**Annual dinner report 2020**

Organising this year’s dinner was not without its challenges! Due to the financial troubles being faced by Bolton Wanderers and Whites Hotel during 2019 it wasn’t clear if we were going to be able to hold our dinner in the stadium as usual. I was keen to hold off making any decision to move to another venue as long as possible given how convenient a location it is and also the quality of table service and food over the last few years. I also admit that, as a lifelong Bolton fan, I was keen to keep supporting my local team in any way possible. The good news was that all the financial issues were resolved before we got to the time I needed to start sending the invitations out.

During discussions with Joanne we were keen to address one of the few areas which we get marked down on in our annual assessment, namely our relationships with the Chartered companies in our area. We were also keen to expand our sponsorship offering and make this more formal.

We agreed that all chartered companies would receive first priority to apply for tickets followed by any other company or individual who has supported the event over the last few years before finally tickets went on open sale. We came up with a two tiered sponsorship offering, Platinum & Premier, named after suites in the stadium.

Approximately 50% of the chartered companies in our area regularly support the dinner already but the others are mainly financial advisory companies so again, this helped expand our relationship into this side of our membership. I’m sad to say we didn’t receive much response from the 50% who do not regularly support the dinner but we did attract one new financial advisory company, Holcombe Financial. I was keen to make them feel welcome so I contacted the MD there a few weeks prior to the dinner to run through how the formalities of the event work and made sure I spoke to them on the night, as did Joanne.

The rest of the planning went fairly smoothly – until the day itself! A branded raffle drum was ordered which I was promised would be delivered in time for the event – it wasn’t (it has since arrived so can be used for future events)! I went into the venue to start setting up around 2.30pm, Whites had put some menus out on the tables and I happened to notice that the starter wasn’t what was had been agreed which meant that vegetarians would be having mushrooms for starter and for main! A few phone calls later and we’d agreed an alternative main course for the vegetarians.

There were no further hitches after this and our evening entertainment, local comedian of Phoenix Nights fame Justin Moorhouse, was well received.

I have to say it has been a pleasure to organise the annual dinner for the institute for the last two years and I’ll be sad not to be involved next year.

I’ll close with a thank you to everyone who has supported me over the last couple of years including all council members who assisted on the night. I wish Libby all the best in taking this task on.