**Chairman’s Report**

**Gosport Borough Hockey Club**

**2018 to 2019 Season**

It all started very early, even before the last season had finished, with negotiations to move back to St Vincent, knowing that staying another season at HMS Sultan was not an option. The move was not inevitable as the facilities manager was (and still is) under pressure to make as much money as he could from hiring out the newly-laid pitch. After all the expensive work on the pitch had taken place at the same time as the College was making staff redundant to reduce costs!

The first options were not only unaffordable, for us, but also entailed us purchasing each service (e.g. pitch, floodlights, changing facilities) separately as well as us bidding for the pitch’s availability on each occasion. We eventually settled on a fixed price, whatever we needed, and a block booking for training sessions as well as matches on Saturdays (with us releasing the slots we did not need back to the College). After some teething problems this arrangement has worked pretty well.

We began the season with three Women’s and three Men’s teams in the Hampshire Leagues, as has been usual for some time. However, the lack of players available to play on Saturdays, issues that have been bubbling away for the last few seasons, was critical right from the very first games. Eventually, as I have outlined in the general report, we decided to reduce our teams to four. By and large, especially in the Women’s sides, this has bedded in quite well; some more work is needed in the Men’s teams to provide even opportunities for all members to play.

This reduction in matches (and so fees), as well as related factors, has impacted on the Club’s finances. The agreement with the College was, of course, calculated on six adult teams as well as adult training continuing on two evenings a week. This will have to be addressed in the discussions for next season’s contract for pitch use.

Alongside ‘day-to-day’ issues, other matters that arose this season include the drive for each of the Club’s officers to have clear areas of responsibility. This has worked quite well and so has meant that matters are dealt with at the appropriate level.

During the season I have explored the opportunity of improving the floodlighting at the pitch (the College were happy for me to do so but stated from the start that they could not make such an investment). However, the installation of LEDs using the current infrastructure (stanchions etc.), which was the only viable option, would not provide a sufficient improvement to justify the cost – the infrastructure needs replacing to do so.

In relation to the challenges ahead, as has already been raised, the reduced number of players available on Saturdays as well as the related issue of less people volunteering for Club roles, especially on the Committee, seems to be a continuing issue. We are not unique in being in this situation. However, perhaps, the size of the Club exacerbates the effects. For instance, we are large enough to have the demands of a bigger club (e.g. the work and size of the Committee roles) without the opportunities that a larger pool of members permits but not small enough to reap the benefits to be had from that.

 In the near future the Club may need to respond to these issues by seeking closer relationships with neighbouring clubs or even more decisive steps. I do not consider that, due to the links I have had with another club, I am the right person to explore these issues for the Club. This is why, along with other reasons, I am not putting myself forward for the Chair the forthcoming season (I will be available to support and assist the new Chair, if they wish).

Alistair Nichols

GBHC Chair

29 March 2019