 2015.) The income includes any grants from the People's Health Trust. The PHT grant is now fully paid. There had been two polling sessions during 2016, providing an income of £880, and the Club had also earned £1,400 for venue hire. In October, it had been agreed to reduce the venue hire fee for Memories dementia group from £70 per session to £50. In return for this, group facilitator Terry would ensure that the clubhouse was cleaned after each session. Roger thanked Terry for this, and pointed out that the weekly meetings were good for the Club in other ways – it meant better security, and the fact that the heating was turned on regularly ensured that the clubhouse didn't get damp.

This year, the Club decided to rely on volunteers rather than paid labour. Whenever anyone volunteered to help with a social activity, the money they would have been paid if they had been an employee was donated to the Club development fund. The PHT has accepted this.

Overhead expenses were down £262 from the previous year. The Club had received a £100 "goodwill" payment from the HSBC bank. When the HSBC had closed its branch in Northdown Road, it had told us that we could go to any Post Office and pay money in there. However, it turned out that we could only pay cheques in at the nearest HSBC branch in Westwood Cross. Roger complained about this to HSBC, but they were rude to him and he took the complaint to the ombudsman. This is what led to the goodwill payment of £100.

The Club does not pay council tax, and won't do so all the time it can show it isn't making a profit. This year, the Club actually made a £300 operating loss (compared to a profit of £3,791 last year). The "book loss" for this year is £15,042, which is made up of depreciation and the amount of money put in the development fund.

The aim is to maintain about £1,500 in the bank, to meet six months' worth of expenses.

A stock check is done every six weeks during the playing season, to ensure that we know exactly how much the value of the bar is and to identify whether the bar is losing money. The bar float was reduced to £50 this year, because the bar isn't being used as much. There had been no expenses on badges, ties and shirts, and it was suggested that the Club delay buying any more until we had more members who were playing competitively.

7 Other officers' reports

(a) Competition secretary's report

Neil had spoken to Roger to say that he had been very happy to do the competitions this year, although he had been disappointed that they hadn't run as smoothly as he would have wished. It is hoped to run the competitions again next year, with every member's name being entered; if someone didn't want to play, they could simply give a walkover. Ryan asked about having prize

money (obtained from entry fees) at the competitions. Roger replied that the entry fees had put people off from entering competitions in the past, which is why it had been decided not to offer prize money. This decision could be reconsidered if the competitions became more popular.

(b) Captains' reports

Trisha Ball gave the ladies' league results, which were as follows:

Ladies' section: points for 20; against 47. Played: 11; won 5; lost 11; drawn 0; conceded 5. The Margate ladies were thought to be 2nd from bottom.

Roger gave the men's results. The men had done very well this year in terms of attendance; they hadn't conceded a single game. Their results were as follows:

Men's section: points for, 45.5; against, 34.5. Played: 16; won 10; lost 5; drawn 1; conceded 0. The men came about mid-way through the table.

8 Election of officers

The new committee is as follows (all were voted in en bloc):

Officers

- Chairman: John McDonald
- Treasurer: Roger Hayes
- Secretary: Miriam Ibbotson

Other committee members

- Trisha Ball (ladies' captain and bar manager)
- Ryan Cooper (men's captain)
- Sheila Taylor (catering manager)
- Phil Todd (overall captain)

There is space for another five people, one of whom would ideally be a competitions secretary. Roger would continue to be the Club's delegate to the Isle of Thanet league, of which he is secretary. There were no volunteers to take on the role of delegates to the Kent county and ladies' county leagues.

Roger, who has been treasurer for ten years, asked for someone to volunteer to assist him, with a view to their taking over the role eventually.

9 Election of selectors

This would be sorted out at the beginning of the next season.

10 Propositions

That this Club raise the maximum age for junior members from 18 to 21 (proposed en bloc by the committee)

The motion was passed via a unanimous show of hands. The Club constitution would be changed accordingly.

11 Any other business

Roger gave a talk on the history and long term development of the Club. This was followed by a presentation based on a report that had been commissioned by Sport England. The aim of the report had been to determine best practice amongst bowls clubs for maintaining sustainability. The report said that clubs need to:

- Recruit (and retain) enough members to generate income
- Maximise other income streams
- Implement strategic planning and financial management
- Access support from national governing bodies and local authorities.

Recruit (and retain) enough members to generate income

Throughout the country, membership of bowling clubs has fallen significantly in the last 5 – 10 years. One reason is the high age profile of members, with 65-70 being typical. This means that members are often lost due to illness and disability. The Sport England report recommends that clubs recruit members in the 40 – 55 age group – these people are young enough to take on jobs in the Club, and to play a lot. They also bring in new ideas and drive. However, it's a struggle to engage with this age group, due to the other commitments.

Margate Club also has a specific problem with recruitment and retention, because of the high number of other clubs in the local area. Roger thanked Allan and Geoff for their efforts in recruiting new members, and Sheila, Trisha and Miriam for their time spent at the Ageless Thanet roll-ups. These efforts had resulted in an influx of new members who were not already members of other local clubs.

Another area to look at is junior members. However, engaging with local schools is hard, because of budget cuts and because teachers also need to give up their time to chaperone children. The Club would also need to provide members for these sessions, all of whom would need a DBS check. Junior members also tend to fall out of the sport when they reach college age or leave school.

Another issue is that it is very difficult to get newer members to make the transition from social to competitive bowls. This issue is not unique to the Margate Club.

One finding of the SE study relates to income from membership: it found that increasing the membership fee puts people off, but reducing membership fees doesn't actually help to recruit new members and attracts the wrong type of person. Going over to a "pay as you play" model is too fiddly, as it needs someone there at all times to collect the fees. (Council greens do this. Incidentally, all council greens are required to have rinks available to the general public, something that is not widely advertised.) In other words, there is only so much extra money that can be made from membership fees – it is necessary to have other income streams.

The SE report lays down what it has found is the minimum membership level to generate enough income to remain sustainable as a club: 15 – 20 members per rink. This works out at 90 – 120 members for our Club. However, 90 – 120 members does assume that the Club is going to play six rinks every weekend. And since triples is the most popular format these days, perhaps 70 members is a more realistic target for the Club.

A key finding of the SE report is that all clubs need to adopt a co-ordinated approach to recruitment and retention. One thing that successful clubs do is to have a buddy system, where any new member is assigned to an existing member. They also have a sub-committee that focuses on recruitment/retention, and on ways to keep members engaged all year round, even during the off season.

Find other income streams

One option is commercial hire – in the past, there have been several enquiries from local people asking if they could hold birthday parties etc. at the Club. However, it had been decided in the past not to take this further as the parties usually involve children/young people and there is a risk of them damaging the green. If we do hire the Club premises out to anyone, it is done on condition that they become a social member. The conditions of the Club licence means that only Club members can operate the bar – if we did hire the Club premises out commercially, a Club member would therefore have to run the bar. Another option is fundraising events – jumble sales, social evenings etc. They involve a lot of effort and don't generate a vast income, although they might help with retention of members.

Advertising and sponsorship is another potential source of revenue. Sponsorship is almost impossible to get nowadays, because companies don't have the money. The Club hasn't attempted to find sponsorship for many years.

Grant funding has been the main source of income for the Club – we got a £46k grant from Sports England four years ago, which spent on concreting around the green, redecorating the clubhouse, new green equipment, and installing new men's toilets. The £20,000 grant from the People's Health Trust, awarded in 2013, was used to fund social events. (John McDonald thanked Roger for his efforts in securing these two sources of funding.)

Strategic planning and financial management

The SE report emphasised the need for sound financial management procedures (many of which we are doing already) and looked at key areas of expenditure for clubs. Green maintenance is the major one; the quality of the green is key for recruitment and retention of members. Employing a contractor to maintain the green would cost at least £7,000 per year just in wages, so this is what the Club has been saving by having Bob Taylor to work on the green. But other volunteers are needed to provide help. Geoff Holmes and Doug Levy were thanked for the help they had given Bob during the season.

Another key area of expense is painting, decorating and other forms of building maintenance. Again, the Club is largely dependent on volunteers. Any "big ticket" expenses are paid for out of the development fund. This is a so-called "sinking fund". Over time, the cost of any equipment is "written off" (depreciation), so that at the end of an item's life, there should be enough in the development fund to buy a new one. Any profits made by the Club are ring-fenced, i.e. they are put in the development fund and can only be used for re-investment in the Club. Any expenditure from the development fund has to be approved by the committee. For any really large expenses (say, £10,000), the committee would probably call an extraordinary general meeting.

Clubs need to find ways to minimise ongoing expenses, such as green maintenance. There is one club near Watford that has a green maintenance

scheme – this club had bought some new equipment, and they pooled resources to create a “maintenance hub” for several clubs. Each club pays to access the equipment. There is a core maintenance team whose members are taken from participating clubs; the team goes round every club in the group and does two renovations a year. By pooling their resources, the group of clubs found that it was able to get heavy discounts on fertiliser etc., which could be passed on to all the participating clubs.

In addition to short-term planning, clubs need to look at what happens in the long term. This is achieved by drawing up a formal business and development plan that lays out the direction the club will take over the next ten years. Our Club does not do this at present, but possible ideas for long-term goals are:

- New roof for the greenkeeper’s equipment store, plus enhanced security for same
- Possible re-opening of second entrance in Talbot Road, which would ease problems we currently experience with parking
- Refurbishment of ladies’ changing room – a second safety exit, plus heating
- Extra ladies’ toilets (one ladies’ toilet wouldn’t be enough if we got more members). The existing ladies’ toilet doubles as a disabled toilet
- Improvements to men’s changing rooms
- Second safety exit for men’s toilets
- Redecorating kitchen and bar in clubhouse
- Improvements to bar security
- Second safety exit for kitchen
- Damp course for rear wall of clubhouse (the damp is responsible for the large number of woodlice). The rear wall is separated from the wall of the next property by a small gap.
- New felting for clubhouse roof
- Moving the water tank to the corner of the green from its current position in what would be the new entrance to the Club.

A more ambitious long-term plan would be to knock the men’s and ladies’ changing rooms down and replace them with a new two storey building, complete with changing rooms and toilets, which could also be used for functions. This would probably cost about £150,000, and would obviously need planning permission.

Access support from national governing bodies and local authorities

The report found that accessing support from NGAs and local authorities was another important thing to do. Given our local council’s financial position, it is unlikely that our Club would get much support from them. Sport England and Bowls England run courses in financial management – so far, it hasn’t been necessary to send anyone on a course like this but it may be necessary if Roger were no longer able to continue in his role.

Final word

Roger emphasised that any strategic development needs to be done by a team of members, not just one person. He recommended setting up three sub-committees: one for club development (to produce a business plan for redevelopment of the Club), one for recruitment and retention, and one for financial management. Roger would be prepared to run the development and financial management sub-committees (at least for now), while Miriam would

run the recruitment and retention sub-committee. Geoff Holmes offered to help Miriam with recruitment/retention.

Since volunteer support is so critical to the Club's success, we need to consider how to recruit more volunteers to organise/help with Club activities. Anyone who does significant work for the Club ought to be rewarded for their efforts – at the moment, anyone who comes into this category gets their membership paid. Roger felt this should be continued, provided that the Club can afford it. It would also be a good idea to do a skills audit to find out areas of expertise that members have.

Roger's talk was followed by a general discussion covering the following topics:

- Purchase of a croquet set
- Encouragement of new members, e.g. through Club evenings/rollups
- The future of Finals Day (the general feeling at the AGM was that it should be discontinued).

These matters would be discussed further by the new committee.

John McDonald thanked everyone for coming, and closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

Date of next AGM

The date of the next AGM is to be confirmed.