

WBCA LTD CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT – AGM 2020\2021

It is especially good to see those who have taken time out to attend the AGM this time, the trustees and I would like to thank you for being present this evening.

Obviously the time since the last AGM, in January 2020, has been dominated by the Pandemic and its effect on all our lives.

From the first lockdown announced on 23rd March 2020, through 2nd Lockdown (5th November to 2nd December 2020), Tier 4 restrictions in December and 3rd National Lockdown from 6th January to the final easing of full restrictions to allow outside activities it has meant a stop go situation for the centre.

With intermediate openings and changes of national restrictions such as rule of 6, rule of 30 plus restrictions, guidelines and protocols imposed by various sporting and activity bodies it has meant a complicated set of ever changing rules for the centre to follow for both internal and outside operations.

During periods of closure a reduced staff presence was maintained who did very well to keep the centre going and prepared and ready, as far as possible, to open when restrictions allowed.

With other staff being put on to the Furlough scheme throughout the period and coming in as required during periods when the centre could operate in some form.

Important use was also made of available grants to help pay ongoing costs while revenue was non-existent or low.

A big emphasis has been put on the use of Risk Assessments and Covid Plans both produced by the centre manager and those sports and activities wishing to use the centre to ensure both staff and participants are safe.

All hirers now needing to agree to abide by government and governing body protocols.

In a lot of cases this meant the update of the 'Conditions of hire' and new forms were created for this purpose.

One item of expenditure to come from the internal Risk Assessment was the purchase of a 'fogging' machine to rapidly clean and disinfect areas as required.

Other general measures taken included:-

- Installation of hand sanitizer dispensers
- Signage for social distancing, sanitizing and the wearing of face masks.
- Signage on the Astro area for entry, exit, distancing and one way system were set up.
- The provision of wipes to users as appropriate, i.e. table tennis.
- Desk dividing screen in the office and provision of wipes and sanitizer for staff.

- Placing of NHS Covid-19 QR code posters for visitor 'check in'.

One of the main issues prevalent during the summer of 2020 was the amount of litter which needed to be picked up and disposed of. At times this was almost a full time job and often took staff away from their other duties. This despite the number of waste bins provided around the centre and grounds.

With regard to the Plant Room continued investment in the hardware and controls in this area over recent years has resulted in trouble free operation over the last period.

Throughout the period the 3 year maintenance contract agreed with the installers and service contractor has also helped with the stability and continued running of the Plant Room.

The long shut-down during the period of Covid restrictions required the centre to treat the hot water system to ensure there was no risk of bacterial contamination before re-opening. After due consideration of various options our regular heating contractor undertook an appropriate system of treatment and issued the necessary certificate.

However one outstanding issue remains in the plant room concerning the automatic shut-down of boilers in the event of a fire alarm. It is planned for this issue to be dealt with in the next cycle of routine maintenance of the control system and fire alarm.

The centre is approaching close to pre-Covid levels of use in a lot of areas with a good number of hirers returning once rules allowed. Some pre-pandemic hirers have not returned for one reason or another these include the physio who rented room space in the changing room area for her business.

With access to the empty space normally occupied by the Physio an upgrade to the electrics and lighting in the changing room area was undertaken which included moving the light switch panel in that space to a more accessible location. Also at this time a revamp of the switching itself was undertaken.

This was a planned item mentioned in the last statement following the last 5 year electrical test.

It was also mentioned in the last statement that since the installation of the main barrier, parking on the bridge had become an issue causing restricted access to the centre to combat this the planned installation of a line of black and yellow striped bollards was completed.

In normal times each year the trustees look to upgrade the fabric of the building and despite difficult times the last period has been no different with the following being completed:-

- Refurbishment of small hall toilets (both sets)
- Refurbishment of kitchen floor.
- Installation of a new ventilation system for shower areas was carried out in 2020.

The last Chairman's statement listed 2 large projects being considered by the trustees with regards to outside facilities.

The first of these was the complete replacement of the fencing around the Astro pitch to secure and protect this most valuable asset.

Following a number of 'break-ins' and damage to the fencing of this facility final approval was given by trustees in March 2021 for the go ahead of this project.

This was carried out and completed earlier this year.

The second one was the complete conversion of the second redundant tennis court area into a new 5-A-Side court.

At a recent meeting with Basildon councillors this was one of a list of various projects and upgrades, with costs, presented by WBCA which they were keen to implement.

Following this meeting a grant of £88K was obtained and approved for funding these various projects.

With these funds available final quotes for the various pieces of work were obtained and approved and contractors contacted.

The main projects to be funded by this grant are as follows:-

- ! Conversion of the old middle tennis courts into 1 new 5-A-Side area including the installation of new lighting and fencing to this area. A contract has been let for this work.
- ! Upgrading the remaining manual shutters to electric operation
- ! Upgrade of the lighting to the nearest tennis/netball court, known as the **Multi-Use Gaming Area (MUGA)**

In addition to the externally funded projects above there are 2 main projects which have been given approval for funding by WBCA, these are:-

- ! Continuation of general upgrade of lighting around the centre.
- ! Replacement of the fencing around the final 2 sides of the furthest old tennis court to match that of the other outside playing areas.

WBCA are aware of possible funding of up to £10k per application named "The Locality Fund" which is an initiative of Essex County Council.

If successfully applied for, this would likely be earmarked to revamp the decoration and aesthetics of the main male shower area as part of the continuation of the upgrade of the fabric of the building.

As noted in the last statement, 2019 saw a curtailment of previous bar opening hours to just Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Obviously during the pandemic the bar had to be closed and remained so until late summer when a trial reopening was begun.

For this, the trial included the bar being opened earlier on a Sunday morning and new coffee machines purchased, so that parents attending the centre to watch their children playing football at that time could get hot beverages.

With previous lucrative events, such as the Billericay Beer Festival, not being able to take place and the lack of take up of this reopened facility revenue was not sufficient to sustain it in the long term so for the time being the bar has been closed again.

However, in conclusion the future of the centre, in general, continues to look reasonably positive despite the events of the last 18 months or so.

This is in no small way due to the continued hard work carried out by the Centre's management and staff.