

## **Alton Hockey Club – Annual General Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026

**Time:** 19:30 to 21:00

**Location:** In person at Alton House Hotel, with additional attendees via Microsoft Teams

### **1. Attendance**

**Total attendees:** 8 committee members, 25 members in person, 2 via Teams.

#### **Committee Members Present:**

- **Whitney Chobbah (WC)** – Acting Chair & Secretary
- **Becky Smith (BS)** – Acting Treasurer
- **Will Butler (WB)** – Junior Chair
- **Colin Gamble (CG)** – Vice Chair
- **Nigel Downing (ND)** – Men’s Club Captain & Acting Minutes Taker
- **Sophie Wallace (SW)** – Ladies Club Captain
- **Jo Ryan (JR)** – Welfare Officer
- **Bella Butler (BB)** – Acting Membership Secretary

#### **Apologies:**

- **John Smith** – Club President

**Members in Person Attendance:** Lawrence Jones, Vicky Small, Richard Spicer, Tom Green, Martin Green, Abi Green, Natalie Milner, Louise Yeadon, Becky Chester, Paul Chester, Pete Wallace, Stuart Brown, Andrew Jurd, Ben Newton, Clare Poole, Jenny Footit, Nikki Ross, Simon Cooney, Ellie Dale, Annie Dale, Dan Grinstead, Kieran Southgate, Dave Metcalfe, Matt Hammett, Richard Housley

**Members via Teams:** Stephen Van Der Berg, Jorja Wright

**Member Apologies:** Robin Kemp, Gayle Moir, Andrew Stratford, Steve Howling

### **2. Welcome from the Chair**

WC opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. She reflected on a **mixed but competitive season:**

- **Men's Section:** Continued year-on-year improvement with each team improving on last season and generally strong performance.
- **Ladies' Section:**
  - L1 finished at the top end of their table.
  - L2 mid-table but could be relegated due to league restructuring.
  - L3 relegated but demonstrated excellent team spirit and junior integration.

WC emphasised ambitions for the **1st XI in both genders to push toward Premier Division** in coming years.

She thanked all volunteers, noting that fixtures, administration, and communications are entirely volunteer-run. With the club now **50 years old**, sustaining volunteer support remains essential.

**Club priorities for the coming year:**

- Providing hockey for all and growing the Ladies' section to four teams.
- Strengthening the junior-to-adult development pathway.
- Working with Eggar's and Amery to secure the best pitch access.
- Expanding sponsorship and off-pitch revenue streams.

**3. Junior Chair Report – WB**

WB reported:

- Successful bedding-in of the new Junior Director of Hockey.
- A decline in volunteer numbers, which remains a critical challenge.
- Several junior age groups had a low number of fixtures.
- **U12 Boys** had an exceptional season but received limited recognition.
- Increased junior participation at Awards Day and more juniors transitioning into adult hockey.
- Junior hockey quality has risen, and training camps have expanded.
- Rising hockey costs are impacting accessibility, but volunteer shortages make some costs unavoidable.
- WB is stepping down as Junior Chair.

#### 4. Treasurer's Report – BS

BS presented the financial overview:

- Last year: **£5,000 loss**.
- This year: **£800 loss**, largely due to ND's work on fee restructuring. ND stated that with £1,000 still to collect, it was largely a breakeven season.
- **350 members**, a slight increase; **64 juniors also paying adult fees**, a positive trend.
- Total club expenditure: **£90,000**, split evenly between adults and juniors.
- **82% of adult expenditure** relates to pitch hire, coaching, and match teas showing the club is run leanly.
- Received **£1,000 council grant** for kit and Back to Hockey initiatives.

CG reminded members that grant applications must be submitted at the start of the financial year.

#### Pitch Hire:

- Eggars refused to release the underutilised Thursday evening slot, so the club remains committed to that booking which is impacting membership fee levels for a further 18 months.

#### Membership & Match Fee Options for Next Season

Two options were presented:

##### 1. Option 1: Inflationary

- £5 increase on all membership fees
- £15 increase on family membership
- Removal of youth member fee
- This would cover the England Hockey cost increase (£1 per member) and rising costs

##### 2. Option 2: Higher membership fee increase presented, averaging around £30 to fund paid support due to reducing volunteers

- Paid Level 2 coaches
- Paid umpires (£15 per game, claimable)

- Concessions for volunteers/helpers

### **Discussion Points:**

- Becky Chester raised a query around the impact option 2 would have on families and whether they would accept. BB commented that with a number of her own children at the club, she believes the increase would be accepted if it was linked to improved coaching and juniors playing a higher standard.
- Andrew Jurd outlined the importance of explaining pitch-hire costs to parents as it is more expensive than other sports and something those unfamiliar to hockey may need to understand, Vicky Small agreed.
- Peter Wallace asked if increasing match fees instead of membership was an option. BS said it had been considered. ND noted match-fee collection is less reliable than membership and that benchmarking against other local clubs had been done and memberships were lower at Alton than other clubs in general.
- Martin Green asked how Governance of concessions will be managed which BS specified it would be by the committee.

### **Vote on Membership Fees**

- **23** in favour of the higher increase (option 2)
- **1** for inflationary increase
- **18** abstentions
- WC and BS did not vote as proposers
- Option 2 motion was carried.

### **Sponsorship Update**

- One sponsor has withdrawn; eight remain which were all added this year.
- Net sponsorship income to date: **£720**.
- Eggar's pitch hire increasing to **£300 per term**; negotiations ongoing
- Sponsorship rollout planned for all teams, including juniors.
- A new **Sponsorship & Events Sub-Committee** has been formed; representatives needed from each team/age group.

### **Kit Update**

- Current supplier (Stitch-a-Logo) experiencing delays; only three junior shirts remain in stock.

- Bulk orders required for restocking; alternative suppliers being explored.
- 100 navy away shirts need to be purchased (£5,000 cost).
- Negotiations underway to reduce this cost by 50%.
- Y1 and Siam identified as potential suppliers for junior kit.

**Approval of Accounts:**

- Proposed: Lawrence Jones
- Seconded: Martin Green
- Motion carried.

**5. Election of Officers**

**Chair:**

- Nominees: Whitney Chobbah, Colin Gamble
- Result: Whitney Chobbah elected (proposed Stuart Brown, seconded JR)

**Treasurer:**

- Becky Smith elected (proposed Vicky Small, seconded Louise Yeadon)

**Junior Chair:**

- Bella Butler elected (proposed JR, seconded WB)
- Kieran Southgate volunteered to support as **Junior Vice-Chair** (proposed JR)

**Vice Chair:**

- Nominees: Dan Grinstead, Colin Gamble
- Result: Dan Grinstead elected 17 votes to 0 (proposed Lawrence Jones, seconded Vicky Small)

**Secretary:**

- Vicky Small elected (proposed Lawrence Jones, seconded Jenny Footit)
- Noted as a potentially temporary arrangement if a replacement emerges during the season

**Membership Secretary:**

- No nominations: position remains vacant

- Committee to seek a solution before the new season

**Welfare Officer:**

- Jo Ryan re-elected (proposed ND, seconded Peter Wallace)

**Men's Club Captain:**

- Nigel Downing re-elected (proposed Stuart Brown, seconded David Metcalfe)

**Ladies Club Captain:**

- Abi Green elected (proposed Natalie Milner, seconded Vicky Small)

**President:**

- John Smith re-elected (proposed Lawrence Jones, seconded Becky Smith)

**6. Close of Meeting**

WC thanked all attendees and formally closed the meeting.