



ESSEX COUNTY CRICKET CLUB

Minutes of the Essex County Cricket Club AGM

on Tuesday 12 December, 2023 at 6pm
in the Doug Insole Pavilion and via video conference

Present

Keith Fletcher (President), Anu Mohindru KC (Chair), Neil Faraday (Treasurer), John Stephenson (Chief Executive) – and 282 members

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Keith Fletcher welcomed everyone to the AGM. The Chief Executive then reported that apologies had been received from Vicky Ford, Victoria Keil, Queenie Porter and Sir Stephen O'Brien.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD IN NOVEMBER 2022

The Chief Executive asked if the minutes of the previous AGM, previously circulated, could be taken as read. Anu Mohindru KC proposed that the minutes should be adopted and this was seconded by Alexander Gunn. The minutes were duly signed as a true record.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

Anu Mohindru KC gave his report, explaining that this included a summary of the 2022 season rather than the 2023 season.

He extended thanks to Adam Wheeler who played for the Club between 2017 and 2022. He drew attention to the Essex Women's Teams (both Seniors and U.18 sides) for their successes.

He referred to the ECB's High-Performance Review, confirming that the Club's Board had unanimously voted in favour of not reducing red ball cricket.

With regard to the Club's Board, he discussed the Nominations Committee providing recommendations to the Board in line with governance and stressed that it had been a difficult period for the Board and the Club in general. He thanked Sir Stephen O'Brien for acting as interim Chair since the departure of elected Board Chair, Azeem Akhtar, underlining that this had not been an easy time to steer the Board.

He talked about the inauguration of the Members' Committee which included member-elected Piyush Somaiya, Millie Dillane and Chris Grant.

Anu Mohindru then turned his attentions to the Katharine Newton KC summary report, highlighting that Katharine, herself, had included in her summary report, the reasons for the considerable delay in the report's publication. He was confident that this was a robust and thorough report which reflected the poor, unwelcoming, unsafe and non-inclusive culture which existed at the Club a few years ago. Great care has been given to all those involved in the report from a legal and welfare point of view and he stressed there had been a need to follow correct procedure at all times.

The Chair then went on to talk about the report and its recommendations, admitting that the Club recognises there is still work to be done. An Independent Committee has been appointed to examine the findings and recommend sanctions for the Board to implement – and this work is ongoing. He added that the Club was in constant contact with the ECB and was committed to cooperating fully with the governing body. He reminded members that the ECB had already sanctioned the Club because of issues arising from the previous Chair. He also referred to the divisive nature of the Board at that time, which was consumed with power struggles. It was not, he said, the job of the Board to create its own fiefdom and the Board had failed in its duty to all concerned, not just the 'victims.' The actions of the Board at the time had resulted in huge legal bills for the Club and has tarnished its good reputation.

He explained that members and supporters had been subjected to a misinformation campaign against the Board with its sole purpose of undermining the Club and the Chief Executive. He stressed that this culture of misinformation and divisive opinion needed to stop. The Club must learn from the report, come together and move forward so that the Club can be stronger together both on and off the pitch.

4 TREASURER'S REPORT

Neil Faraday introduced himself to the members, thanked Finance Director, Bernard Elliott and asked members to applaud Bernard and everyone working behind the scenes at the Club.

The 2022 Financial Performance was screen-shared. The Treasurer highlighted the following points:



ECB funding amounts to £3.8m which is 50% of total revenue. ECB income would be flat for the next 5 years placing strain on the Club's finances and making it hard to grow as a Club. Sponsorship in 2022 totalled £900k. Membership contributed £360k. Tickets / hospitality contributed £700k

He reported that the Club's biggest cost was cricket operations, standing at £4.6m and pointed out that, if the ECB funding remained flat and the cost of cricket inevitably grows, it becomes an unsustainable equation. Ground costs total £5,500k and utilities, £1m.

The Treasurer warned that the 2023 graph would look similar.

He highlighted that legal costs in 2022 had totalled £300k with total legal costs relating to historic racism, totalling £760k – of which £600k was spent on the production of the report and legal advice and £160k covering a £50k fine and the cost of the Club's defence of the CDC and defending the libel claim.

The Club's total loss in 2022 was £378k and he pointed out that the situation can't continue since 2023's loss will look similar. The Treasurer reported that the auditors were concerned about the financial fallout of the Katharine Newton report and suggested that, if the situation continues, the Club would need to sell investments and reserves. The Treasurer told the members that this would not happen in 2024 and a plan is being implemented to return to profit within the next 2 years. Neil Faraday explained that the situation was similar for other non-international venues and there is an urgent need to diversify revenue streams to provide a sustainable future.

Questions were taken from members on the Report and Accounts:

Dan Haggart Is the Club developing the New Writtle Street site or moving to another ground? NF answered that no decisions have yet been taken but work is going on behind the scenes.

John Lever Why is the ECB funding flat for the next 5 years? NF explained that this was due to the Sky Broadcasting deal and the direction of The Hundred (therefore, this was due to the ECB's own financial issues).

Richard Martin Does the Club have any plans to charge for online viewing (paywall)? NF confirmed that this was something the Club was looking in to.

Ian Patterson How can the Club justify investment / diversification without knowing where the income was coming from? Anu Mohindru answered that the Club did indeed need to be wary but unless the Club's facilities were improved it could not bid for bigger matches and a bigger share of the purse.



Piyush Somaiya asked how it was possible to attract more members. NF confirmed that membership numbers were flat, and the Chief Executive confirmed that the Club had been trying various marketing ploys, but it remained a massive challenge.

The Chief Executive proposed that the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts be adopted by the membership. This was seconded by Brian Springall

Neil Faraday proposed that the Club go out to tender for a different auditor, rather than reappointing RSM UK Audit LLP, who had been used for many years. This proposal was seconded by Brian Springall

5 RESULT OF ESSEX COUNTY CRICKET CLUB BOARD BALLOT

The Chair confirmed that there had been 8 nominations for 3 available places on the Board. These were Jason Gallian, Victoria Keil, Piyush Somaiya, Alan Ball, Peter Edwards, Jo Faragher, Clive Purdy and Graham Staples.

Those elected were:

Jason Gallian	674 votes
Victoria Keil	485 votes
Piyush Somaiya	395 votes

Those not elected were:

Jo Faragher	354 votes
Alan Ball	182 votes
Peter Edwards	176 votes
Graham Staples	108 votes
Clive Purdy	86 votes

Jason Gallian, Victoria Keil and Piyush Somaiya were congratulated.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chief Executive took questions from the floor:

Nigel Barrack

Members' Committee. He asked what this committee was doing as he'd heard nothing from them. Piyush Somaiya (Members' Committee) apologised to Mr Barrack for his experience. He explained that this was the first year of the committee's existence and it was still finding its feet. He explained the purpose of the committee and admitted that it had identified communication as being of great importance. It had liaised with the Museum, Boundary Club and Essex Cricket Foundation to understand how these operate, how to help them and how to integrate



them within the Club. He explained that they had been working with the Board on the new website and informed everyone that the Members' Committee had a dedicated email address and welcomed comments and communication. During the season, the Members' Committee attended forums and chatted to members around the ground. He confirmed that a lot was happening in the background.

Richard Martin

Retail shop and its losses. He queried whether the Membership Department needs to be located within the shop's premises and whether it is charged separately for utilities etc. Neil Faraday replied that the Club did not have the ability to split the costs, but it was something they were looking into. The member also asked whether there was a conflict of interest with someone on the Members' Committee also being elected to the Board. The Chair replied that it was important for the Board to know what members were concerned about so this was nothing other than a positive election.

Many questions had been received about the proposed expansion of The Hundred. Neil Faraday answered that The Club had engaged with the ECB on four separate occasions and been part of two consultations on the subject. He confirmed that the ECB's proposals were nowhere near consideration so there was nothing for the Board to deliberate on at this stage. The ECB intends to make a decision about the competition in May 2024, so he reassured the membership that, when there was a proposal worth considering, the Club would hold a forum and it will be discussed.

Ian Brown

Ground Development progress: Chris Townsend (Board member) replied to the member, explaining that the Club had commissioned a report on viable locations and the Board had voted to focus on a shortlist of 2 (which included the current location at Chelmsford). Meanwhile he explained that quantity surveyors and architects had looked at the viability of redeveloping the County Ground site. This process was now concluded, financial models have been built and the Club is having preliminary discussions with funding partners. The Club needs a 'fit for purpose' stadium with long term sustainability. The Club plans to hold a members' forum before the 2024 season starts with the final ground development proposals. Chris Townsend confirmed that there was currently no timescale for any redevelopment, but it was hoped that dates would be confirmed at the forum. Following a question about what capacity the Club is aiming for, Chris Townsend replied that their guidance was to follow whatever the ECB requires for different fixtures. In essence, there would need to be an increase in capacity to approximately 10,000.

Member

Ground development: This member felt that Essex offered third rate facilities which were an embarrassment and the Club was a laughing stock. The Chair replied that a lot of work was going on behind the scenes to improve the situation with the ground and members will see improvements phased in. As mentioned before, plans will



shortly be presented to the members. The Chair stressed that things were moving forward.

Dean Allum

Ground development: Mr Allum asked where the second ground option was located and Neil Faraday repeated that this information would be available at the forum in Spring 2024.

James Bremner

Ground development: Mr Bremner asked whether moving the ground would hinge on a members' vote and Neil Faraday confirmed that it would.

Member

Katharine Newton KC report: This member expressed how appalled he was at the findings of the report and how poorly the Club had handled the correspondence and why certain issues were not picked up. He wanted to feel confidence in the leadership of the Club. Anu Mohindru replied that these issues had taken place in 2021 and 2022 and he could not answer the specific questions because this was before the new Board were in place. All he could confirm was that due process had been followed.

Richard Clarke

The Hundred: With regard to the response of the plans for the new 100 competition, Mr Clarke expressed concern that the forum was not a binding vote and he suggested that most Essex members are averse to expansion of The Hundred and concerned about The Club heading in a different direction from the Members / fans. Anu Mohindru was not able to comment on such a hypothetical question but could say that all the Club could focus on was putting itself in the strongest position by fulfilling as much ECB criteria as possible.

Keith Plaister

Points deduction: This member was not in the room. He asked whether the club would face a points deduction or relegation because of the Katharine Newton report. Anu Mohindru reassured everyone that Essex was in a very different boat from Yorkshire (for example). Essex has remained open and approachable at all times and the ECB has complimented the Club on the manner it has conducted itself throughout the investigations. However, he admitted that points deduction or relegation could not be ruled out and the Club would prepare for it.

Kate Walters

Ballot papers: Why had photographs of nominees been removed from ballot papers? The Chief Executive replied that it was now common practice to not include photos from ballot papers, in order to remove unconscious or implicit bias.



Peter Saunders

T20 hosting: Concerning Essex hosting two T20 matches on behalf of Middlesex, would Essex be taking on 50% of the costs? The Chief Executive replied that Middlesex would underwrite costs and profit would be split 50/50.

John Friend

Scoreboard / announcer: The member urged the Club to pay attention to small things and, in particular, asked why the scoreboard had failed to function on a number of occasions and why the announcer often got the name of the batter or bowler wrong. He felt it was unprofessional and sloppy. The Chair apologised for these shortcomings and said the Club would take his concerns on board.

Darren Mootoo

Alastair Cook: Mr Mootoo asked that a vote of thanks be extended to Alastair Cook for his services to the Club. Following that request, Mr Mootoo then asked if there were any updates for the season following Cook's retirement. The Chief Executive admitted it was hard to 'replace' Alastair Cook, and his departure – along with that of Dan Lawrence – left a gap in the batting. However, he confirmed that the Club had signed Jordan Cox (to replace Dan Lawrence) and an announcement about an excellent replacement for Alastair Cook, would be made in due course. He confirmed that the 2024 squad would be very strong and the Club was pleased to see the return of Daniel Sams for the T20 competition in 2024.

Member

Sky Sports match screening: This member asked if it was true that Essex wasn't chosen as a venue because of the facilities. The Chief Executive replied that this was indeed the case. He stressed that this situation had not impacted Club sponsorship. It was still to be confirmed by Sky whether they would screen any matches at Essex in 2024 because of the facilities.

Richard Curzon

International fixtures at The County Ground: Mr Curzon said he had thoroughly enjoyed the fantastic fixtures between Bangladesh and Ireland, which had a great atmosphere and he wondered whether the Club had plans to repeat such a fixture. The Chief Executive agreed with his assessment of the fixtures and confirmed that the Club hoped to host more such fixtures – and that it was in a good position to do so.

Gerry Dadey

Members Clubs: Mr Dadey pointed out that only 15 out of the 18 county Clubs were members Clubs and he wondered whether Essex might also become a non-members Club. Neil Faraday assured him this would not be the case.



Question via Zoom

This member queried whether the open ground policy would be renewed in 2024. The Chief Executive replied that he felt it had been well received and a great success so would be continued.

Member

Sanctions: The member queried that, if the Club had a zero tolerance to racism, what sanctions would be imposed on current members. The Chair replied that sanctions included removal of membership and a members' vote would be needed for reinstatement.

The Chief Executive announced that Jeremy Lucas (who could not be at the meeting) had a proposition for a lift for access to the Premier Suite and he confirmed that this idea would be looked into.

The Chief Executive then announced that the Pavilion End and Hayes Close ends of the ground, would be renamed after Graham Gooch and Alastair Cook, and the members showed their appreciation of this gesture.

The Chief Executive also announced that the hospitality box currently known as the Doug Insole Box would become the Nasser Hussain Box in 2024.

John Stephenson then thanked everyone for attending the meeting and notified them of various future social functions.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm

Anu Mohindru KC

Chair

December 2023

