

## Minutes from the Young Member Forum meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June in the Garden Room



Forum: Dominic Vincent, Emily Bacon, Emma Powell, Graham Huntingford, Justin Colver, Katy Preston, Marc Newey, Peter Crocombe

In attendance: Alan Jenkins (part), Simon Baker, Dan Lott, Tristan McIlroy, Mariya Vlaykova

Apologies: Joy Stevens, Olivia Huxtable

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

AJ informed the Forum that he unfortunately had to leave before 7pm.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

All Members around the table introduced themselves.

AJ welcomed everybody and talked about the idea behind the Forum. AJ has always been keen to make sure that Young and New Members can make full use of their membership. He also wanted that Young Members had a channel to communicate with the Management and the Board.

AJ and MN felt that the YMF could be an effective way to improve the interaction and communication between the Board and Members aged 18 to 35. AJ assured Members that the Board very much values both the Young and Senior Member Forums. He thanked all Members for volunteering to be part of the Forum. AJ advised that the change may not be immediate or substantial, but he hoped that some very useful outcomes will come in due course.

#### Questions:

JC queried if freezing membership as many Gym Groups has done during the pandemic had been an option. MN explained that financially it has not been. Even though the Management has operated successfully during the last year, the Club relies on the membership subscription and secondary spending. EB commented that the Club had an extended virtual offering free of charge during the lockdown and other gyms that had done so were charging.

MN said that they had tried to keep Members engaged through the lockdown. AJ explained that the main difference between Roehampton Club and the Gym Groups Virgin, David Lloyds and others was that their members were not shareholders. AJ said that since 1989 when Members bought Roehampton Club from the Miller brothers, the Club has operated relying on the member subscriptions and never had a reserve. The subscription money should last for the whole year in addition to the income for the secondary spending. All capital developments were funded by bank loans. Considering the unprecedented situation last year and the real concerns of the Board and the Finance Committee about the ongoing concern at the end of 2020, the Board had to disregard any option of refunding subscriptions. MN added that this decision was for the right reasons and had enabled the Management to keep the facilities operating and in a good shape, plus to retain the vast majority of the staff. MN said that the Board was grateful to the membership for their loyal support.

AJ thanked the Forum and hoped that it would be successful and valued.

*AJ left at 6.50 pm.*

### **3. DISCUSSION/ SUGGESTION**

MN started the discussion by asking Forum Members what they think that the Club is doing well and what could be improved. He reiterated that together with GH, they will pass on the feedback to the Board.

DV thought that sport was excellent – level and facilities. The social side was somewhat lacking.

Younger Members did not see the Club as a destination for a social gathering with friends. The ambience was not inviting, the food offering was “unexciting”. However, an improvement in the food quality has been recently noticed.

MN agreed with the view about the Clubhouse and that the House Committee had identified the key areas that have to improve. AJ and other Directors were very keen to prioritise the Clubhouse redevelopment. The Clubhouse had been designed with one big room for 200 people or three rooms for smaller functions. A lot of the secondary income was coming from Members and sections renting the rooms. Due to Covid, Management had to reconsider the way the Club was operating and currently, the Garden Restaurant was back to being a dining area. The décor had been changed and with the new French Executive Chef, MN was hoping more Members to consider the Club as a social destination.

MN confirmed that the Board was aware that they have to work on making the social area of the Clubhouse more welcoming and attractive. He talked about the suggestion from Nik Snapes to convert the Club Café to a Young Member area on some evenings and offer table tennis, pool table and table football.

EB thought that the sitting capacity, especially when is colder was not sufficient. SB reported that they have considered turning the Club Café into a Sports Café and having draft beer taps, a more relaxed and informal environment.

**YMF liked the idea of having a separate area in the evening (so they do not have to socialise at the same place where their parents were) but considered that the décor and the ambience were very important as if it was a canteen style venue will not attract Young Members.**

GH suggested putting screens on the piazza for big sports events, so Members can gather to socialise and have a drink while watching sport. JC proposed to do it during Wimbledon. MN reported that they had tried this a few years ago. It should be dark for the screens to be seen properly otherwise there is a glare. **MN will consider again.**

EB talked about connecting Members and she gave an example with Paul Seddon who was coaching her and another girl with a similar ability and has facilitated their contact details exchange. EB also considered that when you know who else is attending an event, you are more likely to take part in it. If you do not know anyone, you will probably find an excuse to not participate. DL agreed that the coaches deal with so many Members that it is easier for them to connect people. He said that initially he always invites new Members to Monday Tennis so he can assess their level and if it is the right format for them.

EP and KP considered that a similar golf event is needed. There were not enough weekend Roll ups for Young Lady Golfers or Stablefords. TMI commented that with the idea of IGC, there were very exciting opportunities. They hopefully will be able to schedule golf and social events at the end of 2022. Plus, Members with different handicap and abilities would be able to play. TMI agreed that at the moment Young Ladies Golf was not well attended as a whole. He has addressed the issue by fast tracking a couple of young ladies' golfers. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, he has not seen the benefits of them yet. In addition, Roehampton Club is a unique multi sports club and when good Young Lady Golfers are looking to join a club, they will most likely join a traditional golf club as Royal Mid Surrey GC or Royal Wimbledon. We need to work on the multi-sports attraction.

TMI said that Club Stablefords and Mixed Competitions will be starting soon. There will be tester golf evenings for traditionally non golf Members. The Golf Committee has some restrictions about the ability of the golfers playing on weekends and young lady golfers are mainly available to play on weekends. **TMI will work on a strategy to get them more involved.**

MN liked the idea of tester sessions for the 18-35 age group and suggested YMF Members led on it. They could invite other members for 3 – 4 holes and link it with drinks afterwards. PC thought that Texas Scramble is the best stress-free golf format, played as a team when everyone enjoys the game. The rest of the group agreed with the idea.

JC informed the YMF that he just became a part of the What's app group of 30 other Members who communicate with each other to find a playing partner.

TMI talked about the different What's app groups around the Club and if they could coordinate all those bubbles to use as a communication channel. DL advised that the issue that they had experienced within the tennis sections was that the Members who administrate the What's app groups had their preferences who to play with according to their standards.

MN liked the idea of the What's app groups and having a Club Rep on them who can circulate the Club's information.

**YMF considered that after the Golf or Tennis Induction, Members should be made aware of the available What's app groups with Members with similar tennis standard or golf ability for general play.**

DL reported that they have launched a new app for padel tennis that allows Members to book lessons and group sessions online or via the app. It allows Members to search by time or by a coach. DL was testing it with padel tennis and hoped to use it for tennis also. Currently, there were free taster sessions for padel and Club afternoon on Sunday.

**MN asked DL to organise a padel tennis taster session for Members 18-35.**

DL

EP suggested improving the female clothing offering in the Pro Shop. EP and KP considered that there were not any Young Ladies Golf clothes available. MN informed them that there were two female assistants; Tilly, who was responsible for the racket's equipment and clothes and Nicole, the new golf pro who will buy the ladies lines in the Sports Shop. DL confirmed that Tilly was signing an account with Lululemon, and their stock will be soon available in the Shop.

PC considered that their generation prefers to buy online. He believed that the offering in the Sports Shop has definitely improved a lot and Ricky had done an incredible job. DV thought that the Pro Shop stock was expensive.

MN said that he will ask **Ricky Pharo to contact YMF Members and get their feedback on what brands and offering they would like to see in the Sports Shop**. EB liked the idea because she prefers to try the clothes before buying them.

RP/MN

PC loved everything about the Club. He was very happy with the sporting facilities, but he thought that the guests fees could be reduced. PC enjoyed showing the Club and the amazing facilities and felt that cheaper guest's fees will encourage more Members to bring potentially New Members. KP considered that the guest fees for those under 25 were very good value.

MN responded that on one side, they want Members to bring guests and friends who then potentially become Prospective Members, but on the other side, the Club has a limited capacity. Currently, over three and a half thousand of the five thousand Members were using the Club on a regular basis. He promised to look at **benchmarking the guests' fees with the other clubs and then to consider if they should offer any incentives for Members who pay for their guests**.

TMI/MN

**YMF considered that tennis guests fees should be cheaper at the off peak times on the day considering that often the courts are empty.**

PC queried about the Club's vision about Members aged 30 -35. He said that it was very difficult for Members from that demographic to support their young families, continue to live in London near the Club without the financial help of their parents. The Club was an excellent value for under 30s, but it was harder and harder each year for 30-35 old.

GH asked the Forum Members to consider that whenever they mention anything about discounts for their age group, there is also an elderly group of Members who probably think that they should have a discount considering that their pension is their only income. He

assured young Members that the Board has always in mind the best interest of the whole membership.

PC queried about croquet and for the opportunities Members 18-35 to play. TMI reported that the Croquet section was thriving. It has increased its membership as requested by the Board. Currently, they were trying to create a junior section and had 13-14 year olds playing croquet. TMI reminded that they have organised several social croquet evenings and events including Croquet and Cocktails. He thought that Members could learn to play croquet easily. **TMI will organise similar events for the Young Members.**

TMI

JC suggested a Drinks Car or better halfway house facilities on the course. MN responded that the Board had looked at it, but it was very expensive (£140k) to provide power through the golf course to the hut. In addition, there was the staff cost, a minimum of two shifts per day.

JC second idea for improvement was a Racketlon. MN said that it had been considered and Paul Lindsay will organise it. A racket lawn for table tennis, badminton, squash, and tennis. MN said that the Club had hosted the London Open and will host it again when possible. **Racket Lawn Event will be part of the Club's diary going forward.**

DL

KP thought that the Club was a very good value considering the offering. She believed that more work on building community groups within the Club should be done. The Club needs better working space where Members can work. SB reported that they have looked at the Reading Room and how it could be transformed into a kind of a business lounge. Juice Bar could also be used as a working space. MN said that when the working Members have to talk to someone, they are inevitably loud because of the headphones and disturb the others. MN agreed that they should look Ideally at **a set room that could be bookable per hour with pods, soundproof if possible.**

SB

DV considered that many Young Members get their first job through someone from the Club. He suggested creating a career network for Young Members. **MN liked the idea and said that they will give the opportunity to Members to volunteer.**

MN

PC reiterated how much he loves the Club and how wisely the Board and the management invest in new facilities, he liked the vision and where the Club was going. MN talked about the IGC, a centre next to the Practice Ground, similar to the ITC. It will be open all year round and will have the best simulators called Trackman. Wandsworth Planners were supportive of the idea. This project is planned to be done by the end of 2022, subject to planning approval.

MN reported that they were waiting for planning permission for a second seasonal Airhall on tennis courts 7-10. If approval is granted the Club will have 10 tennis indoor courts from October to April.

### 3.1 Communication and social media

YMF preferred to have several emails with summarising attractive subject line than to read the Recorder. All events to be on the website on the calendar with options to choose the sports you are interested in and to synchronise with the personal calendars.

SB talked about the different booking systems for the different sports and that they are not compatible with each other or with ESP (the main membership system that the Club uses). It is a very expensive project that they look at – to find a bespoke system for the Club's needs. There were a few good American systems, but their support system was overseas.

### **3.2 Health Club dry and wet activities**

YMF liked the idea of an outdoor pool bar.

### **3.3 Golf, rackets, and other sports**

More golf events for Young Lady Golfers or Mixed.

Coaches and Pros to continue facilitating the introduction of Young Members with similar abilities to play sport together.

TMI to organise croquet events and introduce the sport to Young Member.

EP queried about opportunities for Young Members who were taking coaches courses to do their practice in the Club and probably help with the coaching. MN confirmed that it was possible and DL and TMI could be contacted.

DL/TM/LF

### **3.4 Social Events and F&B**

The YMF considered that a more inviting ambience is needed in the F&B areas. It was proposed to have evenings with live music (acoustic guitar or piano). Social evenings after a sports event to be organised. Different areas to be used for different social events linked with a sports theme.

DL reported that he was organising with Nik Snapes a social event on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June (mid week Club championships) in the Pool BBQ area with live music, a meal, and a cocktail bar.

Young Members were pleased with 18-35 Tennis Evenings on Mondays and thought that more of that kind should be organised.

EP and EB thought that half or discounted price nights should be organised on Wednesdays or Thursdays for Young Members.

The YMF agreed that incentives should be offered to Young Members to attract them.

SB/ND

### **3.5 Environmentally friendly and sustainable practices**

SB talked about the initiatives that the Club has undertaken to be more sustainable and environmentally friendly such as giving Members non plastic bottles for water and stop using the single use plastic water cups; solar panels on the new roof of the Health Club plus plans to install more; borehole for irrigation; all lights in the Club are LED; induction hobs in the Kitchen; electric chargers.

MN informed YMF that there is an initiative through David Burditt - two students from Kingston University will go around the golf course and will map all trees and look at the tree carbon sequestration.

He also talked about the initiatives on the golf course including the bug hotels and the bees on the back of the 16<sup>th</sup> tee. The honey from the golf course is used in the Kitchen.

MN said that the Environmental Committee is very important for the Club and asked Members to let SB know any suggestions or initiatives.

JC reported that the water fountain on the 7<sup>th</sup> tee was not powerful enough. EB suggested having more water fountains around the Club and definitely near tennis courts 11-14.

**TMI/ SB**

**4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** TBC – Tuesday or Thursday in September 2021 at 6.30pm.