

The New Balance Greater Manchester Cricket League AGM – January 2024

Chairmans Report

Good morning and welcome to this Annual General Meeting for 2024, thank you for your attendance and thank you to Milnrow Cricket Club for hosting us again.

What a year 2023 has been and what a prospect 2024 looks to be.

The 2024 season will be the ninth of the Greater Manchester Cricket League and the number of Clubs at senior and junior level continues to grow. In 2023 there were 151 Saturday teams, 82 Sunday teams, 77 GMCL20 teams, 13 women's teams, 137 teams playing in our knockout competitions and 412 junior teams.

It is mine and the Directors job supported by the operational teams to raise the bar every year, something that becomes increasingly difficult in a sport where central distributions are decreasing year on year, so never has it been more important to have committed members and officers.

The major news from early 2023 was the attainment of becoming an ECB Premier League, something that we have striven for since the formation of the League. It was a monumental effort particularly for a League so young and it allows us to be at the table when strategic cricket plans are being discussed with the ECB.

With success come responsibility and being a Premier League has an impact on all Clubs wishing to achieve that Premier one or two statuses. It means that all Clubs will need to achieve and maintain Clubmark and run junior teams at a number of various levels. Failure to do that puts Clubs standing in jeopardy. If any Clubs are having difficulty with either of these two determinants please shout up, the Lancashire Cricket Foundation are available to help with the Clubmark aspect and to stimulate junior activity through the CDO network.

Another major impact on how the League has run through 2023 has been the investment in time and in particular volunteer efforts within the Executive Committee that reports into Board. What an impact that group has made. In simple terms this committee deals with all things 'cricket' to do with the League leaving the strategic thinking and movement to the Board of Directors. Whilst the Board will never be detached it is pleasant to know that we are not firefighting anymore, we are stable and have now have room for that blue sky thinking. I hope all member Clubs have felt the positive impact of the Executive Committee.

I also note the work of the Communications working group and the Umpires sub committee for their due diligence through 2023. It is the work of the Communications working group that has ensured that league fixtures and GMCL20 have been issued well in advance allowing Clubs to plan their diaries and a number of Clubs have recorded their thanks for those early fixtures. The Umpires subcommittee deals with all things relevant to umpires and ensure that we have umpires on the field of play every week throughout the season. Sometimes I think it must be a thankless task knowing the pressures of that area of work, but they have reported a slight increase in the numbers of umpires available throughout 2023 so long may that continue. Thank you all for your continued support.

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the League Treasurer will be reporting a stable position statement this year and that has come with years of planning and plotting. Without stealing the thunder of the figures being presented the pleasant things that we have seen this year as well as this strong reporting is an increase in new trophies, well-coordinated and supported Cup Finals, the investment into junior cricket, and of course everyone will take delivery of new stumps just before the season. Thank you to Mike Ward and Bill Elkin for their continued work in this area.

Our work around EDI continues and has been led by Ian Pickles and his merry men and women. It has been an important addition to the work of the League and has been used as an advising group a number of times when issues have arisen. Thanks for all the work and I hope that it continues with just as much support from member clubs.

The Memorandum of Understanding together with an updated version of grounds and facilities will shortly be dropping into Clubs email boxes and both are important documents for consideration. The Memorandum of Understanding is a document that fleshes out Clubs and League roles within this huge organisational structure can I please ask that it is taken into Club and digested. The grounds and facilities are being picked up again now that we have a little clear water and clearly sets out the plan for improvement of grounds and facilities and this will develop into one of the cornerstones of the League.

We have seen a marked increase in the development of women and girls' cricket throughout 2023. The introduction of women's softball throughout the summer and winter has been a joy to watch. We are in discussion about a potential under thirteen softball competition for summer 2024 and with support from the Lancashire Cricket Foundation we have seen a number of women take up the role of coaches within clubs after successfully completing coaching courses. We are, as clubs should have already seen, on the look out for a Women and Girls Board Member with a view to investing resources in this area moving forward.

The rule changes for 2024 have been devised by the Executive and Board together with representatives of 52 Clubs by way of roadshows and I thank everyone for their attendance and contributions.

It is pleasing to note that the relationship with our headline sponsor New Balance is working well and whilst we do not take hard cash, their support in merchandising is well recognised and I thank them and our other sponsors for their continued support.

I would like to take a moment to thank retiring Directors for their support over the past years and this year David Fare, Tim Mitchell and Thomas George who have stepped down.

Headline priorities for 2024

- To continue to develop the density of junior cricket and continue to invest in interleague cricket. This area continues to grow, and we are moving to create a committee of identified volunteers to act similarly to how the umpires operate. Nigel does a fantastic job but needs some support. Please watch out for press release detailing this development soon.
- Women and Girls. As noted, we are on the look out for a new Women and Girls Director to help stimulate and grow the game under the GMCL banner. We are also looking to develop a three-year women and girls' strategy and a workshop is planned for March so please again look out for details.
- To continue and improve the communication between the Directors, operational subgroups and the member Clubs.
- To develop a strategic communication plan for outside of the League structure.
- To embed the Club and League Memorandum of Understanding and Grounds and Facilities into the League work programme.

That only leads to a final comment and that is to thank all connected to the workings of the League and Clubs for everyone's continued hard work. Nine years ago, we as a development committee (as we were at that time), promised a different way of stimulating cricket in Greater Manchester. The work of that prospectus may well be times past, but our work continues as we continue to develop into the best we can be. It cannot happen with just Directors and operational committees; it takes the work of the Clubs and the expanded volunteer base. We are all making a significant difference to the cricket within the GMCL banner, and we should all be very proud of what is being achieved. Together we are stronger.

Martin Kay

Chair, New Balance Greater Manchester Cricket League