



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021

The year started relatively calmly with little indication as to what was to come. Our first function of 2020 was the **Burns Night Supper...A Nicht Wi' Burns**, held at Tandridge Golf Club. Upon arrival guests were serenaded by the uplifting sound of bagpipes. The dining room was full, the toasts were expertly delivered and the entertainment, including traditional Scottish songs, was delivered with rousing enthusiasm by tenor Ben Thapa of G4 fame. As one prominent member declared: "Ben took us on a journey of arias which lifted our souls and would have melted the heart of the 'ice princess' Turandot herself"! Grateful thanks go to Michael Kelly who masterminded the whole evening (without a mask in sight).

On the day that the Chief Medical Officer made the sad announcement of the first reported UK death related to COVID-19 (5th March) our **AGM** was held at Bletchingley Golf Club where the dinner was enjoyed by over forty members and guests. Our speaker was our new President and recently elected MP – Claire Coutinho. Fresh from working on the Chancellor's Budget, Claire devoted most of her speech to answering questions which she did with both clarity and passion, very much appreciated by all those who were present.

Less than three weeks after our AGM we all sat listening to the Prime Minister's 'address to the nation' – in which he announced the details surrounding lockdown measures being introduced in the UK. Needless to say, our planned activity for the Spring and Summer went out the window...no Golf Day, no Political Dinners, no Desert Island Discs. Hopes were soon dashed that we might return to some form of normality towards the end of the year. Goodbye to our Autumn and Christmas Dinners.

In December we held an entertaining Zoom event on the topic of '**Business in a Post-Covid 19 and Post-Brexit World**', featuring Andrew Griffith MP and Claire. It was well attended and thanks to the generosity of our members, raised more than £1,500 for The Institute of Cancer Research.

So what for the future? After a really enjoyable 5 years, I have decided to step down from the role of Chairman and give someone else a chance. I have to say that my final year wasn't quite as anticipated, but so be it. It has been a real honour to have the opportunity to Chair the East Surrey Business Club and follow in my father's footsteps. When I took on the role I set myself 4 key objectives: 1) To ensure that we held some informative events with a look "behind the scenes" at institutions and businesses (such as Biggin Hill Airport and the Old Bailey), 2) that we continued to raise funds for both the Party and assorted good causes (over £22,000 raised for local charities ranging from the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust to the East Surrey Domestic Abuse Service), 3) that we secured a wide range of entertaining Political Speakers (Dominic Raab, Ken Clarke, Amber Rudd, Jeremy Hunt...) and 4) that, above all, we had fun. I leave you to be the judge of that!

Over the past 5 years none of the above would have been possible without my hard-working Committee. I am extremely grateful for the support that they have given me at all times.

I am delighted that the role of Chairman will be taken on by Les Green, a longstanding member of the Committee. I know that Les will bring a host of fresh ideas to ESBC and it will be great to have a Chairman who is involved in a wide variety of businesses on a day to day basis. Through his Company, Lex Associates LLP, Les has assisted all sizes of business over the last 10 years. I am sure that we wish Les every success in driving ESBC forward.

Les stepping up as Chairman means that the role of Honorary Secretary is vacant. He has asked if I would take on that role which I am more than happy to do unless, of course, we receive alternative nominations before the AGM!

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for supporting the East Surrey Business Club during my 5 year tenure as Chairman. As I always say, without you there would be no Club.

Malcolm Dunbar – Chairman East Surrey Business Club, March 2021