

MINUTES OF THE 2023 ABTO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN PERSON AT THE NTC AND BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 9th DECEMBER 2023, 2PM

[SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION AT 2024 AGM]

1. Welcome, apologies and opening remarks.

The Chair, Malgorzata Grzyb, opened the meeting at 2.04pm, and welcomed everyone to the 2023 ABTO Annual General Meeting (AGM). In line with the Constitution, everyone at the NTC had to sign the attendance register and everyone joining by Zoom had to be registered individually in order to check their voting status. **The Chair** ran through some housekeeping requests.

Fulfilling the role of the Honorary Secretary, **co-opted Committee member Steff Johnston**, confirmed that a total of 83 Full Members and 4 Associate Members (total 87) were in attendance, in the room (30) and by Zoom (57), and therefore the meeting was quorate. In addition, 5 valid proxy notices had been received by the Honorary Secretary by the deadline (2pm on 7th December 2023). Apologies were received from 17 Full Members and 3 Honorary Life Members. Details of the members present, and the apologies received are recorded in the ABTO AGM register.

The Chair identified the Management Committee members present: Kath Lovell (Vice Chair), Darren Michaels (Honorary Treasurer), Selena Coburn, Matthew Morrissey, Myooran Nathan, Steven Wilkinson, , and Steff Johnston (co-opted member) at the NTC. Alex Wolfe was attending remotely. Apologies were noted from Mike Crossley and Veronica Mwondela.

The Chair thanked the LTA for their hospitality and support in helping set up the workshops and the AGM. **The Chair** also thanked the workshop presenters.

The Chair said the AGM was a time to look back and reflect over the year, and to remember those members of the officiating community that are sadly no longer with us. **The Chair** mentioned messages received from the families, many of them saying that tennis and officiating played such an important part of their lives. A minute's silence was held in memory of the 6 members that the ABTO Management Committee had been advised of who had passed away since the last AGM:

David Evans

George Grime

Maureen Lavelle

Mick McCarron

Alex Pepe

Peter Smith

The Chair ran through the agenda.

2. To confirm the minutes of the 2022 AGM held on 4th December 2022

The Chair thanked Georgina Robbins for writing such detailed minutes of the 2022 AGM, which were taken as read.

3. Matters arising

There were no questions or matters arising from the 2022 AGM minutes.

4. To receive the Statement of Accounts for 2022-2023

The Chair thanked **The Honorary Treasurer, Darren Michaels**, for working with the accountants to prepare the Statement of Accounts which was circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Honorary Treasurer highlighted some differences between the 2022-2023 accounts and those of the previous year. The year from 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2023 was an election year, however as the elections were all uncontested, the full cost for the election process was not expended. Moving to a hybrid AGM in 2022 increased the cost compared to 2021, when the AGM was held remotely. The grant received from the LTA (of. £4,000) is for the 2023 calendar year rather than a financial year, which equates to 9 months of 2022-23 financial year and 3 months of the next financial year. ABTO held two hybrid (in person and Zoom) Management Committee meetings during the year which increased costs. 2024 will be an election year so taking this into account, the grant requested from the LTA is expected to increase in the next calendar year.

The floor was opened to questions, with none being raised.

The Chair thanked **The Honorary Treasurer** for doing an excellent job in managing the accounts.

5. To receive the 2023 Report of the Management Committee

The Chair thanked the Management Committee for all their efforts and contributions to the report and gave a verbal update on the highlights of the report. In summary, the Committee's work in 2023 had continued to focus on delivering the 2021-23 joint officiating strategy.

1. Introduction of the new fees and expenses structure

The Chair thanked Matthew Morrissey and the ABTO Fees & Expenses Working Group for all the work carried out to review the current fees and expenses structures which resulted in new structures being implemented on 1 April 2023. The overarching objective is that fees and expenses are fair, reasonable, and commensurate with the role. The increase represents an incremental increase to the officiating budget of £280k. The Chair thanked Matthew Morrissey for securing this budget from the LTA, which demonstrates positive recognition of the role that officiating plays. An online seminar was held in November as part of The Conversation, to answer questions regarding the new structures.

2. Creation of Referee Working group

The Chair explained that with two thirds of ABTO members being referees, a survey was carried out at the start of the year to understand the areas where referees most need support. The 3 key areas were:

- a. TPP
- b. Rules
- c. Parents

Kath Lovell and **Selena Coburn** will head up a working group to focus on these areas, and which will include non-Committee members.

3. Introduction of new grading appeals process

The Chair reminded the AGM that as part of the strategy, ABTO has advocated for greater independence in the grading appeals process, and positive steps have been taken in this regard. As of 2023, this is no longer peer led and is managed by LTA executive sitting outside of officiating.

4. Growth of ABTO Mentoring Programme

The Chair reminded members that this is not just for new officials but also for those changing roles. There has been an increase in the number of new officials joining in the last year so it is important that they can receive support and she encouraged potential mentors to come forward. A handbook and information guide are available to support both mentors and mentees.

5. Representation on LTA IDEA Group

Veronica Mwondela is the ABTO representative on the LTA's IDEA Group (inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility). The objective is to see how wider inclusion and diversity in tennis officiating and in the sport as a whole can be improved.

These are the key highlights and there is more detail in the annual report which covers the work that has taken place in the past year.

The Chair opened the floor to questions. No questions were raised.

There were 3 sets of votes required to approve: the Minutes of the AGM 2022, the Statement of Accounts for 2022-23 and the Annual Management Committee Report 2023. **The Chair** requested a proposer and seconder.

Mary Pat Rose proposed, and **Selena Coburn** seconded all three resolutions.

A show of hands took place in the room at the NTC. A poll was launched on Zoom for virtual attendees eligible to vote. As noted above 5 valid proxies were received.

The results of the votes were:

Minutes of the AGM 2022: Total 82 votes in favour – none opposed.

Statement of Accounts for 2022-23: Total 74 votes in favour – none opposed.

Annual Management Committee Report for 2023: Total 72 votes in favour – none opposed.

All three resolutions were therefore passed.

6. ABTO / LTA Joint Officiating Strategy for 2024-2026

The Chair explained that the current 3-year strategy is coming to an end and the new strategy will start in January 2024. It is aligned with the LTA strategy and ABTO have been working with Matthew Morrissey on the strategy in the last few months. The objective is for the new strategy to build on the current strategy. It is still in development; however, the key themes will be shared today. **The Chair** asked Matthew Morrissey to join in presenting.

Matthew Morrissey said he was excited to launch the new strategy in January 2024.

The implementation of a new officials' portal is underway along with the new coaching website. Deloitte are building the new site and testing will commence in the first 2 weeks of January with a go live planned for the end of January. It will be a lot easier to use and feel more personal. More information will be shared in due course. A new selections system will be reviewed later in 2024.

A comprehensive review of the potential impact of Live Electronic Line Calling (ELC) will be undertaken, following the ATP's decision to implement Live ELC from 2025 at all tournaments. A decision is still pending from the WTA.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed that we have time to adapt and mitigate but need to plan accordingly. A survey will be issued in January to gauge umpire feedback. It will affect how officials are recruited and trained. On court officials can retrain as off court officials. Work is underway and will continue following the survey.

Matthew Morrissey continued to say that broad development opportunities are accessible across all roles and levels. He would like to re-introduce referee development groups and will be looking at this very soon.

Recruitment is to continue with a focus on greater representation from diverse backgrounds and to ensure inclusivity. The approach to recruitment will need to also change based on reduced line umpiring opportunities due to the introduction of Live ELC.

The Chair continued to say that more will be done to develop and support the referee community and create channels for welfare and well-being support. A plan is currently being developed to carry out overdue referee evaluations. **Matthew Morrissey** has secured budget to support this process including welfare and well-being support for all officials. This includes training a small number of officials as mental health first aiders.

The Chair asked **Matthew Morrissey** to talk about the areas that were implemented as part of the 2021-23 strategy and will now become business-as-usual items and which cover some important pieces of work.

1. Fees and Expenses will be reviewed annually. The structures may still require tweaking and will continue to evolve. They have only been in place for 9 months and continue to be reviewed.

2. The mentoring programme will continue to be developed. The Chair is planning an ABTO mentoring programme online webinar.
3. **The Chair** confirmed the need to ensure the highest level of safeguarding. As officials, we are in the 'front line' when it comes to witnessing and recognising safeguarding concerns. We have a big role to play in ensuring that tennis is a safe and enjoyable sport.

The Chair mentioned the need for working group volunteers and is always happy to have people outside of the committee involved.

The Chair opened the floor to questions about the ABTO / LTA officiating strategy.

Kossam Mhangami asked why an LTA Councillor who had been appointed to sit on an inclusion panel was struck off following comments that had been made on social media. **The Chair** clarified the situation and confirmed that the LTA Board considered that the post did not reflect the LTA's values and decided to remove the Councillor from his role. **Matthew Morrissey** confirmed he was not aware of the situation or why the decision was made.

Norman Cohen asked if futures events will have Live ELC. **Matthew Morrissey** confirmed that we are a long way from that, and it is not viable from a financial standpoint.

Norman Cohen said the Australian Open saw a fallout of line umpires after moving to Live ELC as the carrot of the Grand Slam is no longer there. **Matthew Morrissey** confirmed that he is on a group covering this and is aware of difficulties they are facing but noted that the structure in Australia is different, and they are set up differently.

Martin Etheridge asked for clarification that line umpires will be used at Wimbledon 2024. **Matthew Morrissey** confirmed they will be used. There has been a delay to the opening of applications which will happen in January.

Chris Melhuish commented that the facilities for line umpires at some pro events are not great, and this could impact whether officials continue to apply for certain events. He asked if this can be reviewed next year. **Matthew Morrissey** explained that he has a meeting to review each event, the good and the bad. He is keen that the experience is more consistent and confirmed that this is on his radar, and he is already starting the dialogue for the major events.

Paul Johnson asked if the next strategy will include a review of the opportunities or threats for Padel. **The Chair** confirmed that it will. **Matthew Morrissey** added there will be a specific part in the strategy to cover this. Padel needs a separate pathway. Currently, tennis referees are being trained to manage Padel. The number of Padel events and venues is growing so there is a major opportunity and will therefore need a separate process for areas such as grading and selections.

Kossam Mhangami noted that there is a drive to encourage opportunities in deprived areas in other sports, and asked if tennis will do the same. **Matthew Morrissey** confirmed that officiating taster sessions will be offered for example in schools in such areas. Current diversity scores for officiating are poor, and they need to be more reflective of society.

No further questions were raised.

The Chair thanked everyone for all the questions and thanked Matthew Morrissey and the LTA for their work in developing the strategy.

There being no further questions regarding the ABTO / LTA Joint Officiating Strategy for 2024-2026 **the Chair** thanked **Matthew Morrissey** for his reports and partnership throughout the year.

7. Presentation of the Alastair Wotherspoon, ABTO Referee of the Year, ABTO Up and Coming Referee of the Year, ABTO Umpire of the Year and ABTO Up and Coming On Court Official of the Year awards

The Chair thanked the Reward and Recognition Working Group for running the process for the annual ABTO awards and long service certificates and handed over to **Kath Lovell (Vice Chair)** and **Steven Wilkinson**.

Kath Lovell (The Vice Chair) thanked **Selena Coburn** and **Veronica Mwondela** in supporting her with this process.

The Vice Chair said the awards were a chance to celebrate the achievements of colleagues and she thanked those who had made nominations. She continued that feedback from those nominated confirmed that they really appreciated being nominated. **The Vice Chair** and **Steven Wilkinson** announced the award nominations and winners.

ABTO Up and Coming Referee of the Year Award 2023

For the best Up and Coming off court Official in the current year.

Nominations: Stephen Plant, Scott Smith

Winner: **Scott Smith**

ABTO Referee of the Year 2023

For an outstanding contribution to tennis in the current year in any capacity.

Nominations: Lucy Davies, Kris Dymond, Celia Edwards, Mark Wilkinson

Winner: **Celia Edwards**

ABTO Umpire of the Year 2023

For an outstanding contribution to tennis in the current year in any capacity.

Nominations: Caroline Baxter, Stefano Dall'Aglio, Georgia Lucey, Freya Pock, Luke Smith, Chris Tortise-Crawford

Winner: **Chris Tortise-Crawford**

ABTO Up and Coming On Court Official of the Year Award 2023

For the best Up and Coming on court Official in the current year.

Nominations: Kamil Borowski, Anya Gough, Sophie Kitson, Cheng Li, Georgia Lucey, Iain Millington, Jed Voysey

Winner: **Iain Millington**

Alastair Wotherspoon Award

This award is named after the founder Chair of the British Tennis Umpires' Association who held office from 1982 until his sudden and untimely death in February 1986. It is presented each year to a member, not being an elected representative, who in the opinion of the Management Committee has rendered outstanding service to the Association over a number of years.

Nominations: Ron Allen, John Clack, Mike McBrien, Sue Rich, Jonathan Tuffs

Winner: **Jonathan Tuffs**

8. Presentation of Long Service Certificates

The Vice Chair announced the Long Service Certificates being awarded this year.

The following members have received Long Service certificates for serving 20 years as an ABTO Official supporting British Tennis:

- Richard Gardner
- Jamie Gibson
- Matthew Jackman
- Jo Keaney
- Graeme Luckin
- Sascha Mitrovic
- Michael Page
- David Paterson
- Chris Robson
- Gary Russell
- Daniel Smith
- Steve Wynn

9. To consider Any Other Business as previously notified

The Chair confirmed that there was none.

10. Closure of meeting

The Chair concluded the formal part of the meeting by thanking everyone that had helped to plan and run the meeting. She thanked those attending in person and online. It was a fantastic opportunity to reflect on the year and catch up.

The Chair formally closed the meeting at 3:32pm.

11. Question and answer session

The Chair opened the meeting to Q&As.

Christine Greenwood thanked the Chair for the AGM.

The Chair said it was a team effort and a lot of time had been spent planning and preparing for the day. **The Chair** thanked **Christine Greenwood** for the sentiment and said it was appreciated.

There being no further questions, **the Chair** invited all those in attendance at the NTC to drinks in the cafeteria and thanked **Matthew Morrissey** and the LTA for providing the drinks.

The meeting ended at 3:34pm.