

Dear Marlins

It may seem a long time ago when we started 2020 with high hopes and in the early months were planning on having a very successful year with members setting new records and preparing to attend County, Regional, National and Olympic trials!

We had great early success not only in the Sussex Relay and County Championships, where we retained the Top Club trophy and many of our swimmers were crowned top of their events or age groups, but also our Masters were setting new highs in competitions and our Waterpolo teams began their seasons well. Our Paraswimmers had gained recognition and were set on the Swim England pathways along with several of our junior members joining regional and national development pathways.

For our teaching groups the membership had expanded, and we were excited to see how many of our members were progressing and enjoying swimming in our Club

Then March arrived and we saw the start of the pandemic take hold. We, like all clubs were looking at a temporary closure and we had to cancel sessions, the Sussex League and the Arena national League early casualties, lately followed by regional and national competitions.

In July we saw the lockdown of leisure centre being lifted and the Government and Swim England introduced a number of recommendations aimed at keeping swimmers socially distanced. However, with a delay in the re-opening of our home pools we had to look to alternative options.

In September we finally reopened at home with a revised timetable and a new set of recommendations for keeping our members and staff safe and healthy while swimming. However, this saw us having restrictions on the numbers of swimmers in the water at the same time and a reduction of pool time available to hire. Further lockdowns, boiler breakages and tier restrictions continued, and will continue, to challenge us.

We took the decision in July to delay any changes to the fee structure until we were reopen and could review the effects of the pandemic on our membership. Sadly, we have seen 250 of our members and friends leave us since the beginning of the year and our cost of operating has increased. We are in a financially stable position, utilising a combination of reserves that we had built up during the good years, donations to the Club and successful grant applications to help support our finances. We also furloughed our lead coaching staff to partially support their costs. But this is only a short term position and we will need to address the continuing drain on our finances which is why we have introduced the new fee rates.

We now face the same challenges on opening hopefully in the April window, but we are waiting for more details in the next few weeks.

Finally, I would like to thank you, our members for your continued support, the Board for supporting the club through these difficult times, the PSC for supporting and taking the initiative to move on many changes we have had to make, to all our volunteers and staff who have worked to keep us open and especially our Club Manager who has worked hard to ensure we are still able to operate as a club.

We, as a Club, will need to continue to adapt to this ever-changing world we live in and take on the new challenges that lay ahead

Stay safe and look after each other.

Les Hawkey, Chairman, Mid Sussex Marlins SC