



Dear all

As we know, this season has been a challenging one for SHC. Player availability has been mixed and the loss of a number of adult players for a variety of different reasons has meant that many of us have been required to play at higher levels, and that we have struggled to field consistent teams. On pitch challenges dent morale and blunt our appetite to create a fun atmosphere in the club house or to turn up to train on dark winter nights. There is a risk that as enjoyment levels drop, people become less committed and drift away from the club and, sometimes, the sport.

That said, there are a number of very bright spots. Some of our junior teams have performed outstandingly well in regional and national competitions and at the other end of the age spectrum, our men's over 55's have again reached the semi-finals of the Masters Cup. Our Talent Academy continues to thrive and is helping young players move through the England Hockey Talent System. Our local schools outreach programme is operating in six schools with plans to expand, and our holiday coaching camps are proving very popular. Whilst our physical infrastructure and facilities are not always what we would like them to be, we remain one of the very few clubs in the country with access to two pitches and a club house on the same site. And despite the shock of the pandemic, we remain financial stable. These are all good foundations for the future.

I said at the last AGM that this would be my last year as Chair and that I would welcome a conversation with anyone wanting to take on the responsibility and the privilege. I am delighted to say that Jen Pritchard has indicated her willingness to step into the role. Many of you will know Jen. Perhaps as a successful Head Teacher, or maybe as a player who has played at the highest levels. You might have met her on the side of the pitch as a parent, or when she has been coaching juniors at Stourport or Worcestershire. I am also delighted to say that Adam Leeke has indicated his desire to increase his involvement in the club – he already does a cracking job of organising our umpires. Many of you will know Adam as a stalwart of the club, having joined as a youngster and with knack for scoring goals in our top teams. You will have probably bumped into him at the bar!

I am sure that Jen and Adam will bring some fresh impetus, additional energy and new ideas to our existing group of talented and committed volunteers. I would like to thank each and every one of those who help to run this club, providing opportunities for us all to play hockey, to support and to socialise. A considerable number have given a lot of their time, day in day out, over many years, and will continue to do so. Without their commitment, hard work and enterprise, we simply would not have a club.

Whilst the Club Officer roles are formally voted on at our annual AGM in September, we know that there is much work to do between now and then. We will convene a meeting after the end of the season to which all members, supporters and parents will be invited. We'll also ask for your views beforehand on a range of issues from coaching, team selection, our facilities and, fundamentally, what sort of club do we want to be in the coming years.

And if you have any appetite to get involved in helping our club in any way, perhaps bringing your professional skills to bear, or running a junior team, or a social media account, or developing sponsorship opportunities, or organising a social event, or qualifying as an umpire, or helping to run the Sports Club – now is your chance to step forward. There is plenty of room for some fresh blood and for those who haven't volunteered in the past to now step forward. Please send me a message if you want to get involved.

In the meantime, please watch out for the survey and the date of our meeting, and feel free to speak to any member of the Executive or coaching team if you have ideas, solutions and a willingness to help.

Martin Tucker
SHC Chair

