

Neon Cricket Wiltshire County Cricket League

Admin Officer: David Norman, 2 Manley Close, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8DT.

Minutes of the WCCL 2021 AGM held at Beversbrook, Calne on Monday 29th November 2021.

Present:

All WCCL Clubs except for Westbury CC.
Members of the WCCL Committee.

The League's Chairman, Mike J Smith, took the chair. Mike began by welcoming everybody to the AGM.

Apologies have been received from three committee members – Graham Chandler and Sandeep Biwalkar due to family illness, and Anton Newton due to a last minute other commitment.

1. Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

Were proposed as a true record of the meeting by Corsham CC, seconded by Winsley CC, accepted.

2. Matters Arising from those minutes

None.

3. Chairman's Report

Mike congratulated all the divisional winners and runners up, and commiserated to those who have been relegated.

Avebury and Calne 1st XIs are rejoining us from WEPL. They are replaced in WEPL by Hinton Charterhouse and Beckington.

We had a normal season on a cricket front, although teas and pavilions had restricted use early on.

The league are having regular meetings with WEPL and the other feeder leagues, which are proving productive. One of the initiatives which is being discussed at length, is the projected future lack of independent umpires for WEPL matches. Hence the WEPL Committee are now encouraging their clubs to provide umpires to the umpire pool. These are to be trained, and will then be initially umpiring in the feeder leagues to be assessed before they go into the WEPL pool. This may result in clubs being asked to host umpires for their matches. This will be managed by both the WCCL and WACO.

We ran successfully without a handbook, with all the information now on the website. The money which would have been spent on handbooks is therefore available as grants to clubs.

Anton Newton has stepped down from his role as League Administrator, and is now just the League Disciplinary Officer, with David taking over the rest of the league admin. We had a rush of disciplinary cases in the middle of the season. One case alone took up 45 hours of league committee members' time trying to get to the bottom of what happened. The person who is responsible for behaviour on the field is the captain. We will therefore have a captain's meeting alongside the Spring Meeting in April. This will be a chance for captains to discuss solutions as well as to understand their responsibilities.

Mike thanked all the groundsmen, who do a difficult job. The pitch marks this year have been very good, so all clubs are asked to thank their groundsmen for the work they do. There is plenty of support for groundsmen if they need it. Richard Mosdell, the Wiltshire Pitch Advisor, is their first point of contact if they need any help or advice.

Mike also thanked all the umpires who stand for their club. Again they have a difficult job, and clubs are asked to pass on the league's thanks.

Finally, Mike thanked the committee for all their work. He also thanked Pete Sykes from Wiltshire Cricket, for all his help, advice and assistance. This has been especially appreciated during the pandemic.

4. League Administrator's Report

David began by thanking all clubs for having worked through the effects of the pandemic this year. While we were able to play a full season, this wasn't certain to be the case until shortly before the season started. Even once we got going, we had to deal with changing rules as the season progressed. We hope and expect that 2022 will be a normal season, but as we have seen repeatedly during the pandemic, things can change rapidly, so we will have to continue to be ready to react at short notice if things do change.

Following discussions with WEPL and the other feeder leagues, the fixtures for all divisions will be released across all leagues at the same time in mid-December. This schedule allows us more time for clubs to work out how many teams to enter, resolve any ground issues, etc. We used a similar schedule in 2021 due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, and it resulted in only one team being expunged during the season – whereas there have usually been several each season, and at least one before the season starts. Hence the decision to continue with this schedule in future years.

The divisional structure has been sent to clubs prior to the AGM. Unusually we will have 12 clubs in Division 7 West and 10 in Division 8 West. We would normally have this the other way around, but it just wasn't possible to make this work. We will be looking to rectify this for 2022, so there may be an unusually large number of teams relegated from Division 7 West at the end of the 2022 season.

Part of the reason for this, is that we have had no teams fold following the 2021 season, only one team move to a different league. This is the first time this has happened in the time David has been involved in running the league, and possibly in the league's history.

Following a league rule change in 2019, we have the first instance of a team having forfeited out the league and thus being asked for a deposit to re-enter for 2022. If they forfeit during the 2022 season, the team they forfeit against will receive a compensation payment from the league, and if they do not, they will receive the deposit back following the season.

In 2021, we regionalised divisions 7, 8 and 9. Following the season, the clubs have been asked how this has gone, and the feedback has been more positive than it was before the season started. This will therefore continue. The clubs in divisions 5 and 6 have also been polled as to whether these divisions should also be regionalised, but only a very small number of clubs were in favour, so these divisions will remain in a linear structure.

One of the problems putting the fixtures together, is that a number of matches have to be moved to the last weekend in April, for reasons such as clubs having their ground unavailable for a week. Every time a club need a fixture moving, they need an opponent. For the first time this year, there has been a need to ask clubs to volunteer for this, having said they couldn't play on the last weekend of April in their season entry. Clubs are asked to help with this whenever they can. The league knows that nobody wants a match moved, but the question is whether they can help, not whether they want a match moved.

David has had discussions with a small number of clubs who have expressed concerns that the larger clubs in the league are starting to dominate, and causing small clubs to fold. David reported that there has always been a problem with small clubs folding – 12 left the league between 2006 and 2019, when the large clubs were not growing. The biggest problem for small clubs, is where their next generation of players are coming from. State schools no longer generate cricketers, so the only way kids get into cricket is through junior sections of clubs. The big clubs are getting bigger because they are doing this successfully, and those kids are then growing up and wanting to continue to play at the club where all their cricket friends are.

However, there have also been a number of reports of big and small clubs working together to the benefit of both. The big clubs are often limited on the number of players they can field by the number of grounds available, not the number of players available, so the loan system can be used to allow small clubs to borrow players when they are short, and in the process, allow the big clubs to give more of their players a game. The small clubs are therefore encouraged to build a relationship with their neighbours, to the benefit of both. Both Wiltshire Cricket and the League are there to help small clubs with whatever they need, so please do get in touch if a club needs any form of assistance.

As referenced above, there are a number of clubs who are having trouble finding venues for all their teams. Clubs are therefore asked to consider whether, if their ground only has 9 home matches, whether they could share with another team – and if so, what they need to make this work – whether that's financial, help with the ground preparation work, or something else.

The league has grants available, which clubs are encouraged to make use of. They can be used for a variety of things, from new pavilions, nets, covers, sight screens and ground machinery, to course attendance for umpires, scorers, coaches, etc. There is now a page on the league website with full details (once clubs have logged in), and a downloadable application form.

As referenced in the Chairman's report, we do take up a lot of committee members time dealing with disciplinary issues – especially trying to get to the bottom of what has happened. With almost everybody now having a microphone and a camera in their pocket, capturing the incident on their phone would provide far better evidence than a written report, so players are encouraged to do this if they have the opportunity.

Clubs have been polled to find out how good their first aid coverage is. This is something the league wants to look at how they can improve, without it becoming another hoop every club has to deal with. As a first step, the grants from the league can now also be used towards the cost of first aid courses, and at the Spring Meeting, every club will be receiving a first aid kit per ground, to ensure there is at least a first aid kit present, if not a first aider. We will also be adding a field to the ground information on the league website, to specify where the nearest defibrillator to the club is.

Questions were then invited from the floor. It was suggested that the league should develop a "good practice" guide for clubs – including contacts, processes, etc. A chance for all the clubs in the league to pool their experiences and learn from each other. This suggestion will be taken to the next committee meeting.

5, Treasurer's Report

The accounts have been circulated, and examined by Colin Webb.

The league invoices to clubs are sent at the end of March, and must be paid by the start of May. 2021 saw every club pay without chasing.

The fines continue to reduce, compared to 2019.

Neon Cricket took over the sponsorship for three years in 2020, but it was then agreed to delay this for a year due to Covid, so it will run to the end of the 2023 season.

We continue to source our balls from John Collins of Wilts Sport. The league buys the same number as it distributes, so doesn't make any money on these.

The "salary" item is actually a contractor payment, but may revert to being a salary if it changes from David being the administrator.

Travel expenses and room hire are down, due to meetings being held via Zoom, so this will return to pre-pandemic levels going forwards.

We have changed trophy supplier, which has caused a slight increase in price.

We will be looking at a new insurance provider for next year, as our current provider are no longer ECB-recommended.

The accounts were proposed as a true record by Goatacre CC, Seconded by Chippenham CC, accepted.

The annual affiliation fee will remain at £80. Proposed by Marshfield CC, seconded by Calne CC, accepted.

6. Rule Amendments.

A large number of corrections and clarifications were circulated to clubs prior to the AGM. These do not change the rules, they just add clarity and correct errors. Clubs were given the opportunity to raise any issues, but none were raised, so these will be adopted into the league rules.

The meeting then moved to the proposed changes.

Number of Overs. It was proposed by the league committee, and seconded by Avebury CC, that the number of overs in Divisions 7 East, 7 West and 8 West is reduced from 45 to 40. These clubs were polled in advance of the meeting. All 32 teams responded. 4 abstained, and the remainder voted 14 in favour, 14 against. As a majority is required to pass, this motion therefore failed.

If this had passed, there would then have been a vote for Division 6, then 5, etc. David informed the meeting that these clubs had been polled. Division 6 was heavily against the motion, and no higher division had a majority in favour.

Disputes Procedure. The disputes procedure has been rewritten to allow for disputes which arise when the result is confirmed, as well as those which arise during the match. This was proposed by the league committee, seconded by Beckington CC, and passed unanimously.

Expunging Teams. It was proposed by the league committee that where a team forfeits a fourth match on the last Saturday of the season, they results are not expunged. They will still face all the other penalties for four forfeits (automatic relegation, deposit to re-enter, etc). This is to stop their expungement affecting the final league table days after the final matches take place. This was seconded by Beckington CC and passed unanimously.

Weather Interference. It was proposed that where a match is rain affected, it can be reduced to a minimum of 20 overs per side rather than 25. This is now possible as a consequence of using Duckworth Lewis. Seconded by Beckington CC and passed unanimously.

Teas. It was clarified that unless there is a change in the league rules, clubs would be required to provide teas in 2022, as they had been in 2019 and before. It was then proposed by the league committee (but with no recommendation to vote for or against) that teas do not have to be provided, and if they are and the away team wish to have teas as well, the home team can ask the away team for a contribution towards the cost. This was seconded by Bradford on Avon CC, and passed by a majority, with about 10 votes against.

David subsequently agreed that the website would be updated so that teams can state whether they will provide teas, and whether they want teas when available at away matches.

Players in Matches in April. It was proposed by the league committee and seconded by Trowbridge CC that where a team plays a league match in April, the players in that match cannot then play in a higher team in the first week of May without permission from the League Admin Officer. This follows the league identifying that about 25 players had done this in 2021. The clubs who were the biggest offenders were the clubs who asked for the match to be rescheduled, and in every case, the biggest offenders won. It was felt by the league that if this wasn't curtailed, clubs would stop making themselves available to play matches on the last weekend of April.

The League Admin Officer clarified that permission would be granted unless there was good reason not to. So if a player plays for the 2nd XI, hits 100, and is then wanted by the first team,

that's fine. If they played 1st XI cricket for the whole of the previous season, drop down for this one match and then want to go up again, it will be refused. Equally, if it is one player who wants to move up, it will usually be allowed, if it's half the team, it will not.

The proposal received 34 votes in favour and 20 votes against, and was therefore carried.

Start time. It was proposed by Avebury CC and seconded by a number of clubs, that 40 over matches would start at 1:30pm. As the previous vote on moving some divisions to 40 overs matches had failed, this proposal was withdrawn.

Cancelled Matches. It was proposed by Westbury CC and seconded by Beckington CC that the number of points for a cancellation is increased from 8 to 10. With Westbury CC not in attendance, this had to be presented by Beckington, and after a brief discussion, was voted down, with about 6 votes in favour.

7. Officers and Committee

In the absence of the League Vice Chairman, The treasurer, Mike P Smith, nominated Mike J Smith for the position of Chairman. Proposed by Malmesbury CC, seconded by Goatacre CC, and with no other candidates, accepted.

The remaining members of the committee were elected en bloc, proposed by Goatacre CC, seconded by Winsley CC, accepted.

8. Any Other Business

It was queried as to whether the pitch marks could be restricted so that can't be entered before Wednesday, to allow away captains to calm down. We don't allow them until the result is confirmed, which generally gives overnight to cool down. Delaying them longer than this would cause other issues.

Meeting closed at 21:41.