

Annual General Meeting Thursday 17th July 2025, 7.30pm

Chair opened the AGM at 7.32pm and welcomed everyone to the 2025 South Central Hockey Limited AGM. Rich Beer and Barbara Reynolds were in attendance from England Hockey.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Karen Porter	Chair	Junior Hockey
James Birtrip	Appointer	ALMC
Laura Valjak	Chair	Salisbury Hockey Club
Patrick Wall	Captain	Sonning Hockey Club
Julia Sharpe	Chair	Thame Hockey Club
Ian Barber	Chair	Bournemouth

2. **Minutes of 2024 AGM held on 18th July**

The minutes were circulated in advance and were approved by the Board as a correct record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

3. **Chairs Report.**

The 24/25 season been another busy year. We've now completed our 4th season in South Central Hockey. Of course, you may not agree, but we're hoping that we've done a relatively good job. We continue to develop, I think our maturity of the area, but we can never stand still, and we must be prepared to evolve as our game evolves. Prior to the AGM we shared a link with clubs to our subcommittee reports and the AGM documentation, so I don't plan to go into too much detail as I'm taking it that they have been read.

The subcommittee is under the leadership of Richard Wood for adults, Kate Porter for Juniors, Simon Milford for officiating, John Stewart for Masters and Alan Dow for disciplinary have navigated us through the season.

Once again, the adult league fixtures have been published and can be found on GMS and we're waiting for the website to switch over into the new season, and that's planned shortly. The Junior League entry deadline was last Sunday, so I'm hoping that clubs all got their entries in on time because there's a lot of work going on now behind the scenes in terms of shaping those leagues.

And the teams are working hard to finalise the 25/26 regulations, which is never an easy task when you are driving consistency across all eight areas. We will continue to strive to create an inclusive environment to participate in hockey and we want to create dialogue with the clubs to continually evolve our offering offerings and the experience for hockey. So, when the regulations are released, whether they're adult regulations or junior regulations, can I urge captains and managers to familiarise themselves with them to avoid any unnecessary penalties.

We are only two months away from the start of the season, so leagues will start on the 13th of September, so no doubt everybody's in full swing to get ready and I would also like to welcome Aldershot and Farnham to South Central, they've hopped over the border from southeast and we wish them all the best in their inaugural season with us.

I do want to not mention indoor hockey. Participation isn't huge and there are limited facilities, but for those that do take part, they always seem to have so much fun. I know we are looking for more help to support indoor this year, so if you would like to get involved, please get in touch.

An indoor is going to be trialled for masters this year, so I'm keen to see if there is appetite to build on this for future years.

We saw more Masters area representation success this year, so masters is growing and growing. It just looks like so much fun meeting new friends, catching up with old friends, and the hockey isn't too bad either. If you if you take time to go and watch it. So, thank you to John Stewart and the captains and the managers who make it such a success.

If you keep an eye on social media, you will have seen that clubs and schools from our area have had a huge amount of success again this year. Either Lee Valley or Nottingham. I am grateful for all the posts created on social media and Stephen is very quick to tag the stories and increase the viewing. As in previous years, I'm not going to try and mention all the teams that have won trophies or competed in Area National Finals or won awards. England Hockey awards ceremony in fear of forgetting to mention someone but well done to you all and keep sharing those lovely stories.

In May, we held our branch EHO AGM. The reports are all online on the website. If you would like to read them, I ask as always, that you please make sure you provide suitable hospitality to the umpires. Whether they're appointed or whether they're club umpires, as like many volunteers, we can't play the game without them. The team have been out and about visiting clubs this year, developing and mentoring our umpires in all weathers. And if you want their support at your club, please contact them and they'll be more than happy to arrive at your club.

It's been a relatively quiet year for the disciplinary team this year, but there were there was a flurry of red cards towards the end of the season, which seems to be in the norm as we're fighting for those last sort of promotions and relegation spots. It does get a bit tense. And as we move closer to the new season, we are updating cleansing the website and if you think there are useful documents that are missing or out of date, please let us know. I've also asked Stephen to source some new photos to refresh some of the images. And obviously if you've got anything to share, please send them through, but please make sure you get approval and of course if you want to share some news or reach out to us, you know, we'd love to share your stories either on the website or in the newsletter.

I can't go through an AGM without mentioning GMS and I can hear the moans and groans in the background. Now look, we have made some small functional improvements this season. I chair the GMS working group that sits across England hockey and areas. The changes weren't earth shattering, but you know we do want to continue to improve the user experience and drive more functionality out of our system in a sensible and controlled way. So, watch this space and hoping for more changes going forward. And I'm hoping that next year that we can see some bigger changes that will help clubs and allow us to master data in the right place. I'm having some good conversations with England hockey at the moment.

Last but not least, on the operating on the playing side of hockey, a big congratulations to Oxford University ladies' ones and Marlow men's ones who are our South Central champions and the very best of luck in the English Hockey League come September.

Now, just as a limited company, South Central Hockey is responsible for ensuring that the right framework, governance and controls are in place to manage hockey. The board members of Hatty Wood, Vice Chair - James Mitchell, Finance - Mark Cumming, Governance and Stephen Smith, Operations work busily behind looking after the business side of things supported by Jenell, who runs our governance meetings and keeps us on track, we've now got four years' worth of knowledge, experience and data to help us build on. You'll see from the accounts this

year that income and expenditure is almost balanced.

And we said that we thought it would take several years for things to settle down and James will go through that in a minute. But we do need to think about priorities and where we focus our time for next season. I'm so keen to hear your views. We must never be satisfied with what we have we can always do more, go better, go faster.

We can't run an area league without our wonderful volunteers. Our sports, whether it clubs or areas, is hugely dependent on them. Sometimes we just need to remind ourselves that we do it for the love of the game and wanting to see people develop and thrive playing hockey. So, we mustn't be too hard on ourselves when things don't quite go right. If you feel like you want to get involved, please don't hesitate to let us know. We are always looking for more volunteers. We are just about coping in some areas better than others, but the time may come if we don't have enough volunteers that we have to appoint paid administration and that will increase our costs.

Before I go, I would like to express my thanks to the board members Hatty, James, Steve, Mark and Jene, and the subcommittee chairs Richard, Kate, Simon, John and Alan, and along with Barbara's guidance and advice from England Hockey.

They have once again done us proud along with their teams delivering for the area and you are members, as I've already mentioned, Alan Dow has decided to step down from area disciplinary. Thank you, Alan, for your contributions and support and we wish you all the best for the future.

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

4. Finance Directors report, accounts and audit report.

The Finance Directors report and accounts were circulated ahead of the AGM.

The fiscal year has been another busy one for the South Central Hockey Finance. The Budget in 2024/25 was set with the intention of being break-even. SCH concluded the year with cash in the bank of £62,366 (PY £54,021) Revenue for the year was £129,297 (PY £106,519). Expenses for the year £126,290 (PY £87,009). Total Capital & Reserves for the year for SCH £62,069 (PY £59,062). QuickBooks again has proven invaluable. GMS has not moved on at all in terms of assisting regions manage their financial administration any better. SC continues to work with the GMS team to ensure better features in this vital tool for all of hockey's administration tasks.

Four years in the finances are stabilising, however, SCH has invested in Umpires, Junior hockey & paying more people to manage hockey (outside of the committee). It should be noted that the allocation of Umpires from across the region to matches not close to their home has meant that the Umpire Expense has dramatically risen by £25,578 year on year, and the subsidizing of Umpiring of Schools has meant an increase of expenses by £4,901.

Activity occurred in the year:

- Complying with HMRC and Companies House filing for SCH Ltd
- Working with the scrutineer on the accounts audit
- Raising invoices to clubs for Membership, League fees, and Appointed Umpire fees
- Managing Fines to clubs through the QuickBooks tool
- Managing Debtors through the QuickBooks tool
- Paying umpires' expenses (842 expense claims)
- Fiscally administering schools for competitions & masters competitions
- Paying expenses for pitch hire and other SC hockey-related invoices

Payments have been OK (ish) – some clubs should 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 address is in GMS and also 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 bills until you are chased is not acceptable. Fines can be levied for late payment.

Umpires

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

Other Stakeholders

- For any projects that you undertake (School tournament, Masters tournament etc) please complete one of the 'Fiscal Control' forms that have been published. i.e. a list of What, how much, when, etc
- This report discusses the P&L for the year and the balance sheet, and the proposed rate card for next season.

Cash Situation in Bank being held for other organisations:

- Claire Wilkinson & Pete Atkins Charitable Trust £18,764
- HUA Account £10,190

EXCEPTIONAL COMMENTS:

INCOME

- £29,937 Funds transfer from closed hockey sporting management bodies to be ring-fenced in the SC accounts for Umpire Development (see above comment)
- Fines £5,917 (PY £4,560) higher owing to the team using QB to execute fines immediately as per league rules - some clubs paying more as not paying fines on time.
- Umpire Income minus Umpire expense has been subsidised £-16,216 (PY £11,192). Greater mileage covered by fewer umpires, fewer umpires living close to the game are appointed. The right level umpire for the right game.
- Junior & Senior Indoor fees (invoice low as a timing issue, they were invoiced after year end) and School Hockey subsidising by SC Hockey (Umpires costs and waived entry fees)

EXPENSE

- £2,239 was spent on the Umpire training website & content
- Umpire Equipment £3,494 was clothing bought for umpires
- Consultancy £9,322 (PY £6,940) was associated with non-committee members being paid a consultancy fee for administration undertaken to manage hockey activities – a significant change was the purchasing service to manage junior and school hockey
- SCH again chose to pay the SCH Master Tournament fees this year and sponsor hockey for masters, some new kit was purchased this year £377
- SCH also subsidises junior hockey with lower league fees and zero umpire fees, and also SC sends umpires to all junior & school events
- Office Supplies were £1,081 (PY £1,387) last year one-off of a printer
- Trophies variation is a timing issue
- Pitch Hire higher in charges from suppliers

- Tournament fees are a year-end timing issue of the invoice from last year; Master's kit was reduced as not repurchased every year
- Technology was GMS, OMS, Otter.ai, and IT systems annual charges

Hardship Fund

Reminder, there is a modest hardship fund available to clubs from EH for financial support to be able to continue to play hockey.

5. Membership Subscription Fees and entry fees for Competitions and Leagues for season 2025-2026.

- No inflationary change to area membership and league fee.
- Umpire mileage expense unchanged.

6. Election of Directors and Postholders.

It was clarified that under the Area Articles, every year, at least two positions on the Board must be available for election. This year the positions for election are Vice Chair and Operations Director.

The Chair announced postholder election results.

The following Director nominations have been proposed and seconded, unopposed. With no objections received Hatty Wood and Stephen Smyth were duly re-elected.

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Second
Vice Chair of the Board	Hatty Wood	Rowena Shepherd	Angela Clements
Operations Director	Stephen Smyth	Su Konganda	Bex Donaldson

The following Postholders nominations have been proposed and seconded, unopposed. With no objections received Richard Wood, Kate Porter and John Stuart were duly re-elected.

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Second
Chair of Adult Leagues & Competitions	Richard Wood	Helen Hyde	Adrian Potter
Chair of Junior Leagues & Competitions	Kate Porter	Judith Barton	Martin Jackson
Chair of Masters	John Stuart	Jacqui Barlow	Stephen Smyth

The Area disciplinary administrator is not a balloted vote. It is appointed by England Hockey and, following the news, Alan Dow has decided to step down once England Hockey has found a replacement.

The Chair congratulated those who were elected.

7. AOB

Maggie Westby, Chair Harlow High Wycombe Ladies HC

“We (at Harlow High Wycombe Ladies HC) believe that the current rule 7.6.2. (citing the last date for registration of players for the league as 1 February) disfavors small clubs, either trying to grow/develop their club or to survive as a club. If a club is wanting to increase from one to two teams with a view to entering a second team in the league (May closing date), they will need to recruit and try out new players across the whole season if they are to meet the May deadline. It is clearly more difficult to increase numbers from one to two teams compared

to, say, five to six teams. On the other hand, if a club is struggling for players, with only one team, and some of those players are hit with injuries, then the club may wish to encourage friends/partners/colleagues to play to help out - but are prohibited from doing so.

We have experienced both of these scenarios at different times. In the latter example, we resolved this by the injured players continuing to play through their injuries or we played short. We did not resort to playing new players under false names. We propose that this rule is removed for South Central. “

Richard Wood responded. Thank you, Maggie, for your question. I'm not sure whether you're understanding the regulation. The 1st of February is at the end of the season. What we're trying to do or what that regulation says. You can register players up to and include up to the 1st of February. But after that in the last because the last few weeks of the season are critical to a lot of teams for promotions and relegations, the area regulations do not allow registration of players after the first of February, but that's almost at the end of the season, so you've got the whole season to register your players.

We cannot as an area remove any regulation. If you feel that this regulation is wrong, please write to us. Once we send out the information again next for next season, write to us again and we will put it up to the 8 area chairs for their views.

Rob Levine, Chair, ACHC

“Somewhat surprised to read that the proposed move to quarters and to smaller leagues were both supported. It will mean we need longer pitch bookings so can host fewer matches at home so will have to hire more pitches - meaning increased costs - and will mean fewer matches over a season so fewer match fees - meaning reduced revenues.

Could you share a breakdown of the survey data - for a change this drastic it would be helpful to understand how many clubs actually voted, what the voting was etc.

I would think there would have to be a quite compelling mandate for both changes. Along with the likely significant increase in EH fees this is combining to make a difficult job of growing participation in hockey even harder as we will have little option but to significantly increase fees to members.”

Richard Wood responded. As you say, we did this poor poll to all the clubs which showed a strong response in favour of both quarters and 10 team leagues. But since then, we have learned that the new ALRS area League regulations. The new Area League regulations will allow Premier League teams to play quarters if decided by the home team. South Central will ask home teams to confirm their intentions to play quarters or halves in their confirmation of the match in accordance with the new Regulation 5 point 2.4. So, this only applies to the Prem 1 Prem, two men and women. We decided not to further the thought of going into ten team leagues, but I'm not saying that it will not rear its head again next season or the season after next.

Karen McKinnon, Wycombe Hockey Club

“Last year clubs voted to not remove annual fees but to reinvest in primary school and umpiring with all the excess funds south central is generating.

How has this happened? I notice London have offered some funding for various activities. at Wycombe we have paid over £5k to put a community coach into multiple primary schools to promote our sport. Can clubs apply for funding?”

Jacqui Barlow responded. So, anybody that was at the AGM last year, there was a proposal to reduce for the further 2425 season. One of the fees not to remove them but to reduce them and I think it was by 10 LB from what I can recall, and it affects that word. That would reduce it was about £5000 coming into the South Central accounts for the year. The AGM at the time this time last year voted not to reduce the fees, but to leave the money with South Central so each team benefiting by, you know, 1010 quid actually having a £5000 was more advantageous and we could actually put more back into hockey if we could use it as a sort of a bigger pot of cash.

James has gone through quite a lot in his detailed report. And again, you know you can find the Finance Report onto on the website. We have spent quite a lot many this year in both juniors and umpiring which you'll be able to see. We completely subsidised the State school hockey tournament. So this is a tournament that's been running for two years. There were no fees to the state school entries, and I think we have 4445 entries. From what I remember, it was totally free for them. So, we charged all of the pitches, all of the umpires, all of the medals and we didn't charge entry fees. So, all of the charges came out of the South Central accounts.

We've also subsidised the club area finals for South Centra and what you will also see is the officiating team have been out and about around clubs this year. Lots of really good pictures on Facebook, supporting clubs where they've asked for umpiring development and mentoring. So, the team have been out and about in all weathers. Supporting a club, umpiring development and all of that will total quite a lot more than the 5K that we didn't, which we which in effect we didn't reduce fees by and I would like to say as well Karen's asked to come clubs apply for funding and I know. Since we've received this request, Wickham actually have put in a request for some funding for some state school hockey, which is just being considered at the moment.

Charlie Bennett , HHC Director of Hockey

“As per the 2024 AGM minutes there was meant to be a process communicated to clubs for the IOW travel subsidy, but HHC didn't receive this. I sent multiple emails to the finance director requesting the subsidy and the process and was eventually told there wasn't any subsidy or policy. Clubs have to pay hundreds of pounds per team to play away vs IOW, what can be done about this?”

Jacqui Barlow responded. We discussed this for the last three AGMs and let me tell you where it came from. In terms of 2023 as we finished our 2023 AGM, Isle of Wight hockey had been successful in their hockey on the pitch and had actually moved into a position of needing appointed umpires for their games. And the comment that I made and I've got, I've got my notes in terms of the comments was you know we need to treat the Isle of Wight Wild Isle of Wight Hockey Club as a member within you know our area and they shouldn't be disadvantaged because they are an island club and be treated exactly the same as all of the other teams. When we appoint umpires onto the island, we are very careful in terms of our appointments to try and minimise costs. And we travel over as foot passengers. I've done it myself and the Isle of Wight teams then come and pick us up, take us to the hockey feed and then take us back to the ferry. And then we're on our merry way back home. So, the discussion started in 2023 about let's keep an eye out and see how we're getting on in terms of appointing umpires in into onto the island. There was a then a query that came in in 2024

in terms of a subsidy and there was a bit of a miscommunication on that call because unfortunately, James wasn't on the 2023 AGM. W spoke about a subsidy, and it said it's sort of grown arms and legs a little bit and then after the AGM and we had discussion, James sent out an e-mail to all club chairs and secretaries. Just a quick clarification to say today there is not a subsidy, we have a hardship fund, but there is not a written down policy to subsidise costs going on to the island must admit during the course of the year, a couple of other clubs have asked if there was a subsidy or a policy. And today we said obviously if the membership would like us to consider one going forward, we would need to obviously run all the numbers, control the data and have a look in terms of what it is that we would like to propose and obviously why we have money in the bank We could certainly put something together that we would bring to the AGM for consideration, but obviously if that was voted in later on down the years when there is no money in the bank, we would have to increase either fees or remove the policy if it wasn't viable.

So that's where it's come from, and it has grown a little bit arms and legs and have been and been miscommunicated.

James Mitchell apologised for the miscommunication and will go away and see if the finances will allow an IOW subsidy.

Grant Hunt

Timely Submission of Complaints

“Last season, a situation arose where a team (Oxford OBU) submitted a complaint about player eligibility against another team in South Premier. The player in question had not been formally released by OBU and went on to play against them in the first match of the season. However, the complaint was only lodged in the penultimate week of the season. Over 6 months later. At a point when relegation was a possibility, and points could have influenced league standings. I would propose introducing a clear timeframe within which such complaints must be submitted—ideally within 14 days after the incident. This would help ensure that concerns are raised in good faith and in a timely manner, rather than being used retrospectively to gain a competitive advantage.”

Sanctions and Points Allocation

“I also believe the current approach of awarding a 5–0 win to the “wronged” team may not reflect the spirit of fair play. In the case mentioned above, Oxford OBU were comprehensively beaten in the match but stood to gain a 5–0 win by default, had the complaint been upheld. Instead, I'd suggest that if a team is found to have breached player eligibility rules, they should incur a points deduction (e.g. 3 points), regardless of the match result. This penalises the offending team appropriately without artificially inflating the result in favour of the other side. A useful parallel might be found in motorsport. If a driver runs another driver off the track, that driver is penalised with a time penalty. The other driver is not rewarded a time advantage.

In summary, my two requests are:

- Introduce a reasonable time limit (e.g. 14 days) for raising player eligibility concerns.***
- Replace the awarding of a 5–0 win with a fixed points deduction for the team found to be in breach. No gain to the other team.***

I believe these changes would promote fairness, clarity, and integrity across the league.”

Richard Wood responded. Process for handling player eligibility, complaint or any complaint. Again this is in the draft regulations for the coming season. The new Adult league regulation prevents retrospective reports more than seven days old. The ALR pertains to all areas and is not changed at area level, so if you've got a complaint, it must be done within seven days, or it will not be entertained. Moving on to the sanctions and points allocations.

We have not been approached to deal with this, or it didn't come to our notice to be thought about it for the current or for the new season. So, we cannot change what you're asking for, they cannot be implemented for 25/26, as the amendments is very nearly complete. We will, however, consider the recommendations in their submission for the 26/27 season. Again, the ALR pertains to all areas, is not changed at area level. And just a final bit, please note that all clubs are invited to make proposals to change to the ALR when invited mid-season or early next year.

As no other business was raised, members were thanked for their attendance, volunteers were thanked for their contributions to hockey, and the meeting was closed at 8.43pm.