

Worcestershire County Cricket Club

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Club held in the Graeme Hick Pavilion at the County Ground on Monday 22nd February 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:	President	Mr K T Mills
	Chairman of the Board	Mr J M Price
	Chief Executive	Mr M Newton
	Director of Cricket	Mr S J Rhodes
	Captain	Mr V S Solanki
	Finance Director	Mr C R Smith
	Together with 171 members	

The President welcomed Members to the Meeting, the first to be held in the Graeme Hick Pavilion. He said that it was good to see so many members at the AGM after last year's poor attendance due to the snow.

The President then asked members to stand in silent tribute to all the members and friends of the Club who had died during the last year, in particular Ray Crawford, Michael King, Frank Bush and Colin Jenkins.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from: The Rt Rev'd Dr John Inge, Mr Clive Richards OBE DL, Mr David Exall, Mrs Pat Mills, Mr Jack Randall, Mrs Joyce Booth, Mrs Ann Connolly, Mrs M O Dimmock, Mrs Gillian Suckling, Mrs Jane Radburn, Mrs Mary Windle, Mr Michael Bound, Mr R E Davenhill, Mr Brian Dimmock, Mr George Farrimond, Mr Clive Fieth, Mr Howard Hudson, Mr W Smith and the Rev'd M D Vockins.

2. **Confirmation of Minutes of the AGM held on 9th February 2009**

The Minutes (which had been available to Members prior to the Meeting and were taken as read) were approved by Members and signed as a correct record of the Meeting.

3. **President's Address**

The President said that this was the first AGM to be held at the ground since he started to watch cricket here in 1957 and it may well be the first AGM to ever have been held at the ground. At one time the AGM was held in the Shire Hall and then we moved to King's School.

He said that his first year as President had turned out to be very disappointing as far as the cricket performance went, especially in the four day game. The highlight of the season had been the opening of the Graeme Hick Pavilion with its new facilities for members and players.

The President said we had missed Graeme Hick during the past year both on and off the field as he felt sure he had been a positive influence in the dressing room.

He said the Director of Cricket would report on last season but as members we can look forward to a better season this year. It is important that we continue to support the Club and playing staff while we build the team with the young players who have been signed during the winter and he hoped that the overseas players would succeed.

4. **Approval of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts**

The President invited the Chairman to speak to the Annual Report.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

I have been privileged to be Chairman of Worcestershire CCC for three years and what a roller coaster ride it has been - from the peaks of winning the NatWest Pro40 Trophy in 2007 and gaining promotion in 2008 to the troughs of the summer floods in 2007 and 2008 and, of course, the disappointment of 2009.

I will let our Director of Cricket, Steve Rhodes, talk to you about the cricket performances in detail and you will hear more about our finances from our Finance Director, Chris Smith, later in the meeting but there is no getting away from the fact that 2009 was a disappointment for all of us involved with Worcestershire CCC.

I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the issues that have been raised by members and the media over the last six months and to demonstrate to you all how we intend to move forward.

By the beginning of 2009 we had invested heavily in a squad of 20 contracted players, 10 of whom had international experience at full, Lions or U19 level. For the first time, our cricket expenditure went above the £2m mark. We all felt the squad would be strong enough to compete in the Championship and challenge for one day titles. Unfortunately it was not to be (more about that from Steve Rhodes later) and as the season progressed it was clear that a change of direction was required as some senior players chose not to extend or see through existing contracts and others were released.

A total of 8 contracted non-overseas players have been released or have moved on since the end of the 2009 season. These movements have saved the Club £491,000 in salaries of which £214,000 has been re-invested in the team for 2010. I can confirm that much of this saving is being ‘banked’ for use when the time is right – either for the recruitment of new players, if available, or higher remuneration to retain our young players who make a breakthrough.

We are particularly pleased to see the return of Phil Jaques and look forward to welcoming possibly the first Bangladesh Player to take up a County Overseas slot when their captain, Shakib al Hasan, arrives in July.

Jaques as you know has been in terrific form and Shakib was recently voted the Wisden 2009 Test player of the year. For the Twenty20 period we have also secured the services of Steve Smith, an allrounder who is highly regarded out in Australia and has just made their one day squad.

It is also worth mentioning that under the new Performance Related Fee Payment system to be introduced in 2010 by the ECB, the Club will financially benefit whenever any of the Players who have moved play for their new County or for England. For 2010 we will be giving our younger players the opportunity to claim regular 1st team places which will also help the Club financially going forward.

Sport is and has not been immune to the economic recession. This is reflected in our accounts for the year. The poor fixture schedule and the team's performances compounded the situation but I am pleased to say the fixture schedule for 2010 is a vast improvement with many more games being played on Friday evenings and, most importantly, on Sundays.

On the sponsorship front, we are very grateful to Tom Scott and The Cotswold Group for becoming major sponsors at the beginning of the season and we are all delighted they have recently extended their sponsorship through to 2012. We also hope to announce a new Associate Sponsor plus a 3 year extension to another of our Associate Sponsors in the near future. Our Commercial Department, led by David Leatherdale, are performing well despite the economic downturn which has affected corporate spending so badly.

There has been much speculation about the growing financial gap between the Test Match grounds and the Non Test Match Grounds. There is little doubt some of the bigger Counties are investing heavily in their squads and this is escalating player salary expectation to a level which we believe is unsustainable. Such spending does not necessarily translate into playing success and it is worth noting that in the last three seasons, only Durham of the Test Match Grounds has won a title. All the other titles have been won by non Test Match Ground Counties including our success in 2007.

I fully understand that Members and Supporters are mainly interested in playing success but I think it is absolutely imperative that we remain financially prudent and do not risk the future of our Club. Our Director of Cricket, Steve Rhodes, and Captain, Vikram Solanki, are both highly respected individuals within the cricket world and are both committed to our future strategy. Worcestershire is fortunate to have them at the helm and we are confident they will bring success to the Club.

Very high on cricket's agenda at the moment is the 'Free to Air' debate. The Davies Committee has recommended that Ashes Test Matches are shown on terrestrial TV. The consultation period comes to an end in a few weeks and it will be interesting to see whether a bill is put before Parliament before the election. Whilst it is clearly a vote winner, it is important to realise the impact it could have on cricket in general and county cricket in particular.

It has been said the economic impact of this would be a £150m loss to the game over 4 years. The robustness of this figure is being examined by specialists on behalf of the ECB but let us consider some of the issues. At the last round of TV negotiations, terrestrial TV did not even bid for the live transmission of cricket so would that approach change next time? Would there be any bid and, if so, would it reflect the true value of the rights? Would BSkyB be prepared to bid for the other three years in the four year cycle if they didn't get the crown jewels of cricket? We don't know but what is certain is the financing of County Cricket beyond 2013 is uncertain at present and the pressure to reduce the number of Counties will increase. Your Board is absolutely determined that Worcestershire is in a strong position to meet these challenges if and when they arise.

In 2009 we made some amendments to the membership structure following feedback from many of you when we took all Twenty20 matches out of the basic membership package. As a result of this, membership revenue remained static despite a fall in numbers. I must report to you that one Life Member took the Club to the County Court over the imposition of the additional payment for Twenty20 cricket but the case was summarily dismissed.

On the brighter side, the opening of the new Graeme Hick Pavilion at the end of May was a marvellous event with Graeme and his family joined by Tom Graveney and our Patron, Mervyn King, plus around 150 members and guests. At the official lunch, Mervyn King made a very moving tribute to Graeme and his career as a Worcestershire Player. The £2m building has received many favourable comments from players, officials, members and visitors alike and represents Phase One of the Ground Development Scheme. The Pavilion is already proving to be a very popular venue on non match days and it is noticeable how many more members are using the facilities on match days.

This scheme is vital to the Club's future at New Road. Despite the weaknesses in the financial markets it is still hoped that Phase 2 incorporating the 120 bed Premier Inn Hotel, a restaurant, a new atrium entrance and administration area for the Club will commence September this year.

Sir John Major kindly gave his time to speak at the Flood Club Dinner in July and gave a fascinating and amusing speech about his political life and love of cricket. His tale of how he tried to explain the game of cricket to Boris Yeltsin in Moscow whilst downing quantities of vodka will long be remembered. I would like to thank Cynthia Crawford for persuading Sir John to give of his time. Whilst mentioning Cynthia, I should also mention Ray who has made a wonderful bequest to the Club.

This year's Chairman's Lunch on the 8th April will be addressed by the current President of the MCC, John Barclay. I urge you to attend this traditional curtain raiser for the season and listen to John who has a very good reputation for public speaking.

I returned from Australia and New Zealand yesterday and I can tell you that Doug Bollinger is now a star, they absolutely love him in Australia.

Whilst over there I visited Glenn Turner who sends his best regards and hopes that the Club has a better year this year. He is now a National Selector for the New Zealand squad.

2009 is now behind us and we must look forward. There are just 45 days to the new season when we play our first match against Middlesex. It is the time of year when all cricket followers start seriously thinking about the long sunny days to come. The playing squad is enjoying their pre-season training at our new Malvern College winter base with its wonderful new facilities. Overall the squad is younger than last year but there is a good mixture of experience and youthful exuberance.

I call upon everybody involved with Worcestershire County Cricket Club to get behind the team as I am sure they will surprise more than a few pundits."

Cricket Report

The Director of Cricket said

"The Chairman and President have spoken about the disappointing cricket in 2009 but didn't explain too much about why.

One of the reasons was that Kabir Ali and Simon Jones took 100 wickets in the 2008 season and Kabir only played four games in 2009 and Simon Jones didn't play at all. We came across some good batting sides but unfortunately our remaining bowlers didn't come up to the job. Generally, they lacked control which made life difficult for the Captain. This is an area we have focused on this winter and we are trying to keep it as basic as we can, hitting a good area. Hopefully this will help the Captain to have more control during the season.

It didn't help having to chase 300/400 runs every time and this affected the players confidence and some players didn't have the season that they should have had.

In one day cricket we played some good cricket. We won 14 games and lost 10 but we did lose some important games which is a concern should we get in the same position this year.

The recession and certainly the news to the dressing room that we had to cut the cricket budget had an affect on the morale of the players. Both myself and the Captain understand that finances are difficult and that the Club needs to look after itself but it is difficult for players to understand as they are mainly thinking about their own careers.

The positives about the season were that we finished 3rd in the NatWest Pro40 and we beat the eventual champions, Sussex. We were top of the table going into the last two games of the season.

In the Friends Provident Trophy we beat the champions Hampshire both home and away and we saw the emergence of some good one day players. Chris Whelan was one the Captain often turned to and Jack Shantry towards the end of the season

showed that he had control and a uniqueness to his bowling which opposition teams found difficult. Moeen Ali had a career best 125 and a 3-32 in one day cricket.

In the four day game there were some positives. Daryl Mitchell got 1162 runs and a career best of 298 against Somerset. He was also pleased to get a career best of 4-49 against Yorkshire.

There was also Gareth Andrew's 92 not out against Nottinghamshire and Chris Whelan's 5-95 against Lancashire.

The one bowler we were impressed with was Richard Jones. In four day cricket he took 22 wickets in seven games and scored a 53 not out against Durham. He was selected for the England emerging players squad trip to South Africa and he was the only seamer who remained fit for the whole tour.

David Wheeldon had a very good second team season and Ben Cox, only 17 years of age and still at school, made 61 on his first class debut.

Of the senior players Vikram Solanki had a good season. Matt Mason also had a good season and at times was the only bowler who was doing the job.

The facilities was one of the main issues given by some of the players who left us at the end of the season. It was mainly not having an on site cricket school which we know is not possible due to the flooding and the high costs involved.

We are looking at ways to try and cover the outdoor nets so that we can practice there during the summer when there is rain.

This winter our training facilities have been in the new Sports Complex at Malvern College. The surface we are using is the most realistic surface that I have played on. They have all the facilities we need and also a swimming pool. The cricket has been good and there have been some big improvements during the winter months.

The standard of the outdoor practice wickets has improved and things are being learnt with regard to the middle wickets and hopefully we might be able to produce wickets with a little more pace. Towards the end of last season we drilled and filled three of the wickets and we will look to see what happens to these in the coming season.

The medical department has now been strengthened and we have a new Strength and Conditioning Coach who has bonded really well with the players.

I feel that we have a lot to be optimistic about during 2010.

Alexei Kervezee, 20 years of age, has just made the breakthrough into the first team. Aneesh Kapil and Jack Manual are still at school but after being on the Academy have now been put on professional contracts.

Matt Pardoe, Neil Pinner and Joe Leach have been abroad during the winter and will be on contract to us this summer. They have all come through our Academy.

We have signed an all-rounder named James Cameron. He is 23 years old with a British passport.

We have also signed Alan Richardson, a seasoned bowler, who has vast experience and as we have a young squad it is good to have this experience.

At the start of the season we will have Phil Jaques as our overseas player. Phil has a higher career first class average for the County than Graeme Hick.

Shakib al Hasan will be our overseas player for the second half of the season and he really does impress. He should join us towards the end of the Twenty20 campaign.

Steve Smith is joining us for the Twenty20 and has recently made his debut for Australia. Steve Warne is very excited about him. He is also a top order batsman and a very talented cricketer. He is a bit of a gamble but hopefully will bring energy and enthusiasm during the Twenty20 campaign.

We have developed a partnership with Malvern College who are sponsoring talented young cricketers on a scholarship. The first scholarship started last September and the young lad, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, instantly became a member of our Academy squad. There is another place already taken for this September.

The Academy is running well under the leadership of Damian D'Oliveira and seven players have made it to professional level since the Academy was accredited by the ECB.

The team is led by Vikram Solanki who is one of the most experienced county captains. He is highly respected by his peers, colleagues and everybody in the cricketing world. He is Chairman of the PCA and he is currently the Acting Chief Executive of the PCA which shows the high esteem in which he is held.

Daryl Mitchell has been appointed Vice Captain. Daryl is well respected within the dressing room and he will be useful for Vikram on the field. He is well liked by the rest of the team.

Cutting the cricket budget is not going to be easy but I do think the Club is going about things the right way and we will be better off than other counties in future years.

There is a lot to look forward to but it is not going to be an easy season. We cannot expect an overnight success and young players need time to develop. We need to be patient as it is a re-building time for Worcestershire County Cricket Club. We have a squad of players who want to play for Worcestershire County Cricket Club and we have something to build on."

Finance

The Finance Director gave the finance report.

He said the accounts being presented were the merged accounts of Worcestershire County Cricket Club Limited and Worcestershire County Cricket Trading Ltd.

There are two main summaries in the Annual Report - the income and expenditure account and the balance sheet.

The income and expenditure account for the year ended September 2009 shows a pre tax deficit of £118,439 and a post tax deficit of £101,346.

He said the results were disappointing compared to the 2008 figures. The 2008 figures had represented a very satisfactory start to a two year recovery plan that was intended to recover the losses following the floods in 2007.

The reason for the losses in 2009 arose because of the increased costs without any significant increase in income. The increased costs were cricket costs, match expenses (e.g. match insurance for the Twenty20 competition) and an increase in administration costs. Administration includes interest and this was because there were interests costs as a result of the building of the Graeme Hick Pavilion.

Overall the costs from the three categories increased by £510k.

The Finance Director said that we don't normally refer to next year at this stage but in view of the levels of turnaround and because we haven't recovered the 2007 costs as planned we felt it right to include a comment about 2010.

He said that cricket costs had been reduced and the administrative staff have been put on a pay freeze and together with other cost cutting we are hoping to return to profitability.

The Finance Director also explained to the meeting the affect of the re-valuation of the property on the accounts.

The Finance Director formally asked the meeting to adopt the annual report and statement of accounts.

This was seconded by Mr Price.

The President then asked for questions about the Annual Report.

Mr Tim Courtney said that we managed to lose half a million in the balance sheet in building the pavilion. ECB income is going down and he was after an assurance that we were not going to sell the Club to the bank in order to build the hotel. He was worried about the long term future of the Club.

The Chief Executive said that he was entirely in agreement that we shouldn't jeopardise the future of the Club but we needed to progress the development as this will put us in a far better position than the Club has been in for years.

He said that no-one on the top table or any of the Directors will allow the Club to fall into financial difficulties that it couldn't get out of.

Mr Tony Reeves said that he understood Gloucestershire were looking towards an increase in their business rates of up to 50%. Were Worcestershire in the same position?

The Chief Executive said there had been a re-valuation of all county grounds in 2008 and this was due to come in in April but as yet we had not been told what ours would be but we were not worried about it at this stage.

Mr John Collins said that one of the big issues at the moment is the balance financially between counties that stage test matches and the rest of the counties. Unfortunately seeing what has happened with football in England where the top teams get extra money whereas the ones at the bottom are struggling to survive, he wondered whether anything could be done on a national level to stop the test match grounds moving away from the non test match grounds.

The Chief Executive said that he had worked at both test match grounds and non test match grounds and said that it was totally irrelevant as the test match grounds have far more costs. He said that if you look statistically over the last 5 to 10 years, the smaller counties had won more titles than the larger grounds.

He said there were two things to consider. Firstly, it is possible there is going to be a salary cap coming into cricket. The Club is behind this although personally he is not sure about it. Secondly, the eighteen counties get roughly the same amount of money each year whereas in football the more successful you are, the more funds you receive. This does not happen in cricket. What we have got to do is make sure we are fit for purpose in the future. We have to improve our management skills and the development of the ground is crucial to developing our cricket team in the future.

Sir Hal Miller said he understood a little more about links that some counties were undertaking with the IPL and asked how Worcestershire see this panning out.

The Chief Executive said it was an interesting move but he had no concerns. He said that the whole world of cricket was being driven by the IPL in India and ultimately it was about money. He had never seen any alliance like this work in any other sport.

Mr Barry Wainwright said that at last year's AGM he had asked why we didn't play more cricket at the weekends and the Chairman had said he would see what he could do. He just wanted to thank the Chairman having seen this year's fixture list.

The Chairman said that the eighteen Chairmen met twice a year now and they were going to have a 50 over competition this year. He fought against this and was happy to have the 40 over format in place for the season.

Mr Graham Fowler said it was his first AGM and one thing in the accounts that surprised him was the low match receipts for Twenty20 matches. He thought the competition would be more beneficial.

The Chief Executive said last year had not been good for match receipts, although having bought in the premium ticket some of the money was shown in membership. We were anticipating a better season 2010 backed by a strong marketing campaign.

Mr Alec Mackie thanked the top table for the positive way in which they had outlined the future. One thing he wanted to stress was that last year on certain days there had seemed to be a total lack of enthusiasm among the players. He hoped that the Director of Cricket and Captain would enthuse the players. Whether they win or lose, the members and spectators that come through the gate need to see some enthusiasm for the game.

Mr Les Davies said that when Kabir Ali had arrived at Hampshire he was quoted as saying that this year Hampshire were going to be the Manchester United of cricket. He asked the Director of Cricket which football team we would be this coming season.

The Director of Cricket said there were some big players in county cricket and there were some clubs we couldn't compete with financially. However, we have to find other ways and he wasn't going to say what type of football team we are at Worcester but we will be doing our best in all forms of cricket this year and hopefully we should be able to compete well in one day cricket. He felt that everyone should understand that some counties are paying big salaries and it is difficult for sides like us.

Mr Andrew Jenkins asked the Director of Cricket if it was right that one of the reasons that some players had left was because they couldn't practice on rainy days.

The Director of Cricket said it was one of the reasons they had given for leaving. They wanted to be able to practice on site on rainy days and a resolution to this was being sought.

The Annual Report and Accounts were approved by the meeting.

5. **To Elect a President**

The President handed over the meeting to the Chairman at this point.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Board, said it gave him great pleasure to propose Ken Mills MBE be re-elected as President of Worcestershire County Cricket Club.

He then proposed Ken Mills as the Club's President for 2010.

Mrs Cynthia Crawford seconded this proposal and the meeting voted in favour of the proposal.

Mr Mills, as President, then took over the meeting.

6. **Confirmation of Additional Directors**

The Chief Executive asked for the meeting's formal approval to the re-election of Mr J M Price and Mr WSC Richards OBE DL as non-elected Additional Directors to the Board, and for the election of Professor David Green, Principal of Worcester University as an Additional Director.

This was approved by the meeting.

7. **Confirmation of the Election to the Board**

The Chief Executive said that there had been two vacancies on the Board for the current year and three nominations had been received - Alan Bennett, Tim Curtis and Neal Radford.

The result of the ballot was Alan Bennett 684, Tim Curtis 1680 and Neal Radford 1346.

The Chief Executive asked for the meeting's formal approval to the re-election of Mr Tim Curtis and the election of Mr Neal Radford to serve for three years.

This was approved by the meeting.

8 **Vote of Thanks to Honorary Advisers**

The Director of Cricket, on behalf of the Board, proposed a Vote of Thanks to the Club's Honorary Medical Advisors.

The proposal was seconded by Mr Peter Jewell and approved by the meeting.

9. **Any Other Business**

Ben Smith Benefit Year

The Chief Executive said that Ben Smith's Benefit Committee had informed him that Ben's Benefit Year Accounts are still to be finalised but they are looking at approximately £100,000 raised during the year. This is before tax and donations to several charities supported by Ben during the year including Acorns, the PCA Benevolent Fund, the Rainbows Childrens Hospice and Cure Leukaemia.

Ben and his Committee have asked the Chief Executive to extend their thanks and appreciation to all those present who supported the Benefit Year.

There was no beneficiary in 2010.

Contracts

Mr John Colley asked if there was any potential difficulty or conflict of interest in contracting children who are still at school.

The Chief Executive said that the short answer is no - as long as they are 16 or over they are employable. He explained that there was always a discussion with the parents, the School and the Club before signing a player still at school.

Vote of Thanks

Mr Vic Whittingham wished to give a vote of thanks to the Board of Directors for the work they put in on behalf of all members.

The President thanked the members for their attendance and formally closed the meeting at 8.20 p.m.

Signed

Dated