**Minutes of the Norfolk Seniors Full Committee Meeting**

**held at 19:30 Friday 24 March 2023**

**at Wensum Valley Hotel Golf & Country Club, Beech Road, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6HP**

*Apologies* were received from RC, NI, MM

*Minutes* The minutes of the 8 February meeting had been circulated, corrected and placed on the Club website at <http://www.norfolk50ccc.co.uk/2023.html>. There were no matters arising.

*Future Ground Hire for Norfolk Seniors*

IP summarized the email he sent to Committee members on 2 March summarizing the difficulties experienced this year in finding reasonably-priced pitches from clubs willing and able to host our games. There are threecauses contributing to these problems: 1) increased costs; 2) decreased availability of suitable pitches; 3) decreases in volunteers to supervise hire on behalf of hosting club.

*Increased costs*

Fertilizer prices have risen nearly 30% since the start of 2022, following an 80% surge due to the Ukraine war. Double-digit inflation has led to increases in costs of repairs, maintenance, seed and loam. Landlords who own pitches (councils, etc) have increased their rates. Groundsmen are now asked for extra work in preparation and attendance at matches and are less willing than previously to take this on without financial recompense.

*Decreased availability of pitches*

There is now a Wednesday evening O40s league supported by the Norfolk Cricket Board (see <https://www.norfolkcricket.co.uk/play/competitions/over-40-cricket/>). Also, there is an increase in junior cricket played on weekday evenings. These two have combined to reduce the number of pitches available to host our midweek afternoon/evening games. Only by starting at 10:30 would it be possible to finish a Seniors’ game by 18:00, which was considered unrealistic.

*Decreases in volunteers to supervise hire on behalf of hosting club*

The reduction of several years in the number of volunteers in cricket is already a well-known problem, recognized both nationally (<https://www.ecb.co.uk/beinvolved/volunteering/volunteer-recruitment>) and in Norfolk (<https://www.norfolkcricket.co.uk/be-involved/volunteering/>). Volunteers run bars, liaise with the hiring Club’s captain, and organize teas, coffees, drinks, etc. Changes in work practices due to Covid mean that many employees are less inclined to have odd days of annual leave previously used for hosting midweek cricket matches. Many companies are now unwilling to allow employees time off work for cricket. The financial situation for many families is critical. All these factors add pressure to the already dwindling band of volunteers.

As a nomadic club we are especially vulnerable to these problems. Several Clubs have already quoted fees to host matches of £100/120 for this year, citing ground costs of £60/70 and Groundsman costs of £40/50. The estimated average cost per game for 2023 is now £155, requiring a match fee of £15 per player to break even. We have written evidence from other counties of similar problems. Essex have recently reported that this year has been the most difficult for pitch hire; they have had to shift a home game from Little Baddow CC after being asked for £175 for pitch hire for an O70s match. Cambridgeshire have had similar issues of finding suitable grounds in Cambridge and concur that costs are rising.

AG then asked the Committee for their ideas on how these problems could be addressed.

AK suggested that Captains should encourage each of their players to take responsibility to ask about the availability of their own club's ground and seek to host at least one match per season.

RC had written previously that on several occasions during this coming season both 50s teams will be playing on the same day. There is some doubt over whether we can raise two sides, especially considering similar problems in 2022. CP said that the Club should consider reverting to the situation where an O50s 2nd XI would play only friendly matches.

IP explored the pros and cons of reintroduction of an annual subscription. JP volunteered to address the additional administrative burden this would create. MB remarked that this would be substantial. Also, MB and AK felt that the current ‘pay when you play’ was fairer, especially to those players who only got an occasional game. It was decided that an increase in match fees would be a better solution. The consensus view was that if match fees were increased to £15 for season 2023, we might be able to avoid a further increase in 2024. MB suggested that such an increase in match fees would be the minimum required if the Club were to be able to support the costs of long-distance travel in play-off matches after the league season.

Sponsorship from outside sources was discussed. NI had written previously that trying to get sponsors on board in the current climate is very difficult. IP mentioned the possibility of using advertising rollers at home games.

A list of possible grounds for future hire that have not previously been used was discussed.

Caister was deemed too far for most visiting counties to reach easily. Mattishall and Cringleford are very expensive. Braddenham, North Runcton and Great Melton have no pitches available. Bircham, Swaffham, Thetford and Rocklands have problems finding volunteers to host. The ground quality at Bungay, Cringleford and Aylsham require confirmation. The grounds that were considered important to follow up were Thornham, East Harling and Swanton Morley.

It was agreed to continue with no annual subscription. It was agreed unanimously that match fees be raised to £15 for this 2023 season. JP agreed to notify all members.

*Any other business*

IP reported progress on two-tone blue track suits that GG will be asked to sublimate, whichg will be offered to players for £25 for top and bottom and £15 for single item. Captains to find out how many members want; IP will tell captains size availability. Money will be collected via match fees by MB.

IP agreed to seek further support for Seniors cricket from David Bowker and Lewis Denmark.

There being no further business, the Chairman, AG, declared the meeting closed at 21:24.