

Begbrook Green Bowling Club

AGM: Tuesday 25th November 2024

Thank you all for coming. I should like to start the proceedings this evening by observing a minute's silence for those members and former members of the club who have died in the past year. Would you all please stand and remember.

Dave Quick, John Kenvin, Dave Simeons. Ken Blanchard

Thank you. Returning to the Agenda

Apologies for absence

Minutes of AGM from 2023

Adoption of Minutes

Matters Arising: Approval of 2023 accounts

Chairman's Address

The purpose of the AGM is to reflect on the past year, to discuss any resolutions and to elect the officers for the next year. This is my sixth year as Chairman, and it is common practice after three years to stand down and hand over to a new person with new energy and fresh ideas. I have said previously that I will stay on until the issues raised by Bristol City Council and their Parks initiative have reached a conclusion.

However, I note that nobody has put their name forward and therefore, assuming you are happy for me to continue, I shall be pleased to carry on for the coming year, although it would be sensible for all concerned if I stood aside at the end of this year and handed over the reins to someone else – assuming the business with BCC has been concluded.

At today's meeting, I should like to focus on three topics:

1. Bristol City Council
2. The past Bowls Season
3. Management of the Club

Bristol City Council

To remind long standing members and for the benefit of new members, the green, surrounds and club house are owned by Bristol City Council (BCC). The club financed the changing room and white container from club funds.

In May 2018, BCC adopted a proposal to operate "chargeable sports facilities and other facilities in public parks only when they generate no cost to the council".

Basically, this affects football, cricket and bowls clubs who have all been, and continue at present, to be subsidised by the council.

As a part of this enforced process, BGBC submitted an expression of interest to manage the site. Our club was the only body who submitted an expression of interest in the facilities here. This process had stalled due to covid, lack of council employees, local elections etc. The list goes on while we sit in limbo.

We now have a choice:

- A. Carry on renting the site at an estimated annual cost of somewhere in the region of £1,500 and carrying out the maintenance of the green, or
- B. Taking out a Sports Asset Transfer lease on the property at a peppercorn rent for the first 5 years. The lease is almost certainly going to be for a term of 25 years.

The committee decided that the latter course of action was the sensible way forward for the following reasons:

1. Currently and under scenario A, we have no security of tenure from one year to the next. Whilst unlikely, BCC could terminate our presence if an alternative proposition for the site was advocated. A long-term lease would guarantee our future.
2. Financially, the club would save money on the annual rental (£7,500 over 5 years). In the draft lease the peppercorn rent is stated at £0. In addition, the council has offered an olive branch to the tune of £60,000 to improve the facilities on the site.
3. The improved facilities will help the club to retain members and improve the appeal of the club to new entrants.

So where are we in this process.

The club has had to jump through a number of hoops to satisfy BCC that we are a fit and proper body to be entrusted with what is, and will remain, a council asset

The club has had to agree a Service Level Agreement (referred to as a SLA) to maintain the site. Clearly the objective is to ensure the club maintains the landlord's property. However, the SLA goes beyond this simple objective as BCC tries to push the council's responsibilities on social well-being onto the club, which while distasteful, is council politics. We were understandably concerned that this could result in a situation similar to Ardagh where the "café" has taken over the site, or at Eastville where the Friends of Eastville Park are heavily involved, or at the City and Port of Bristol where the adjacent social club held the whip hand and has resulted in the demise of that club. However, we have been assured that as we will be the leaseholders, we will make all the decisions and not some third party that might try to muscle in.

Secondly the club has had to engage with a consultancy named Community Matters who have scrutinised documents provided by the club to ensure we have management systems in place to comply with current legislation and our CASC status. The documents referred to include our constitution, minutes of our AGM and 12 months committee meetings, insurance, safeguarding, audited accounts, licences, data protection policy and health and safety – 34 documents at the last

count. We now have a certificate saying BGBC has achieved the PreVisible Quality Mark which is valid for 3 years. This process was a necessary prerequisite before BCC would consider entering into a lease, and more importantly, part with council tax money. Needless to say, as we have achieved our objective, we shall not be renewing in 3 years' time.

Thirdly, and on our behalf, BCC have applied for and advertised a Public Open Space disposal notice for a small parcel of land to the north of the green currently part of Begbrook park. No objections were raised and the ground will be included in the plan accompanying the lease.

Finally, we have seen copies of the lease which appear fairly straight forward and intend to enter into in good faith. The lease is currently with BCC solicitors and is expected to complete before Christmas. From a practical stand point, this means the council will no longer maintain the green and we shall have to employ a contractor from circa 1st January 2025.

In anticipation of BCC granting the "olive branch" money, a sub-committee has been formed to oversee the implementation of the proposals agreed with the council. The money has to be spent within an 18 month time frame and so on the signing of the lease the club needs to push ahead with a sense of urgency. The proposals include:

- Apply for a club premises licence to allow the sale of alcoholic drinks. You will have observed from our new bar, appropriately named Gary's bar, we have already pushed ahead with this item from our own funds and hope to recover the costs in due course.
- In addition, hollow tine and raise the rink margins on two sides.
- Fence off the land in Begbrook Park between the beech hedge and the public road north of the site.
- Strip soils, make hardstanding, move the white container and purchase an additional container.
- Then purchase and erect a semi-permanent marquee with a design life of 30 years on the newly acquired land.

It should be noted the committee's preferred option was to put the money towards building a new larger clubhouse to meet the needs of our membership which has grown over the years. However, BCC would not permit the use of public money to be spent on permanent buildings as the money is intended to maintain and refresh existing property having been neglected for so long, Our new clubhouse will have to wait for another day. If any more of you want to get involved in this project you are more than welcome and you should come and see me after the meeting.

Moving on:

The Bowls Season

The club has had mixed success on the playing front. I am please to report that the men's Oaks team gained promotion to Division 2 as champions. However, this achievement was to some extent at the expense of the Willows who unfortunately

were relegated. However, the club has some fine players coming through the ranks and I would not be surprised to see them regain their rightful position next year.

I have to report further disappointing news and record that the ladies team were also relegated, but again there were extenuating circumstances with the availability of players.

The Friday triples league continues to grow in stature and is attracting a lot of the better players in the Bristol area. It is therefore some credit to the team that they managed fourth position.

Finally, to end on a brighter note, our team in the St Andrews Floodlit league won their section and gained promotion and a tidy sum of money into the bargain.

The friendly matches also attracted a lot of interest this year and for the first time, on a couple of days, we played both a home and away match on the same day raising 9 rinks on each occasion. In all, we played 69 matches including new or newish fixtures against Chepstow, Cinderford, Lydney and Weston. In order to cope with the demand, about 10 reserve games were also arranged and I trust players enjoyed the experience. Thank you, Ken Willcox, our fixture secretary, for another full program. I think Colin Dark has the statistics, so I don't want to reveal the results. Thank you Colin. It would be remiss of me not to mention our match day captains referred to by the initials COD's – or cods. I shall be recruiting more next season so don't be like a fish out of water, step forward. Thank you also to Ann Sedman for collating the google form availability sheets displayed at this meeting and maintaining the web site. Ann is particularly pleased that the new booking system, introduced in parallel with the paper system at the end of last season, has taken off largely without mishaps or hiccups and will be continued next year.

The club also had some internal games including the mens v women – I have conveniently forgotten the result, but does it matter – well yes it does!!! Also the Fun and Open Day which again attracted 16 entries and full use of the green.

Our internal championship games were well organised – thank you Jane Nicholls – and the presentation took place last Sunday at the BAWA club. The winners' names will be displayed on the boards in the clubhouse for all to see in perpetuity.

Also, I must mention our club night which took place every Tuesday evening and was well supported by our newer members. I look forward to seeing you all again next season. Thank you, Ken Maynard, for organising and others who stepped in at short notice.

You will see from the foregoing that the club offers plenty of scope to play throughout the summer so please continue to take advantage. These opportunities don't happen by chance. It begins with a friendly introduction to the club and coaching. This year we again ran Bowls Big Weekend and our thanks go to Ken Willcox and Jane Warburton for their coaching.

Finally, if you can't play bowls, you can always meet up with friends at our coffee mornings, come to our bingo and quiz nights (thanks to Suzanne, Mary and Gerry) or have number in our weekly bonus ball draw (thanks to Sue).

Management of the Club

You will recall that at the outset, I wanted to focus on three topics, The final one being the management of the club.

I draw your attention to copies of our constitution which have been circulating around the room. The committee is charged to review the constitution annually which we have done every year I have been chairman. The constitution allows the committee to make minor changes to the constitution without reference to the membership. There are some minor changes again this year shown in green on the document. These take account of the recommendations following the PreVisible Assessment, the annual membership renewal date of 1 February brought forward to comply with the GBA, and references to the requirements now that we have a sale of alcohol licence. These will be passed at the first meeting of the new committee, but if anybody has any comments, please voice them.

Begbrook Green is a members club and run by volunteers. There are no paid officials. I therefore thank you all, and in particular the committee, for your time and hard work throughout the year. I am reminded of the old testament reading where the old man gave a bundle of sticks to each of his nine sons in turn. Of course, none could break the bundle, but when the old man broke the bundle and gave each son a stick the task became easy. This is true in most walks of life and bowls is no exception. I therefore urge all of you to help in some small way to ease the burden for all. I have observed the bowls clubs in the Bristol area for a number of years and it is apparent that the strongest and successful clubs have a strong management team and willing volunteers. Those that don't fall by the wayside, witness Ardagh and City & Port of Bristol.

Special thanks

With that in mind, I would like to thank two of our members who have contributed greatly to the club over the years and have now decided to step down.

Roger Ferguson

First up, Roger Ferguson. Roger joined in 2013 and was elected Chairman at the 2013 AGM and carried on until 2016. Roger was Sunday Captain in 2018 and 2019 and then B Team League Captain from 2020 to 2022 and continued to be a valued committee member. More recently, Roger has continued to be one of our friendly team Match Day Captain whenever asked without exception. Roger has also been our rep with Bristol County and the Men's League for many years. I understand Roger has just been elected as an independent member and so will continue his work on the committee. Finally, Roger was responsible at considerable personal cost, to attract sponsorship from Willow Chiropractic. On behalf of the club, I should like to thank Roger for his dedication to the cause and make a small presentation as a token of our appreciation.

Ken Maynard.

Second up, Ken Maynard. Ken joined the club in 2006 and took over as Acting Treasurer on 29th June 2007, when, the then Treasurer resigned. He was then the Treasurer until 2019 – 12 years. Ken continued as a Committee Member from 2020 to the present date. Ken also plays a mean game of bowls and is a regular member of the league teams. I have already mentioned that Ken has organised livewire on our club night for a number of years. Also, if you won one of this years internal club competitions, Ken produced the winner's certificates.

Honorary membership is the highest distinction that a club may bestow and should be conferred only in exceptional cases. Since the club's inception in 1994, only 4 other playing members have been afforded this title. Ken has been, and continues to be, a highly valued and respected long standing member of this club, and for these reasons the committee is unanimous in its decision to make a Ken an honorary member of Begbrook Green. Ken, thank you for all your contributions and hard work over the years. Please come forward and accept this small token of our appreciation to accompany the Bristol Blue inkwell and pen, presented in recognition of your many years as Treasurer on Thursday 5th Dec 2019.

I now hand over to Dave Parker – our Treasurer.

John Sedman, Chair