

Messages from Your President

Dear Member

On behalf of the Club's Board of Directors/Executive Committee, I hope that all you and your families and friends are continuing to keep safe and coping well in these difficult and unprecedented times.

A general e-mail was sent out at the end of March updating you all on how your Club was dealing with the Coronavirus situation and related restrictions as prescribed by the government, and planning to ensure that the Club survives through to when normality is restored. Some 6 to 7 weeks ago it was self-evident that the Club would have little or no income from then until the new season started, hopefully in September. With the clubhouse 'mothballed'. this included loss of income from the bar and hires. All hires, including one major event in June, had to be suspended until government restrictions are lifted.

Since then, a number of events have occurred, with impact on finances. One was negative inasmuch that, as many of you will already know, the Club was subject to a break-in late on 30th March. There was some damage but nothing stolen, due to the CCTV/alarm system alert to Lauren Utton, who in turn contacted the police – who attended the Club very rapidly. This was followed by a number of positive events. Our insurance company agree to pay for replacement as is, and the response from members to a JustGiving appeal to cover additional security improvements was to say the least amazing. Other positive events were that the (1) the Club's application for a government grant via Rushmoor Borough Council (under the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant category) was successful – the Club were awarded £10,000, and (2) the Club were awarded a £1000 RFU grant via Hampshire RFU for urgent work on the pitches.

The works carried out and planned in the categories of repair of damage (from the break-in), and improvements to security, are as follows. Completed/Nearly Completed - Garage Door and Jamb Repair; Back Door and Door Jamb (steel) (Ordered); Bar Door and Jamb; CCTV; Monitor screen, Mounting Brackets and Passive Infrared Sensors (every door and window); Alarm system (Monitors all doors and Club rooms, and saves recordings to Cloud); Connecting Door and Frame (Players Area to Entrance Hall); Shelves in Bar area (in progress); Shutters to Front Door, plus 6 other Doors to Rear and Sides; External CCTV (by the end of this week); and, New Front Door and 3 Rear Windows Replacement (Ordered). Awaiting Quotations - Bar Shutters; Front Shutter Bolts Chain Linked for Ease of Opening/Closing; Dishwasher; and, Painting/ Carpet tiles. Of the money received from the Club's insurers, the JustGiving appeal, and the Grant from the Council, so far the Club has spent some 57%. Many thanks are due here – in particular to Lauren Utton, Lee Kirkham, Daryl Brown, Fiona Strudwick, and others.

Now the Club's financial situation has improved, such that - still with a continuing careful eye on income and expenditure – we are looking OK for the period between now and at least September.

On the playing side at the Senior level, the RFU decided to proceed with promotion and relegation, based on the position at mid-March and a prognosis of a final outcome at season end. On this basis the 1st XV was relegated to Hampshire Division 1. The teams currently allocated to Hampshire 1 (12 teams, 22 games) for 2020/2021 are: Farnborough, Fareham Heathens, Overton/ Southampton University Medics, Locksheath Pumas, Fawley, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth 2nds, Tottonians 2nds, Ventnor, Gosport & Fareham 2nds, Romsey, and

US Portsmouth. Fixtures will be issued as usual in June, but for obvious reasons whether the leagues will start in September cannot be confirmed at this time.

Dave Thorley, the Club's Director of Rugby, is feeling really upbeat about the challenge of Hampshire Division 1. He is full of praise for the senior squad which gelled well together over 2019/2020, and sees that as a really good base for a good 2020/2021 season. Further, the Colts coming in will bring a different but positive dynamic. Dave is confident that with last season's players, the Colts coming in, and new players arriving (Dave is actively involved in player recruitment) the outcome for 2020/2021 will be that (1) the 1st XV will have a successful season, and (2) we will put out a 'quality' regular 2nd XV. The players are in regular contact via their WhatsApp group, and indeed via that group Glyn Jones (Club Head Coach) is issuing fitness challenges almost daily. Another initiative for the more senior people is that the Club has entered the 2020/2021 Hampshire Vets Cup – so those of you who would like to dust your boots off whatever please get in touch with Dave as soon as possible!

Regarding the Minis and Juniors (M&Js), Chris Collett (Chairman of M&Js) sends the following message. "I hope this finds everyone safe and well. With last season being cut short and lockdown I hope everyone is looking forward to the new season. I have seen via social media that many of you are keeping fit whilst social distancing which is great to see. We need to start planning for next season, whenever that will be. Once we get the OK to resume activities, we will be looking at holding the end of season presentation (which was postponed) in one form or a another."

In fulfilling many actions, not just on the 'works' side (see above), the Club is extremely thankful for the efforts of all Board of Directors/Executive Committee members and others (particularly Lauren Utton, Lee Kirkham, Tony Thorley, Daryl Brown, Fiona Strudwick, Ian Smith, Jim Carden) working 'behind the scenes' to keep your Club afloat and ready for 2020/2021.

We will keep you up to date with progress. Your continued support is very much appreciated and anything you can do to help, recognising these are hard times for everyone, will be enormously valued.

I re-iterate from the end March general e-mail that we all have support networks of friends and family, and that provided by our Club is one of the strongest. It may be that we will not meet up again for some time, but we are still all here for each other. If there is something that your Club can help you with, please do not hesitate to contact us via Maria Carbone (Club Secretary) – maria_carbone@hotmail.co.uk.

As mentioned before, rugby is all about being together. We cannot do that just now, but we can be grateful we live in an age where technology helps. Many of you I know are using WhatsApp, Zoom, HouseParty, etc. This brings your team, age group, group of 'oldies', whatever, together so you can stay in touch, have quiz etc sessions, chat about rugby, and have your banter as if at the Club.

Stay Safe!!

Robin

Robin Moses
President
22nd May 2020