

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the Pavilion Bisley

on Saturday 23rd February 2013 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Dr R Pizer

Members: Mr G Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Mrs ID Bennett
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr CM Brooks
Mr A Bullen
Dr A Cargill-Thompson
Mr JH Carmichael
Lt Col ARK Clayton
Mr PR Coley
Mr DGF Evans
Mr MG Farnan
Mr C Farr
Mr NJ Francis
Mr G Gilpin
Mr J Harris
Mr P Hobson
Mr K Hocking
Mr J Kynoch
Mr G Larcombe
Mr MF Martel
Mr J Miller
Mr K Nash
Mr AJD Saunders
Mr I Shirra Gibb
Mr S Wallis
Mr J Warburton
Mr DD Watt
Mr WDC Wilcox
Mr RHF Wills

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs HL Webb - Membership Secretary
Mrs G Thatcher - Office Manager

Apologies for absence: Mr T Bobbet, Col W G C Bowles, Wg Cdr DP Calbert, Maj SB Fraser, Maj T Higham, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr JA Horton, Mr P Hunter, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr CN McEachran, Cmdr MJC Magan, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr CC Mallet, Mrs DC Meredith, Mr R Neighbour, Col WJ O'Leary, Mrs K Robertson, Brig J Smales, Mr D Spittles, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr G Trembath, Sqn Ldr P Upham, Mr P Watkins, Mr MJ Wood, Mr DG Young.

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular Mr A Mercer, the new Chief Executive. Hoped that everyone would find an opportunity to talk to him and explain any concerns about the NRA.

The initial phase of the restructuring is now over. 10 staff retired, 10 made redundant, 12 resigned. Total of 32 out of 68 have left the NRA in 2011/12. 18 new staff have commenced employment, some of which are contractors. Nett loss of 14 people at present.

The restructuring was necessary and more extensive than expected and clearly mistakes were made. Important to say that all Trustees supported the restructuring 100%, including Trustees who came in half way through the process.

The Council had been unable to provide as much information as they would have liked as the restructuring was mainly about staff, but now entering a new phase. They will look at reviewing interaction between staff and volunteers. They expect to keep General Council better informed and more engaged.

Chairman requested that if GC members had any concerns about existing staff please raise with Andrew Mercer or Chairman only.

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G311 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7th SEPTEMBER 2012

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 7th September 2012 were received.

Matters arising

G291: (Minutes of General Council meeting held on 9 February)
Follow up to the question concerning the wording of the minute covering NRA staff being on General Council.

The Chairman confirmed further thought had been given to the question but it was felt that no changes should be made from the way they are now. The current position is that the current contract signed by staff states they are unable to become members of General Council.

G286: A question was asked regarding the Bisley Live income figure. The Chairman confirmed that the NRA are unable to sue Westech as the company has gone bust. The question regarding suing the guarantor company, GSA in Singapore – advice from the solicitors is because we didn't get a signature from GSA on the contract, we are unable to do so.

Regarding the instruction given to NSC, D Frank did send an email on 29th November in which instructions were given to NSC to get the GSA signature. That did not happen. Now looking to see if it would be possible to sue the staff concerned. Still awaiting clear advice on how to proceed.

M Farnan raised the point that a member of Trustees should have checked a signature was received on the contract. Chairman confirmed in hindsight yes, but not done.
G299: Operational Update

The question surrounding Shooter Certification Cards. The DLRSC who were expected to make a decision last Autumn, failed to do so in November, January. However possible they may make a decision in April 2013.

G300: AGM 2012 - Matters arising

Matt Ensor tribunal decided against the NRA. Still waiting court hearing date for financial award settlement figure.

Graham Gold – solution has been reached and compromise agreement signed and sum of money paid over.

MoD – still in the process of getting payment due by MoD. Meeting has been held with Col. Sykes and they confirm they owe the NRA money but they are currently in the process of persuading the Civil Servants to release the money to us. AM and NRA staff are working closely with Hythe Lodge to put a case together. Hope to resolve the matter. However, 2013/2014 bookings will be down on current levels, therefore less income will be received. Allowance has been made in the budget for this.

G306: The Council –minutes of 17th July & 16th August 2012

Kingsbury Range – no additional information on this subject. George Barnard asked if any additional information known – confirmed that considerable earthworks have taken place with main changes on A Range – raised the 100 yard and 200 yard firing points considerably. Have flattened the firing points at 500 yard and 600 yard points. Have cut down the range to 12 central lanes. Only 6 lanes now at 600 yards.

Woffington Lodge –Chairman confirmed we are now back in negotiation over lease. Hope satisfactory conclusion will be reached. AM confirmed that terms have been agreed with Nigel Cole-Hawkins and now in hand of solicitors and lease should be signed in due course.

No other items/matters arising.

G312 FINANCE

Chairman confirmed regular management accounts now being produced each month. Accounts for end Dec 2012 show a loss of £135k. Total Income £300k higher than budgeted. Total Cost of Sales £170k less than budgeted. Overheads are £500k higher than budgeted – headline numbers are Legal & Professional costs £230k; Finance & IT £230k; HR £33k. Most are one-off costs due to restructuring and main contributory reason to the loss.

Chris Farr requested that a summary of financial information be provided to General Council prior to meeting. Chairman agreed.

John Miller asked whether those high run rates are to continue. Chairman confirmed it is just this period. Audited accounts will show a number of other issues which need resolving, including the VAT issue. Discussions have been held with Mike Blythe in February 2013 and will now carry on with the auditors. It is believed correct method followed in terms of split between Charity and Commercial up until 2011.

Guy Larcombe asked who had taken over from M Blythe. AM confirmed that at the time of previous meeting, Brian Cottrell was Head of Support Services. Ray Hutchings took over the position at end January 2013 and is now dealing with the VAT issue. AM believes that the team now in place will be able to take the financials forward positively.

Clarification was requested around the individual professional fees/rates charged per hour were agreed prior to work being undertaken as a considerable amount more than originally forecast. AM believes that agreement was made prior to the work being carried out.

Alex Cargill-Thompson requested clarification on how the NRA is going to be monitoring the time spent by staff on various issues. AM confirmed that this is something that is being looked at and will be implemented fully once a complete understanding of what happens here at Bisley is understood by the new management team, but not a priority for 2013.

Chairman raised the subject of monies paid to Derrick Mabbott and Russell Neighbour as this will appear in the Audited Accounts. Payment authorised by the Charity Commission to DM was £102k per year plus expenses (c.£120k in total). Russell Neighbour as a contractor received c.£68k including expenses.

Guy Larcombe asked for some headlines on what RN had achieved in his time. Chairman confirmed the following – lease issues including HAC tender process; Anderby Lodge; Old Bisley Gun Club; Torpedo Shed roof; The Cottage dilapidations. Electronic targets; building relationship with CNC; Sniper Training; Use of Melville and Cheylsmore ranges. Reviewed commercial opportunities for police training and use of Sniper Tower on Stickledown. Review potential for lodges. Silver Room refurbishment. Licence compliance issues on caravans; Reviewed management targets and personal development for staff in Clays; Title to Old Sewerage works; three staff appeals.

AM believes the contributions RN has made will bear fruit over time. AM also confirmed that we have enough information from RN now he has left the NRA which will allow us to review the on-going leases reviews.

Chairman confirmed a large amount of work is being undertaken on leases and backdated monies will be coming in following reviews being done. Chairman recorded how very grateful he was to Richard Bailie for all the work undertaken to date and on-going on the leases.

Chairman stated that the 2013 budget has been looked at and confirmed that subscription costs have not been increased. General increase of 6% across the board, except for the Imperial Meeting which has an increase in charges of 2½%

Staff reviews have been undertaken and an increase has been given to staff. However, not a blanket increase, allowing poorly paid members of staff to be brought up to flat minimum wage of £8 per hour (previously £6.50 per hour).

AM confirmed that we have been able to create a better working environment for all staff and have been able to recruit a housekeeping team with specific remit for ablutions in order to make the site feel loved.

Guy Larcombe commended AM on the changes which have been made to date. AM also confirmed that an Estate Management/maintenance programme is being put into place and will look at prioritising such things as filling in potholes, tidying up messy areas, car parking signage, roadways, ablution blocks, grass cutting etc. Meeting with planner next week to discuss some options.

AM confirmed he will look at mapping the site to understand what we have here in Bisley and how best to prioritise updating and improving the site.

Guy Larcombe asked whether it would be beneficial to advertise on the website what is being done. AM confirmed that he would like to do this but wanted to ensure a full realistic programme was in place prior to advertising it to the full membership.

Chairman recorded his astonishment at what has happened over the last 4 years as Chairman. The organisation was not fit for purpose and Chairman wants to put forward and discuss a possible new process for electing new trustees with the right skill sets. We have been unable to get volunteers with the right skills from the membership to join as Trustees and hope this will change in the future.

No other questions raised.

G313 MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE (G302)

The minutes of the Membership Committee meeting of 17th July were received and there were no matters arising.

The minutes of the Membership Committee meeting of 26th October were received. A question was raised during that meeting by Steve Wallis as to what the Committee were there for collectively and what skill sets were there and what were needed. Following that discussion a further two candidates have been put forward for election which will increase the skill set and increase support to members.

SW also confirmed an excellent working relationship with Richard Blackmore has been established. A number of new initiatives have been implemented by RB including Sporting Rifle events which is increasing the membership; visit to the British Shooting show which has increased contacts within the trade therefore increasing income.

Safe Shooting Audits are being looked at and RB is contacting c.5 clubs per month to ensure compliance. This is on-going.

Membership numbers are up on last year's figures – currently 6,941. 85 members have not renewed to date this year but these are being followed up.

A new electronic email bulletin has also been created and being sent out to members on a monthly basis which has been well received.

No further questions raised.

G314 SHOOTING COMMITTEE (G303)

The minutes of the Shooting Committee meeting of 6th September were received.

John Carmichael asked whether there was an update on the Electronic Targets. AM confirmed that discussions were underway with Haering and we are awaiting feedback on whether they can be fixed and work correctly. If they can then the NRA will be paying for the targets. If they do not work then the NRA will be expecting a full refund.

No further questions were raised.

A verbal report of the minutes of the Shooting Committee meeting of 31st January were received.

Firing Points - have received a partial report on the state of the firing points from Martin Townsend. Three more reports to do which should be done within the next month or two.

Wind Flags – new set have been ordered and will be installed in June ready for Inter-Counties and Imperial meetings.

Number boards – boards have been replaced on Century for maintenance reasons due to closeness to mantlet so allowing access behind. Aware of visibility problems with new boards which is being addressed.

The Handbook is largely complete. Karen Robertson is dealing with final editing/production of index and sending to printers.

Updates to handbook include Rule 212 covering mats – recommend by Trustees that soft material can now be placed under the mat so long as it doesn't provide artificial rest or support. May be revised next year if any issues arise this year.

John Bloomfield requested that everyone pay particular attention to the radio messages in the Bible which have now changed.

RCO Structure – work on-going to restructure training programme and supervision of RCOs by Membership & Training department.

Staff appointments on ranges. Peter Turner has been made up to CRO of Century Range. Tony Clayton is now CRO on Stickledown. Doug Watt has been 'semi-retired' to doing match rifle on Stickledown.

Commonwealth Shooting Federation Championship taking place on 22nd-24th July for fullbore only being held here at Bisley with 50-60 attendees.

No further questions were raised.

G315 –FUTURE OF TARGET RIFLE – ENGLISH XX REPORT

The Chairman raised the question of appointing a Committee to follow up the results of the English XX report on the future of Target Rifle.

In-depth discussion held around the results of the report, including cost of ammo across all competitions including the Imperial, maintaining good relationships across all disciplines, clubs and members, engaging and retaining young shooters.

John Warburton believes English XX should be applauded for taking the initiative to ask the views of their Membership. Believes a strategy should be in place for the next 10-15 years to look at the future of the sport and challenges faced by the NRA to maximise membership potential.

AM confirmed that a draft development and strategic plan would be submitted to the Trustees by third quarter of this year for both NRA & Bisley which would encompass many of the issues discussed today.

It was agreed that the current initiatives in place including Young Shooters Club and on-going discussions with TARA/CCRS should continue.

Decision was taken that Shooting Committee and Membership Committee and staff to come forward with some suggestions as soon as possible with a plan to cover all disciplines.

G316 - COUNCIL

The minutes of the Council meeting of 16th August were received and there were no matters arising.

The minutes of the Council meeting of 7th September were received and there were no matters arising.

The minutes of the Council meeting of 4th October were received and there were no matters arising.

The minutes of the Council meeting of 13th December were received and there were no matters arising.

A verbal report of the Council meeting of 5th February were received.

Additional items not previous covered during this meeting were reported.

AM confirmed that the CNC are looking to expand their use of the ranges at Bisley on Short Siberia and Melville ranges. This will produce an increase in revenue, but reduce short range availability on Short Siberia range Monday to Friday. An additional 100 yard range will be put on Butt 19 on Century and be available mid Spring. CNC have made an agreement for use from April 2013 through to March 2014.

NSC – AM has been appointed a Director; Ray Hutchings has been appointed Company Secretary. Russell Neighbour will be a Non-Executive until June 2013. Mik Maksimovic and Debbie Meredith both step down as from today.

Remuneration Committee – John Webster has been appointed Chairman.

Publication of Council Minutes – have asked AM to look at creating a ‘members only’ section of the website where these can be published.

Risk Register – AM has produced a Risk Register for the audit in April. Chairman thanked AM for the work already completed on this.

Written Resolutions T1201; T1202; T1223; T1252 were all received.

Clarification was requested by Guy Larcombe on the positions held by Martin Chaza (Plumber) and Tina Blackledge (Clays Caterer).

G317 – REVIEW OF SELECTION, APPOINTMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF NRA TRUSTEES PRESENTATION

Following a presentation by the Chairman to discuss how NRA Trustees should be selected, appointed and assessed, the Chairman requested feedback on how the GC members viewed how the NRA met with the hallmarks of a successful charity using a scale of green (good), orange (needs to do better), red (bad).

Hallmark 1 – Clear about its purposes and direction Orange (mostly neutral)

Hallmark 2 – a strong board Orange (mostly neutral)

Hallmark 3 – fit for purpose Orange (mostly neutral)

Hallmark 4 – Learning and Improving Green (mostly agreed)

Hallmark 5 – Financially sound and prudent Red (mostly disagreed)

Hallmark 6 – Accountable and transparent Orange/Red (equally neutral or disagreed)

Following discussion, it was agreed that all GC members should send suggestions for changes to the selection, appointment and assessment of trustees to John Warburton by Easter 2013 which will then be amalgamated with the Chairman's ideas before a discussion taking place at the next GC meeting in June.

The chairman proposed a small committee to review proposals consisting of himself, John Webster and John Warburton and two others. It was discussed that any potential committee members should have experience of appointing directors in small companies to help decisions to be made by the committee.

G318 – BRITISH SHOOTING (G307)

Period of 2013-2017, British Shooting has been given £3m to select and train the Olympic British Shooting team.

£1.1m has been given for the whole sport plan in England, concentrating on disabled shooting and the talent pathway, identifying promising youngsters pushing them through to the Olympics.

No merger of UK Sport or Sport England will now take place.

Shooting remains a core sport for the Olympics for 2020.

British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) have agreed to train five people in dealing with the Press. AM will be one of those. NSRA, CPSA and two other shooting bodies are having one person trained.

Increase in Firearms Certificate costs. BSSC willing to accept an inflation increase. Prices go from £50 to £69 and the Police want another £23.

Discussions are on-going between Home Office and BSSC and Police regarding house checks on firearms before having certificates renewed.

G319 ELECTIONS TO THE COUNCIL & COMMITTEES

The following were appointed, co-opted, and or elected.

- (a) Dr Robin Pizer was re-elected to the General Council as Chairman
37 Yes Votes
9 No Votes
1 Abstained
- (b) Mr Derek Lowe was elected to the Council as Treasurer
44 Yes Votes
2 No Votes
1 Abstained
- (c) Mr Gary Alexander was elected to the Council as Trustee
38 Yes Votes
8 No Votes
1 Abstained
- (d) Mr Barry Morgan was elected to the Council as Trustee
44 Yes Votes
3 No Votes
0 Abstained
- (e) Mr John Miller was elected to the Membership Committee
31 Yes Votes
3 No Votes
1 Abstained
- (f) Mr Taff Wilcox was elected to the Membership Committee
32 Yes Votes
1 No Votes
2 Abstained

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Sarah Bunch and Peter Turner who had acted as scrutineers for these elections.

G320 - ELECTION TO GENERAL COUNCIL

Elections are due to take place in July 2013.

AM to write to all members regarding vacancies available for nominations.

G321 – DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE DECISION MAKING

Neil Francis raised his concern at the consistency of decisions made by the Disciplinary Committee. NF would like to know how decisions are reached and how different levels of punishment are levied.

David Evans responded that when decisions are made on the appropriate penalty, the Committee have the benefit of having a detailed register which sets out previous decisions and penalties given at those times. Committee always takes great care to reach decisions which are consistent and appropriate to the individual circumstances.

Chris Farr requested that as the decisions of Disciplinary are, to date, a matter of public record and as the committee has an historical digest of these decisions, a summary without confidential details be made available to interested members of GC. It would save a great deal of wasted effort in trawling back through the journals to collate the data.

G322 - AOB

John Bloomfield presented a trophy which the Association has acquired through eBay. Inscription reads "Earl Spencer's Cup, won by GB Thornton of Cheltenham College, for the best score shot of the School 11's, Wimbledon 1864". The trophy is one of the earliest individual NRA trophies known to exist.

Martin Townsend had negotiated strongly to secure the trophy for £1860.

JB wanted to express his thanks to Karen Robertson for locating the trophy and bringing it to our attention.

The trophy will be kept in the Museum.

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm

Chairman

DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

Friday 14 th June 2013	2.00pm	Bisley Pavilion
Followed by the AGM	5.30pm	Bisley Pavilion
Friday 6 th September 2013	2.00pm	Bisley Pavilion