

## How have we got here...?

Over the last few months it has become apparent from meetings between The Borough Park Group and SHDC, that the Council were interested in exploring the possibility of reducing their responsibility, and the ensuing financial burden, in the day to day managing of all the facilities within Borough Park - The Pavilions, Rugby Club, Bowls Club and Tennis Club.

There have been a few meetings and within the next 4 years the contract for managing these facilities, currently with Tone Leisure, is due to be renewed or replaced in some form or other. However, within 12 months this whole process of renewal will begin which is why there is a time factor to be considered.

The Borough Park Group are currently looking into options.

On 8th October Graham had an email from Jon Parkinson wishing to arrange a meeting to discuss the issue of Totnes Tennis Club becoming self-governed. This came about without any pressure from ourselves and possibly shows their keenness to move things forward.

The Club needs to consider the options and plan the best way forward to ensure that the Club continues to thrive and is protected/enhanced for the future.

## Option 1

### Maintain the current method of operation

The Club rents 3 or 4 courts from SHDC via Tone Leisure on:

- Sundays 10.30am-12.00pm all year round &
- Wednesdays 6.30pm-8.00pm April to September.

⇒ Cost to The Club: £2,512.50 (2012-2013) p.a.

Maintenance of courts, floodlights, nets, side netting by SHDC.

⇒ Cost to The Club: nil

Clubhouse is 'owned' by The Club and we pay ground rent to SHDC (any repairs to clubhouse are paid for by TTC)

⇒ Cost of ground rent: £187.00 p.a.

Public liability rests with SHDC

⇒ Cost to The Club: nil

### Benefits

- Situation has worked fine for several years so why change?
- Club got brand new courts 4 years ago at no cost to itself
- Buzz membership deal for members who want to play outside of club times
- No great public demand on courts so it is fairly easy to fit in a heavy schedule of club matches outside of club times
- No public liability for TTC
- Fairly stress-free way to run a small tennis club!

### Disadvantages

- Uncertainty over future Park management and financial restraints could mean costs to Club increase
- Totally reliant on SHDC for maintaining courts and lights. Courts are still in OK condition but are showing signs of wear and tear. SHDC want to reduce their costs and therefore it would be very unlikely that they will want to either repair or resurface the courts when that time comes - possibly within 5 years.  
⇒ How does the Club cope with degrading court surface?
- Floodlights deemed virtually unplayable by club members, SHDC reluctant to upgrade at estimated cost of £7000  
⇒ Is it OK that the official club time is cut by 50% from September to March?
- Limited potential to expand club activities - eg encouraging juniors - with only 2 club sessions

## Option 2

### **Self-governance of the Club with responsibility to maintain and develop existing facilities for members and public**

Take over the Club on a 25 year lease from SHDC at a minimal 'peppercorn' rent. This route has been trialed successfully by Totnes Bowls Club and we have a meeting planned to get an idea of how they proceeded, problems, benefits etc.

There would be plenty of details to be clarified with SHDC but in principle the Club would have full 7 days a week access to all 4 courts whilst still offering public use of the courts.

SHDC appear keen to look at this option having proactively contacted us to arrange a meeting for further discussions.

Possible on our own or as part of a community-run new look Borough Park.

#### **Benefits**

- Court access increased from 5 hours per week to 7 days per week
- No court fees payable to SHDC (other than minimal rent to be agreed).
  - saving of £2512.00 based on 2012-2013
- Coaches fees would come to the Club (currently to SHDC)
  - there are currently 4 coaches using the courts and paying SHDC a rough estimate of £3,500.00 per year
- Greater flexibility and potential to maximise court use as we wish
  - e.g. juniors, evenings, inter-club friendlies etc.
- Club with 7 day access could have greater appeal to attract new members
- Attract schools use
- Boost junior element and so tap into the community
- Inspire members to greater involvement in the Club and contribute ideas, time etc.
- Maintenance in our hands - we can plan when & what needs doing and how
- Leasing courts opens up greater sponsorship options
- Utilise disabled access to top court
- Greater incentive to fundraise for the Club
- Self governance opens up potential for grants to develop the Club
- Tadpool have already said they would be happy to manage bookings for us (cost?) and we would need to discuss this with Tone Leisure
- We would have control over our own destiny

#### **Disadvantages/Questions**

- How would we manage the courts 7 days a week?
  - potential big management workload for members/committee?
- A sudden big responsibility compared to the current 'easy' situation
  - ⇒ This option will only work with commitment from members, what if people don't want to help out?
- How would we maintain the courts and at what cost?
  - repairs and/or resurfacing will be needed in the near future
- Would the local community feel threatened by all the courts being TTC?
- How would we manage the different coaches?
- Public liability?
- Are the members really that bothered, maybe they are happy enough with how the Club is run?
- Do we really want to become a bigger club?
- A considerable increase in our balance sheet/income is likely and this could cause issues with Tax - how do we resolve this?

Option 2 continued

## Other information

1

### Detailed analysis

This option cannot be undertaken without due care and attention - we would need to look into all the issues in great detail, ensure ourselves as far as possible of the financial viability, legal/safety issues etc.

This is a big task with huge potential benefits but also many possible pitfalls if not undertaken in a serious manner.

We must not be afraid to say "no" if we feel we are not capable of proceeding.

We would need the full backing of the membership and would propose before going much further that a General Meeting be called where we can explain the options; the members must be included in the whole process.

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### Committee Restructuring

It is important to stress that self-governance would only work if there was an increased involvement by club members in the running of the Club. This cannot be achieved by 2 or 3 hardworking committee members as has been the case for several years.

To this end a proposal would be that:

1. The Committee have specific areas filled by individuals with defined roles and skills
2. Members with key skills be given the option to contribute on a one-off basis as required - ie legal, fundraising, marketing etc.

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### SHDC

They have been in touch and want a meeting asap this month.

The Council seem keen to hand the facilities over to a responsible organisation. It is not in their interest to 'throw away' the courts - they would get bad press etc. - and so should be happy to help with the transition as much as possible if we handle this carefully.

For example, in our negotiations we would want to stress that we could only take over the courts if the lights were in good order - we would not want to spend £1000s to bring them up to scratch. The Bowls Club got a new roof as part of their deal!

2

### LTA Registration

If we register our Club with the LTA we would be eligible for advice and support in how best to manage and develop the club.

We propose we register as soon as possible in order to get guidance on self-governing. This route has been taken by other clubs.

- Currently as we only have 5 hours per week access we are classed as a 'nomadic' club and so the cost is only £200.00 per year.

Should we become self-governing the cost would be £100.00 per year per court but we feel it is worth joining even if only for 1 year. There is of course no magic wand that the LTA will wave and being a large organisation they could well be difficult to deal with!

- Public liability is offered as one of the benefits.

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### Court Maintenance

Going forwards this would be the largest expense we would need to manage and potentially the biggest problem.

How could we afford to resurface the courts in say 5 years time?

Given the increased revenues we would need to create a 5 year business plan part of which would cover creating a maintenance fund.

But on a very rough estimate we could have an extra £6,000.00 pa at our disposal based on:

- £2500 court fees to SHDC
- £3500 coaches fees to SHDC

We would need to look into fundraising, grants etc. Grants are dependent in part on increasing junior, disabled access etc.