

Minutes of the RTYC General Committee held on 20th March 2023

Present:

Commodore:	Martin Morgans (MM)
Vice Commodore	Karen Cox (KC)
Hon Secretary	Stuart Carter (SC)

Rachel Morgans (RM), Nigel Collingwood (NC), Frank Martin (FM), Don Gray (DG), Piers Hodges (PH), Judy Pearson (JP), Andy Ketteringham (AK), Alan Lucas (AL), Tom Smith (TS), John Barrett (JEB), Mike Brand MB, Terry Adams (TA)

Apologies; Andy Beaumont-Hope

Approval of Minutes of the last GC meeting Thursday 10th January 2023. The minutes were agreed and signed by the Commodore. Proposed KC, seconded RM

Approval of Minutes of the last Extraordinary GC meeting Tuesday 7th March 2023. The minutes were agreed and signed by the Commodore. Proposed RM, seconded TS

Provisional GC Approval of Minutes of the AGM Sunday 26th February 2023. The minutes were agreed and signed by the Commodore. Proposed AL, seconded PH

Matters Arising Therefrom: No matters arising.

Correspondence. No Correspondence

Finance. The Commodore talked about the recently available P&L report. There were some difficulties in identifying the true picture and we had attempted to provide comprehensive figures to be able to compare last year's trend with our performance so far this year by dividing the figures into 12ths. There was a protracted discussion, and it was agreed that our temporary Treasurer would need to speak to the Bookkeeper to make sure that all associated costs were categorised correctly in Sage. RCC queried the amount of Booking.com fees. It was established that their fees were 20%.

Given the lack of an elected Honorary Treasurer, the matter of establishing a Finance Committee was raised. It was agreed that FM would chair the committee and would be looking for volunteers, hopefully with financial experience, to join it. Julie Rook will form part of that committee.

Bar previous month & YTD plus stock: The Commodore brought up the formation of a new Elective Committee and said that TS had volunteered to chair it. JEB said that TS would inform the GC of the composition of the committee and who would be performing the stocktake. There would be a report every GCM. The Commodore explained that before we changed our licence, the Elective Committee would be in control of the sale of alcohol but since the change the designated premises supervisor, in this case the club manager, Barry, holds the responsibility of ensuring the club complies with the licencing laws. To that end the Elective committee should liaise closely with Barry, especially on the matter of pricing.

RCS:

- **Buoys:** PH said that the buoys are all ready to go out and the divers are ready to take them out. But the weather isn't ready for that to happen. JEB asked where the invoices were for the Buoy sponsors. PH said that he was waiting until the buoys were in situ before issuing the invoices. LM asked that Kent Decking be given a more prominent position this year. PH said that was already being done.
- **Floor:** He then moved on to his report on the bar floor. In the interests of expediency, he proposed not to go through it line by line, but would take questions if there are any, and then just talk about the recommendations. FM said that he thought the report was very good.

It was important that Ramsgate Week should go well and the first recommendation was to provide temporary support for, in the form of acro jacks placed in the necessary positions in the Hold bar. KC said that she had heard that the Hold bar ceiling could make it difficult to put the props in the right place. PH said that the plasterboard ceiling was flat against the joists and that should present no problems.

RM asked how long the props would remain in place. PH said that the props would go up the day before Ramsgate Week and come down immediately after. The Commodore asked PH to make sure that the props would not cause any damage to the ceiling in the Hold bar and PH gave an assurance that everything would be done to that end.

KC asked if it was agreed that this would happen for Ramsgate Week. No objections were raised.

Several permanent solutions were suggested, and it was agreed that, following the temporary fix, the permanent solution would wait until the appropriate funds were found. Our insurers have been notified and their approval sought.

- **Business Improvement Plan:** PH referred to his initial report on the business plan that had been distributed to the GC. He explained that he had reviewed revenue for the last couple of years to get a feel for where the money was coming from and what it could be if it was back to previous levels prior to the pandemic. In 2018, which was a normal year, pre COVID, there was no profit made, but we did spend 50,000 on the building. 2019 was the last proper year before we got into COVID and we made a small profit on a turnover of £299,000. I propose not to really look at the 20 and 21 figures because they were properly COVID impacted. They don't tell us very much. The bar takings were fractional and accommodation was down.

Then coming out into 2022 we see the subs coming up again, the bar takings are up, but not where it was, and accommodation was actually larger than it has ever been. Ramsgate week and Nav school were quite healthy again. A small profit was made on a smaller turnover and smaller subs than in 18 and 19, and that is probably down to cost control. We could really do with our subs going back to the 2018 or 2019 levels. One of the reasons for that is that subs are really high profit margin. You don't need three full time equivalent employees to manage the subscriptions, but you do for the bar.

PH continued: every other membership is almost pure profit, less the cost of a printing a gold card. So that is definitely going to be a focus of the business improvement plan. Looking at accommodation, functions and catering, I am hearing numbers like 30%, 37% hotel occupancy for accommodation but we need a deeper investigation into functions and catering to ascertain the profitability of each element.

PH said he was astonished at the amount that the volunteers have to do in this club to make it turn over £300,000 pa. 4 to 5 full time equivalent employees to turn over 300 grand is not ideal. I believe the best way forward, is that the staff do the majority of what we must do and that the volunteers do the majority of what's nice to do, racing and things like that. And if we don't go that way, if we if we drive the volunteers to make the place survive rather than have fun, it is not going to make the volunteer base sustainable. If we want the volunteering to be sustainable, we have to make it enjoyable, and they need to feel like it is worth doing.

He continued saying looking at where we were 2022 may not be the best baseline. We were still recovering from COVID in terms of bar takings and people getting out of the habit of going out. We made 5% profit or £15,000. He believed could go for a ten cubed project, where we aim, within ten years to turn over £10,000 a week and with a 10% profit margin as laid out in the tables in the report. It looks like we're probably already make the 2025 goal for the bar takings this year. There is a good chance we will. Looking at the way things are going and assuming a good Ramsgate week, he asked for committee input on whether 10 cubed is actually ambitious enough. It relies on a modest growth in subscriptions We have to get the subscriptions back up because of their margin of profit. The profit margin in the bar will always be 58% minus staff.

PH said that he was not going to propose that we do anything more in terms of the bar and allow the other business growth to drive up the footfall through the bar. Volunteers are already doing an awful lot to get the footfall through the bar because of club racing, Ramsgate week, quizzes, games nights and other internal functions. However, volunteers don't drive external functions like weddings. We drive the accommodation at a high profit margin business because the rooms are already there. The fixed overheads are already there. With 40% occupancy (most hotels, outside of London, are about 70%), we should be pretty close to our target. So, it comes down to identifying profitable areas, driving them and setting goals that don't overburden volunteers, which are finite resource.

The Commodore thanked PH for a superb effort and said that he totally agreed with the direction that was being taken. Over the past year, his goal had been to try and get the staff into the mode that they should be as professional managers and bar staff. His goal for this coming year is to get them to the point where they run the clubhouse and we run the business of playing and sailing and having fun.

PH then asked if anybody thought that the plan was not ambitious enough. Should we really be thinking about a 5x5 plan to achieve £500,000 turnover within 5 years. MB said that it would be nice to hit the first target and then we could revise the plan if we hit the target early enough. He also said that he thought the current method of subscriptions could be changed from a fixed yearly sub to a rolling gym-like system of a yearly contract with a monthly fee of possibly £30 per calendar month. This would provide an alternative to pro rata payments for those who join at different times in the year.

A short discussion followed on methods of paying for subscriptions, followed by a discussion on methods of booking hotel accommodation. The Commodore said that the possibility to book direct was always mentioned in the notes in each room. JEB asked if it was possible to book rooms through the RTYC website. The answer was no but this facility could be added. The business Improvement Plan team of Terry Adams and Chris Cox will investigate and report back.

FM said an important starting point for any business plan is an up-to-date forecast of the current year because as has been said, 22 is very difficult to take as a baseline. He had done a rough grossing up of revenues to date. That was up to the end of January. And his suspicion was that the club was not far off hitting the target of £335,000 of turnover in the current year, three years earlier than the outline plan.

Having a rolling forecast of the current year sales margin overhead and profit is absolutely crucial for the business. We need to know where we're going in the current year to be able to plan appropriately for the future years. That is information that the chair of the Finance Committee would hope to provide.

RCC: we had a fitting out, fish and chips event on the 10th of March. 36 meals were handed out. The club was quite full, and the bar was quite busy. Everybody had a very good evening. Some new members came along, met the cruising section for the first time, and they were added to the Cruisers WhatsApp group. It was a successful event. It just shows how people do want to come along.

The planned cruising this year is going to start on Easter weekend, weather permitting, with the run to Dover, organised by George Jackson and going to go to the new marina, which will certainly be open. It looks like we'll have probably at least a dozen boats who have expressed interest. Our regular monthly cruising socials are now, on the second Friday of each Month. The cruising schedule, that has already been published in the Temple Bell for this month, remains unchanged.

The Commodore took this opportunity to run through some of the events that have put money behind the bar over the past month and included the fact, as an experiment, the monthly quiz would be run twice a month to see if that would increase footfall.

HHO: AL ran through his report as issued and there was an extended discussion about the hotel rooms and their refurbishment. There was a suggestion that the refurbishment be done in stages with the front rooms first, especially their bathrooms, which would give the club a chance to increase their prices. It was agreed that the front rooms are to be assessed and costed first to include better furniture and decoration. PH asked that this activity is tied in with the business plan to take advantage of the opportunity to capitalise on the current closure of the Oak Hotel which means there are 33 rooms missing from the market space.

There was further discussion on the rest of the report, including the holes in the roof. It was suggested that we ask a drone operator to carry out a survey on the outside. (PM Note: this has been done and will be part of the report for next meeting). Given the possible urgency of the situation roof repairs are a priority and HHO is asked to organise quotes for the work which can be circulated and agreed by email.

Entertainments. RM passed around her report for everybody to read. In the bar we have had the 6 Nations Rugby, which has now moved on to the ladies' event. Quizzes have already been mentioned. It's now twice a month, so that is hopefully going to carry on a good level. The decision has been taken to stop music nights, after advice from the Club Manager, Barry, because we are not getting enough people in to support the cost of the bands. The pool team is doing well having finished the winter season. Thursday nights are now for practice sessions. Some friendlies have been arranged until the next season starts, bringing more people into the club looking around and seeing what our all about, which is positive in terms of things to come. The RNLI are holding their lifejacket clinic, which will hopefully be good support for them.

The lack of a caterer massively limits what we can do. Before Antony left, we approached a lot of catering companies and asked them if they were interested in working with us and supporting events. Many of them were busy until 2025. RM has been trying to look at alternative events and functions like Hog Roasts and BBQs. RM found it very difficult to communicate with Antony who would often say he would do an event but then try to cancel at the last minute because he was short of staff. For example on New Year's Eve, Rachel was on standby to wait on tables was working doing tables until the day before because he'd lost all of his waiting staff. There is still a possibility though, that he could be available for the odd event.

RM also noted that, there is quite a low sign up to functions. We base our costings on 30 attendees. If the function includes a band or a meal, we need to know that we are able to cover the cost, which makes the ticket price quite high. And she is considering a casino night, which works out about £55 a ticket, for the casino, food, and a glass of fizz on the way in. Yet some of our members attended a golf club with exactly the same thing and they paid £25 a head because they had 70 attendees. What would people think about a flexible ticket price where we pay a £30 deposit with the ticket price at £55? If we get 40 people, the price will go down to £45. If we get 50 people, it will go down to £38. By the time we reach 60, it's a sell-out. You will only pay that £30 deposit. It's a lot of admin work for the staff, but it might encourage people to come in.

MB raised the possibility of franchise saying that any franchisee would want to link the bar with the catering because no caterer is going to want to do it for nothing and they cannot make enough money out of just doing the food functions. We could actually remove our staff costs and hand it over to an operator and come up with a management fee to do it that way. Obviously, you would have to communicate that with Barry to say what's happening. But actually, that is the way that you'll get somebody to run the catering and the bar and the accommodation and they'll do it much better than we would do as non-trained hospitality people.

Ramsgate Week: KC apologised for the late report, but she had been away. She requested agreement to run a banner promotion for RW in the May edition of Yachts & Yachting magazine. Cost £245+VAT. This was agreed unanimously.

On a sad note, Broadstairs Sailing Club have decided that they will no longer support us with RIBs. She then read out a communication from BSC: " At Tuesday's meeting, it was unanimously agreed that we would not provide a patrol boat, mainly for three reasons. These boats are not really designed for being offshore in rough conditions, although they're mainly used for Mark laying. In the event of a bad situation, they could be called on for assistance. You really require a larger boat. It would be more seaworthy in such conditions. We all understand that a perfect sailing day can very quickly deteriorate into a dangerous one. There is a potential for injury to a crew member. Every sport has its risks, but this is one we would rather avoid. There's also a possibility that the patrol boat itself could be badly damaged or even written off." It is a shame, as we've gone to them year after year after year. However, we do probably still need a boat of some description for the distance marks and also the photographer mainly. KC asked if anyone had any contacts or boats they could use that would be suitable.

JEB said that he would make enquiries with Downs Sailing Club but was not hopeful.

On the sponsorship front, we have got two possibilities for gold sponsors. KC is meeting with Shepherd Neame On the 15th of April or 13th of April, and St Lawrence College has actually come back saying They have had a changeover of staff, which is why things taken a while. They are keen to become a gold sponsor. Also, James Bradley has a friend who is keen on becoming a sponsor at one level or another. He has an IT company based in London. It is possible he would want to do is come down here and do corporate diving. The problem is, again, we don't have a caterer unless they want to bring their own caterer down. Certainly, sponsorship is looking more hopeful than it did.

There was a discussion about the cost of the different levels of sponsorship. LM offered to reach out to Barratts at Westwood Cross.

Navigation School: No Report

Academy: The Commodore said that Danielle was organising a meeting for the Academy committee. There was a short discussion about life jackets and it was agreed that, when the Academy students were ready to go on the water, the life jackets would be checked and certificated.

Social Media: KC said social media is just ongoing. we have been advertising for the various job candidates and we will also start advertising the quiz nights heavily. Ramsgate Town Council magazine have been writing to KC asking if we want to advertise in the town council magazine. This generally does not produce any results.

Membership. Okay. As of yesterday morning, we have 219 full members, 16 trial members, seven crew members and five academy members making a total of 247. 2 new people trial members and 1 full member, Peter Schawyer, for approval tonight. No resignations

AOB.

- a. **250 Club:** JEB said the 200 club is now the 127 Club. This is due to just a lot of people dying, resigning, or just general wastage. There is a continuing problem with people signing up with their banks for standing orders. I have 2 applications sitting on my desk. I have phoned them to set the standing orders up and they just don't do it. As we have only 127 members and I am going to have to reduce the prizes. Each month the prizes will be £100, £50 and £25. There will be no roll over and the year end prizes will be £1000 and £500. That will give us an approximate profit to the club of about £1,500 to £2,000. There was a short discussion exploring the ways to promote the 250(127) club and ways to make it easier to pay. Further discussions will take place off-line
- b. The Commodore issued a statement and distributed documentation pertaining to recent meetings and communications between the Non-Executive Directors and himself to the General Committee.
- c. NC asked about the possibility of turning the entire club into a trust and was asked to produce a report on the matter for the next GCM.

DONM. Next meeting Monday 17th April at 1930hrs.

Meeting finished: 21:17