

9<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Members

As you are aware, there have been considerable upheavals involving the **Management of the Club**, so I am writing on behalf of the Committee, to explain how they will approach the task of running of the Club in the foreseeable future.

You will know that Jen Brogan, our Manager, handed in her notice and is leaving at the end of this week, and this was closely followed by our Chairman, Will Gurney, who resigned after a Committee Meeting last Tuesday.

The Committee is indebted to both of them for their efforts on behalf of the Club, and in particular for increasing the membership, and simplifying the subscriptions and payment methods that were long overdue. We hope that Will will continue to enjoy his tennis without the worries of Chairmanship, and trust that Jen has success in her new jobs. Hopefully, she will pop in from time to time.

- The Committee is pleased to say that considerable optimism has been generated, largely thanks to **Dominic Hall**. Dominic was one of our most promising juniors, and departed to University, before working abroad and in London. After many years, he has returned to Ivybridge and promptly joined the Club again, and for his sins he was persuaded to join the Committee. At the same time, he is currently setting up a new business, (operating from my old office on the first floor gallery), so he will have a presence at the Club for most of the time.
- With the onset of the problems, Dominic immediately grasped the nettle by speaking to the LTA and all the Committee Members, outlining his initial thoughts to take things forward. Much of it was based on pointers given by the LTA when they addressed the Committee recently on how to run a successful Club - ironically only days before we received the resignations....!
- **Chairman:** Understandably, Dominic does not wish to become the Chairman at this particular time whilst he is establishing his new business, so he has invited Alan Strowger and me to assist the Committee with the day to day work and legal advice, as he values our history and expertise. It is proposed to be an interim arrangement until the AGM in March 2016, but in the meantime, we will be making a concerted effort to recruit new members from all sections of the Club to join the existing Committee.
- **Priority:** It has been identified, that the first and most important task is to establish exactly where the Club stands financially since the last AGM, and our Accountants have been asked to come in during the next two weeks or so, to give us a Report before producing the year end Accounts on December 31st. It is worth noting that we were unable to replace Will as Treasurer, following his appointment as Chairman at the AGM, but for the time being, the Committee consider that it will not be prudent to seek anyone for this position until they have spoken to the Accountants.

- **The LTA** has indicated that further funding may be available towards the Management of the Club, but has made it clear that we must decide in which direction we want the Club to take, and suggested three options.

1. A Members only Club
2. A Non-members Club open to all - (similar to Tarka and Exeter)
3. A Hybrid of the two - (as we were in previous years, and favoured by the LTA).

- Furthermore, the LTA wishes us to address the **Management Structure** as soon as possible. Do we retain the Committee Structure with working groups, or do we favour a full time Club Manager who reports only to a Board of Directors? In terms of management, the LTA are keen that we have a frank and open forum with the members or working group, but only after we ascertain our current financial position. It is important to consider whether the model we choose is "fit for purpose" for the years to come, and for this reason, we will not be appointing a Manager to replace Jen, until we have had our deliberations and recommendations approved by the LTA, thus enabling us to establish the appropriate Terms and Conditions of Employment for this position.

- **Subscriptions and Direct Debits:** The Committee is afraid that some of the arrangements with subscriptions and direct debits will have to change temporarily, as they are based on payments for nine months only. They are proposing that the subscription will remain the same until the AGM in March, so will be asking those who paid by cheque, to renew their membership in January for the remaining three months, and likewise for those paying by direct debit to extend the period. They had anticipated holding an EGM in November, but for various reasons this did not prove possible within the time scales available. The Committee apologise for the inconvenience, but trust you understand their predicament and are happy to go along with the arrangements.

- It is proposed to sit down with the **Staff** to discuss their issues and suggestions, and Jean will be responsible for the staff and rotas, much as before. The Committee will also be talking to **TennisMad** to discuss new initiatives and a closer working relationship.

- The Committee do not wish to make panic decisions that they might regret later, and consider that the Club is now at a crossroads within its development. It is important to determine the Club's future with care, in the knowledge that the whole Leisure Industry is changing and becoming much harder to survive with limited finances and increased competition. In our case, there are now 56 indoor courts in Devon (we were the first), so we cannot be complacent or expect immunity from these pressures. There is also the spectre of extremely large maintenance bills in the future, which should not be ignored.

- The Club faces big challenges ahead, but the Committee is optimistic that they can overcome the current management difficulties, but only with the help and tolerance of everyone, and would welcome any new ideas and suggestions you may have to improve this great Club of ours.

Thank you for your understanding - I hope this explanation has helped.

Best wishes

**Steve Hitch** (President)

