

YOUNG MEMBER FORUM MEETING
25th January in the Garden Room/ via Zoom
at 6.30pm

Forum: Marc Newey, Joy Stevens, Emily Bacon (part), Emma Powell (part)

In attendance: Simon Baker, Dan Lott, Tristan McIlroy, Nicki Davis, Mariya Vlaykova

Apologies: Justin Colver, Peter Crocombe, Cameron Fraser, Graham Huntingford, Olivia Huxtable, Katy Preston, Dominic Vincent, Ricky Pharo

The apologies were noted.

Considering that the two Members present had to leave at 7pm, MN handed over to EP and EB to share their comments.

Golf

EP queried if any golf packages for ten rounds were considered. MN responded that the golf guest fees were reduced by 50% from November until the end of March because guests can only play after midday.

EP asked if that included the weekends. TM reiterated that guest fees for golf have had been reduced by 50% over the winter period to compensate for the fact that guests were not able to play before midday and that included weekends.

TM reported that some golf events for those Members under the age of 35 will be arranged during the summer, social opportunities to play golf to encourage them to play more golf. They will likely be on Thursdays, subject to final arrangements being approved by the Golf Committee.

EP said that she was happy to help with the social golf and young Members without golf membership. TM thanked her and said that they would look to arrange coaching sessions (on course/practice areas) for female Members under the age of 35, particularly those who are currently non-golf Members. He would liaise with Ricky Pharo (Head Professional) and see if Nicole Stewart (PGA Pro) would be able to help.

RP/TM

EB queried if non members were allowed to have tuition in the Club. TM confirmed that they were allowed but had to pay a fee.

Croquet

TM reported that they were looking at dates in the summer to organise Croquet and Cocktails events for Members under the age of 35.

Rackets Sports

Tennis

DL confirmed that social tennis on Monday evenings continued to be popular.

He informed the Forum Members that the Club had received planning permission for the second seasonal airhall on courts 7 to 10. The works will start in the summer when the grass courts were open. The tennis surface of courts 7-10 will be the same as in the ITC – proflex. Court 10 will become a double court and the tennis will be much more accessible next winter with ten indoor courts.

Pickleball

DL reported that they have introduced pickleball to the membership and had organised a couple of trial sessions. He was working with Louis to organise a taster session, especially for younger adults on weekends. The first one will be on 27th February. If young Members enjoy playing pickleball, DL consider having a pickleball session on the last Monday of the month instead of tennis. The general feedback from Members was very positive about pickleball.

DL talked about padel tennis and pickleball becoming very popular sports around the world and he was confident that the UK will follow the trend.

EB queried if there was any decision regarding reduced price tennis guest fee when a Member has three guests playing on the same court. DL responded that they had discussed it, however, with the reduced number of available courts during the winter and increased demand, they did not want to encourage more guests. MN added that he could consider a promotion for a court instead per guest for the next summer but should be for all Members and not only for under 35s. He thought that the best way to do it was to keep the same guest fee for the first guest, reduce for the second and substantially reduce it for the third.

DL/MN

F&B

SB reported that they continued to work with the House Committee and Edge on the designs for the refurbishment of the Club Café and the business pods in the Reading Room. They have decided to go ahead with repairing the existing equipment in the Club Café and when the new Executive Chef joined the Club, they would review the layout.

Regarding the business pods, they were working on the best design to fit four single and one double soundproof pods in the Reading Room. They had looked at the outdoor facilities to potentially install business pods, but the House Committee had considered that it would not be the best use of the outdoor areas and had recommended the Bandstand as an area that potentially could be hired for meetings.

EP queried if there was an update on the cost of renting a business pod. MN responded that the price would depend on the cost of the pods. If Members would like to use it for an hour, it will be for free, but if they want to use it for a couple of hours, then they should pre book and pay for it. MN reiterated that he considered the pods as a service but each pod cost circa £9k.

ND reported that they had reintroduced the kids' buffet in the Club Café on weekends to reduce the waiting time for food during the busiest times.

Taking on board Member feedback about the cost of the Carvery, they have reduced the prices. Children under 6 years were eating for free and juniors between 6 and 12 for £16. The Club will offer Sunday Carvery generally on the first week of the month starting on 6th February.

ND presented the Spring Social Scene and the events that they were organising. She recommended for mothers with children or young ladies the self defence training for women on 21st May between 1-3.30pm.

MN said that it was good that the Club could organise social events again. They were cautious with the number of attendees but were gradually welcoming back more Members.

As reported, the Club was proceeding with the business pods so Members could come to work for a couple of hours and then enjoy the sports facilities.

MN thanked EB and EP for joining the meeting and confirmed that the next meeting will be in March - April.

EB and EP apologised and left the meeting at 7pm.

JS commented that it was a shame that more young Members did not join the meeting. She considered that they should not lose the momentum.

JS queried about the social media presence. MN responded that he had asked Helen Bolt (Membership and Marketing Manager) and Lottie Jane (Marketing and Communication Assistant) to work more actively on that and will follow up with them.

LJ/HB

JS considered that more social media presence was needed. It was the easiest way to reach many Members. She also thought that more information should be posted with booking details, dates, and times of how Members could attend. JS reminded that at the last meeting they had discussed that Young Members do not go through all information and wanted everything in one place.

MN agreed that the Club could be more proactive and suggested inviting Lottie to the next meeting to discuss with Forum Members how actively the Club communicates with them.

LJ

MN also talked about how much effort the teams put to organise different events (sports, social) and building up to regular groups who attend those events.

JS said that it would also show the Members under the age of 35 that the Club listens to them and takes their ideas on board.

JS added that it was important to add "value for money". **Top ten events** for Members under the age of 35 and emphasise the free ones as tennis on Monday evening, spin class on Wednesday morning, pickleball on Sunday afternoon, etc.

MN said that currently, the value of the membership for Members under 35 who use regularly the Club was excellent. Their subscriptions were substantially reduced, therefore, when considering offers and discounts they always applied them for the whole membership. MN reiterated that he was supportive of specially targeted promotions that increased participation or added to that “value for money”.

DL stated that the Club did not operate any differently from any other sports club and the Club’s fees were compatible with the rest of the retailers. Encouraging more guests who were allowed a maximum of six sports visits per year and impacting the Club’s operations (taking a car space, using the changing rooms, etc) was a no brainer. DL considered that it was better to add value – guests to come to play tennis and to be allowed to use the swimming pool for example. DL reiterated that the tennis guest fee in Devon was £10 and, in the Club, including the premium facilities and maintenance £16. He did not think that the Club was expensive.

TM queried how many Prospective Members (PM) on the waiting list were of age under 35 compared to the rest of the age groups who were willing to pay full fees and join the Club. MN responded that approximately five out of the 50 attending the PM meeting were under 35. Interestingly, all those five PMs were willing to join as soon as possible and were considering that the Club was of amazing value.

MN recapped that they had to promote what good value the Club was, promote certain classes and events at certain times that would fit around the average working young Adults (9am to 5.30pm), being mindful of transport issues for Members to come to use the Club or to go to work after attending a class.

ALL

DL considered that the business pods will be popular not only with the Members aged under 35 but with many other Members who had business abroad or had flexible working hours. He considered that there should be similar promotions for the different demographic groups and a strategy how efficiently to communicate with the different groups (push notifications, emails, Recorder). DL believed that it was time consuming to try to build all those small groups and instead the Club should concentrate to communicate efficiently and providing the information. Members could then decide how they prefer to get the new information.

Following DL’s view, JS suggested “top ten” for Members of which two-three to target under the age of 35.

TM added that people would continue to adjust to working differently and currently, the weekly offering had become more important (what they can do before or after work). He believed that they should allow things to settle down before deciding what changes to make

SB endorsed TM’s view and considered that they will have a better idea of how Members will use the Club and about programming different activities by April – May to mid-year. He also agreed that they should theme the promotions.

JS reiterated that the Club did not need to promote only new events and classes, it could be something that was already happening like a spin class on Wednesday, but it was important to put out the message.

TM said that for young Members was important to know that their friends would be attending, and they could socialise with people they knew. Under 35s need a “hook” to commit.

DL informed the Forum that he was looking to put a cardio tennis session early morning in the week at about 7am indoors. He considered that it would be popular with Members aged under 35.

MN thanked all participants and concluded the meeting at 7.30pm.

Date of next meeting: TBC – March/April 2022