



Devonport Hockey Club

Strategic Plan

2023-33

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Cover image credit: Nicky Green

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Executive Summary

Devonport Hockey Club was formed in 1981 and has a history traceable to 1918. It has enjoyed on-field success, has a large contingent of past players and has been prominent in the North West hockey community.

In 2022, the Club faces urgent challenges that threaten its survival. The clearest indication of those challenges is the steady decrease in player numbers to a point where the Club fielded 4 teams in 2022.

The Devonport Hockey Club Strategic Plan 2023-33 has been developed to ensure the survival and rebuild of the Club. The Plan identifies 4 challenges:

- participation
- financial sustainability
- club community
- on field success

The Plan states 4 objectives for the Club committee and members to pursue to ensure the survival and rebuild of the Club. They respond to the 4 identified challenges and are:

1) By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will field 6 senior teams and 4 junior teams

2) By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will be low cost to players and will remain financially sustainable

3) By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will be a fun, welcoming and inclusive family club where our members have a strong sense of belonging and purpose

4) By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will win a premiership every year and will supply players to Tasmanian teams

The Plan describes a new organisational structure for the Club Committee and relies on input from a larger contingent of club members, although roles outside the Executive Committee are designed to suit a broad range of club members and possible contributors. For anyone willing to contribute, there is a role that suits their skills, passions and availability.

The Plan is a call to action to Club members to contribute in the best way they can to the running of the Club, ensuring its survival and rebuilding it through the achievement of the four objectives.

The Plan includes an action plan that provides guidance for the Club Committee, assisting them to focus on what is required to achieve the 4 objectives.

The Plan includes some measures of success that can be reported on at future AGMs to demonstrate to Club Members that the Plan is being delivered, ensuring the survival and rebuild of the club.

Background

The Devonport Hockey Club was official formed in 1981 when Devonians (Old Devonians Association -ODA) Womens Club and the East Devonport Mens Club agreed to amalgamate to form one of the first combined mens and womens hockey club in the State.

The history of the two clubs that amalgamated can be traced back to 1918 for ODA and to the 1960s for the East Devonport Men's Club, providing the Devonport Hockey Club with over 100 years of history to value, preserve and build on.

The Devonport Hockey Club built a large playing group, peaking at 12 senior teams in the 1980s. The Club has regularly achieved on field success, notably winning 2 womens and 5 mens premierships in Division 1 /Greater Northern League since 1985. Success, including premierships in lower divisions and junior divisions was also achieved.



Image Credit: Dallas Cripps

At an individual level, the Club can boast Australian representative administrators, umpires and players as well as many Tasmanian representatives.

The Club has boasted a strong social fabric, which enabled participation to remain high, recruitment through friends, family and from rival clubs, and built long lasting relationships between club members.

The Club was at the forefront of the development of the North West Hockey Centre at Meercroft Park, including the installation of lights, the artificial playing surface and the clubrooms. The Club has also had significant input into the development and administration of hockey in Devonport and North West Tasmania.

At all levels, Devonport Hockey Club has been a strong club.

However, like many sporting clubs, participation has been in decline for many years and the Club now faces multiple challenges and must review 'how it does things' to survive and to rebuild.

Objectives

In order for the Club to survive and rebuild, it must clearly identify the challenges it is facing and define strategic objectives to address those challenges. Then, the Club must unite and deliver a set of actions that contribute to the achievement of those objectives.

In 2022, the challenges threatening the Club's survival are:

- participation
- financial sustainability
- club community
- on field success

The objectives required to address these challenges are below:

Objective 1: Participation

By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will field 6 senior teams and 4 junior teams.

In 2022, Devonport Hockey Club did not field a team in either men's or women's GNL competitions - the first time the club did not field any team in the highest available level of competition.

The Club fielded 4 teams:

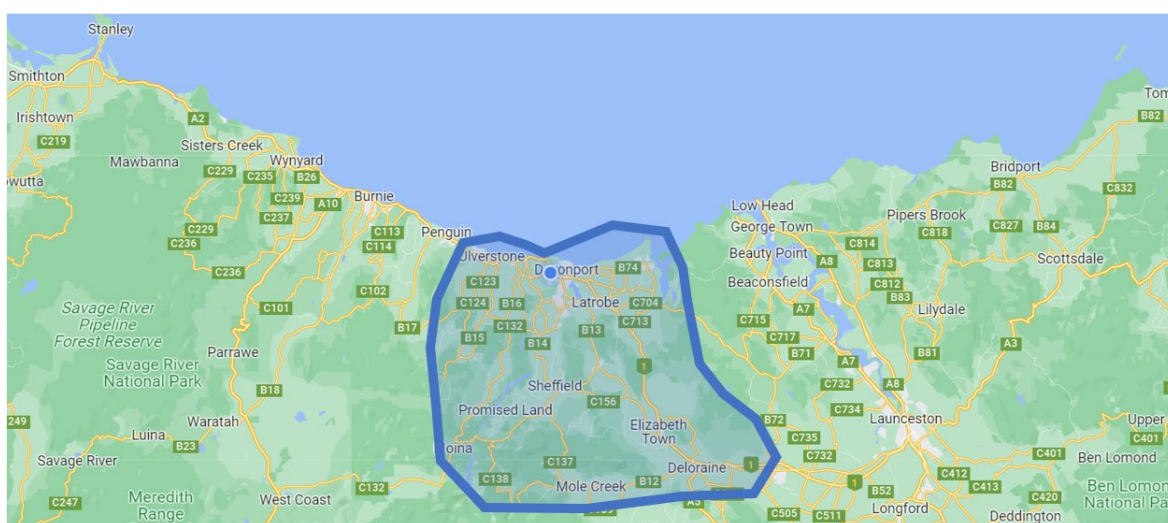
- Division 2 women
- Division 3 men
- Under 17 mixed
- Under 13 mixed

Current and former players played at other clubs (mainly GNL) and participated in a non-affiliated womens roster in the second half of the season.

This level of participation and number of teams is unsustainable for the Club, so the development of a plan to increase the number of teams and players is essential. The Club needs to sustainably increase the numbers of players and teams, firstly by identifying and communicating to prospective players and then by targeting the right playing opportunities for members and prospective members.

When considering the catchment of potential players, there is a population of around 60,000 that have Devonport as their closest hockey facility. The catchment includes:

- Devonport
- Latrobe and Port Sorell, to the East
- Sheffield and Deloraine to the South
- Ulverstone to the West



A population of this size provides the opportunity to build to the 10 team objective, requiring around 150 players. But consideration must be given to barriers that exist that prevent people from playing hockey. Some barriers have been identified for junior players including:

- Travel and rostering
- Competition from other sports
- Mixed roster (for girls)
- Range of ages / sizes / skills in the same competition
- Cost
- Family support / competing time demands
- Inadequate marketing of hockey

And similarly for senior hockey

- Length of season
- Travel / time commitment
- Cost
- Lack of fitness or lack of confidence
- Other requirements e.g. umpiring, canteen, match managing

Actions should address these barriers. This will be challenging as the set of barriers experienced by a player or family may be unique to them. Understanding and removing those barriers for multiple players and families can be time and resource intensive for the Club. This will be possible to the extent that the Club has resources (e.g., people and funds) to contribute.

When searching for players, there is quite a narrow range of sources, including:

- Primary and High School students
- New residents to Devonport, including migrants
- Friends and family of current players
- Former players
- Players from other clubs

This is advantageous as the resources required to develop programs and opportunities, tailored to appeal to each of these groups are likely to be achievable for the Club, with some assistance from Hockey Tasmania.

The actions described below will give the Club the opportunity to connect with prospective players and offer them a hockey 'product' that is attractive and suits their circumstances.

Measures of Success:

- Number of registered junior players increases year on year
- Number of registered senior players increases year on year
- New players are recruited from a range of sources and locations
- All players have a range of playing options
 - Competition level
 - Day of week
 - Time of year / length of season
- Primary and High School students are given hockey opportunities

Roles Required

The establishment of a sub-committee focussed on increasing participation is recommended. The roles of the sub committee may include:

- Participation coordinator

- Coaches in schools
- Umpiring officer

Active communication will be required with Hockey Tasmania, with schools, with local governments with Club coaches and managers, as well as with other Committee members and existing Club members

Actions Required

Actions identified during the preparation of this plan include:

- Seek support from Hockey Tasmania to deliver school-based hockey programs
- Recruit coaches from within the Club to support school hockey programs
- Run junior hockey clinics in various timeslots and for different age groups as a feeder system to the Club under 13 teams
- Provide incentives for new players and existing players who recruit new players
- Develop programs to target sources of prospective players
- Work to align available rosters and competition levels with needs of players (e.g. time of week, time of year)

Over the life of this plan, different actions may be identified as a priority to continue or boost participation.

Objective 2: Financial Sustainability

By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will be low cost to players and will remain financially sustainable

Through the discipline of successive committees and the conscientious work of Club treasurers, the club is in a stable financial position. Generally, Club revenue and expenses have been balanced and the Club has had adequate cashflow as well as a modest cash reserve. The Club has complied with its financial reporting requirements and has adequate systems in place to ensure transparency.

No club will survive if it isn't financially sustainable. Conversely, a club may not survive if it doesn't reinvest its funds into activities that promote growth.

The Club must find new revenue sources to offset player fees, which may give hockey a competitive advantage over other sports. The Club should allocate resources to obtaining sponsorship agreements beneficial to the Club and find ways to provide value to sponsors.

The Club should pursue grant opportunities and should lobby Meercroft Park Development Committee to pursue grants more actively than it currently does.

The Club should continue to subsidize the cost of junior players and consider ways to incentivise new players and their 'recruiters' as more players increase revenue and spread the load.

Measures of Success:

- Sponsorship income increases year on year
- Income from events increases year on year
- Quality grant applications are made to all relevant opportunities
- Club fees remain low – in the order of \$5 per week for juniors and \$20 per week for seniors
- Club members have a range of opportunities to receive payment from hockey related work (e.g. coaching, umpiring)

Roles Required

It is recommended that a financial sub committee be formed, and work under the direction of the Club Treasurer. Sub-Committee roles may include:

- Treasurer
- Sponsorship officer
- Grants officer

Actions Required

Actions identified during the preparation of this plan include:

- Prepare and maintain Club documentation that can be tailored for sponsorship opportunities
- Develop and secure sponsorship opportunities that align with
 - Club promotions and Club Member benefits
 - Club events
 - Club roles (e.g. a personal trainer running pre-season sessions)
- Establish and maintain contact with Devonport City Council and other funding bodies related to grants

- Regularly review player fees to maintain affordability

Over the life of this plan, different actions may be identified as a priority to maintain a balance of revenue and expense.

Objective 3: Club Community

By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will be a fun, welcoming and inclusive family club where our members have a strong sense of belonging and purpose

One of the main reasons people join a club is for friendship and social interaction.

Historically this has been a strength for the Club which helped to recruit and retain players and has contributed to on field success. Many past players have formed lifelong bonds with their teammates and clubmates. The sense of community for Club members is fundamental to their enjoyment and therefore their ongoing connection to the Club.



Image credit: Sharlene Hardy

Image credit: Michele Reeves

Significant change has occurred since the club formed in 1981 and the Club is still coming to terms with the impact of those changes that include:

- The construction of the artificial turf, which had significant impact on spacing out rostered games across the week
- Societal change to working patterns (e.g. the 24/7 work opportunities and more work for women and young adults) which has impacted people's ability to commit to a team
- The internet and social media

Another challenge for the Club that has always existed is the pull experienced by young players to leave Devonport for educational and work opportunities.

To survive and rebuild, the Club must restore this strength of the Club community, in a modern context.

The plan has identified these needs for this to be achieved:

- Develop a strong sense of belonging and sense of purpose
- Be welcoming and inclusive. Create fun and community spirit
- Utilise clubrooms and facilities as a place for people to meet socially after training, games and for club events
- Commitment to including others, with a family and social focus
- Value and reward members, communicate and promote regularly

- Provide a valuable service to the local community and give people a place to go for physical and social health
- A family focus – our future lies in the next generation. Focusing on and investing in junior development and recruitment programs will help us survive and rebuild
- Recognition and promotion of the Club’s long, strong history and achievements

There is a significant level of consultation, planning and preparation required to deliver the communications and events required. This will need contributions from Club members with a range of skills. Some roles will be short term (like event preparation) and others will be ongoing.

The Club also requires the physical infrastructure to support the Club community. Meercroft Park is arguably the best hockey facility for spectators outside of Hobart. Similarly, it has the best changerooms, although they compare poorly to most other sports in Devonport. The Club has limited direct power to enact change but is a major stakeholder of the Meercroft Park Development Committee. The Club should lobby for the infrastructure required to support the Club community objective which could include:

- Improved catering facilities
- Improved spectator facilities, including shelter and scoreboard
- Infrastructure to support live streaming of games
- Infrastructure for children, including a kid’s turf or play equipment

Measures of Success:

- Website visitors increase year on year
- Increase in comms (emails/social posts etc) year on year
- Event attendance numbers increase year on year
- Annual Club survey indicators improve year on year

Roles Required

It is recommended to form a social sub committee to implement the actions required to achieve the Club community objective. Roles in the sub-committee may include:

- Club community coordinator
- Communications officer(s)
- Events officer(s)
- Merchandise/Uniform officer
- Historian/records officer

Actions Required

Actions identified in the development of this plan include:

- Review and define the Club culture and values
- Development and implementation of an engagement plan for:
 - New members
 - Current members
 - Past members
 - Community
 - Schools
- Development of a volunteer network for minor and short term roles
- Establish a member survey

- Development of an infrastructure plan for Meercroft Park which supports the Club community objective

Objective 4: On-field Success

By 2033, Devonport Hockey Club will win a premiership every year and will supply players to Tasmanian teams.

The Club has a history of success across all grades and for periods has been a dominant force in North West Hockey.

Some of the notable team successes include:

Division 1 Women (Coastal) premiers 1985

C Grade Men (C2) state premiers 1985

Division 1 Men (Coastal) premiers 1988 – broke a 12 year streak by City Marians

Division 1, 2 and 3 Women premiers 1991

Division 1 Women (GNL) premiers 1997

Division 1 Men (GNL) – 3x premiers 2000, 2001, 2002

Division 1 Men (GNL) – 2x premiers 2007, 2008

Under 16 mixed – 2x premiers 2017, 2018



GNL premiership team 2008. Image credit: Shannon Wainwright

In 2022, two of the Club's four teams made finals, with the Division 3 Men narrowly losing the grand final.

At an individual level, the Club has contributed to the development of Australian representative players Penny Dunbabin (Gray), Kim Walker, David Guest and Ian Addison as well as representatives in Australian junior teams and masters' teams. Contributions at an Australian and International level

by Meg Wilson (ODA – player and administrator) and Minka Wooley (umpire and administrator) are also significant.

The Club has consistently produced Tasmanian representative players, which has continued at the junior level in 2022.

On field success – winning – contributes to the enjoyment of sports. A culture of success contributes significantly to the strength of a club. However, success can not be achieved or sustained without reliance on the other objectives outlined in this plan. Therefore, for the Club to achieve sustained on field success, it must focus first on the other three objectives. Therefore, this objective is likely to be the last to be achieved. It is the ‘icing on the cake’. In turn, on field success helps to achieve the other objectives.

The Club must also be mindful of the impacts the all-out pursuit of success can have on participation and the Club community, as it is well understood that Club members play and contribute for a variety of reasons. Teams, players and coaches should have open communication about team and individual goals.

To achieve on field success, it is recommended to appoint a Technical Coordinator to the Executive Committee with oversight over team coaches. This role will ensure that the development of skills and tactics is aligned with State and National programs but is tailored to suit the range of levels of Club teams.

The role will help enhance the capability of team coaches and will be responsible for seeking input from specialist coaches as required.

The Technical Coordinator is also responsible for identifying elite individual talent and connecting them with development and representative pathways

Measures of Success

- Win rate increases
- 1 premiership team per year
- 1 player represents Tasmania per year

Roles Required

It is recommended that the Club form a Technical Sub Committee to focus on the delivery of on field success. Roles may include:

- Technical coordinator
- Coaches, assistant coaches and team managers
- Specialist coaches – fitness, skills, goalkeeping, junior development

Actions Required

Actions identified in the development of this plan include:

- Source and deliver State and National training and game-day material and tailor for Devonport Hockey Club teams
- Recruit and upskill coaches
- Assess need for specialist coaching input and source as required

Club Structure

The Club's organisational structure is a key element of delivering on the objectives of this plan.

The structure of the committee has been unchanged for many years. As player numbers have reduced, the pool of Club members available and willing to be on the Club committee has also reduced. The workload for the committee has continued, so the workload has increased for the committee members in recent years.

The Club committee requires a clearly defined set of objectives to work towards, which this plan presents. Committee decisions should always contribute to the achievement of the Club's objectives. The objectives are long term, but steps can be taken towards them, weekly or monthly or over a season.

A committee requires a broad range of skills to deliver on the objectives. Roles have been defined in the plan, that are required to deliver the objectives. Importantly, there are many more roles than current committee members. However, many of the roles are specialised and will suit the skills and passions of different Club members.

This plan is a call to action to Club members to contribute in the best way they can to the running of the Club, ensuring its survival and rebuilding it through the achievement of the four objectives.

This plan proposes a new structure for the Club committee, with the following purposes:

- Spreading the workload
- Aligning people's skills and passions with their role
- Maintaining strategic direction
- Maintaining good governance

It is recommended to form an Executive committee to govern the Club:

Executive Committee

It is recommended that the Executive Committee be a group of six Club members, that provide off field leadership for the Club to ensure its survival and rebuild. The Executive Committee must be united in its pursuit of the objectives.

The Executive Committee should approve annual appointments to the Sub Committees.

The Executive Committee should maintain a formal and regular meeting structure.

The roles of the Executive Committee are:

President

This role is the figurehead of the Club with overall responsibility of delivery of the Strategic Plan, ensuring the survival and rebuild of the Club. The President's role includes:

- Liaison with Hockey North West, Hockey Tas and Meercroft Park Development Committee
- Management of the Club committee
- Governance of the Club

The President does not have any of the sub committees report directly to them.

Vice President

This role supports the President, and takes on some of the administration activities previously performed by the Club Secretary, including:

- Scheduling and documenting Executive Committee meetings
- Attend HNW and MDPC meetings as a proxy for the President, as required

The Vice-President would not have any of the sub committees report directly to them.

Participation Coordinator

This role is responsible for delivering growth in player numbers, in the pursuit of the participation objective.

- Liaison with Hockey Tasmania with respect to resourcing and program development
- Liaison with schools
- Liaison with local governments with respect to engaging with community groups
- Recruitment, as it relates to the participation objective
- Recommendations for player awards

Treasurer

This role is similar to the traditional role the Treasurer has played and is responsible for delivering the financial sustainability objective. The treasurer's duties include:

- Invoicing and payments
- Financial reporting

The role also includes oversight of the financial committee.

Club Community Coordinator

The Club Community Coordinator has a broad role, working towards the delivery of the Club community objective. Duties include:

- Develop and implement a communication/engagement plan for all current and prospective Club members
- Oversee internal and external communications
- Coordinate volunteer roles as they relate to events

The role also includes oversight of the Social Committee.

Technical Coordinator

This position is responsible for delivering on field success for the Club. The role includes:

- Appointment, oversight and guidance of team coaches and managers
- Engagement of specialist coaches as required
- Assisting with tactical and skill development across all teams
- Resourcing coaches with knowledge and equipment
- Providing Regional and State team pathways for elite and developing players
- Recruitment, as it contributes to on field success

The sub-committee reporting to this role includes team coaches forming a group to share ideas and discuss selection and other on-field matters. In future, there may be a need to

support this position by having a specific role each for men's/women's or senior/junior teams that supports the coordinator.

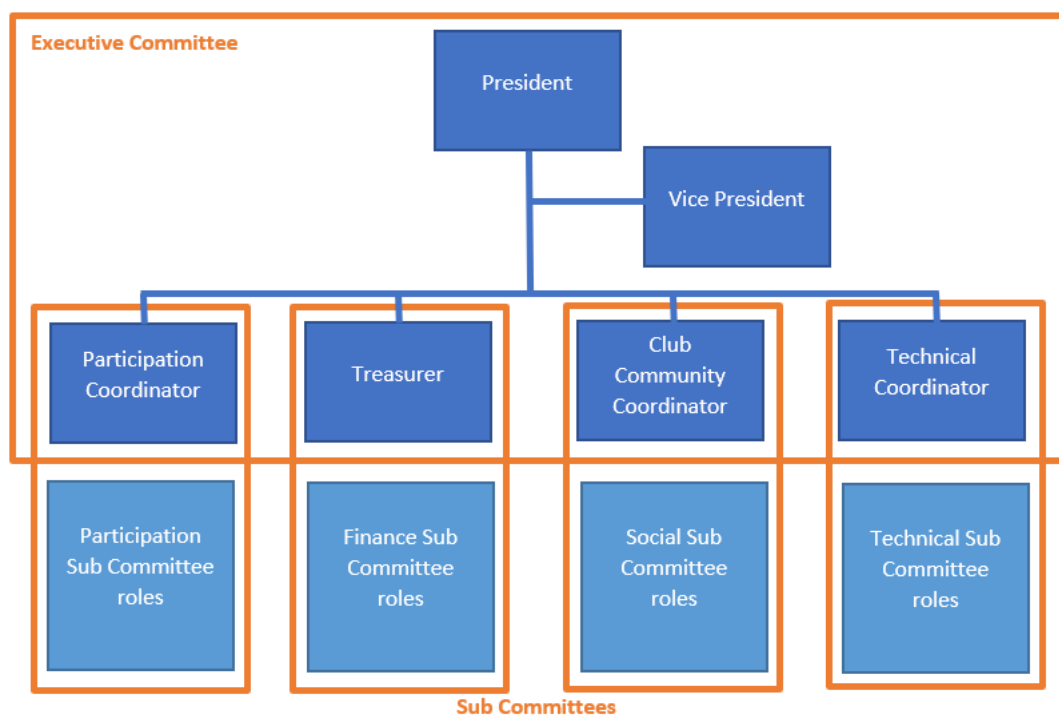
The Club has found it difficult to fill committee roles, a problem that has grown in recent years. It is hoped that this plan is seen as a call to action for Club members. It identifies the challenges the Club faces to survive and may motivate some to nominate for Executive, Sub-Committee and volunteer roles. However, the Club may also need to provide incentives connected to these roles to attract capable and passionate people. Monetary compensation is unrealistic, but there may be personal development opportunities available, such as training, mentoring and skill development that would benefit the Club and the Club member. This approach may contribute to greater capability in the Executive Committee and greater continuity created with succession planning.

Sub Committees

Having four sub committees, with each reporting to a member of the Executive Committee, will give club members a variety of roles they can take up to support the Club.

There will be cooperation required between sub committees on projects, activities or issues that cross over multiple objectives. This should be led by the relevant members of the Executive Committee.

Four sub committees are recommended, aligned with the four objectives, with the organisational structure shown below:



Participation committee

This committee supports the Participation coordinator to achieve growth in player numbers described in the participation objective. The roles of this sub committee include:

- Resourcing of junior clinics and school programs
- Resourcing of other beginner opportunities

The work of the participation committee is year-round as there are a number of opportunities outside the traditional hockey season to attract new players.

Financial committee

The role of the financial committee is to grow the Club's income in ways outside of player registration fees, which will reduce costs to players, further supporting participation.

Specific roles of the Financial Committee are described earlier in the report, but their key activities are:

- Develop and implement an annual and long term plan to attract sponsors
- Provide value to sponsors through cooperation with Participation and Social committees
- Engage with Devonport City Council and other funding bodies to maximise grant income

The financial committee should meet regularly before and during the season, as that's when most opportunities are available.

Social Committee

The Social Committee supports the Club Community Coordinator to strengthen the club community. This is likely to be the largest sub committee, with roles including:

- Communications
- Events
- Merchandise
- Club history
- Community infrastructure

The social committee should meet year-round to ensure continuity for Club members and to maintain momentum outside the traditional playing season.

Technical Committee

As described earlier, it is intended that the Club coaches make up this committee and report to the technical coordinator.

It is advisable that this committee meet regularly before and during the season, most likely around training sessions.

It is recommended that each role in the Executive Committee and Sub Committees are held by different people to the extent possible, so that the workload is sustainable.

It is recognised that this plan requires more work by a larger committee than the current structure. The Executive Committee will need to prioritise work to define roles and to attract Club members to those roles.

Action Plan

The delivery of the identified actions will require Club resources: time, energy, skills and money. These resources may be constrained, and so prioritisation may be required.

The Action Plan includes actions directly linked to the 4 identified objectives. However, several governance actions are also required to enable the Club to adopt the recommended organisational structure.

Action		Priority	Duration/Timing
Club Governance			
0.1	Update the Club constitution to facilitate the proposed organisational structure	High	One-off, immediate
0.2	Undertake nominations and elections for Executive Committee	High	Annual, at AGM
0.3	Adopt the Club Strategic Plan	High	Annual, at AGM
0.4	Define subcommittee roles and make appointments	High	Annual, immediate
0.5	Report on the identified measures of success at the AGM	High	Annual, at AGM with 2022 baseline
0.6	Consider growth and development opportunity for committee members	Medium	Ongoing, as required
Objective 1: Participation			
1.1	Develop, implement and maintain a program of school-based hockey programs	High	Ongoing, immediate
1.2	Develop, implement and maintain a program of coach development for school based hockey programs	High	Ongoing, immediate
1.3	Develop, implement and maintain a program of hockey clinics for juniors	High	Ongoing, immediate
1.4	Develop, implement and maintain recruitment programs for identified sources of prospective players	High	Ongoing, for 2023

Action		Priority	Duration/Timing
1.5	Consider incentives for new players and current players who recruit new players	Medium	Ongoing, for 2023
1.6	Review options for rostering and competition levels to increase participation	Medium	Annual
Objective 2: Financial Sustainability			
2.1	Prepare and maintain a document of Club needs in preparation for sponsorship and grant opportunities	High	Ongoing, immediate
2.2	Prepare and maintain Club documentation that can be tailored for sponsorship opportunities	High	Ongoing, immediate
2.3	Engage with prospective sponsors	High	Ongoing, immediate
2.4	Engage with Devonport City Council and other funding bodies	Medium	Ongoing, for 2023
Objective 3: Club Community			
3.1	Review and define the Club culture and values	High	Every five years, start in 2023
3.2	Development and implementation of an engagement plan for identified groups	High	Ongoing, for 2023
3.3	Development of a volunteer network for minor and short term roles	High	Ongoing, for 2023
3.4	Establish a member survey	High	Annual, for 2023
3.5	Develop an infrastructure plan for Meercroft Park that supports the Club community objective	Medium	One-off, for 2023
Objective 4: On-Field Success			
4.1	Source and deliver State and National training and game-day material and tailor for Devonport Hockey Club teams	Medium	Ongoing, for 2023
4.2	Recruit and upskill team and specialist coaches	High	Ongoing, for 2023



Image Credit: Lynda Wallace

