

Meeting:- South Central Hockey Limited AGM 20th July 2023, 19:30

Attendees:- 57 participants

Apologies:- Jason Holford, Sarah Allen (Windsor HC), James Mitchell (Finance Director South Central Hockey)

- 1) Chair Opened the AGM at 19.30
Welcome everyone to the 2023 South Central Hockey Limited AGM.
- 2) Apologies for absence
Jason Holford
Sarah Allen
James Mitchell
- 3) Minutes of 2022 AGM
These had been circulated in advance and were approved as a correct record of the meeting.
- 4) Chair's address

Firstly, I would like to look back across the 2022-23 season, our second season as South Central Hockey. We are still only two years young, and we are still learning. If you have been on the journey with us, you will have heard me say a number of times that the first year after transition to the new area was about set-up, the second year was about embedding and the third year about planning for our next steps by developing of an area strategy; what is our ambition, how we grow participation, where and what do we want to invest in hockey in our area. I have always said that it would take 2-3 years for things to settle down and I still stand by that, and I am very proud about where we have come from and where we are today through a fantastic team of volunteers.

So, the closed season wasn't without its challenges, we had several bumps along the way.

If you recall, GMS fell over just as the season was going to start which impacted across all hockey, problems with the platform that GMS sat on not only brought hockey down but I heard that cricket crashed too. After a number of weeks, the system was stabilised but left a lot of debris in its path. This resulted in a lot of work for our league divisional secretaries to recover the start of the season to ensure data was collected and results were recorded accurately for both adult and junior leagues. Umpiring appointments were not visible, so we converted back to spreadsheets maintained our umpiring appointers and clubs had to advise umpires of match details, just like the old days. Everyone just rolled their sleeves up and did what they needed to do to make sure that hockey was played.

We recovered from that but then we were disrupted by the cold weather which effected a significant number of adult and junior fixtures. I would like to say thank for to clubs for early engagement with opposition and umpires which stopped a lot of unnecessary travel and expense. Again, our league divisional secretaries across adult and junior hockey stepped up to help clubs reschedule postponed fixtures and to feed the changes into GMS. This resulted in several weekends where teams played Saturday and Sunday, and where teams were also involved in EH competitions, there were a handful of games played mid-week. We stretched our umpires goodwill to the extreme, in some cases asking umpires to double up on both days to ensure all our fixtures could be played.

So, I'll start with saying thank you to Richard Wood and his committee for successfully navigating us through a second adult league season. Promotions and relegations all confirmed, and league winners' pennants have been presented to clubs. Richard's proposal to generate league fixtures independently from EH has meant that fixtures were released to clubs in June which was received well and is so important for clubs that rely on schools for pitches. The team are in a strong position in readiness for the new season, and revised regulations will soon be published. We are only 8 weeks away from the start of the season for a small number of divisions.

The junior leagues always start with a clean sheet of paper each year. The structure of the leagues are determined by the number of teams who enter each year, and into which of the four tiers, so each year we work within a framework but the structure is re-set. Making sure that the structure is right for junior hockey in our area is a challenge. The junior committee, led by Kate Porter, aims is to create a competitive club environment to facilitate junior hockey, but we saw several teams dropping out of the leagues and several fixtures not played across the closed season for various reasons. Again, we need to learn, try again, engage with the clubs to develop a structure that is fit-for-purpose and supports the needs of our junior membership. The team are also responsible for running areas finals for both clubs and schools, both 11-a-side and In2Hockey, and have a watch across both County hockey and the talent system. Thank you to Kate Porter and her committee for delivering junior hockey across our area, and a special call out to Eilish MacBean for stepping in at short notice to run a couple of schools area finals.

Let's not forget our indoor hockey competitions across adults, junior clubs, and schools. The competitions are held before the Christmas break with the winners going forward to national indoor finals. Indoor could be one of topics for our area strategy depending on our ambition, but we are constrained by the number of indoor facilities available to us so we could develop a longer-term strategy to increase participate and facilities if supported by clubs. A big thank you to Douglas and Marion for organising our indoor competitions again this year.

We've seen several successes on the pitch this season for our clubs and schools in the EH competitions. I'm not going to try to mention them all, there are too many to mention and I'm likely to miss somebody out, but well done to all those teams - adults, masters, junior clubs, junior schools, and state schools - that reached finals at either Lee Valley or Nottingham. A special mention to Trojans U16 boys who won the Supra League and Great Marlow School for winning the Tier 3 final and then their coach, Lottie Porter, winning coach of the year at the EH annual award ceremony. We also had some success with our master's representative teams which is a credit to John Stuart and the volunteers that came forward to help lead/captain the teams; our Mens Over 70s and Women's Over 65s both came home with gold.

In May we held our branch EHO AGM for our members – thank you for Simon Milford and his committee for everything officiating. Our appointed umpires have travelled many miles across the South Central area to officiate the higher league games, some umpires doubling-up to help fulfil the fixtures and we had the additional challenge of the rescheduled games due to the cold weather. Alongside appointed umpires, there are many club umpires who volunteer across our game. We are fortunate that we have an experienced team of appointers, assessors, and coaches to help our umpiring community over the year; they can be seen out in all weather. Whether you are starting your umpiring journey or progressing up the ladder, we have a strong support structure in place to the envy of other areas. We are always looking for new umpires, so if you do know someone who wants to take it up, please get them to register their interest. An umpire pathway is just as important for our game as a player pathway so we do need to think about how we can increase our umpire community going forward.

We continue to build the content of our area website and build links to other sites with an aim to have a single platform to source everything you need for area hockey e.g., results, league tables, regulations, safeguarding, etc. This is all supported by our social media platforms that are getting more hits and receiving more content. If you find something missing which results in you having to search across other websites, please let us know, we are always open to feedback to make things easier and better. We have been actively sharing news and stories across our social media platforms. We are always looking for engaging content for our area newsletter, whether you want to share news, do a shout out, advertise a summer competition, get in touch.

I've already mentioned GMS. Reality is that we are not where we want to be, whether you are EH, an area, a club or an individual. There is a list requirements - new functionality, improvements, fixes - that is being looked at and prioritised. The basics are in place, there is a code freeze ahead of the new season to ensure that we go into a third session with a stable GMS system, but GMS needs to be transformational. We will continue working with EH to find ways to increase functionality and reduce the admin burden that we are putting on clubs and volunteers to shift our focus to playing hockey, after all that why we are all here.

We continue to improve our governance, reviewing policies, procedures, and regulations to help guide and administer hockey, driving consistency across the 8 areas which was one of the original objectives. We have a set of documents to govern our game, they might not be perfect but over the course of time they will be reviewed and refreshed to ensure that we keep them aligned to our game. Clubs have a responsibility to self-govern, we don't want to step in and penalise teams, but transparency, consistency and fairness is an important aspect of any game.

Our disciplinary team has been busy working behind the scenes this season – but a massive call out for the area. In the first year South Central had the highest number of red cards / MMOs or sanctioned disrepute complaints received across English Hockey but in the second season South Central had one of the fewest. This is no doubt a combination of improved club/player behaviour, umpires competency and actions from the disciplinary team so thank to Mark Rutherford and his team for the improved position. However, most of the incidents reported are for umpire abuse which is not acceptable in any game, and we need to work together with clubs and officials to eradicate this from hockey. Alongside the work of our area teams, England Hockey have carried out a full review of the disciplinary/dispute regulations with a proposal to revise the regulations soon.

Finally, to wrap up the 2022-23 season, a big congratulations to Fareham Ladies 1s and Banbury Men's 1s, our South Central champions, and very best of luck as they venture into the English Hockey League.

So, looking forward to the new season, work is well underway across the committees to get us ready for September and it's encouraging to see again more entries into the adult league next season.

But we should never stand still and be complacent. There is a still a lot to do to become a well-run and cost-effective organisation. We now have two full years' worth of knowledge, experience, and data behind us to help us plan to go forward. The learnings of the two years are so invaluable, we can always be better and improve, and we are always keen to get feedback from our clubs. We are at the beginning of our journey; we are only 2 years young. We need to work together across our area with counties, academy's, talent, schools, etc to join up our hockey family to make it accessible and a great experience for everyone. And whilst we have been delighted with the levels of support and offers of help from the hockey community, there is always space for more volunteers. So, if you wish to be involved, please don't hesitate to let us know. We always looking for more volunteers to

help us especially if you have strong views – help us to improve, help us to move forward, we want your views, we want ideas.

I truly believe there is lots to go at – increasing participation in masters hockey for one but actually across all sectors of hockey, encouraging more umpires into our game with the necessary support and coaching, embedding EHs ED&I framework making hockey accessible for all, looking at a communications and marketing strategy, IT, state school hockey, there are things to fix, areas we can do better, make it easier- no doubt we all have ideas of where we should look to improve and invest back in to the area. We will cover the finances in a minute, but we need to develop ideas and a plan – that is realistic and deliverable – to invest back into our area. We have received some views and feedback already.

To do this, we need a joint plan. Depending on your role – club chair or player or divisional secretary – you will have different priorities and different thoughts about this. Once the season has started, I am proposing that we hold a number of face-to-face club forums – we want your ideas and solutions, we want your energy, we want your help. We don't have a magic wand, we are all volunteers, some of our priorities will be in our control but some change won't. Some ideas may be very specific, others more generalised, but we want a balanced plan that benefits all our membership. So, if you have any ideas how we might do this, suggested venues, people that might want to help facilitate this or drive changes through some small projects, please get in touch. This all about future direction and growth of our area.

I would like to express my thanks to the Board of Directors – James, Frankie & Stephen – and the Chairs of the committees – Richard, Kate, John, Mark & Simon - and their committees, whose passion and commitment is exceptional. They have spent thousands of hours between them delivering hockey over the past season for the membership. We have also received great support from Harriett, Caroline, Gaynor, Eliana, and Barbara at EH and together they are the people that run South Central for the membership. A big thank you.

A huge thank you to Frankie Tierney, Governance Director, who is stepping down this year. Frankie has made a massive contribution to hockey, as Chair of South Central Womens Hockey League and then Governance Director for South Central; Frankie's knowledge of the game and support will be greatly missed but we wish Frankie all the best and we will continue to see her on the pitch playing and umpiring.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and remember those members of our hockey family that we have lost during the last season.

5) Finance report

The fiscal year has been another busy one for South Central Hockey Finance team (a one chap team!). The Budget in 2023/24 was set and the intention of being break-even. SCH concluded the year with cash in the bank of £34,473 (PY £19,922). Revenue for the year was £100,476 (PY £103,792). Retained earnings for the year for SCH £16,654 (PY £23,404). QuickBooks again has proven invaluable and GMS has moved forward in so far as it now exports 'Appointed Umpire Charges' for clubs invoices, at a match level for greater clarity – these can be imported easily into QuickBooks. SC are driving the GMS team to be more efficient and are asking for the same exported detail for Annual subscriptions and league fees.

What activity has occurred this year:

- Complying with HMRC and Companies House filing for SCH Ltd
- Working with scrutineer on accounts audit
- Raising invoices to clubs for Membership, League fees and Appointed Umpire fees (790 invoices)
- Paying umpires expenses (420 expense claims)
- Fiscally administrating schools for competitions & masters competitions
- Paying expenses for pitch hire and other SC hockey related invoices
- Chasing clubs for debt payment

Despite the treasurer having the ability to levy a 'fine' on late payment of invoices on clubs, no club have received a fine for this. Payments have been OK (ish) – some clubs could be quicker and not be chased – you know who you are !

To date the Finance Director and Finance Admin role has been carried out by me with no extra cost of admin staff – hence keeping SCH cost base low. My plea to all clubs / SCH leaders wishing to use the finance team is :

Clubs

- Make sure your correct treasurer email addressed is in GMS and the details also communicated to finance@southcentral.hockey
- Please pay your bills on time or contact us to discuss. Please do not just NOT pay.
- Ignoring Bill until you are chased is not acceptable. Fines can be levied for late payment.

Umpires

- Ensure the SCH treasurer has your BACS details.
- Claim you expense on time and certainly by the end of April 2024.
- Join EH Umpire membership program.

Other Stakeholders

- For any project that you are undertaking (School tournament, Masters tournament etc) please complete one of the 'Fiscal Control' form that have been published. i.e. list what, what, how much when etc etc.

This report discusses the P&L for the year and the balance sheet and proposed rate card for Season 2023/24.

EXCEPTIONAL COMMENTS :

- £1,000 Donations is a one-off transfer of cash from MBBO closing its books.
- Fines much higher owing to team using QB to execute fines immediately.
- Umpire Income and Expense was £8,307 (PY £4,813) positive, the majority of this value is from umpires NOT claiming their allowed expenses.
- Consultancy was associated with non-committee members being paid a consultancy fee for administration undertaken to manage hockey activities.
- SCH chose to pay the SCH Master Tournament fees this year and sponsor hockey for masters, this including buying their playing shirt which will be reused next year.

- SCH also subsidises junior hockey with lower league fees and zero umpire fees.
- Technology was GMS, OMS, IT systems annual charges.

The full financial report was sent to clubs in advance of the AGM and is available at Companies House.

Questions were invited on the Accounts and fee proposals.

Karen McKinnon (Wycombe HC) raised the point of the Cost-of-Living Crisis and that all clubs are currently struggling and want to give players the cheapest possible way of playing. With South Central having circa £39,000 in the bank. Appreciating the need to have operating capital and the desire to invest, the question was raised on whether now was the time to propose an increase in Umpire fees and could a reduction in membership fees be entertained?

The Chair responded stating that £34,000 cash in bank but £10,000 which is proposed to be ring fenced for Appointed Umpires fees because it should not be used to subsidise club activities when all clubs do not receive appointed umpires.

There is no proposal to increase the Umpire fees. These have and will remain the same as the previous season.

South Central are trying to maintain an appropriate cash flow and be as efficient as possible and make sure we do not waste membership money. We wish to invest in hockey, so rather than reducing fees we want to work with clubs to agree a plan to re-invest the surplus to get the best benefit for clubs in the Area within an Area Strategy.

Karen next asked about the Hardship fund.

The Chair replied that the money was put aside to support England Hockey's Talent Academy's. As an Area we wanted to ensure that if money was an issue for young players going on the Talent Academy we would offer support. To date we have not received any requests for financial support.

Elaine Smith (Iver & Burnham LHC) queried the total fee of £30 per adult team, as she had received an email dated 7th July which stated £10 per team and proposals for entry to adult league, £50 per team. Elaine asked, 'what is the actual cost'?

The proposal was to retain the Area adult membership at £10 per team and the adult league fee at £20 per team. The Chair asked Elaine to send her a copy of the email she was referring so that we could provide a response.

Ben Wright (Weymouth HC) raised the issue that GMS is optimised for a laptop but not mobile phones which makes filling in team sheets a challenge. Could this be fed back to England Hockey?

The Chair replied that we recognise we are not where we want to be with GMS. With a number of issues still to be addressed, we want to have a stable platform, recognising the ambition is to reduce administration for clubs. We want to ensure that areas have an input into the prioritisation of

GMS activity including fixes and new functionality. An API into club sites has been identified as a requirement for the future.

Harriet Tebbs from England Hockey was asked to give a perspective, which she did and asked members to email GMS support with any question or queries.

The Chair went through some additional questions that were put in advance of AGM.

What is the desired level of cash to have on the balance?

England Hockey advice to South Central is to have around £40- £45K in the balance sheet. Best practice is around 40% of expenses and we are there or thereabouts.

What is being invested into Junior Hockey for 2023/2024?

Unable to provide a response as budgets are being drafted currently but will be happy to share that figure when it is available. We are working with our chairs to deliver the support for all activities.

Are subsidies available for Isle of Wight travel?

We do not wish to penalise a club just because they are based on an island, there is no additional direct cost for appointed umpires. We manage this through the overall fees and expenses. We do appoint carefully, making sure we minimise travel, ferry pool and car share where possible, umpires travel as foot passengers, members of the Isle of Wight club collect from and return them to the ferry terminals to keep costs down which is gratefully received. In fulfilling fixtures, the club travel to the mainland every other weekend at their own cost. There is no financial support from South Central and we believe that a favourable rate has been negotiated with the Ferry company.

What support has been given to master's Hockey?

To date playing kit has been purchased and paying entry fees for area competitions.

The meeting was called on to vote on the proposed fees for 2023/204 season which remain at the same level as the previous year.

Proposed by Stephen Smyth

Seconded by Simon Milford

The outcome of the vote was 39 in favour; 4 against; 2 abstentions. The proposed fees for the 2023/24 season were duly agreed.

The Chair thanked the members for their support and restated that the plan is to engage with clubs to agree a plan to reinvest into hockey in the area.

6) Announcement of post holder elections

The Chair announced that the Governance Director (not seeking re-election) and Operations Director (standing for re-election) had stood down. The Vice Chair position was vacant.

The Chair thanked the outgoing Governance Director (Frankie Tierney) for her stalwart service to Hockey, both for the area but in also in previous roles chairing ladies hockey in the South.

The following Directors have been appointed following the ballot.

Vice Chair	Hattie Wood	Appointed
Operations Director	Stephen Smyth	Appointed
Governance Director	Steve Hills	Appointed

For the roles of Chair for Adults League, Junior League, and master's Committee our current holders were willing to stand for re-election and have been duly appointed following the ballot.

Chair of Adult Competitions and Leagues	Richard Wood	Appointed
Chair of Junior Competitions and Leagues Committee	Kate Porter	Appointed
Chair of master's Committee	John Stuart	Appointed

The Board have accepted the recommendation from the Branch EHO AGM and duly appoint Simon Milford into the role of Chair of Officiating.

The Chair thanked all people that put their names forward and congratulated those who have been elected. Our sport is so fortunate with so many volunteers prepared to invest significant amounts of their time into the game.

The Chair clarified that the role of Area Discipline Administrator is not a balloted role, it is appointed by England Hockey, and I pleased to announce that Mark Rutherford will continue in the role.

7) Any other business

No AOB proposals had been received which concluded the formal element of the AGM.

The meeting was closed at 21.07.