

## **Chairman's report**

### **Annual General Meeting, 2019**

The annual general meeting (AGM) is your chance to hear how the club has performed over the previous calendar year and to have your say on how the club is being run. I hope that as many of you as possible will attend the AGM.

If you are reading this report in person at the AGM, thank you for attending; if you are not able to attend but have something you'd like to discuss about the how the club is being run, please do not hesitate to approach either Matt Bale (Vice Chairman) or me.

2018 did not start as smoothly as hoped. The new blocks, which represented the largest capital expenditure in the club's history, started to show signs of "tea-staining" on the stainless steel frames in early February and as a consequence, required twice-weekly cleaning to maintain the frames; thank you to Donna and all those that mucked in and helped to keep the blocks in the condition we expected whilst a longer-term solution was being sought. Although the blocks have since been treated, which has provided some longer-term protection, the block in lane 3 continues to suffer from "tea-staining." This is happening despite rotating the blocks between lanes, so this saga is not over yet! The next step is to resume conversations with Fusion as given that it is always the block in lane 3, it must be a local environmental issue causing this to occur.

On to a positive note and the highlight of the year for me, which was seeing the swimmers' reactions to the Olympic Swimmer sessions we ran during late November. We were very lucky to get Lizzie Simmonds and Andrew Willis along to our Friday night training sessions and then the following morning, they ran dedicated starts and turns workshops. I must say that both Lizzie and Andrew we're excellent with the way that they engaged with swimmers of all ages and took time to answer all the questions and sign pretty much everything where swimmers could find a suitable space! Due to the continued success of the two Halstead Open Meets and the Bingo Night (more on social and fundraising events later), we were able to put this event on with no cost to our swimmers; so thank you again to all the volunteers that helped to make this event possible and provide such a valuable and inspiring experience for our swimmers.

One activity that the Executive Committee undertakes in preparation for the Annual General Meeting, is to review the club's constitution and compare this to the guidelines and model constitution issued by Swim England. This year, there are a number of changes that we are proposing, largely based on reverting to the Swim England recommended model constitution; these are summarised as follows:

- Changing the timing of the AGM to June of each year. This is solely to allow sufficient time for the Independent Review of the Club's annual accounts to take place. Due to the AGM currently being held in January and this coinciding with an extremely busy time for accountants, it is highly unlikely that the accounts will be independently reviewed before this year's AGM and given that this is a key declaration to Swim England, it is not something we can overlook in the future.
- The model constitution allows for the concept of a Membership Officer, so we have duly adopted this and made the role a formal Officer of the club and member of the Executive Committee.
- The model constitution also states that we need to appoint Custodians of the club and I am delighted that Gordon Finch and Gary Tyler have agreed to stand in these positions subject to being elected at the AGM. The role of a custodian is described in sections 16 and 17 of the new Constitution.

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- We are also proposing the removal of some draconian by-laws that have previously been in the club's constitution with no reference to anything like these in the model constitution from Swim England; these were around the suspension of swimmers if they didn't represent the club when selected, or enter a minimum number of events at the club championships. These by-laws do not reflect the culture of the club and not something that would have my support in particular, if they were to remain.

The adoption of the new constitution is a voting matter at the AGM (via a simple show of hands.) I appreciate that it is a lengthy document and that we have made several changes from what is currently in-force. If you have any particular concerns with the new version or the above changes, please do not hesitate to approach either Matt Bale or me before the AGM.

From a financial perspective, again primarily due to the success of the open meets, the club has generated a healthy operating surplus for the year. This surplus, combined with a savings balance at the top end of the recommended guidelines means that we are in a very healthy position financially.

Therefore, as an Executive Committee, we are looking at ways to how best use this surplus, which assuming the success of the open meets can be taken as a given over the next 2 to 3 years, we can use this revenue on operational spend such as more training time without increasing costs to swimmers.

Subject to a review of options with Roger as Head Coach and the broader coaching team, we are currently considering the following options for utilising the surplus in 2019:

- An additional weekly early morning training session, most likely to be on a Tuesday morning.
- Quarterly 50m training sessions at either Basildon or the London Aquatics Centre.
- Quarterly coaching clinics (to be held locally) with the coaching team on specific aspects of competitive swimming e.g. starts and turns, technique and race strategy.
- Dry land training/physical training with a suitably qualified instructor.
- Another Olympic Swimmer type event.

Following the discussion and approval of the above by the Executive Committee, actual changes to the coaching programme and any dates for the quarterly sessions will be published. We are interested in your feedback on these ideas so as per everything else in this report, please come forward to discuss your feedback with Matt Bale or me.

Another change that the club are making during 2019, is increasing the number of open meets that the club enters to provide greater opportunity for swimmers to compete in strokes that they are not normally selected or in 50m pools. I am very grateful to Matt Bale and the team that has agreed to support Matt in leading this effort and look forward to the swimmers benefiting from these greater opportunities to compete

On to social and fundraising events during the year. The first of which in May, was what is now turning in to an annual bingo night. At the end of the Bingo Night, there was an auction of gifts and experiences donated by local businesses; thank you to Jeremy and the team behind the event for organising such a fun night that raised over £1,000 towards the costs of the Olympic Swimmer sessions.

Thanks also go to Jeremy for organising the two excellent summer social events in August. The first being the Summer Splash event at Bradwell, where the day was made up of water-based activities

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with all those involved able to go out on to the estuary sailing. The day was finished off with a BBQ and disco with excellent feedback from all those attending.

The second event of the summer was aboard a Thames Sailing Barge at Maldon. Although due to an operational issue with the barge it wasn't able to sail during the morning for the older swimmers, the younger swimmers had a great time aboard in the afternoon completing activities and learning about its long and very impressive history. The afternoon was finished off with time in the splash park at Maldon and again, feedback from all in attendance was excellent. Thank you again Jeremy, you have set the bar very high for 2019!

With regard 2019, we will be looking to provide similar social events during the year. So if you or your swimmer(s) have any ideas on what we should be considering, please do not hesitate to put these ideas forward to Jeremy or another committee member as this is something we will be deciding during the first three months of the year.

As previously mentioned, all of the above is only possible with the continued success of the open meets, with these open meets only being possible due to the huge amount of support from all the volunteers that get involved. Please come and speak to me or any committee member if you would like to know more about helping out at these events.

There are also currently, at the time of writing my report, a number of vacant roles on the committee, particularly around managing our website. So if you have any skills or experience in these areas, please do not hesitate to come forward.

As a committee, we are very interested in getting your feedback on how the club is being run, what we are doing well and what we should either stop or start doing. On this note, we will be launching our "Have Your Say" survey in early 2019 and I encourage as many of you as possible to complete this and provide your feedback.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the committee, coaching staff and all volunteers for providing such a great year of training, competition, experience and opportunity to all of our swimmers. Their enjoyment and participation is the sole reason we exist as a club, so let's keep this up and continue in the same vein during 2019.

Finally, I would like to put on record the club's sincere thanks to two committee members who are stepping down from their roles at the end of 2018, in Sue Craig and Alastair Walker. Sue has served on the committee for a number of years, most recently as Treasurer; with Alastair also serving on the committee and helping to run the "tech team." Without people such as Sue and Alastair, as a club, we would not be able to provide the environment and experiences that we have during 2018 and all the prior years that they have been involved in the operation of our club. I am sure that this gratitude extends from all swimmers and parents to both Sue and Alastair, so thank you again for all that you have done.

Here's looking forward to another successful year in 2019.

Tim Rayner  
January 2019