



SASC AGM Chair's Report

MARCH 24

**Stretford ASC
AGM 2021**

Chair's Report: September 2020 – March 2021

It's exactly one year since we went into lockdown 1 and as I reflect on the year I am extremely proud of the way everyone in the club –swimmers, water polo players, parents, volunteers, coaches and the committee have worked and adapted to the changing circumstances throughout the year. We've engaged and kept as many people participating with the club, despite the challenging circumstances. It has been a pleasure to be at the pool during the swimming sessions, seeing just how enthusiastic our members are to be in the water. Still plenty of smiling athletes enjoying their training and meeting with friends. You will be back in 330,000 litres of water soon!

***“[swimmers] are a credit to themselves and the club completing
[online] sessions” Tom Pope – Head Coach***

Despite returning to the pool in July, the ongoing prevalence of Covid-19 and ensuing Government restrictions, the Club has needed to continue to offer “out-of-pool” training and activities, notably in November and for the entirety of 2021 so far. Our position though was still considerably better than some clubs, having more access to pool time than a lot of others, some of whom have not swum for months.

The short term November lockdown came just as members were getting back into the swing of training after two months: time trials for swimming had begun, the first signs of competitive swimming at the club in many months; Water Polo sessions had developed beyond just swimming. Sadly, we had disappointing news in that month too when Trafford Leisure announced that it would not re-open until 2021, despite restrictions lifting from December. The Club Committee reacted quickly and urgent talks took place with the three other Trafford Clubs and Trafford Leisure. We discussed the impacts a delayed return could have on the wellbeing of our athletes and potential risk to all the Clubs with regard membership retention. TL explained the reasons for their

decision to remain closed, but accepted with the financial support clubs could leverage and to benefit member's in both sporting development and wellbeing they would open two centres for club use only, throughout, December, in preparation for a full opening in January. This new collaborative approach between all parties showed how quickly solutions could be created and it was fantastic to be able to use the pool with more hours throughout December, sharing the facility with Flixton Swim Team. Here I'd like to thank Jo and Jonathan at TL, Lea at SL, the other club chairs, Head Coach Tom for working to get us a suitable timetable and to Anne for ensuring our covid protocols were shared, explained and followed by FST.

“...without SASC drive, we would not have got back in the pool in December” *Chair of Altrincham SC during Central Lancs*

With the high level of engagement, we've continued to see throughout the lockdown and the flexibility in our fee structure (other club's commented on how innovative this was) our recent Membership renewal has seen a positive retention rate. Since the same period last year, 75% of members had renewed and we know most of the gap is associated either with our dual memberships from for example COMAST and some of our older swimmers being at University.

“...love innovative approach on [both] the monthly fee and spreading out membership renewal ” *Chair of a Trafford Club*

For all our members, we now await news from the industry association of UK pool providers, Trafford Leisure and Stretford Leisure on rules they will require us to follow when we return to the pool, hopefully from 12th April. Our Covid protocols will allow us to return to sessions at least in the same way we have been able to achieve in the second half of 2020 and I believe they are robust enough to be adapted as necessary to

implement guidelines issued by TL/SL and Swim England. Sadly, from the latter's perspective and despite much lobbying of the Government, the first stage return to aquatic sport will only be for junior members (i.e. members under 18 as of 31 August 2020).

Finally, on this topic, this is the opportune moment to pass on a massive thank you to all our supporters during the entire period of lockdown: Covid Lead Anne who developed our protocols and has maintained link with Swim England for updates; Covid liaison timetable planner Annie; all poolside supports (Bonnie; Claire; Frankie; Hanna; Helen; Mike; Nicky; Michelle; Ruth; Andrea; Mary; Kate; Becky; Amanda; Simon; Karin) and the WP support team [Linda; Alison; Phil; Sue; Mike; Helen]; our coaching team and supports: Tom; Jared; Shelley; Simon; Isobel; Ethan; Alfie. Also to the full committee for the clear approach we have taken on this topic at meetings and on various WhatsApp discussions. Without these processes and the level of engagement we have had from you all, we would not have been able to gain any pool time. Thanks.

Good news came in September that we had continued our Swim Mark accreditation. We have this as a necessary requirement to be affiliated with the local swimming associations and Swim England. Led by Swim England NW, we had excellent support on new processes on sharing data with them and whilst we had some back-and-forth on individual certificates that had gone missing or even not been provided, with their support, we were signed off and approved at their Swim Mark Panel meeting in September. Thanks to everybody for their support.

There is an ongoing discussion on the proposed merger of three local swimming associations (Bolton & District; Central Lancashire; Manchester & District). The detail of the proposal has been shared to the Committee and all members for comment and we have attended the first meetings where the structure has been discussed (Tom; Simon; myself). We will provide overall feedback to those Associations shortly, but in principle, the proposals look sound: swimming competitions are suggested to take place in three distinct regions whilst water polo will be a single region; the level of competition appears to be a good split on athlete development and an introduction to competition; the significant area of concern is around committee structure and it has been noted there is

a misalignment between level of swimming v water polo at executive level. Stretford will continue to positively contribute to this discussion.

To conclude, despite the impact of Covid on the club – 2020's loss of external competitions (especially qualifiers for regionals and counties), internal competitions including Club Championships, social events and Rossall, I am optimistic for the future. We already know of course that Rossall 2021 has been postponed with a view to have this in the summer (waiting protocols from Rossall) I do believe we will be talking positively about this event and many other club successes at our 2022 AGM. I hope we see competitions restarting during the year and we should focus, restrictions allowing, on delivering the best experience for all our athletes, culminating in a Club Champs and a social celebration of our achievements. The Club is in a strong position financially and is well set up aquatically to progress in 2021, unlike many clubs throughout the country. Thanks to everybody for their ongoing support.

Duncan Evanson
SASC Chair