

Minutes DSTC EGM 5 February 2025

[Slides from the meeting are viewable on the Tennis and Squash websites.](#)

The Council Chair, Tony King (AK), opened the meeting and thanked all attendees, together with all those who had voted via email.

AK described the various activities the council had addressed in the past three months since the previous EGM in November and the progress made to date on many items.

Voting Results:

Alison Knibbs and Gill Ford acted as polling officers, collecting votes from members on entry, if they had not already voted by email, and then counting both sets of votes.

1. Constitution: The revised constitution (v3) was approved, with 95% of the votes received being in favour.

2. Council Roles: James Grindell, Gill Holt and Vic Malysz were all confirmed in their previously co-opted council roles of Tennis Lead, Social Lead and Marketing & Communications Lead respectively.

Future Directions:

AK then addressed the future challenges faced by the club, including sports and fitness market changes and ideas how the club might change in order to continue to provide first-class facilities, grow membership and improve financial security (given that flood insurance is now not an option).

Opportunities for improvement lay primarily inside the clubhouse. Pickleball has been introduced with minimal outlay and membership for this has been steadily increasing (currently 50 new members), tennis court 6 being regularly used. Outdoor padel has been considered. Facilities would require major investment and be vulnerable to flooding; enquiries to planning officers have indicated that planning permission would be very unlikely due to the noise and proximity to residential units. The club sits in a conservation area and World Heritage site and a padel facility would be situated on a flood area that was under substantially more flood water than the club building during the flood in October 2023.

Of the list of members' proposals for improvement of the clubhouse, designs are being produced, from which estimated costs will be obtained, for the changing rooms and they will be displayed for comment. Should this cost be inside the council's financial spend, £75K, this can go ahead and should be completed within 3-6 months, without structurally affecting any other wider development plans. Should the costs be greater than £75K and council recommend proceeding, membership approval will be required.

AK explained the proposal to change the club legal status from unincorporated to incorporated and the advantages of doing so, with two aims: removing liability from the membership and to allow the club, if it wished, to own assets and utilise this facility appropriately. As a legal entity (a Ltd [Limited Liability Company]), having assets and

income, allows the club to further investigate, with our accountants, the possibility of the club being able to raise funds via a mortgage (the raising of funds this way is not possible as an unincorporated entity). If this were the case, and only after rigorous financial verification to proceed, this would be put to the entire membership for a vote before proceeding with such an option.

Finance:

The club's current and projected financial position was then explained by AK. The current available cash balance reduces significantly once the flood contingency of £300K is ring-fenced. If the club proceeds with the necessary investment to secure its future (estimated at c£500K), the available cash reserves are projected to become depleted within a year. Therefore, funds between £250K and £500K need to be raised.

A question was asked concerning applying to the LTA and England Squash for loans, but it was explained this had been tried and was not available (club was too 'cash-rich'). However, it was stated that, whatever direction the club chooses to pursue, the council will reinvestigate as many options as possible to raise funding to underpin it.

A visit to another similar club in Wolverhampton had been informative, having had similar problems and undertaken several of the changes being proposed in this EGM, including change in facilities, becoming incorporated and also having only one subscription for members. A review of DSTC subscriptions is being addressed as part of the unification process.

Squash Courts:

AK then moved onto the section concerning the issue of 5 or fewer squash courts. He explained that official sports data demonstrates the decline in national participation, particularly for squash. This reality had caused David-Lloyd to remove all its squash courts and Wolverhampton to reduce court numbers from 8 to 6 (after undertaking a court usage analysis).

AK explained that the concrete in squash court 1 required several months to cure before further work could proceed (mid-February at the earliest). This necessary waiting period, as outlined in his update to members in November, had given time for detailed squash usage data to be obtained from MyCourts and analysed (the full analysis has been made available to members - see link in EGM reminder email on 3 Feb 2025). The results indicate a maximum of 3-4 courts is sufficient for current and estimated future increased membership. However, it was noted that the council squash lead and several of the squash sub-committee do not support a consideration for reduction in the number of squash courts, on the grounds that it disregards the outcome of the EGM vote last June (made before squash usage data had become available).

Having the squash usage analysis information opens up opportunity for improvement options to be drawn up. A request was made from the floor that the club pursue a vigorous cost / benefit analysis by all three areas (Squash, Tennis and Fitness) of cash funding presently. This is to ensure that if a court is removed, the area used, plus the other three focal areas, can produce the requisite revenue and profitability to support any funding commitments the

club might pursue in making these changes. It was stated this would be the case and it was asked if those making this request would be willing to support the club in this exercise. Indications were that they would and names were taken after proceedings concluded.

It was explained that, as disappointing as it was, during this time, it would not be best use of the club's limited finances to fully return court 1, later in February, to playing condition until the members have had a chance to review future options and make decisions (thereby eliminating the risk of the club potentially wasting c£20K for the sake of waiting for the outcome of the next steps). The members present overwhelmingly verbally agreed when asked if this was a reasonable position. It is proposed the redevelopment plans could be available within 3 months. Nothing will be actioned without members' approval.

Once tennis moves from Clubspark (from which historical booking data cannot be extracted) to MyCourts, a similar analysis will be done in due course, albeit direct comparisons with the squash data are difficult, given weather conditions preventing play has a big influence.

A comment from the membership stated, that a significant mortgage (circa up to £500k) or funding by other to fund structural changes puts a significant financial burden on the next generation of people running the club. This work is fully committed to be done with the council and further support from the membership. The Chairman stated that squash and racketball will need to work with tennis and pickleball as well as the gym and fitness leads in providing a business case for the continued use of 5 squash courts and that this would be reviewed with equal merit and impartiality alongside the other options being considered.

It was commented by a member that there are occasions when 5 courts are needed, for example, tournaments, although this would be infrequent and in the past the club has successfully joined with other establishments where more than 5 courts were needed. This would need to be considered in any cost / benefit analysis.

Another member suggested the council should also look at longer term options, in addition to the current proposed near term. This could open up more improvement opportunities for the club, although would be even more contentious as they implied the removal of 2 squash courts, thereby reducing the club to 3 squash courts only. It was argued that, only by opening up such options and creating business cases for specified proposals, can benefits be compared/evaluated and the best way forward identified. There was considerable agreement for this proposal from the members present and although the council only considered the option of removing 1 court, they must at least consider removing 2. However, it was pointed out that even if the club did redevelop by removing 1 court, indications are the costs will be significant, removing 2 could prove prohibitive.

Closing Remarks:

AK thanked everyone for their supportive and constructive remarks and questions. Overall, this meeting gave the council a mandate to proceed to the next stage of development planning.

AK appealed to anyone who would be willing to help the council in the work needed to develop the options to let the council secretary (secretary@dstc.uk) or other council members know.

The meeting finished at 9:15pm - 68 members attended the meeting and 141 people voted overall.

Glynnis Wigram (Secretary on the council for DSTC) 15th February 2025