

MINUTES OF THE 2024 ABTO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN PERSON AT THE NTC AND BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

SUNDAY 1st DECEMBER 2024, 1.30pm

[SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION AT 2025 AGM]

1. Welcome, apologies and opening remarks.

The Chair, Malgorzata Grzyb, opened the meeting at 1:30pm, and welcomed everyone to the 2024 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 to check their voting status. **The Chair** ran through some housekeeping requests.

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

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

Fulfilling the role of the Honorary Secretary, **co-opted Committee member Steff Johnston**, confirmed that a total of 97 Full Members, 5 Associate Members and 1 Honorary Member (total 103) were in attendance, in the room (48) and by Zoom (55), and therefore the meeting was quorate. In addition, 1 valid proxy notice had been received by the Honorary Secretary by the deadline (1.30pm on 29th November 2024). Apologies were received from 14 Full Members, 3 Associate Members and 1 Honorary Life Member. Details of the members present (both online and in person), and the apologies received are recorded in the ABTO AGM register.

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. A minute's silence was held in memory of the 4 members that the ABTO Management Committee had been advised of who had passed away since the last AGM:

Alan Mills

Kevin Pryce

Catherine Reffold

Neil Songer

The Chair ran through the agenda and confirmed the reordering of the awards.

2. To confirm the minutes of the 2023 AGM held on 9th December 2023

The minutes of the 2023 AGM were taken as read.

There were no questions or matters arising from the 2023 AGM minutes.

Proposer: Ruth Watts

Seconder: Selena Coburn

A simple majority is required to approve the minutes. The minutes were formally approved.

3. To receive the Statement of Accounts for 2023-2024

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 confirmed the accounts run from 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024. The expenditure was a lot lower than the previous year. The main reasons for this were that 2023 was not an election year, all committee meetings were held remotely which was a £400 saving compared to the previous year and there were no external speakers used for The Conversation, all of which equated to a £1.6k saving compared to the previous year. The grant from the LTA is for a calendar year and therefore covers 9 months of the current financial year and 3 months of the following financial year. Expenditure for the next financial year includes the elections, the accountants, awards and an external speaker. The grant from LTA is £4k which includes £2k for the mental health first aider training. **The Honorary Treasurer** thanked the LTA for the financial support.

The floor was opened to questions.

Grayce Shomade asked if any donations or flowers are sent to the families of those departed.

The Honorary Treasurer confirmed the Committee had decided to stop donations a few years ago.

Jonathan Pierre Lion asked why affiliation fees are paid to LTA.

The Honorary Treasurer confirmed that it is standard practice for all counties and directly affiliated organisations to the LTA, to pay an affiliation fee even though we receive a grant back from the LTA.

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

Proposer: Gill Andersson

Seconder: Charlie Falconer

A simple majority is required to approve the accounts. The accounts were formally approved.

4. To receive the 2024 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, this report provides a good overview of the last 12 months and the Committee's work in 2024.

These are the key highlights and there is more detail in the annual report.

Fees and expenses

The Chair confirmed that an annual review of the fees and expenses paid to officials was held at the start of the year and new fees and expenses structures were introduced on 1st April 2024. These saw increases ranging from 2% to 25%. A review will continue to take place at least on an annual basis. Thank you to Matthew Morrissey for securing additional budget for officiating.

Introduction of ELC

The Chair noted that the adoption of Live ELC has been growing and even before the AELTC's announcement, ABTO had been working with the LTA to assess its potential impact. A survey was issued earlier in the year to gauge feedback from Line Umpires and this provided a good insight into the general feeling. A review of grading structures is taking place and there will be an impact on the different officiating roles. The structures will be simplified and will introduce the Match Assistant role.

The Conversation

The Chair thanked those who have attended The Conversation webinars in 2024. Several sessions were held this year including today. The Conversation will continue in 2025, and the committee are open to suggestions, topics and ideas or recommended speakers.

ABTO Mentoring programme

The Chair confirmed the mentoring programme is in its 3rd year. There have been 20 partnerships throughout the mentoring programming for both on and off court officials. **The Chair** encouraged more people to come forward. As verified by Dr Tom Webb at the Officiating Conference, mentoring can help to build resilience and wellbeing. **The Chair** also noted that more mentors are needed especially as we have new officials, and geography should not be a barrier. Great resources have been developed to support both mentors and mentees.

Welfare and Wellbeing

The Chair stated that the wellbeing of our officials is one of our top priorities. Budget has been secured for mental health first aider training which is to take place in 2025. **The Chair** confirmed that once the training is completed, this will be communicated, and the trained members announced, together with available resources. **The Chair** thanked the LTA for securing the budget.

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

Proposer: Ivan Milatović

Seconder: Mike Crossley

A simple majority is required to approve the management report. The management report was formally approved.

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

The Chair stated that the joint officiating strategy was presented at the 2023 AGM and we are now in year 2 of this strategy. There have been some minor amendments to the strategy to reflect the new competition strategy (which Jenny McAneny-Vincent presented at the Officiating Conference).

The officiating mission now refers to competition.

There are 5 strategic pillars – Invest, Evolve, Engage, Performance and Lead

Beneath each of the 5 pillars, there are 15 tactics, and some will be highlighted.

Matthew Morrissey presented the following key areas of focus:

Officials' hub – this was launched earlier this year. It is simpler and easier to use and will continue to evolve. The selection area of the website has not changed and has been in place since 2014. **Matthew Morrissey** acknowledged that it requires an upgrade. Several “off the shelf” systems and are currently under review.

Enhanced CPD – the coaching CPD is more developed than the officiating CPD so will be used to broaden the officiating CPD. Also looking to incorporate competition organisers into CPD.

Evaluations – Key focus for Q1 2025 are referee evaluations. Chair and line evaluations are well established, and the off court official evaluations need to improve.

The Chair continued:

The **impact of Live ELC** which has already started will continue to be reviewed into 2025 including the grading and selection process.

Mental health training – this was already covered earlier, and we are looking forward to its rollout.

Raising the profile of officiating to inspire current and future officials. We will look to promote officiating more internally and externally; an example is by working more closely with the Tennis Parents Community to increase the awareness and appreciation of officiating amongst parents.

Matthew Morrissey continued:

Fees and expenses – this is now “business as usual” and will be included in the strategy with a commitment to review annually. Looking to introduce changes from 1st January moving forwards so that it falls in line with the LTA's financial year.

Training – evolve training resources in particular on the referee side.

Selection process – will include the match assistant role. Need to ensure selections are fair and transparent.

The Chair continued:

Safeguarding - ensure the highest levels of safeguarding are in place and for officials to be equipped and knowledgeable on how to approach different situations and scenarios.

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

Kossam Mhangami asked how people for mental health training were selected?

The Chair responded to say that an item had been included in an earlier edition of the ABTO bulletin, inviting members to put themselves forward, however it is not too late to come forward.

Juan Solari asked for the number of full paying members.

The Chair confirmed no one pays for ABTO membership. Everyone automatically becomes a member unless they opt out. There are 890 full members, 150 associate, 10 honorary therefore a total of 1,050 members.

Alfred Wong asked about the match assistant role and consideration for only on court officials.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed that only trained line umpires can take that role. If Live ELC goes down, match assistants will have to go on court therefore must be trained as line umpires.

Grayce Shomade asked about raising the profile of officiating and will there be roadshows.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed that no roadshows will take place however training courses will continue for umpires and referees.

Daniel Kwok asked if there will be opportunities to call serve at other tournaments now that Wimbledon is no longer an option, and the current line structure includes serve.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed the structures will be reviewed taking this into account and possibly select more officials towards the end of ITF tournaments to allow for more experience on serve.

Jonathan Pierre Lion stated there was a backlog of people wanting to be umpires.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed that a balance is needed so that once recruited everyone can get on court. There is a need to consider the number of people leaving and recruit based on this.

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.

6. 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 explained that she had established contact with the relatives of Alastair Wotherspoon (after whom one of the awards is named) to learn more about the award and its history. It is nice to keep his memory going and for new officials to know the history of the award.

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 **Alex Wolfe**.

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

The Vice Chair and **Alex Wolfe** announced the award nominations and winners.

ABTO Up and Coming On Court Official of the Year Award 2024

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

Nominations: Faris Ahmad, Kamil Borkowski, Sophie Kitson, Alex Underhill, Lauren Whiteman

Winner: Alex Underhill

ABTO Up and Coming Referee of the Year Award 2024

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

Nominations: Jack Askew, Amy Dannatt, Amy Hoburn, Steve Plant

Winner: Amy Hoburn

ABTO Umpire of the Year 2024

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

Nominations: Robert Balmforth, Alasdair Gordon, Ekaterina Inozemsteva, Keith Regan, Chris Tortise-Crawford

Winner: Alasdair Gordon

ABTO Referee of the Year 2024

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

Nominations: Mike Cohen, Peter Grimsdale, Ray Lovell, Denise Parnell, Mark Wilkinson

Winner: Denise Parnell

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: Nina Amato, Gill Andersson, Charlie Falconer, David Fuchs, Kossam Mhangami

Winner: Nina Amato

The Vice Chair encouraged people to look around them at tournaments and nominate their fellow officials in future years.

The Chair said it was great to see amazing achievements and for there to be more nominations next year.

Long service certificates for those achieving 20 years' service.

Congratulations:

Neil Adams

Jason Baker

Andy Bradley

Roger Henry

Bev Lancaster

Christine Penny

Tom Potts

Gill Pountain

Derek Thorpe

Maggie Tyrell

The Chair explained that the database relating to earlier years is not very reliable and ABTO will look to remedy this by asking members to confirm when they started officiating to update the information held.

7. Results of 2024 ABTO Management Committee Elections

The Chair explained that elections are held every 2 years and was delighted it was a contested election and good to see some great candidates coming forward. The Civica system was used for the election process this year and it worked well.

A total of **337** votes were cast representing 38% turnout and is similar in numbers to the survey engagement. Thank you for casting your votes.

The results of the election are as follows:

Officer roles

Vice Chair: **Veronica Mwondela** received 204 votes, and Selena Coburn received 123 votes. Veronica is therefore elected as Vice Chair for a 4-year term

Honorary Secretary: **Sangeeta Arora** was elected unopposed for a 4-year term

Non-Officer roles

The votes were as follows:

Ruth Watts	207 votes	4-year term
Sophie Kitson	172 votes	4-year term
Ivan Milatović	162 votes	4-year term
Steff Johnston	161 votes	4-year term
Selena Coburn	152 votes	2-year term
Graham Silvester	136 votes	2-year term
Hugo Allen	101 votes	Not elected

We have a full complement of 12 committee members. It was a very close election and we have a great group of people who will be representing our officials.

Warm welcome and congratulations to all new and incumbent committee members.

Three members are standing down, it is difficult to see them leave when they have played such integral roles in the Committee's work. They are: **Mike Crossley** (2 years), **Myooran Nathan** (6 years) and **Kath Lovell (Vice Chair)**.

Kath Lovell has been a committee member for 12 years and has held several roles including Vice Chair, involvement in several panels and groups and countless other areas such as championing referees' matters.

The Chair thanked **Kath Lovell** for everything she has contributed to and her hard work and presented her with a gift from everyone at ABTO.

Kath Lovell said that she had learned so much being on the committee, and it was an honour to represent officials, and it has been a fantastic experience.

The Chair thanked **Kath Lovell** for the lovely words.

8. To consider Any Other Business as previously notified

The Chair confirmed that there was none.

9. 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 3:06pm.

10. Question and answer session

The Chair opened the meeting to Q&As.

Julia Freeman said that she was surprised by the AELTC announcement and how it was communicated. Queens had a year's notice. She didn't expect it to happen this way and as she doesn't spend a lot of time on email she found out via the TV.

Barbara Richardson said she felt it was badly managed and hoped **Charlie Falconer** could do his 50th year next year.

Matthew Morrissey said that he cannot speak for the club as it wasn't an LTA announcement. They could not announce too early due to the press and was therefore the best approach in that situation.

Rhonda Chang asked if there could be a time without chair umpires.

Matthew Morrissey could not see this happening due to the level of communication required with the players.

Ivan Milatović asked if the LTA are anticipating a drop off in numbers and do they have an estimated percentage.

Matthew Morrissey stated there is an idea from the survey which is 47% line umpires would not continue however they have not seen a drop off yet and no one has confirmed that they were stopping officiating. They are probably waiting to see what it will be like before deciding. This was across all grades.

Ivan Milatović asked if Wimbledon qualifying be in the same place, i.e. Roehampton.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed it would be.

Grayce Shomade asked about introducing incentives such as Wimbledon ground passes to keep people interested in carrying on.

Matthew Morrissey stated that consideration of the current benefits for those working at Wimbledon, maybe look at via the license scheme ballot which could be expanded although not connected with AELTC.

Grayce Shomade asked if for the match assistant role there would be preference for those who can umpire matches during the second week and be match assistants the first week.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed that it will be a continuation of what happens today in that white badge umpires are line umpires during the first week and chair matches in the second week. This will be the same for the match assistant role. There has to be a mix of foreign officials to allow for matches to be chaired where British players are competing.

Julia Freeman asked if another survey will be held amongst line umpires.

Matthew Morrissey stated that people may vote with their feet.

Chris Melhuish said that some court supervisors who were being evaluated by referees didn't know it was happening and said they may give up. There needs to be more transparency and officials given guidance and support.

Matthew Morrissey said that it was trialled, but referees did not have enough time to carry out evaluations for court supervisors due to commitments of the role. It is easier with chair umpires as the team is already there. Looking to do something similar to line umpiring or send someone to the event purely for evaluating however need to consider the budget. Need to explain it is a development opportunity.

Kossam Mhangami asked if the ITF membership fee still needs to be paid now that Wimbledon has gone.

Matthew Morrissey confirmed that it does need to be paid if working at Wimbledon or professional tournaments. Depending on timing and selections, we will confirm whether it needs to be paid

Kath Lovell (Vice Chair) stated that in the past, the role of the referee as well as managing the court supervisors would be to carry out evaluations of the court supervisors. This was a main part of the role.

Matthew Morrissey said this can work and we must make it work and that is one of the options.

The Chair thanked everyone for the great questions and discussions.

The Chair thanked the LTA for the rooms, lunch and drink, and the committee for all their help and support in setting up and organising the sessions and day.

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

The meeting ended at 3:21pm.