**CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE TO MEMBERS**

**APRIL 2020**

Dear Members

As the first year of my Chairmanship comes to an end, I am delighted to be able to provide my Chairman’s report.

Our first thoughts are with families who have been affected by this terrible virus and I wish you all and your families well during these very worrying times.

On a happier note, I can say that season 19/20 was a very successful season for the Club.

At the beginning of the season we identified a number of objectives for our teams, including improved selection arrangements, **good on field discipline** and also **enjoying hockey**. I believe that we have achieved a lot on all fronts.

**Team Performance**

**The Men’s 1’s finished very strongly in National League**, Conference East and the **Ladies 1’s had a very successful season** **gaining promotion to the East Premier League**. Both teams have played attacking hockey which is exciting and good to watch and I would like us all to make a real effort next season to increase the numbers that support the teams. We will do our best to schedule home matches so that the teams can get the support they deserve. I am also delighted that Miranda Baldwin has agreed to become ladies first team coach for next season.

Congratulations to

* the **Men’s 3’s, 4’s, 5’s and 6’s for winning their league(s)**
* the **Men’s 7’s and 8’s for gaining promotion**
* the **Ladies 2’s for storming their league and remaining unbeaten** through the season
* **U.16 Boys England Hockey Tier 1 Finals**
* **U.14 Boys England Hockey Tier 1 Area Finals**
* **U.12 Boys Essex In2 Hockey Champions Regional Finals**
* **U.12 Girls Essex In2 Hockey Hockey Runners-up Regional Finals.**

Even the Supervets came good in the end!

In keeping with tradition, all of our junior teams have done very well but a special mention to the Under 16 boys who have played some exceptional hockey and are through to the National finals, although we are not certain whether this will take place and also the Under 14 boys who were well on the way to the National Finals. We have a great record for our youth hockey so let’s hope the boys who also reached the National indoor finals earlier in the season will be able to play and showcase their talents.

The managers and captains groups have been working very well and although there is still room for improvement (and we have the inevitable difficult weeks), the co-operation between managers and captains has been very good which is critical to the overall functioning of teams and performance.

There are one or two areas where I think we can all help, namely **responding to managers/captains requests for availability as early as possible** and also managing the inevitable non hockey commitments with team managers and captains.

During the course of the season, I have been able to watch nearly all teams, and I have thoroughly enjoyed watching the attacking brand of hockey that we play at the Club, which is clearly enjoyable together with the discipline and respect for Umpires that the teams have shown. Regrettably one of our teams, fielding a number of young players, had a difficult experience against one of our local clubs, which we took up with the League, but even that has a positive side because of the way our boys played and the fact that the opposition resorted to unfair tactics to try and control the talent that we had in our team.

A big thank you to the coaches, managers and captains for all the hard work you have put in during the season and special thanks to Ian Padfield for organising umpires. This is a difficult task that has been carried out with great enthusiasm and thanks also to the umpires that have responded and umpired many matches during the course of the season. As Ian will say, **“no umpires no hockey”** so we all need to bone up on the rules (take the Level 1 course which is fun) and help out. The Club and other umpires are very happy to help anyone who is able to assist. We are introducing some initiatives this season, to recognise the importance of our Umpires.

Apologies to those teams who have not had a specific mention. You have all played an enormous part in our very successful season. Whilst it is brilliant to win and gain promotion, the key to our success is good organisation, on field discipline and enjoying hockey. Let’s hope we can get back to playing soon and celebrate our successes (and our 100th Anniversary Season), hopefully with some early tournaments and matches and a delayed Club dinner.

**England Hockey Re-organisation**

As many of you will be aware, England Hockey have presented far reaching proposals to change the structure of the England Hockey landscape which we hope will give rise to improvements in a number of areas. The documents published by England Hockey are long and detailed and the Club Management Committee and, in particular, Peter Kempe have spent a great deal of time analysing these proposals and making very serious submissions to England Hockey about how the changes will impact on the Club. The England Hockey AGM was to be on the 17th March but was postponed because of the current issues.

Despite our concerns (although as a result of Peter’s efforts, we believe we are in a much better position than we were before) we believe that the leagues and tournaments in which our Club teams are involved, will not change to any significant extent. We will bring you up to date with developments from time to time.

**Club Officers**

Since my appointment as Chairman I have chaired several Club Management Committee meetings and it has brought home to me that running a Club like ours is complex and time consuming and I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee (Richard Higgins, Peter Kempe, Jane Blake, Jay Fox, Sam Gayler, Elliot Smith, Tom Stumbke, Cindy Falconer, Simon Beckley and John Wright) along with Harriet Chere, Jamie Oxley and Kevin Fernandes for their time, energy and input into Club management. This is a side of the Club that members do not generally get a chance to see. Thanks also to the other officers and helpers (who have taken on specific tasks) and our valued employees who are also important contributors.

Another point that has been brought home to me is how we, as a Club, rely on many volunteers who give up their time to help this Club function as it does. I believe the way forward is to lighten the load by sharing responsibilities and, in this respect, we are looking for further help in the following positions.

Treasurer: Tom Stumbke is stepping down after five years great service to spend more time with his young family. Many thanks to Tom and if any of you know of someone who has a financial background that may be able to help in this respect, please let us know. This is an important role that we need to fill and I would add that it may suit a person even though they may not be a member.

Club Secretary: This is an important role held by Jane Blake for the last five years. Many thanks to June for her valuable contribution to Mancom during this period. Again please let me knows if anyone is able to take on the role which involves helping with the admin of our Management Committee and annual meetings.

**100th Anniversary Celebrations**

We need a small group to organise a limited number of club functions and activities through the 2020/2021 season. Again, please step up and help.

**Club Refurbishment**

As some of you will know, we are in the process of planning a refurbishment of the main club house, bar and facilities. Thanks to those who have been involved in the process, including John Reynolds and Simon Beckley. We hope this will produce significantly improved facilities and a warmer atmosphere for members.

**Costs and Subscriptions**

Just a short note to say we have exceptional facilities that we aim to improve, but they are costly to run (over £12,000.00 on pitch cleaning and maintenance last season) so please do your best to look after our facilities and get the subs organised early, it really helps.

Finally, I would like to thank our main sponsors, Higgins Group Plc, for their tremendous support, The OL Trust for their support and also our other sponsors and contributors. You really make a difference to the success of the Club.

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and engaging with you all and I look forward to getting back to hockey as early as the current problems permit. In the meantime stay well.

PHILLIP WHEATER

CHAIRMAN