

Highbury Fields Tennis Steering Group

Meeting: Monday 29 October 2012 , 8pm, Canonbury Arms

Present: : Sally Kinnes, Jill McLaughlin, Hitesh Soma, Nigel Billen, Viren Soma, Wendy Proudfoot , Susannah Oxley

Apologies for absence: Simon Moore, Jon-Paul Mbaka, Manu Ducrocq,

Agenda

- Minutes and matters arising
- Booking information - views on proposed changes.
- HFTSG - website and advertising tennis activity
- Condition of the courts
- Update from Highbury Forum
- Membership of the HFTSG

Minutes and matters arising: The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Susannah said she had tried to make contact with the over 30s group but had so far heard nothing. As we were not sure the group was operating it was agreed to wait till they made contact.

Booking information - views on proposed changes/Condition of the courts

With reference to the notes of the meeting which she had prepared and distributed ahead of the meeting, Jill presented a report of her meeting with Islington Council and the Islington Tennis Development Group. (The notes are attached as an addendum to these minutes.)

The meeting had been very positive and problem solving with many of the issues concerning steering group members raised.

Jill's report proved a useful basis for a widespread discussion of booking processes (due to enter its second stage of development in the Spring), court maintenance and other issues.

Issues identified included:

- Clarification on the refund policy
- The most appropriate time slot for discounted and/free play on the courts for children and concessions
- The quality of the existing lighting on the courts and how it compared with other centres
- The apparent delay in getting lighting repaired

It was clear from the discussion that many of the proposals made at the meeting with Islington Council needed to be clarified. In addition the steering group agreed it needed to understand the finances of the courts better in order to form an opinion and help advise on the best way to see the courts improved and maintained.

Jill was thanked for attending the meeting with the ITDG and it was agreed that regular meetings of this kind were useful and desirable. Jill was asked to follow up on the issues raised and to ask for a financial update.

JILL

Jill confirmed that Karen Dawson has been appointed as the Tennis Co-ordinator and suggested that she should be invited to the next meeting of the Steering Group. The group agreed and promised a warm welcome.

JILL

Update from Highbury Forum

Sally updated the group on discussion had by the Highbury Forum (a friends group for Highbury Fields) about the courts. They were in agreement that they were a matter of some concern and were trying to push for an improvement. The Forum had approved storage facilities for Oasis Cafe toys, maintenance equipment and tennis equipment (discussed at our last meeting) and the council will install.

HFTSG - website and advertising tennis activity

There was no time for a demonstration of the site or a discussion of how it should be used so this was postponed for a future meeting. Nigel collected £10 payments from those present as a contribution to the cost of setting up the site and it was agreed that those not present should be asked for a payment at a future meeting. Nigel said he would email invites to edit individual pages to steering group members, but offered for now to add any information sent to him to the site.

NIGEL

Membership of the HFTSG

The steering group is committed to formalising public representation on the group but there was no time at this meeting for the detailed discussion required and it was considered better to postpone this to the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was set **Monday December 3rd**.

Addendum

Notes from meeting at Islington Council.

Tuesday 16th October.

Attendance:

Andrew Bedford, Jerry Gutwin, Bhupesh Thapa, Dan Summers, Dan Jarvis, Anthony Jarrett, Jill McLaughlin

Purpose:

Primarily to review the booking system.

Information:

Appointment of tennis co-ordinator - Karen Dawson - who starts on November 7th.

Points of discussion.

General Booking: I advised that team practice was not being booked in advance as the coaches were not prepared to book on behalf of the teams. I explained some of the difficulties - e.g. financial risk, counting within turnover of organisation, and difficulty on agreeing on time. It was agreed that this would be picked up by Karen when she started. Key issue, find time for booking that still allows public to book.

Block booking: I enquired about the opportunity to block book for group sessions. This was discussed, and it was agreed that the barrier was one of managing the number of block bookings, but it was agreed that with the 8 day booking this generally wasn't a major requirement - but the other factor was that of collecting money. Anthony advised that the team bookings were block booked but they had taken time and chasing to get payment. Possibility of direct debit??

Tennis usage: No figures re comparable booking figures year on year but the £ income is up £7k on last year.

2nd phase of booking system - due in Spring (variable times were given)

This will also include Islington tennis centre. All arrangements will apply similarly to both.

Overall, the council members were keen to make improvements to the arrangements and all issues were discussed. Their approach was one of trying to find solutions.

1. Refunds: Credit period is to be extended to 60 days - they are not considering refunding cash
2. Refunds - the refund policy is one of erring on the side of the customer - refund credits will normally be given. If people ring up and say it was raining, they are given credit refund.
3. Cancelling courts - the next upgrade will enable cancellations up to the time of the court - but how to stop people cancelling at last minute and so courts being empty?

4. Using empty courts - when people don't turn up for their booking - proposal for others to be able to use courts, at no charge - after 15 minutes on the basis that if the rightful booker turns up that they get to use the court. They do not want to charge for courts - PR issue.

5. They now know that you can't buy tokens with Izz card discount at Highbury Gym - this is being rectified.

6. The men in the hut will be able to book tennis courts - and they are looking at whether they can have access to the membership list - but not confirmed yet. Also, they do not want hut to take lots of money - security issue and impact on safety.

7. Junior booking rates when playing with adults: - This was extensively discussed and they were supportive. A number of options were considered - e.g. junior rate at certain times of the day. They recognise that the only regulation is that applied by the men in the hut - as anyone can book a junior court - so up to men in hut to check that juniors are playing. No knowledge of how often people are challenged.

8. Free play for over 60s. This was discussed. The proposal is to bring in free play for over 60s out of peak time - eg 8 -2pm Monday to Friday. Options to extend this were discussed. They would like to be able to book courts at cheap rate for over 60s but think a charge is necessary to avoid the book and no show problem perhaps £2?

9. Charging for lights. They are looking to find away to charge extra for use of courts with floodlights. They are currently thinking of reducing the price of courts outside of floodlight usage - suggested that the courts could be cheaper outside of peak hours - irrespective of lights - so 7 - 9pm every evening would cost more - and perhaps this could also apply to peak hours at weekend - Saturday and Sunday 10am- 1pm. No price was discussed but perhaps £10 for peak and with use of lights. This might help manage demand a little.

Condition of courts: Discussed - there will be cleaning equipment kept in storage box near courts which will help - this will be once the council have taken back the care of the courts in house. Also they are still looking at how to get funds to resurface courts.

Next meeting joint 19th January 2013.

Dan Jarvis - off on sabbatical leave for 12 months.