

## **Devizes Sports Club AGM**

### Chairman's Report

Good evening all. 2020 is probably better consigned to the bin - in that, the onset of the pandemic caused a massive change in fortune for a lot of businesses. Having set the ball rolling to reduce the losses from the previous year, the plan was starting to bear fruit and costs were under strict controls to increase the profitability of the Sports Club.

Then in March 2020 lockdown happened and we were forced to close the operation and 8 weddings were cancelled in 24hrs, numerous parties and other activities ceased. The net result was that the income stream dropped by 90%. Likewise sports became limited in what they could do and, with no clear resumption plan going forward, we had to make decisions about the way we could operate. So we chose to go into hibernation, as we didn't know when we could restart any form of business.

Staff were put on furlough initially, contracts and leases examined to see if we could stop or suspend them until we knew more. That worked to a point, in that the furlough period was on and off, and eventually we made a decision to make staff redundant to be fair to them and not knowing when we could restart. Emma Wright had done everything we'd asked her to do to make the transition to no staff as easy as possible; we all need to thank her for that.

The Accounts are what they are; we could not achieve our objectives in 2020, so this has meant continued losses for 2020 and 2019. We have now got accounting under control and Phil Hendy is here tonight in support of the accounts you have before you and can give a current 2021 statement.

In July, we made changes to the committee as we needed to communicate directly with main club chairs, so we co-opted the chairs into the committee, where certain decisions were made to save the club from collapse. So I need to apologise to the normal members for their exclusion from events but it was necessary to ensure all parties got direct info from me.

Within this, we discussed and were supported by The South West Business Hub and Wiltshire Council and they ensured we got access to support grants, amounting to £40,000 in 2020. These grants proved vital in allowing us to be here now. So thank you to them, as they have been brilliant.

The silver lining to all this is that we have cleaned up most of our finances and we now understand the expensive items like Gas, Electricity and Water more clearly and can get more savings.

So enough about the past: what about the future? Out of the doom and gloom comes opportunity; opportunity to change the way the clubs want to operate to support their club activities more at critical times in the week and at weekends. That means looking to continue to support the NHS on a Thursday, and to cultivate similar uses from Monday to Friday during the day, leaving weekends free for sport and social activity. With the savings we've made in cutting costs, this means it's possible to have a vibrant club scene supporting the clubs rather than any potential conflict. Teams are working to achieve this status and are looking at leases and contracts and managing debt to make the whole thing viable.

Lastly, I am stepping down as chairman as the role and function is basically redundant with the way the clubs want to work going forward. So, as of tonight, I will no longer be involved. It has been an interesting time to say the least. I'd like to thank all those that have worked with me, as this was a joint effort to get to a place where we can look to the future with optimism.

David Whatling

Devizes Sports Club Chairman