

BIDDENDEN BOWLS CLUB - CHAIRMANS REPORT 2021

As we draw the curtain on another bowls year, it appears it was over as quick as it started. The Club along with the rest of the community, have had their collective resolve tested in a number of ways. None more, than with the continuation of Covid -19.

It seems only recently that the Committee were planning for a long awaited return to the green. Last season the continuity in our bowls lives was cut off, as was the physical connection to our bowling friends and the local community. These were and to some extent still are uncertain times, but in true Biddenden spirit, our collective resilience allowed us to return to the green and enjoy the sport of bowls more fully, but more importantly with some new bowlers and return of our existing bowls friends.

Our Club does not just cater for bowlers with a serious interest in the sport, but also for members who just want to bowl for fun. This has meant that, on one hand bowling events have varied from National to Kent County competitive Tournaments. Friendly games with other clubs across the County were planned and opportunities to enjoy roll-ups and friendly games with other clubs were made possible thanks to the organisation of Paul, Norman & Sue. Hopefully next year we will receive more invitations to these events and the notice boards and website will be buzzing with news of dates and venues. However, it has been wonderful to observe so many inexperienced bowlers develop their skills and gain confidence by taking part in the matches that were organised. Sadly due to ill health David feels unable to continue as Competition Secretary this year, but we all thank him for his hard work and for moving the competition page onto its online format. We wish him well and a speedy recovery back to good health. (in his words, "he will be back"). Sadly Sue J will not be standing again as Competition Secretary and I thank her and Norman for planning and organising this years Competition and Ann for arranging the County Competitions.

The dedication of the green maintenance, general maintenance, sweepers and the gardening team deserves recognition for a job well done, hopefully next season we will be able to make use of the club house but thank you to everyone for making the view from the balcony so attractive. and I do hope we will be able to recruit more volunteers to the work force and return to fully using the club house.

Last year we were fortunate to be able to fill all the vacancies on the Committee, and I thank them and all our volunteers for the dedication and hard work they have demonstrated to keep the club motivate in this challenging time. After many years of sterling work, Maggie and Laurie retired as Coordinators of the Ladies Tournament and I would like to thank them for all their commitment and hard work. Together they laid a very firm foundation of fun and competition and earned the Tournament its excellent reputation across the County. We also would like to wish Laurie a speedy recovery back to good health. Barbara Ellison took "the baton" from Maggie and along with a new but very strong team of volunteers she ensured people went away saying "see you next year", well done Barbara!!

It was a year of "firsts" and the reintroduction of a Membership Secretary has proven to be a great asset to the club, many thanks Linda. This role, underpinned with the introduction of digital banking have proven to be succesful additions in a difficult financial

period (thanks Kim for driving this initiative). and they have brought significant change to the administration processes at the Club. The introduction of online volunteer cleaning and tea rotas coordinated by Barbara and Veronica and a team of volunteers have ensured we were fed and had clean facilities. As a committee we feel we have continued to respond to an ever changing environment and have used the skills and knowledge gained during the year to improve and broaden the opportunities on offer to members as we traverse the "new normal"

Regardless of the challenging circumstances, we have prepared a Club Development Plan from the information provided by the members who completed a SWOT analysis earlier in the year. This plan defines the Clubs progress over the next three years and will be the corner stone for decision making & development. Some of the key targets are already being actioned and hopefully they will come to fruition in the next few months. Hugh has prepared a précis of the document for your information and once the plan is completed, it will be published on the website and hopefully the new Committee will lead the Club into the next phase of delivery, working collaboratively with members on a joined up strategy.

In the last twelve months a number of our bowling friends have battled serious illness/operations and we have been pleased to see them return to the green. We wish those on the road to recovery, "continued strength of arm" and thanks to Sue J for continuing to bake, and Linda for her plant stall. Both were back in business shortly after their operations!!

I recognise "change" is difficult for some people to accept, as a Committee we have tried to take on board constructive comments and suggestions and we are very happy to work with members in taking forward new ideas. This is your club and we would love to see a few more people on the committee helping us to collectively raise the profile of the sport of bowls as an inclusive, accessible sport for all

It has been delightful and very encouraging to see the Clubs development and engagement with young people and this together with the introduction of coaching sessions for both new and experienced bowlers has driven home the key factor that all members can be continually learning and improving no matter at what level they play. In addition to taking on the role of Treasurer, Kim has devoted many hours along with a cohort of volunteers working with Juniors, coaching existing members and new members and I would like to thank her and wish her good luck with her Level 2 Bowls coaching award.

Finally as Chairman, I am personally proud of the efforts members have demonstrated in supporting the club, we may not have got everything right all the time, but we have tried our best! To the strong cohesive committee who have continued to encourage and advise me during the year, thank you for a job well done. And at the risk of accidentally omitting someone from my thanks, I would like to thank you all and look forward to 2022.

In the words of Ralph", " I think we won this one"!!