

# Club Facility Management

Review and Recommendations

2009

## Objectives

- To undertake a review of the current state of Squash Auckland affiliated clubs facilities to help them to develop effective strategies for improving the quality of their assets.
- Develop recommendations and strategies based on the feedback provided to help clubs to improve the quality of their facilities in order to attract more members to their club.
- Recommendations and strategies will be incorporated and actioned in the 2010 business plan

## Areas Covered

- Facility Management Planning
- Committee Involvement
- Committee Education
- Budgeting
- Saving for Facility Maintenance
- Supplier Support
- Shared Services
- Contractor Contacts
- Trust Funding
- Council Support
- Facility Amalgamation/Relocation
- Furniture/Decor
- Accessibility
- Booking Systems
- Volunteers
- Alternative Facility Funding Strategies
- Facility layout
- Ambience
- Heating and Ventilation
- Creating A 'People Place'
- Personnel

# Key Findings and Recommendations

## **1. Facility Management Planning**

- Few clubs have a formal written facilities management plan. A few clubs indicated that they were working on putting a plan together.
- Most decisions about facility upgrade priorities are made by the committee, as and when they deem it necessary to undertake the required remedial work.

### Recommendations:

- A facilities management planning template to be made available to all clubs.
  - All clubs to be offered the opportunity to receive assistance from Squash Auckland to complete a facility management plan.
  - Squash Auckland to produce an asset Register template for clubs to record their asset details.
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- One club interviewed had a committee member with designated responsibility for overseeing facility management issues. Their role was to formulate a facility plan, provide facility maintenance and upgrade budget, and identify and bring to the attention of the committee facility maintenance and upgrade issues.

### Recommendations

- Clubs to be encouraged to appoint a designated property management person to their Executive Committee.

## **2. Committee Involvement**

- Decisions' concerning what is required to upgrade and maintain the club's facilities are generally made by the Executive Committee. Unfortunately in the absence of a long term facility plan many of the decisions made appear to be ad hoc and reactive in nature.

### **3. Committee Education**

- Judging by the ad hoc nature of club committee decision making regards facility management, it appears few have a significant understanding of what is required to maintain an attractive modern facility that will attract today's sports consumer to become members of their club.

#### Recommendation

- Guest speaker(s) with expertise in facilities development be asked to attend the upcoming Squash Auckland Club development day to address club Presidents on the importance of providing quality facilities to attract and retain members.

### **4. Budgeting**

- There is little evidence to suggest that clubs are budgeting for facility maintenance or upgrades. This is hardly surprising as most clubs don't have a long term facility management plan. Without a plan it is unlikely a club will have an associated budget to support it.

### **5. Saving for Facility Maintenance**

- Some clubs have made attempts to put money aside from fundraising activities to save for maintenance requirements. Unfortunately the majority of clubs have no savings plan in place; instead they rely primarily on trust funding to assist them with paying for maintenance repairs and upgrades.

#### Recommendation

- Many clubs are finding that access to trust funding for facility repairs and maintenance is becoming increasingly difficult to get. In light of this all clubs should be encouraged to put aside a percentage of their fundraising income to provide for the purpose of providing for future facility maintenance and/or upgrades.

## 6. Supplier Support

- Clubs interviewed indicated that after sales service from the suppliers of major products and services was variable at best. A significant case in point is demonstrated by the example of one particular club, who having built a new squash facility then found that the manufacturer failed to provide them with a maintenance plan or any written advice on what was required to assist in the upkeep of the facility.

Since its construction the club has experienced ongoing problems with certain sections of the squash courts. To date the issues have not been resolved satisfactorily due to ongoing disputes with the supplier and manufacturer as to who is ultimately responsible for fixing the problem.

### Recommendation

- Squash Auckland initiate a meeting with the major provider of squash courts and associated squash facility products and services to discuss the provision of an after sales service and maintenance plan for clubs.
- Clubs to be encouraged to source 'as built' drawings of their facility and any operating manuals for all mechanical, plumbing and electrical plant equipment.
- If the above information can't be tracked down, the club should employ the services of consultants to prepare the relevant information. Squash Auckland could consider providing financial assistance to facilitate this process with selected clubs?

## 7. Shared Services

- Each club has a range of contractors they use for repairs and maintenance. In many cases existing members of the club are either contracted through their own business to carry out remedial work on the club's facilities or in some cases they provide their skills free of charge as a way of volunteering their services to the club.

## Recommendation

- Clubs to be asked to provide Squash Auckland with a list of the contractors they currently use for facility maintenance. Squash Auckland to compile a database of club contractor details and their specialisation and make this available on the association's website for all clubs to access.

## **8. Trust Funding**

- Most clubs interviewed expressed frustration at the lack of success they were experiencing in securing adequate trust funding for facility upgrades and maintenance. There were a couple of exceptions provided by clubs that indicated they had been quite successful in securing funding. The reasons for their success varied.

In the case of one club they were fortunate to secure the services of a member who had designated responsibility for and was experienced in completing funding applications.

In the case of the other club they were able to demonstrate to the funding agency that they were willing and able to financially contribute to the cost of their project. The lessons for clubs from these two examples are twofold;

### Recommendation(s)

- Club's should proactively recruit a volunteer with designated responsibility for completing trust funding applications and for establishing strong, positive long-term relationships with providers.
- Clubs should make provision for future facility upgrade and maintenance costs by ensuring that they regularly put a percentage of their income aside specifically for this purpose.

## **9. Council Support**

- Nearly all clubs expressed frustration at the lack of support they received from their respective councils when asking them for assistance on facility matters. With the imminent introduction of the Auckland Super City, there may be little of significance that can be done to address the problem in the short term. It is unlikely that the existing councils will want to commit to any significant investment in sporting facilities before the introduction of the new Super City.

## **10. Facility Amalgamation/Relocation**

- For some clubs this presents a very real opportunity for them to relocate and/or upgrade their existing facility. Many of the existing squash facilities were built in the 1960's and 70's to cater for sports participants of that time. Since then the manner in which people participate in sports has changed significantly. With it has come the demand for newer, more modern, multi-purpose facilities that are accessible all year round. This is something that few of today's squash clubs are able to provide.

Many sports clubs today face a declining membership. Club membership no longer holds the same appeal to people as it did when many facilities were first built. This is particularly true for single sport style facilities. Instead the demand today is for multi-purpose facilities that can cater for the sporting and leisure interests of the whole family. Herein lies an opportunity for squash clubs to investigate the possibilities for relocation and amalgamation with one or more sports clubs in their local community or alternatively to become a part of a council initiated sports hub, or existing sporting complex. Examples include;

- Rodney District Council's proposed Metro Park sports complex in Silverdale.
- Papakura City Councils existing Bruce Pulman Park sporting complex.
- Franklin District Council's proposal for the creation of a sports hub in Franklin Road, Pukekohoe.

- The existing Fergusson Park sports complex in Onehunga.

### Recommendation

- Squash Auckland to investigate – with the cooperation of the relevant club – the logistics of relocation/amalgamation to a multi-purpose site.
- In the case of the existing Fergusson Park complex, investigate what needs to be done to develop closer ties between the existing host sports to enable the complex to be more viable and attractive to prospective club members?

## **11. Furniture/Decor**

- Traditionally clubs have been built to host middle age, white, working class men. The decor, furniture, fittings, and beverage offerings were designed to reflect their tastes. However over time the demographic of clubs has changed to include more women, children, and people from other ethnic groups. In addition society has changed the way it socialises. Hospitality has become more sophisticated as people demand greater comfort and a wider range of food and beverage offerings. Evidence of this can be seen in the exponential growth in cafes and themed style bars.

There has been a significant change in the style of bars over the years. From the old 'booze barns' of the 70's that were dominated by working men sitting around bar leaner's drinking jugs of tap beer. To today's smaller, modern themed bars offering imported beers in bottles, a range of wines, and even coffee. Unfortunately many squash club's decor and furniture still has a male centric feel, with plenty of bar leaner's (often situated close to the bar), tables and chairs joined together in long rows resembling an army mess hall, and an emphasis on alcoholic beverages. All of this continues to reinforce the stereotype of the traditional club as being the primary domain of the mainly white, middle class male aged 40+. As a result clubs have become less appealing to younger people, both male and female. Confirmation of this can

be seen in the regional and national club membership statistics which show a heavy skew towards male members (70%) and masters aged players (35+).

### Recommendation

- Squash Auckland can source suitable expertise in the area of interior design, furniture and decor fit out. This can then be made available to clubs via the website. However just changing the decor and furniture without a fundamental change in the mindset and culture of the club may not be enough to attract a younger more diverse audience to become club members.

## **12. Facility Accessibility**

- As far as facility issues go accessibility ranks very highly on the order of priorities facing squash clubs in the region. Spending copious amounts of money on upgrading facilities is of little value if people (not just members) can't access the club at their convenience.

At present very few clubs have a full-time manager on site and available to answer prospective member's enquiries or to actively promote the club and its facilities to the local community. The onus then falls on the committee to make decisions on the future well-being of the club. Unfortunately by the time the committee makes a decision it is often too late to take advantage of the opportunity.

It's no coincidence that those few club's that do have a full-time manager/administrator on site have achieved the biggest increase in membership numbers in 2008 – 09 and are proving to be the most innovative.

- A number of clubs have an electronic access system for their members. This provides members 24 hour access to the facility and unlimited use of the courts. In most cases though the system is not being used by clubs to allow

access to the facility for non-members, thereby limiting the opportunity to tap into a potentially lucrative revenue stream.

### Recommendations

- Squash Auckland to work with clubs to explore the feasibility of a job sharing arrangement whereby a club administrator/manager works for two or more clubs during the week.
- Assuming the system is cost effective and the club is able to manage the logistics of implementation and everyday use effectively, all clubs in the region should be encouraged to take advantage of Squash NZ's proposed facility access system.

### **13. Court Booking Systems**

- This is closely linked to the issue above – accessibility. Currently in a number of clubs court bookings are determined by who turns up on the night. On arrival a member writes their name up on a white board or blackboard and then proceeds to wait for the next available court. The inherent weakness in this system is the assumption that people are prepared to stand around waiting for a court to come available.

This may suit some long-standing members who have the time and inclination to stand around waiting for a court to become available; however for most people today who live very busy lifestyles and are looking for instant gratification, the thought of waiting to play is a major turn off. Clubs however can overcome this problem by introducing an on-line booking system.

### Recommendation

- Squash Auckland to support Squash NZ's on-line booking system and work with all clubs in the region that currently don't have this facility to adopt the system being offered.

## **14. Volunteers**

- In nearly all clubs volunteers are heavily relied on to carry out a significant amount of the repairs and maintenance work on the facility. Most clubs have members who either possess a trade or own or work for a company that specialises in providing products or services related to facility repairs and/or maintenance.

Working bees appear to be a common method used by clubs to get volunteers to undertake remedial work on their facilities. Clubs running working bees report having mixed success. The most common complaints appear to be; the willingness of members to make themselves available, the quality of work carried out, and volunteers reliability. Still clubs continue to run them, as the alternative option – paying a contractor – is often not financially viable.

## **15. Alternative Facility Funding Strategies**

- With trust funding becoming increasingly more difficult to access, some clubs have sought alternative methods of raising funds for facility maintenance and upgrades. One method used by one particular club was a volunteer member's levy. Members were levied an additional sum of money on top of their annual membership fees. The purpose of the levy was to raise enough money to fund the upgrade of fencing around their tennis courts.

The levy met with some success. Whilst not all of the money required was raised, the amount received went a considerable way towards helping the club achieve its goal of new and upgraded fencing for the tennis courts. While this met with some success at the aforementioned club it is unlikely that most clubs could rely on this as a significant source of income towards the cost of facility maintenance and/or upgrades. The nature of the project requiring funding and the circumstances of the club and its members are likely to play a significant role in determining member's willingness to contribute

extra funding via a levy on their membership fees.

### Recommendations

- Squash Auckland to share the member levy idea with other clubs. Club's can then make a determination as to whether this method is a suitable way for them to raise funds for facility upgrades and/or maintenance.

## **16. Ambience**

- Not feeling physically constricted is very important to users, particularly to potential new players. Unfortunately squash courts by their very nature create a sense of restriction. This is particularly true for courts that do not have a glass back wall. For non glass backed walled courts the environment can appear intimidating, cold, dark and uninviting to players and non-players alike. In contrast courts with a glass back wall provide a sense of openness, spaciousness and light.

### Recommendation

- Identify clubs that are interested in converting a court or courts to glass back and work with them to secure the required funding to achieve this.
- Some clubs decor, furniture and fittings appear to have changed little since they were originally built in the 1970's. By today's standards a number of clubs decor, furniture, and fittings look dated and conservative.

Most squash clubs were built to be functional. The current fit out, decor, furniture and fittings reflect functionality. People pick up cues from the building, decor, furniture and fittings about how an experience will feel. For most adults today the current squash club fit out does not reflect fun, but functionality – fitness. This does not capture them, because for them it needs to be about fun and enjoyment.

### Recommendation

- Colour and lighting can make a significant difference to a facilities ambience. The mood and feel of a facility can be significantly enhanced by having colours and lighting that are bright and uplifting. Resene offer a comprehensive service to organisations wanting advice and assistance on interior decorating, painting and decorating.

## **17. Heating and Ventilation**

- A user's comfort level can be strongly influenced by the operating temperature of the facility they are patronising. Many squash facilities don't have adequate control systems to regulate on court temperature. This often leads to squash courts being very cold during winter and very hot during summer, to the point of being almost unbearable to play on. This is particularly true of the older style squash court with four concrete walls. This can result in members and prospective users becoming reluctant to patronise a facility during certain times of the year.

### Recommendation

- Clubs to be encouraged to install on-court temperature control systems. Squash Auckland has information available on its website from Avon Electrical with regards on-court temperature control systems.

## **18. Creating a 'People Place'**

- Physical activity is not an end in itself and is not always enough of a draw to get users and non-users to patronise a squash facility regularly. The social factor is crucial. The opportunity to socialise and interact with friends, family and other members in a relaxed, friendly and modern environment is crucial to attracting people's patronage.

### Recommendation

- The growth in the cafe culture provides a pointer to clubs as to where they should be positioning their hospitality offerings. The ability to provide a combination of physical activity and socialising either as part of the activity itself or as part of the process (e.g. do something physical and then socialise in a relaxed setting that is part of the complex afterward) can be a significant determinant of people's willingness to patronise a facility. North Shore Squash Club provides an excellent example of what can be achieved with this type of approach.

### **19. Personnel**

- The message here is to “lighten up”. The people will determine the culture of the facility. They are the essential source of energy and enthusiasm that people are looking for when they patronise a club. If it is welcoming, fun and inclusive people will be motivated to attend. In contrast if it is inaccessible, dull and a closed shop, people will stay away.

### Recommendation

- For clubs that don't have a full-time manager on site they should create a position on their committee for a person or persons responsible for welcoming and following up with new and prospective new members to the club.

## Suggested Further Readings

- **Strategic Facility Planning**

[http://www.ifma.org/tools/files/SFP\\_WhitePaper.pdf](http://www.ifma.org/tools/files/SFP_WhitePaper.pdf)

This white paper produced by the International Facility Management Association provides a comprehensive overview of the key principles of strategic facility planning and details the key stages of the entire strategic facility planning process.

- **Facility Temperature Control**

<http://todaysfacilitymanager.com/facilityblog/wp-content/uploads/hvacsurvey2009.pdf>

This survey report looks at the issues facing facility owners and operators with regards temperature control in the workplace. While most of the responses were from people working in offices, the issues around temperature control and the effect it has on employees comfort levels are relevant issues squash clubs need to consider when addressing comfort levels for their members.

- **Facility Management Resources**

<http://www.fmlink.com/>

This American website is an excellent resource for all things facility management. The site has lots of free resources including articles, white papers, special reports, and case studies about facility management.

- <http://www.nzrecreation.org.nz/Default.aspx?section=organisation&page=projects>

This manual – from the New Zealand Recreation Association - consists of 11

chapters, each one available free in pdf form or a hard copy version for \$65, and is a comprehensive resource for any facility owner or manager.

### Time Frame for Implementation of Recommendations

Category Recommendation	Outcome	Completion Date	Comments
1. Facility Management Planning	Facility Management Template produced and available to all clubs	Oct 2010	
	Asset Register Template produced and available to all clubs	2011	
2. Committee Involvement	5 Clubs have on their committee a person with designated responsibility for property management issues	August 2010	
3. Committee Education	Guest Speaker (Facility Management) attends Squash Auckland Club Development day.	June 2010	
4. Budgeting/Saving for Facility Maintenance	5 clubs per annum budgeting/saving for facility maintenance and/or upgrades	2010 - 2012	
6. Supplier Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement reached with squash court provider on the provision of an after sales service and maintenance manual for clubs.</li> <li>• 5 clubs per annum have sourced their facilities 'as built' drawings and operating manuals and are using this information to formulate a facility management plan for their club.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">2011</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2011-2012</p>	

Category Recommendation	Outcome	Completion Date	Comments
7. Shared Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75% of clubs have provided a list of their contractor details to Squash Auckland</li> <li>Club contractor details are available on the Squash Auckland website</li> </ul>	April 2010	
8. Trust Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75% of clubs have a designated person responsible for securing trust funding</li> </ul>	June 2010	
9. Council Support	Auckland Squash Club facility management discussed with the person responsible at the new Auckland City Council	2011 - 2012	
10. Facility Amalgamation/Relocation	As above	2012	
11. Furniture Decor	Make available on the Squash Auckland website information on companies that specialise in interior design, decor, and fit out for hospitality outlets	June 2010	
12. Facility Accessibility	75% of clubs have an electronic access system	2012	

Category Recommendation	Outcome	Completion Date	Comments
13. On Line Court Booking Systems	50% of Auckland clubs are operating an on-line court booking systems for members and non-members alike.	2011	
15. Alternative Funding Strategies	Clubs made aware of the membership levy option as a means by which they could raise funds for facility repairs, maintenance, and/or upgrades	April 2010	
16. Ambience	2 clubs have converted at least one concrete backed squash court to glass back	2012	
	2 clubs per year have taken steps to upgrade their decor, furniture and fittings	2011 - 2012	
17. Heating and Ventilation	2 clubs per year have installed on-court temperature control systems for the comfort of players	2011 - 2012	
18. Creating a People Place	2 clubs remodelled their lounge area to incorporate a cafe/lounge type ambience	2012	
19. Personnel	50% of volunteer operated clubs have a designated person on their committee responsible for new member induction and support	2011	



