

Southbourne Tennis Club
Chairpersons report for AGM 19 October 2020

This report, my last one after four years of being chairperson, is in four main sections. A general overview, the highlights of these four years, the challenges for the future and my thanks to all those people who have supported me during the period.

General Overview

It's been an interesting, busy and fascinating four years for me, both personally, and in my role as chairperson. Back in October 2016 I had four grandchildren, now I have seven. Of the original seven Committee members (other than me) during the same four years, five of them have been replaced. More recently of course we've had to deal with the biggest challenge of all - COVID19.

It would be no exaggeration therefore to say that, on all counts, my learning curve has had a fairly steep trajectory but equally, on all counts, it's been mainly enjoyable and definitely exhilarating. Indeed, I thoroughly recommend it, as a way to fill many hours when you could be playing tennis!

Highlights of the last four years

We successfully applied for and subsequently received planning permission to build another court in February 2018. This applies for three years in the first instance. The debate about whether to continue with this or alter the project to create a padel court remains less of a priority as it's increasingly felt that we have no alternative but to replace the floodlights.

After several months of extremely time consuming work we were finally awarded charitable status in January 2019. We feel that this more accurately describes the ethos for which we are well known i.e. aiming to offer tennis to the whole community. Amongst other benefits it enables us to apply to a range of different organisations for much needed additional funds alongside being registered for gift aid thus significantly increasing any donations that we receive.

We established a very comprehensive Club Business Development Plan covering the period January 2019-December 2022. The plan sets out the priorities to ensure the ongoing development of the club, to provide a solid basis for our investment and development decisions, a basis for inviting sponsorship and external funding and delineates clear objectives on which underlying activities are based. We measure progress against the key objectives and use it to identify where and how we should be focussing our efforts. Key areas of success have been the exploration of a marketing strategy resulting in our attendance at the Littledown Family Fun Day and the production of a very attractive new publicity leaflet. An outline sponsorship strategy was developed and resulted in us gaining sponsorship from Slades, we hope that many other local businesses will take the opportunity to support the club in this way. Our financial position is actively monitored and we seek every opportunity to raise funds from a variety of sources especially for the programme to open up access to tennis for the whole community. We recognise the importance of feedback from members and set up various working groups to encourage them to support us in ongoing improvements. As a direct result of this some alterations were made to the interior of the clubhouse but lack of finance prevented any major changes.

Dave Sanger, our Head Coach, was formally recognised for the amazing programme of tennis for people living with disabilities that he provides by being awarded the LTA Regional Award. He was then a finalist for the National award. We were disappointed that he did not go through to win at this level but delighted that the commitment that he shows at Southbourne Tennis Club was acknowledged.

After many hours of work, much head scratching, testing and trials undertaken by the Committee

our web site was completely refurbished. Huge thanks to Adam Spicer for his ongoing single handed determination to ensure that we have an attractive, relevant and accessible site.

Challenges

The first of these is where we need your help. As of the AGM there will be no Chairperson. We have also still not filled the vacancy for the Social Secretary. The Committee cannot function effectively unless someone is willing to consider standing for either, or preferably both, of these roles. As the outgoing Chairperson I would like to assure you that I will endeavour to do a comprehensive handover as well as provide support during the first few months. Whilst at times the role can feel somewhat overwhelming there is a great and very effective Committee in place who will continue to operate positively to fulfill their individual responsibilities.

Clearly the role of Social Secretary is less crucial but providing social events where members can spend time off court getting to know each other better is an important part of what we aim to do. Southbourne's reputation as a friendly and inclusive club remains one of the main reasons that new members quote as reasons for joining us.

Money

It is extremely gratifying not to say relieving that we end this year in a positive financial position. The Treasurers report will give you more detail. However there are two priorities which are crucial if we are to maintain and continue to improve our facilities; these are the replacement of the current floodlights to LED's and the creation of a paid role for a Clubhouse and Grounds Maintenance Person.

As far as the floodlights are concerned this investment will enable us to significantly reduce, not only our energy costs, but also ongoing maintenance for the existing system. We are already in the process of getting the work costed and applying for part of the necessary funds.

You will be aware that, in spite of frequent requests for volunteers to undertake both the co-ordination and the actual work needed to maintain the fabric of the building and its environs as well as the grounds, we have been unable to find sufficient willing hands to do so. It is therefore with considerable regret that we feel we have no option but to seriously consider raising your annual membership fees to allow us to pay someone to undertake this task. There is already a budget allocation for maintenance and an outline ten year maintenance schedule in place so we envisage that we are in a good position to move ahead, with your support.

Thankyous

The Coaching team- Dave, Matt, Ray, Zoltan and Liana continue to provide an extremely well received wide range of opportunities, seven days a week, twelve hours a day, in all weathers and with all standards and abilities opening up tennis for all comers. Without their ongoing dedication to ensure that members new and old are supported and encouraged to enjoy and aim to improve their game, Southbourne Tennis Club would not survive. This year in particular their commitment and sheer hard work, their adaptability to the new ways of coaching, translating the many changes in regulations required as a result of Covid, reorganising the booking system and guiding us through the complexities of Clubspark, continually clearing the courts of rainwater and linked storm damage have ensured that we can all still play in spite of less than ideal conditions. Thank you to you all from us all.

The Committee- Celia, Colin, Dan, Carolyn, Amanda are the only ones left standing! All of you in your own unique ways have made my job as Chairperson worthwhile. You have all more than fulfilled your roles and have been there in my hour of need to support me, to challenge positively, to

respond flexibly to the joys of Zoom meetings, to deal seriously with your revised roles as Charity Trustee and to get your reports in on time! The incoming Chairperson can be assured that they will inherit a hard working and dedicated Committee, ready to face the future and determined to continue to ensure that Southbourne Tennis Club goes forward with confidence. Thank you for making my last four years so enjoyable.

The members- its been a tough year for us all especially during the lockdown. I am so grateful that so many of you have continued your membership of the club and, more so, to those of you who felt able to donate your reduced membership fees to us to enable us to manage our reduced income. I am acutely aware of the impact that the Covid regulations has had on your usual weekly tennis sessions. Now that everything has to be prebooked on Clubspark and that there's no coffee available at the end of each session it's really difficult to be enjoy each others company off court as well as on. As I informed you in my regular email updates we had to be guided in our decision making by the LTA advice and information which was not always as timely nor helpful as we would have liked. But we must have something right as not only have we retained most of last years' members we have attracted over ten new members. The Membership Secretary's report will give you more details.

Finally, this is a serious and heartfelt plea. Please think hard and long about how you personally can offer your skills to support your club. The Committee cannot survive for long without a Chairperson. There are several of you who I know have the necessary experience and could easily fill the role. We need you, and I need someone to hand the baton/raquet over to.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of being your Chairperson for the last four years, now I can just turn up and enjoy my game.