

Highbury Fields Tennis Steering Group

Meeting: Monday 30th July 2012 , 8pm, Highbury Barn

Present: Jill McLaughlin, Hitesh Soma, Jon-Paul Mbaka, Manu Ducrocq, Nigel Billen, Sally Kinnes, Viren Soma, Wendy Proudfoot , Susannah Oxley

Apologies for absence: Simon Moore

Agenda

- Minutes and matters arising
- Feedback on events and activities over last 2 months.
- Islington tennis development group - update
- HFTSG - website and advertising tennis activity
- Highbury Tennis Club - Understanding its current role and scope and ambitions. (Wendy Proudfoot, Simon Moore)
- Membership and Promotion of HFTSG
- Feedback on courts, booking system. (all)
- A.O.B

Minutes and matters arising: The minutes of the last meeting were approved and Susannah Oxley was welcomed to the group. Susannah joins the committee as representative of the club's Women's Team.

Feedback on events and activities over last 2 months: Those present recapped on the major events of the early summer. All remarked on the effect of the rain and the loss of court time and revenues.

Wendy said that the annual Summer Tournament had run successfully again and for the first time under the umbrella of the Highbury Tennis Club which had helped with the financial administration. She outlined the club's team strategy and the goal of being "the best you can be".

Hitesh noted the effect of the rain on courses and lessons but commented that the rain check procedure through the Hut had been flexible and worked well.

Nigel mentioned that Local Tennis Leagues had received a small grant from the LTA, a sign of the LTA's growing focus on local competition on public courts. He noted that that the league had not been able to find an effective way of using pre-booked courts for league players and he and Sally were monitoring the effect this would have.

Jill said that new notices had produced an encouraging turn out for the Saturday Morning Mix In sessions with around 24 regulars representing a wide range of ages and ability. She was grateful to the change in the timing of the men's training sessions which had allowed some of the men to join the mix-in. She advised that the standard charge of £4.50 per week was creating a float which would be used to cover quieter weeks in the winter. She raised a concern that in the winter when the weather was often not inspiring paying up front would be difficult and it may well be unclear as to whether a booking should be cancelled if no one turned up in poor weather.

Islington tennis development group (this discussion took in a discussion of membership criteria for the steering group): Jill noted the very positive response from Andrew Bedford, Principal Parks Manager at the Council who broadly offered the Steering Group the recognition it had been seeking. The committee welcomed the proposal that the Steering Group should be represented at the next meeting of the Islington Tennis Development Group.

Jill noted that the ITDG had, by and large, accepted suggestions the Group had made for changes to the job description for the Tennis Development Coordinator post (which had now been published).

There was broad discussion of how the Steering Group should be represented on the management committee and it was agreed that it would normally be the duty of the chair to do this sticking to the agreed policies of the group as a whole. Any issues arising that the steering group had not a position on could be referred back to the group for future discussion.

Andrew Bedford had raised the question of the steering group's constitution and membership. The committee restated the principle that membership should open to everyone. Work still has to be done to agree what the mechanism for the broader membership should be – possibilities include sign-up to a facebook page, or to a website.

It was agreed that in the future anyone wishing to be on the Steering Group committee should agree to the constitution as currently drawn up but that the committee structure should be flexible enough to include new tennis user groups and interests.

Website and advertising tennis activity (this discussion took in Membership and Promotion of HFTSG)

Nigel said he had begun the process of setting up a free website but that it would carry the generic address of the service provider unless we bought a web domain. It was agreed that the group would share the cost of buying a bespoke name. Wendy said that the club has acquired various addresses based on "highburytennis". It was agreed that the group should adopt "tennisonhighburyfields.co.uk". Nigel agreed to action this.

The site would contain basic information about the group and its constitution, links to those who work on the courts or provide tennis services, and copies of the minutes. In addition, the group would set up a Facebook page to carry news of activities, campaigns etc. Manu agreed to help Nigel with setting up a Facebook page.

There was discussion of the need of a physical sign and notice board at the courts, probably by the hut. Nigel suggested it should be accessible to anyone with a tennis message – "racket for sale", "hitting partner" wanted etc.

Highbury Tennis Club - Understanding its current role and scope and ambitions.

Wendy elaborated further on the ambitions of the club. These included managing the practicalities of competitive play in competitions such as the Middlesex League – the ability to book courts for matches and practice sessions.

The club had wider ambitions which included a club house and a web page and a mechanism for attracting funds to the courts. Wendy said the club wanted to be a community resource that could be used by anyone.

Nigel suggested that any new building on the fields should be seen as a resource for all users of sporting and other facilities on the Fields and not just for a specific club and Wendy agreed.

Feedback on courts, booking system. There was not time for further discussion of this topic but it will be raised again at a future meeting.

AOB

Viren raised the need for a storage box for mini tennis equipment etc. It was agreed that the Steering Group would champion this.

There was discussion of problems arising from a clash between the Hut team's need to clear the courts of players at the end of the evening and players' (including players in team matches) desire to finish matches and to get full use of their booked time. It was agreed that this was the sort of practical dilemma that the Steering Group could advise on at meetings with the ITDG and that the new Coordinator might have a role to play too.

It was pointed out that someone was advertising an over 30s group. The steering Group would try to reach out to the organisers. [Susannah could you make contact?! – Jill]

The state of the courts and the tentative plans for trimming back or crowning of trees was raised. The Steering Group wanted to know more and agreed we must be very careful about recommending anything that would damage trees especially if it wasn't part of a thought through, sustainable solution to the state of the courts. Sally advised that this was being considered by the Highbury Forum and she would raise this on behalf of the tennis group.

NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was set for September 10th but it is now proposed to be **Monday September 17th** to allow Jill time to report from a meeting about the courts with the Council's Tree Service department scheduled for Tuesday 11th September.