

TENNIS BOOKINGS

I have been the tennis court keyholder (now Bookings' Manager) since 1994. Over the years, a system developed, with the full approval of the Parish Council, whereby the organisers of doubles games involving more than one household were allowed to "pre-book" regular slots to make life easier for the coordinator of these games.

When hand written bookings were made by individual players on the printed sheets, these regular games were pre-printed by me onto the sheets. Once the booking calendar became available online, it was easier for me to book these games from the start of the new system into the foreseeable future, with one click which I duly did.

One occasional user of the court wrote to me towards the end of April to say that they felt this system was unfair and proposed an alternative arrangement whereby potential tennis players could bid for slots on a Sunday evening. I could see that this was going to be unworkable since (a) most people book the court on an ad hoc basis, as and when the fancy takes them and the weather is favourable and (b) I've frankly got better things to be doing on a Sunday evening than running a quasi auction!

Furthermore, I pointed out, at some length, that the players involved in the 4 (now 5) pre-booked slots represented about 25% of the tennis revenue and that I could not tell the pre-bookers that they might have to enter into a lottery for their bookings, in view of the degree of organisation it takes them to fill these slots.

I pointed out that these regulars play throughout the year, unless the weather is against them, rather than when the fancy takes them and that they represent the backbone or "bread and butter" of the court's usage and the Council's revenue from the court. However, these bookings are not set in stone so that, with enough notice, it has occasionally happened that a regular has happily stepped aside to allow, for instance, tennis lessons for a group of children when the coach could not come at any other time. It may be that this possibility should be made clearer to all players?

Finally, I pointed out that the dancing lessons in the Village Hall were pre-booked and that there wasn't any great difference between that arrangement and the regular tennis games. And I explained, yet again, that the Parish Council was happy with the arrangement. At this the complainant withdrew, apologising for wasting my time, while leaving open the possibility of taking the matter up with the Council.

I believe this person is a lone voice and not speaking on behalf of others but, in case the matter is brought up at a Parish Council meeting, I thought it wise to brief you.