

WANSTEAD & SNARESBROOK CRICKET CLUB

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 15th November 2010 @ 8:00pm.

Present: M. Pluck (Chair), C. Hurd, T. Hebden, P. Staniford, Ms K. Byrne and K. Lloyd, N. Hutchings, S. Batra, J. Palmer, Arfan Akram, N. Baldwin, L. Enoch, S. Andrews

1.0 Apologies for absence

1.1 No apologies received – all Management Committee members were present for this meeting.

2.0 Attrition of cricket clubs in Essex

2.1 This was an ongoing concern that had been raised on several occasions in the past during Committee meetings. The problem was that whilst the bigger clubs in Essex continued to grow and thrive the smaller ones were struggling to survive. This issue had been originally identified several years ago at the junior U15 level where an increasing number of clubs were unable to field teams or fulfil fixtures at this age group. This had now filtered down to adult teams in many clubs in the area. Whilst Wanstead was considering putting out a Saturday 7th XI clubs like Ongar were finding it difficult to raise a 1st XI.

2.2 The discussions on this topic covered many areas, issues and concerns. The following summarised the points raised:

- The subject had been raised at Essex League meetings and clubs across the county were aware of the issue. There were no obvious answers to what was an endemic problem although efforts were being made to get more clubs to join the League.
- Wanstead had become a victim of its own success at junior level with ever more juniors trying to join the club. In addition, Wanstead had a large catchment area not available to other clubs.
- It was suggested that the 5 or 6 largest Essex clubs combine to form a subcommittee to address this problem
- ECB accredited clubs tended to have better run youth sections which contributed to their viability. Costs for the smaller clubs were becoming prohibitive especially with respect to training of coaches.
- It was the same for both boys and girls sections at clubs. Catchment area was not necessarily a significant contributory factor to the problem as people were generally mobile and willing to travel. Wanstead practised an open door policy which had been very instrumental in the growth of its junior section at a time when other clubs were selective.
- Burgeoning regulation was adding to the elitist nature of the sport and making it increasingly difficult for the small clubs, who had fewer volunteers, to survive.
- Already 3 tiers of clubs were beginning to appear. The top tier included the larger clubs such as Wanstead, Woodford Wells, Brentwood, Chelmsford

and Colchester. The second level of clubs comprised those that at certain stages of their development would be considered as tier 1 clubs but did not necessarily achieve this status on a consistent basis. The third tier clubs would struggle to survive.

- It was better to be in Wanstead's position than that of many other clubs. However, we should not be complacent.
- A similar situation was occurring in other sports – this was not confined to cricket.
- Football was slightly different in that it was easier to set up clubs as minimal facilities and infrastructure were required. Often being bigger was not necessarily so good for football clubs.
- Eventually the larger clubs would find it difficult to find opposition teams to play. This was happening already and the decline in people playing cricket meant that junior sections were critical to the longevity and success of clubs. However, the adult teams could not continue to rely on junior players to keep them going.
- In some ways Wanstead were contributing to the problem. The large number of juniors at the club meant that it was impossible for all of them to play in games every week. As a result many were not actively participating on a regular basis when they would have been able to do so were they playing for other clubs.
- In some ways it was actually surprising that so many clubs continued to survive in these adverse conditions. Wanstead should perhaps consolidate and stop growing in the way it had done for many years. It was noted that this was not practically achievable as to retain ECB accreditation the club had to prove that it was growing its junior membership year on year.
- The key to the success of clubs like Wanstead was the strong volunteer base. The secret was to be able to maintain this going forward.
- Girls' cricket had exactly the same challenges. Wanstead was so successful because of the support given by the club to women's cricket in terms of the making playing facilities available and funding coaching courses.
- Wanstead could decrease its junior intake but this would reduce the club's income and jeopardise accreditation. We should not worry too much about losing players to other clubs if they wanted to leave for any reason.
- It was also important to make the cricket administrators aware of the burden that regulation was placing on recreational clubs. The cost and structure of coaching courses was a typical example – these had gone up by 500% in 3 years whilst the content and usefulness of the courses had greatly diminished.

3.0 Club layout and facilities for providing hospitality

- 3.1 This had been a long term issue for the club. The layout of the clubhouse made it very difficult to host fund raising events and provide large scale entertainment at Overton Drive – the annual junior dinner was a prime example of this.

The key question was whether we should look to address this going forward or whether the club was accepting of the status quo. Should we look to start a long term fund similar to that undertaken to pay for expensive repairs to church roofs.

3.2 The following summarises the points raised on this subject:

- The kitchen should definitely be moved. Its location was impractical and also potentially dangerous from a health and safety perspective – the kitchen area was often overwhelmed during junior Friday night sessions as this was on the main thoroughfare into and out of the clubhouse
- This had been a regular topic of discussion for the past 40 years – there were plans for moving the kitchen back in the 1960's with proposals to relocate the kitchen being included in the club's anniversary booklet at this time.
- The obvious challenge was how we would underwrite such a large expenditure if we were finding it difficult to fund the day to day running of the club.
- Apart from the cost implications (estimated at around £500,000 to rebuild the clubhouse at its existing size) there were potential planning restrictions if any significant refurbishment were undertaken. This also raised the question of how we wanted the club to operate – would we look to host increasing number of events such as wedding receptions to justify the expense.
- There was concern that Hainault & Clayhall, who had built a massive clubhouse at Oakfield, considered it to be a white elephant. The club was planning to relocate and the clubhouse would be demolished.
- The current economic climate meant that it was probably not the best time to be considering investing in a major refurbishment of the clubhouse. We should focus on a facelift of the existing facility.
- There was probably never a right time for such an initiative – history had shown that this would probably never happen. It would perhaps be more beneficial to consider taking over the area of the Warren Italy Clay Tennis Club – this could be used for an indoor cricket school.
- As noted above, we needed to have a clear idea what the club members wanted to use the clubhouse for. Did we want to focus on the fact that we were a cricket club or was the clubhouse to be treated as a facility that we rented out more, even in the summer months. We had tried to do this in the past but the players had not been happy with this.
- The consensus was that we should not lose sight of the fact that we were a cricket club. There was a salutary lesson to be learnt from the experience of Wanstead Gold Club – we would not expect to recoup any significant investment in the club's infrastructure/clubhouse.
- We should make more of the history of the club, especially in the clubhouse at Overton Drive.
- It was also important that members took greater pride in the clubhouse, including the dressing rooms.
- In the short term we should get a quote for a makeover of the hall area at Overton Drive – this would probably need the involvement of an interior designer.

Action Arfan Akram to contact Pam Gadd as she may know of an interior designer that the club could use.

Action	<u>Martin Pluck</u> to contact Graham Russell to see if he could recommend an interior designer.
Action	<u>Martin Pluck</u> to send out a communication reminding all club members of the responsibility and duty of care that everyone has to ensure that grounds and changing rooms are left tidy after games

4.0 **Adult participation in and support of club activities**

4.1 It was important that a balance was achieved between adults and juniors with respect to their involvement and participation in club activities. It was vital that the club maintained a strong junior section but this should not take over the club to the extent that the adults became an afterthought.

On the playing side it should be remembered that the adult sides were not run for the benefit of the juniors. From a social perspective it was an ongoing concern that very few adults made use of the club and its facilities when not playing. The challenge was how to encourage more adults to participate in social activities.

4.2 The main discussion points on this were as follows:

- Introducing a 7th XI would only make matters worse as this would, for the most part, comprise junior players.
- A lot of clubs suffered the same problems as Wanstead. Changes in entertainment patterns and expectation levels meant that clubs were not as popular as they once were. We were competing with other more attractive social events.
- We should look to host one social event each month to get adult members to come to the club.
- It was important to publicise the facilities and events more actively. Encouraging all adult members to provide details of email addresses would help as it would be easier to contact them with details of events.
- The junior section definitely did dominate the club and the strength and quality of the junior members meant that many adults were forced to play in lower elevens than would be the case if they were at other clubs.
- The team captains should encourage team members to go back to the club once a month. A monthly club night with a specially organised event (ie quiz night) would definitely help.
- One obvious problem was that only a third of the Saturday teams ever played at Overton Drive – this made it more difficult for them to relate to the club and consider it as a focal point for their activities.
- Many clubs, especially some of the smaller ones, definitely appeared to have a better club ethos than Wanstead. They were managing to attract adult members to their clubs on a regular basis for social events – there was something that we could learn from these.
- One suggestion was that Sunday friendlies should be restricted to adult members only. The Slow Coaches had proved to be immensely successful and we could look to extend this approach to Sunday matches.
- A monthly club magazine for both adult and junior club members would help to promote an all-inclusive club ethos with active participation of

members. This would require an editor to engage contributors and produce the magazine.

- The end of season adult presentation evening should be extended to encourage members to stay after the individual awards have been made.
- We needed to understand what members wanted from the club in terms of social events/entertainment.
- The club should make better use of social networking services such as Facebook to engage club members
- We should consider using Nutter Lane for smaller, more intimate functions.

Action Joe Palmer, in conjunction with Joe Palmer Jnr, to send out a communication to members asking what social events they would like to see hosted at the club. They will also request volunteers to be involved in co-ordinating social activities.

5.0 Reducing reliance on grants and donations

5.1 The club had been increasingly dependent upon grants to cover the shortfall between income and expenditure. Under the current economic conditions there was a growing number of clubs and voluntary organisations competing for a share of a shrinking supply of grants.

5.2 They key points raised on this subject were:

- The club had to continue its focus on keeping costs to a minimum.
- There was a limit as to the subscription rates we could expect members to pay
- It was imperative that the club identified alternative means of raising funds – this would require a concerted effort.
- A committee should be set up to oversee and co-ordinate fund raising initiatives and social events
- The club had become very dependent on a small number of income streams
- The club was very reliant on its members and recruiting volunteers to participate in fund raising activities
- Grants for capital expenditure were still available. Grants to cover running costs were now very limited and this was the area where the club needed to find additional money.
- We had made cost savings in several important areas and opportunities for additional significant reductions in costs were restricted. The focus for the club had to be on increasing income.

6.0 Girls' and women's cricket

6.1 The Ladies Section at Wanstead had been very successful since its introduction and this was the appropriate time to take stock and plan for the future. A key aspect to be addressed was how to integrate the ladies section more effectively into the club.

6.2 They following points were raised on this topic:

- The girls did very well last year – both U13s and U15s were county champions. They were being successfully introduced into the ladies team.
- Wanstead managed to field both and U11 and U13 team something that very few clubs were able to achieve
- The ladies would remain in the North London Women’s League. The plans were to expand the league and Wanstead intended to enter a second team for this
- The number of competitions the ladies participated in was increasing. They had entered a team in the Chelmsford indoor league and so far had won all 6 of their games
- There were around 60 girls/women members and our Ladies Section was now the size of some smaller clubs
- The overall ladies infrastructure good but they needed to make better use of the club website
- The ladies were generally well integrated into the club but the wider membership were not as aware of what they were doing as should be the case
- To improve the overall integration of the Ladies Section it was proposed that Pauline Osborn join the Management Committee. The constitution needed to be addressed to formalise this but in the meantime it was agreed by all Committee members that Pauline would be co-opted onto the Management Committee.
- It was suggested that ladies teams be put on the notice board in the same way as the adults

Action Martin Pluck/Nigel Hutchings to review the club constitution with the intention of amending this to incorporate a representative of the Ladies Section on the Management Committee

7.0 Any Other Business

7.1 Car park/access drive

Chris Hurd confirmed that that Wanstead Golf Club had taken up most of the Wanstead Sports Grounds Ltd (the Landlords) funds during 2010. As a result there was nothing available to complete the repairs required to the cricket club access drive and car park. There was a genuine risk of an accident occurring as a result of the poor state of the drive. We needed to make the landlords aware of this risk.

Action Chris Hurd to write to the landlords emphasising the cricket club’s dissatisfaction with their response to date on this issue and drawing their attention to the risk of litigation if the repairs are not carried out in a timely manner.

7.2 Drains

The work had been completed on these. They had been cleared and a sleeve inserted to prevent any root incursion going forward.

7.3 Accounts

These were being finalised for the financial year up to the 30th September 2010. The club had made a loss of between £6,000 and £8,000 during the period. This position did not include the cost of the work on the drains but did incorporate the end of season ground maintenance. The main reason for the shortfall was the reduction in bar takings for the year (down from £120,000 to £100,000.)

7.4 Calendar

It was proposed that a calendar be put on the notice board at Overton Drive. This would be actively maintained to include all key club events and activities.

8.0 Date of next meeting

8.1 This was scheduled for Monday 17th January 2010 (subsequently rearranged for Monday 24th January.)