

Worcestershire County Cricket Club

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Club held in The John Moore Theatre, King's School, Worcester on Monday 18th February 2008 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:	President	Mr P J Seward
	Chairman of the Board	Mr J M Price
	Chief Executive	Mr M Newton
	Finance Director	Mr C Smith
	Director of Cricket	Mr S J Rhodes
	Captain	Mr V S Solanki
	Together with 145 members	

The President welcomed Members to the Meeting and expressed thanks to Mr Tim Keyes, Headmaster of King's School, for once again allowing the Club the use of the excellent facilities in the School's Theatre.

The President then referred to the deaths of two distinguished ex-players of the Club during the year:

DENIS EVERS Denis died on the 28th August 2007 aged 94 years. He had played cricket for the County 15 times between 1936 and 1938.

JOHN STANNING John died on the 27th May 2007. He played for the County 9 times between 1939 and 1946. His career with Worcestershire was interrupted by the war. The President said that he had played hockey with John who was a very good player.

The President then asked Members to stand for a moment in silent tribute to these two ex players, and to all Members and friends of the Club who had died during the year.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from: The Rt Hon The Lord Walker, Mr John Chadd, Mrs Betty Godfrey, Mrs Joyce Booth, Mrs Monica Chadd, Mrs Anne Connolly, Mrs B J Day, Mrs Marjorie Elliott, Mrs P A Robertson, Mr John Elliott, Mr David Exall, Mr Jack Godfrey, Mr Michael Needham, Mr D M Robertson, Mr Graham Robertson, Mr Robert Scott, Mr W Smith and the Rev'd M D Vockins OBE.

2. **Confirmation of Minutes of the AGM held on 19th February 2007**

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 it had been a difficult year and he felt that the members should all be very proud of the Chief Executive and all his colleagues who had worked very hard throughout the year in such adversity.

He felt that he could claim two firsts as a President of the Club. He said he was the first President to put on marigolds when joining members and supporters to help clear up after the first flood. This had proved to be a waste of effort when the second flood came 3 weeks later but he had been very impressed to see how many members and Board members helped with the clean up.

He was also the first President to host a home game at Taunton. He said that everyone had been very kind in allowing us to host our games at the various venues.

The President said that despite the atrocious conditions he had heard nothing but positivity from the Chairman, the Chief Executive and the Board and he hoped that this would settle the concerns of members about the future of the Club.

He expressed his congratulations to the Director of Cricket and the Captain on having won the NatWest Pro40 Trophy.

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

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

The Chairman said that his first year as Chairman had certainly proved memorable including winning the first trophy for 13 years and the worst disaster to ever hit any County Club.

He began by congratulating the team on winning the NatWest Pro40 Trophy despite not having played a game on home turf at New Road. He said this was a remarkable achievement and what a joy it was to see the young players leading from the front.

The team has developed into a highly competitive one day unit but it was disappointing to be relegated in the LV County Championship.

He said the Director of Cricket would speak in detail about cricket but it was worth mentioning that we are trying hard not to go down the Kolpak route in our player recruitment. We are continuing to invest increasing sums of money in our Academy programme.

The Chairman said the two summer floods had caused devastation to the region and New Road had suffered badly. He said we must always recognise the damage caused to personal property and the lives lost during June and July, including one of our members, Eric Dickinson.

The accounts show the floods costs the Club £1.164m which led to a pre tax deficit of £693k for the year. He said that this had been a devastating blow but he would leave the Finance Director to explain the details and where we are in our recovery plan. He explained to the Members that in 2006 we had insured against loss of business due to damage to the pitch following the Elton John concert. In 2007 we had renewed this policy. This policy did not exclude damage resulting from a flood. Our Finance Director had picked up on this which had resulted in an insurance claim of £375k.

He wished to thank the ECB whose help both financially and administratively had been immense. We had received help to the tune of £75k and a promise of additional help with our cash flow during the year if necessary.

The President wished to publically thank Chris Smith for the outstanding job he had done with the Club's finances and thanked all employees for their efforts on behalf of the Club during the last year. He made special mention of the 200 or more volunteers, nicknamed the Marigold Army, who turned up to help clean the ground after the first flood.

He told members that as part of the recovery plan he had introduced the Chairman's Flood Club. Individuals and Companies had been invited to join at a cost of £1,000 each and so far 101 had joined. In addition we had received further donations from members and supporters worth £21,000. He said that a limited number of events would be staged during the season to raise further funds including an event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of winning the County Championship in 1988. This event will be keenly priced in an effort to attract members rather than the corporate sector.

He made special mention of the Supporters' Association who had agreed to make a donation of £50k during the current year. He thanked the Association for their wonderful efforts on behalf of the Club year after year.

He said that a contingency plan was now in place in case there was a repeat of last summer. This would mean that the Club would be able to move first class cricket at 48 hours notice to Kidderminster CC.

The Chairman said the cricket budget had been ring fenced to make sure we remain competitive despite the financial losses of last year.

He said that inevitably the events of last summer had resulted in a delay to the ground development plans. A search for a commercial hotel partner was continuing but the current economic climate was not helpful. He told members that the Board is resolved to stay at New Road and the plans for the new development will ensure that all the buildings are above the flood plain. This only leaves the playing area to worry about.

He said that following an initiative by Michael Foster MP the Club will meet with the Environment Agency to see if anything can be done to stop the flood waters intruding on the playing area. This was a remote hope but certainly worth a discussion.

He told members the recent winter flood does not appear to have done any damage to the playing area although we won't know the full impact of recent events until the first pre-season match against Warwickshire on the 1st April.

The Chairman said the Board was aware that many members, supporters, sponsors and stakeholders did not receive best value in 2007. The situation had been addressed very quickly and he was pleased to announce that all the major sponsors and commercial partners had remained with us.

He said that membership renewals were standing up reasonably well at this stage although the critical period would be in April when we would be able to assess better the reaction to the situation.

The Chairman told members that he had attended a Chairman's meeting in Loughborough when the new ECB five year plan had been introduced and approved unanimously by the County Chairmen. It will mean an additional investment of £30m into cricket over the next five years. This investment would benefit both recreational and professional cricket and is a testament to the healthy state the game is in at present.

A new TV deal is being negotiated and the latest review of the domestic structure is ongoing. The results of both should be known later this year.

He said that generally the game is in good health going forward. The powerhouse of international cricket, India, are certainly flexing their muscles having finally embraced Twenty20 cricket. The impact on our own domestic cricket is unknown but he said he had little doubt there will be changes ahead.

The Chairman finally wished to thank his fellow Board members who all have the Club's interests at heart. He said the President had done a wonderful job during a traumatic year and he had been able to seek valuable advice from his predecessor, John Elliott. He said that the media, who were represented at the meeting, had been hugely supportive as always and he thanked them for their help in communicating so much information to our members and supporters last summer so quickly and efficiently. He said that most of all he wished to thank the members for their support and patience. He said he had had the privilege of meeting many members during the year and it was clear to him how important the Club is to the members and to the local economy. He reassured members that the Club would survive and continue to flourish in the years ahead.

Cricket Report

The Director of Cricket said we had had some terrific games of cricket during the Friends Provident Trophy competition. It was a difficult competition to win but he felt we had had a fairly satisfactory season.

The LV County Championship was disappointing. He didn't wish to make excuses but felt that there were some contributing factors including the

Captain losing the toss 13 times during the season. This does have an affect on the players and puts pressure on our bowlers. On the three occasions we did win the toss, we had Surrey 9 wickets down in one game, another was a draw with three days washed out and then we won the last game at Kidderminster.

Matt Mason's injury was a tremendous blow to us. He gives us stability with the ball and also aggression and he has taken good wickets over the years.

Doug Bollinger didn't get the wickets that we expected him to get although he had gone back to Australia and done really well during the winter.

He said that one of the problems with the ball was that, although Kabir Ali did well, this put a lot of pressure on our younger, less experienced bowlers who were not yet ready for First XI cricket. These were culminating factors in why the opposition got big scores. This then put pressure on the batsmen who had been in the field all day and then were expected to go out and make big scores.

The Twenty20 competition then came in the middle of the season when we were starting to improve in the four day game. The floods came and this put an end to cricket at New Road.

The NatWest Pro40 was the first major trophy for 13 years and he was pleased with the way the players approached the game. They stuck to their plan and this worked in most of the games played and we remained unbeaten for most of the competition. The game at Bristol was very pleasing and to see the silverware back at New Road was magnificent.

He congratulated the Captain and all the players on winning the trophy having played all of their games away from their home ground.

He said that he did not wish to recruit any Kolpak players for the 2008 season. He felt that it was a messy situation and there were a lot of extra costs involved. He would try to avoid this as much as he could but would not rule it out in exceptional circumstances.

He told members that we had parted company with Roger Sillence, Dewald Nel, Nadeem Malik and Stuart Wedge during the winter.

We had bought in Gareth Andrew who has impressed both the Captain and Damian D'Oliveira, who had seen him play for Somerset in the Second XI.

Chris Whelan had also been recruited from Middlesex. Both Gareth and Chris had been offered two years contracts by their respective clubs but were looking to move on. The Director of Cricket was expecting good things from both players.

The Director of Cricket was very pleased to announce that Simon Jones had been bowling in the nets since January and training three/four times a week with the guys. There are no injury worries at the moment. He feels that if he

is managed well throughout the season his bowling will be invaluable to the team.

The last position in the team is the overseas signing. This has been extremely difficult with the amount of international cricket being played around the world, including the IPL tournament now biting into the season. We are still actively looking at this and we have several players in our sights.

The Director of Cricket then gave the meeting an up to date review of how the players who were currently overseas were coming along. He said that Matt Mason was doing a full rehab programme in Australia working with a physiotherapist and a strength and conditioning coach. He is bowling in the nets without any adverse affect on his shoulder.

Daryl Mitchell had been captaining Midland and Guildford in Perth and has done very well. They are currently challenging for the final.

Richard Jones is currently in Perth. Josh Knappett and Chris Whelan are in Sydney and Alexei Kervezee in Melbourne. They are all playing well.

Moeen Ali went to Cape Town after Christmas and has done extremely well scoring three centuries and taking a three and seven wicket haul.

Kabir Ali is in good shape. There was no major problem when he was dropped by England. He is attending all training sessions.

Steve Davies had a slight knee problem but this was not serious. He is currently in South Africa with Moeen.

The Director of Cricket said the Academy was progressing with Damian D'Oliveira doing a wonderful job as Academy Director. There were a couple of young lads worth keeping an eye open for including Aneesh Kapil and Jack Edwards, a left arm seamer.

Matt Pardoe, Nitesh Patel and Neil Pinner have just got back from a spin clinic in India. This has been a magnificent learning curve for them. They have all been members of the Academy for the last 3/4 years.

The Director of Cricket said the players were looking forward to 2008. The main target is to gain promotion back into the LVCC Division One whilst winning a one day title.

He wished the Captain all the best and hoped the Members and supporters had a good 2008 season.

Finance

The Finance Director addressed the meeting. He said the accounts being presented were the merged accounts of Worcestershire County Cricket Club Limited and Worcestershire County Cricket Trading Ltd.

The Finance Director gave a report on the accounts for the year which had shown a pre-tax loss of £693,211 . He explained that all the calculable flood costs (£1.164m) had been included in the 2007 accounts even though the costs would not be incurred until 2008. The ECB grant of £75k and the majority of the insurance claim £300k had also been included in the 2007 accounts. HM Customs and Excise had allowed us to defer our payments for several months on an interest and penalty free basis.

He said that the combination of additional income, the settlement of the insurance claim and other cash flow measures had enabled us to repay the interest free loans within the agreed timescale and to keep pace with other outgoings through the winter.

He said that he felt our recovery progress to date had been encouraging although there was a long way to go.

He then handed over to the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive said that it was unusual for him to speak at the AGM but he felt it had been a difficult year.

He wanted to re-assure Members that we had a three stage recovery plan. The first stage had been to get through the season and retain as much goodwill as possible.

The second stage through to March was to fully assess the financial impact, repair the ground in its entirety and plan the financial recovery. He said the playing area was looking good and there was a good growth of grass on the wicket. The financial recovery was well under way and he thanked Stuart Glazzard of Cox Hepburn, our insurance brokers, who had been so much help in securing the insurance claim.

He thanked the Supporters' Association and Advantage West Midlands for their considerable help. He also thanked the dozens of supporters who had made donations to the Club.

He thanked the media on a personal basis for the work they had done in getting information out to the members and supporters.

He thanked all his colleagues at the Club for their efforts throughout a difficult year.

He congratulated the Director of Cricket and Captain on winning the NatWest Pro40 trophy at the end of the year.

He said that the third part of our recovery will last for two years. He said the success of this would depend a great deal upon the support of all our members and supporters maintaining their support of the Club despite the loss of value last year.

The Chief Executive said that we are first and foremost a County Cricket Club and that is the most important part of our activity and everyone involved with the Club is absolutely determined that, despite our size, we will continue to punch above our weight both on and off the field.

The Chief Executive then moved for the formal adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts.

The President then asked for questions about the Annual Report.

Mr John Curry said the Chairman had mentioned talks with the Local Authority about the flood waters but he didn't seem very optimistic about the outcome. He asked if more pressure could be put on the Local Authority to do something to help the Club. He felt that they were unwilling to do much to ensure that ditches were cleaned and drains were repaired.

The Chief Executive said that a meeting had been set up by Michael Foster MP with the Environment Agency to discuss this. He said we knew a gentleman who studied all the floods and there had not been much change in the cycle of floods since 1899 although last summer was exceptional.

Mr Brian Shearer asked the Director of Cricket if he was happy that we had sufficient batting this season.

The Director of Cricket said he was happy with the situation. He said Daryl Mitchell is a player who had come through our junior cricket and has scored runs in all forms of cricket. He was confident that he will do a good job of opening the batting in the four day games. Moeen Ali will also be challenging for this position. He also said that we must not forget that there was the loan system available to us should this become necessary.

Mr Ray Crawford asked whether we might be looking for an overseas all rounder.

The Director of Cricket said he felt we needed another fast bowler. Matt Mason and Simon Jones would play a big part towards this season but felt we would be a better team with an extra bowler.

Mr Crawford said that it had been nice to get the information on how the players were doing during the winter but asked if this information could have been given earlier and to a wider form.

The Chief Executive said that updates were regularly put on the Club's website.

Mr Vic Whittingham said that a lot of thanks had been given this evening but felt not enough had been given to Kidderminster CC and said that he had hoped they might have been given a match this year.

The Chief Executive said he felt we had thanked Kidderminster CC sufficiently during the evening and explained that talks were in place to take

cricket to Kidderminster at 48 hours notice if this should again prove necessary. However, it is more difficult to stage a game at Kidderminster as it is difficult to cope with the communications and logistics required to stage a day of cricket and the Board's view is that our games should be played at New Road.

Mr Hal Miller asked what the Club's policy was with regard to the 40 over game as opposed to the 50 over game.

The Chief Executive said that he has been quoted as saying the 50 over game is boring. The official policy is to retain 50 over cricket whilst it remains the international standard. His view was that one day games should be 40 overs. He said there was currently a review of the domestic structure of cricket taking place and the result would be known later this year.

Mr Richard Sanders asked if the ECB would be talking to clubs and their members regarding the review.

The Chief Executive said that clubs had been consulted last summer and wide ranging surveys had been conducted involving members.

Mr Ian McRae asked about the possibility of permanent floodlights.

The Chief Executive said that all counties will receive a subsidy of £500k to put in permanent floodlights. Our problem is our site and he doubted that we would get planning permission but it was something we would consider in the future.

Mr Roy Booth then seconded the formal adoption of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts.

The Annual Report and Accounts were then 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, proposed that the President for the coming year be Peter Seward.

He said that Mr Seward had had a very difficult year and felt hopeful that we would have a wonderful year and good weather at New Road in 2008.

He then proposed Peter Seward be re-elected as the Club's President for a second year.

Mr Dave Broughall seconded this proposal and the meeting voted in favour of the proposal.

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

The President said that this was a great honour and he would always work for the benefit of the Club.

6. **Election of an Honorary Vice President**

The President, on behalf of the Board, proposed the election of Mr John Elliott as an Honorary Vice President.

He said there probably weren't many members who didn't know John. He had been involved in cricket and on the Board at Worcestershire for 25 years and had been Chairman for 8_ years. He had raised money for the Club and for many beneficiaries. He was a very popular member of the Board and is highly respected at the ECB and within the county game worldwide.

This was seconded by Mr Norman Whiting and approved by the meeting.

7. **Confirmation of Additional Directors**

The Chief Executive asked for the meeting's formal approval of Mr J M Price and Mr WSC Richards OBE DL as non-elected Additional Directors to the Board. He said they had served for the last year and had contributed enormously during the year.

This was approved by the meeting.

8 **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 only two nominations had been received.

No postal ballot was required and Ms Meriel Harris and Mr Peter Jewell were therefore re-elected to the Board.

The Chief Executive asked for the meeting's formal approval.

This was approved by the meeting.

9 **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.

12 **Any Other Business**

Mr Peter Asquith said the Chairman had said earlier that New Road was in the top five of the prettiest grounds in the world. This was mainly due to the

view of the cathedral from the ground but this is partly obscured by the trees in the summer months. He asked if something could be done.

The Chief Executive said the question had been asked of the City Council but unfortunately they will not agree to lop the trees.

The President said the Board wished to express their thanks to all the Counties who had staged our home fixtures and to Kidderminster CC for their help throughout the summer.

The President explained to Members that we had received a request from the Rector of St Clements. Worcestershire County Cricket Club is in the parish of St Clements and she had asked if the Club would like a service of celebration either at the church or at the ground during the year. He asked members for their views and a show of hands if they felt this was appropriate. There was not a great deal of enthusiasm for this.

The Chief Executive announced that Vikram Solanki's benefit year had been extended to the end of March due to the difficult season we had had but so far £150k had been raised.

Vikram thanked everyone that had supported his benefit year and he also thanked members for their support over the last 15 years. He also thanked his Benefit Committee for their support during the year.

The President wished everyone a good 2008 season and formally closed the meeting at 8.20 p.m.

Signed

Dated