

BRSC AGM 2020: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Introduction

Those Members who have attended the AGM over the last few years will have heard me emphasise the importance that I and my BRSC Committee colleagues place on this meeting. We are all conscious of the responsibility that we carry to sustain and develop BRSC on your behalf, to the best of our abilities, and we always look forward to the opportunity to meet members and account to you for our stewardship of BRSC over the last year and to seek your support for our plans for the future.

We would all much rather present our reports to you in person at a traditional AGM, but we are unable to do that safely under the current Covid-19 restrictions. With that in mind, the Committee has worked hard to produce a “one-off” solution which complies with the spirit of the BRSC Constitution whilst recognising the present realities.

With that in mind we have opted to produce a series of short, focused reports which will summarise the key points of BRSC business activities since AGM 2019 on May 29th last year. We will also explain the measures that we have put in place to manage our activities whilst respecting “social isolation” and some of our preliminary thinking about how we get fully up and running again when current restrictions are lifted.

You will see the detail of our financial position and membership numbers in the separate reports from the Treasurer and Membership Secretary, so I will give an overview on where things have gone well this year, highlight some of the changes to BRSC business processes that we are implementing and reflect on areas where we still have some work to do.

As always, we would like to record the BRSC Members who have passed away over the last year. We are aware of the following; if there are any of which we are not aware, please advise the Secretary and we will add them to the record. We will miss them all.

Ian Fletcher
Peter Hall
Alan J. Jones
Bill Singer
Tom Sutton
Barry Taylor
Marilyn Thomas

Minutes of the 2019 AGM

Minutes of the AGM held on 29th May 2019 were published on 23rd June 2019 on the allez-bath website. Since no comments have been received, I propose to regard them as approved. Many thanks to Pat Lawrence for producing them so quickly.

BRSC: BUSINESS REVIEW

BRSC Committee

The BRSC Committee has been operating at a full complement of 10 during the last year. Each Committee Member is responsible for a specific area of BRSC business as well as having a common responsibility for the work of the BRSC Committee as a whole. This arrangement has worked very well; each post is supported by a specific Job Description and we are increasingly working towards ensuring that we have a nominated backup within the Committee for each key role. There have been 12 full Committee Meetings this year, latterly conducted by “Zoom”. The meetings are normally attended by a senior or middle management level representative from Bath Rugby for a specific Agenda item taken at the start of the meeting, after which they depart. This allows for a structured dialogue to take place and for issues represented by BRSC Members to be tabled and where possible, quickly resolved. It also provides an opportunity for the BRSC Committee to provide a Supporters’ perspective on longer term planning which is always well received. This year we have welcomed attendees across the Bath Rugby structure including Operations, Marketing, Communications and Ticketing. This is a significant commitment for Bath Rugby which is greatly appreciated.

Committee Members have also regularly met in smaller groups or by Zoom, Facetime or telephone to keep BRSC moving forward and I would like to put on record my thanks to all the Committee Members for their support and hard work on behalf of BRSC over the last year, especially Mike Carr who is standing down this year.

When we started preliminary planning for the AGM back in January, a number of long - serving Committee Members (including myself) indicated that they felt that the time was right to stand down from the Committee. However, when it became apparent that it would not be possible to hold a normal AGM and that the next twelve months were likely to be particularly difficult as rugby (hopefully) returns to something like normal, we felt that BRSC would benefit from retaining as many as possible of the current experienced team during what will be a very testing time. Accordingly, Pat Lawrence (who maintains the Management Plan and assists the Secretary with essential admin), Anne Kirkham (Membership Secretary), Chrissy Webb (Events Manager) and I all offered to extend our terms of office for a further twelve months. This will cause greater turnover at AGM 21, but we believe that it is in the best interest of BRSC just now.

In the current exceptional circumstances, we have accepted the offer to extend the period of appointment for the above Committee members, without formal re-election. It is stressed that this is a one – off measure brought about by the extraordinary situation that we find ourselves in. BRSC Members are assured that we will revert to normal election processes for all Committee posts at AGM 21 and we seek your support for these actions.

Finance

BRSC Treasurer Doug Wrigglesworth has continued to exercise rigorous management of BRSC finances during the year and I am pleased that at the end of our 19/20 accounting period we have a very healthy balance of £10,796.85 available in the BRSC Accounts in addition to the £1173.32 which we raised for our adopted charity last year.

During the year we took the opportunity to review the way in which we manage and structure all aspects of BRSC financial management including a shift to electronic banking, greater use of card payments at the gazebo. We also created a separate resilience account, overseen by the Secretary, which provides financial confidence that we can “weather the storm” of major disruptive events such as the Covid-19 Pandemic and seamlessly resume the full range of BRSC activities when we are safely able to do so.

Following agreement at AGM19, we have moved away from printing and posting hard copies of our Newsletter. They are now edited and sent out electronically, except for a small number where the recipients are unable to receive them by this means. This has resulted in a considerable saving in printing and postage costs and a huge effort in manually filling and despatching the Newsletters by post.

Appointment of Auditor for 2020/21

This year’s accounts have been subjected to audit in accordance with the requirements of the BRSC Constitution. I’m very grateful to David Harrington who has conducted the review. David is exceptionally well qualified to undertake this role and has volunteered his services for 20/21. I recommend that Members endorse his appointment to the role for a further year, using the voting form which will shortly become available under the next phase of this year’s “electronic AGM” process.

Membership Fees

Against this background we see no requirement for an increase in BRSC Membership fees. I am delighted that we will be able to invite the AGM to endorse our proposal that once again, the fees should be held at the current level in 2020/21.

Membership

Anne Kirkham has once again done an outstanding job as Membership Secretary. Our current membership total of 875 falls short of our target set last year of 1,000 but is consistent with the figure achieved during 18/19. As I said at last year’s AGM it is always our intention to grow the membership numbers but in reality sustaining them at a consistent level is a satisfactory outcome for this year given the early finish to our events programme. To a certain extent our ability to recruit new members is directly linked to Bath Rugby’s performance. The late start to the season and a disappointing Heineken Cup run will also have had an impact.

The continuing high level of renewals is encouraging and we have seen positive benefits from our focus on making the BRSC Gazebo an integral part of the pre-

match “Supporters’ Village” at the Rec, working with Bath Rugby staff to distribute flags, noise makers etc. This has given us greater engagement with supporters and allowed us actively to promote the benefits of BRSC Membership. We will continue to look at ways of increasing our match day profile.

We see the roll out of the MemberMojo software as a very positive step in delivering a streamlined, accessible package to BRSC Members. It will remove much of the administrative burden which currently falls to the Membership Secretary and will significantly reduce the capacity for error since all data is input and managed by the applicant. When we decided that we needed an improved data management package to assist with all membership issues we conducted research to identify a package which best met our requirements. After initial trials of two systems we opted for MemberMojo and engaged in an extensive testing package over more than three months. The end product is a smart system which is already tailored to meet BRSC requirements but which will become even more refined with use. It is straightforward to use and it removes the problems previously encountered by some members in making payments using Ecwid. We believe that the adoption of MemberMojo together with the shift of the membership year to start on 1st September are the right thing to do now and will serve BRSC well going forward. We have amended the Constitution to reflect this and we will be seeking your endorsement of this change.

Communications

We have continued to focus on developing our methods of communicating with BRSC Members during this year. We have worked hard at positive interaction with as many people as possible at the match day Gazebo and supported this with an increased use of Mailchimp announcements to keep members informed. We have continued with our programme of Newsletters although the Covid – 19 restrictions have meant that we have had to put the planned second Newsletter which was to have been team – focused on hold for the time being. We have sought to compensate by increasing the frequency of our Newsflashes and by launching additional electronic communications including the “Who’s the GOAT” competition which ran over 7 weeks and was well supported.

At the same time, we have continued to work on our use of social media. Nicola Curtis has focused on this, expanding our social media footprint across the most commonly used platforms.

We have also answered a number of questions sent to us by members either directly or via the committee@allez-bath email address or by Facebook Messenger. We have a standing objective in the Management Plan to review the allez-bath website. The adoption of the MemberMojo package gives this work greater impetus and we will tackle it as a concomitant task as we roll out the new software.

We have reviewed our policy and processes in respect of Data Protection and are confident that they are compliant, robust and provide effective assurance that Members’ information is being properly safeguarded.

Events

Our events programme in 19/20 was curtailed towards the end of the year by the Covid-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, in addition to the AGM we held the following events:

- 2019 Annual Awards Supper
- Ask the Ref
- Christmas Quiz Night
- “Back in the Box” at the “A” League game vs Bristol “A”

We had planned to hold a further Back in the Box event and an evening with Craig Lilley to tell us about the Academy and Development Pathway. The latter event should have been held on 30th March but had to be postponed; we will look to arrange it as soon as we can when it is safe to do so. The Back in the Box event should have been for the “A” League game against London Irish “A” on 20 April but was also a victim of the Covid restrictions.

All the events were well attended and helped to generate a sizeable sum for Bath Mind, our charity for 19/20. All these events require a great deal of work and are a “whole team” effort, but I would like to say a special word of thanks to Chrissy Webb who once again did a great job as our Events coordinator. I am also very grateful to all the staff at Bath Rugby who always go the extra mile to help with our events. It would simply not be possible to deliver what we do at the price that we do without their help and cooperation.

Influence

In the course of my report I have already spoken about the level of positive interaction between BRSC Committee members and Bath Rugby staff at all levels. We have continued to use this excellent relationship to ensure that issues of concern to BRSC Members (and also the wider supporter community) are referred to the right person within the Bath Rugby management structure. We always receive responses; where we are relating a problem which can be readily addressed it always is and where it can't be, explanations are provided. We are also able to provide a Supporters' perspective on wider issues and long-term plans, something which Bath Rugby management actively seeks and values. This sort of relationship is mutually beneficial and will be particularly important as we all address the issues which will undoubtedly arise in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

WAY AHEAD

The immediate future will be challenging; we currently have no idea when we might all be able to enjoy rugby at the Rec again or when we will be able to plan to hold BRSC events once again. What is clear is that we are not going to be able to hold the Awards Supper in August. We will continue to hold the votes for the various Trophies and will seek an opportunity to present them at an event when it is safe to

do so. We are considering various options about what that event might look like; we give you more details as soon as we can.

Immediately, we will focus on rolling out the MemberMojo software and keeping in touch using Newsflashes, mailchimps and social media posts whilst making sure we are ready to get back to BRSC business as usual as soon as circumstances permit.

CONCLUSION

BRSC is in a good place. We have the right number of Committee members with the right range of skills. Our finances are robust and well - managed; the inability to hold events since late March has not compromised our financial position. We have a stable membership base from which to build for the future. We have an effective communications suite in place and are making innovative changes to some of our key processes going forward.

That said, the future of BRSC is in all our hands as Members, so I would like to finish with something of a call to arms. As I write this, arrangements for the end of the 19/20 Premiership season are still being debated and the start date and shape of the 20/21 season is far from clear. All those uncertainties notwithstanding, please rejoin when next year's membership opens on 1st September – and spread the word! Rugby will return and we want to hit the ground running as a Supporters' Club when it does.

Finally, I would like once again to place on record my thanks to Ian Rooney, Doug Wrigglesworth, Anne Kirkham, Pat Lawrence, Chrissy Webb, Christine Knight, Mike Carr, Nicola Curtis and Paul Russell for all their support and hard work on behalf of BRSC during the last year and David Harrington who has stepped up to audit our accounts.

Allez Bath

(Sgd) Kevin Lawrence

Chairman BRSC