

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the NRA Pavilion
on Friday 16th June 2017 from 3.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Mr JGM Webster (Chairman)

Members: Mrs ID Bennett
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr CM Brooks
Mr AM Bullen
Dr A Cargill Thompson
Mr PR Coley
Mr M Cotillard
Mr DC Crispin
Mr CES Dickenson
Mr HF Dunton
Mr J Harris
Wg Cdr CJ Hockley
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr DR Lamb
Mr GAE Larcombe
Mr D Lowe
Mr MF Martell
Mr TS McDowell
Mr JF Miller
Mr J Morgan-Hosey
Mr K Nash
Mr R Roberts
Mrs K Robertson
Mr P Ryder
Mr R Sayer
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Mr IR Thomson
Sqn Ldr P Upham
Mr MP Watkins
Dr AP Wolpe

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Secretary to Meeting
Mr D Lacey - Trustee
Mr PAE Charlton - Disciplinary Committee (Lay member)

Apologies for absence: Mr GK Alexander, Mr GV Barnard, Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Maj R Bruce, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Mr M Charlton, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr DGF Evans, Sqn Ldr A Fox, Mr NJ Francis, Dr N Fyfe, Mr GMLN Gilpin, Mr J Harper-Smith, Mr K Hocking, Mr JA Horton, Mr A Hunter, Mr D Kent, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr T Lehman, Mr M Magan, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr CN McEachran, Col. Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mr AJD Saunders, Brig J Smales, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr PDC Turner, Mr G Trembath, Dr J Warburton, Mr MJ Wood, Mr D Young.

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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G476 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as noted above.

G477 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 18TH FEBRUARY 2017

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 18th February 2017 were received.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting and duly approved.

G478 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 18TH FEBRUARY 2017

Guy Larcombe (GL) asked for an update on the release of the Proof House's final report on Rule 150.

The Chairman confirmed that the report belongs to the Proof House and it is their report to release, not the NRA's. Some additional gauges have been ordered for further testing and those have taken more time than expected to arrive; so the additional testing being undertaken by the Proof House has been delayed.

Paul Upham raised an error from the previous minutes that stated the RAF is on rack rent and wanted it minuted that the RAF is still on ground rent. The Chairman remarked that the rental lease document indeed states that it is a ground rent; however, in within the lease, the demise is defined as both the ground and the buildings, and it is on these terms that the rent is assessed. So both statements can be said to be correct.

Charles Dickenson (CD) asked again whether the guidance from the Charity Commission on mixed motive investing is now available. The Chairman replied that he has not seen the guidance yet; both the NRA's lawyers and the accountants to be proposed as the NRA's new auditors have been asked and were unaware of any publication. The Chairman will be happy to ask the Charity Commission for an idea of when the publication will be.

Alex Cargill-Thompson (ACT) thanked everyone who was involved in getting the minutes of the meeting distributed within the agreed 10 days of the meeting. ACT asked the Trustees for their perspective on how the process worked. The Chairman responded that he personally felt that the draft minutes had been circulated quickly, and requested comments came back in a timely fashion, and he thanked everyone for that. The minutes were not radically changed, not least because the minutes are recorded and lengthy minutes are produced. Any errors would be recorded by postscript if necessary. The process seems to have worked very well. It was agreed that the process would continue within the agreed 10 day turnaround.

Steve McDowell (SMcD) asked for an update on Site 103 with regards to the withdrawal of the hotel development application and whether anything further was planned for the site. Ken Nash (KN) of the NSRA who own Site 103 responded that work is ongoing and there is no concrete progress to report on at this time.

No further matters were raised.

G479 – THE COUNCIL

The Chairman gave a verbal report of the Council meetings held on 22nd April and 16th June 2017.

One key topic was the change of auditor. The membership received notification at last year's AGM that the NRA would be putting out to tender a request for new auditors which is standard operating procedure for organisations of our type.

Saffrey Champness have been our auditors since 2010. The request for new auditors was no reflection on Saffrey's performance and they were invited to re-tender for the audit. Andrew Mercer and Ray Hutchings put together a tender document which was sent to a number of audit firms and of those who responded, two new firms, along with Saffrey Champness, were invited to make presentations. Hays McIntyre were selected following that process. The company is a 'single office' firm with 32 partners and 200 staff members and are the top charity advisor to the 3000 leading charities in the UK. They audit over 600 charities and a number of sports NGBs including British Rowing and UK Athletics: they also audit a number of sports foundations and charities. It was felt that they were the best fit for the organisation and they will be proposed at the AGM.

Other matters covered included amendments to the Second Schedule which will be discussed in more detail later in this meeting, NRA assets and the Pavilion, and various works on the ranges as well as Home Office Approval fees.

At the most recent meeting, a discussion was held about the article in the Times and Dr Pizer's letter with regards to the Artists Rifle Clubhouse. The Chairman remarked that there are misrepresentations in both of those documents. Andrew Mercer has reported the facts from the NRA's point of view in that we believe the litigation is over as we have settled and agreed with the Artists, which is not what is stated on the JustGiving website page set up by Moss Mustafa. The final offer of rent for the Artist's Rifle Clubhouse as put on the website was also nothing like the final offer made by the NRA which is very disappointing. Also disappointing is the fact that the NRA's former chairman would not only again break the Trustees Code of Conduct by publishing a confidential minute in the public domain, but that he completely misrepresented the conclusion of that particular meeting.

SMcD remarked that the Chairman does have a right to reply in the newspaper. The Chairman replied that he felt it inappropriate to render any response through the newspaper and would rather make any response at the NRA's AGM. SMcD agreed with the Chairman's view.

The Chairman also informed the meeting that the NRA are looking at their reach outside of Bisley. Unfortunately we had another unsuccessful try at securing the Pentre Barracks range in Wales. The NRA are also looking at other possibilities including making contributions to help develop a range in Yorkshire and also looking at a range complex in Dorset. The Chairman is pleased to say that all of these are indications of the NRA's wish to increase range access for members around the UK. Congratulations were offered to Nic Couldrey for all his hard work and efforts in securing contacts and opportunities on behalf of the NRA.

Harald Dunton (HD) asked whether there was any update on the incident which occurred on Cheshunt range.

AM remarked that on completion of remedial works the smallbore range would reopen. The wider consequences with the police are still being worked on. We are in the process of drafting advice notices to operators of private ranges to share with Clubs and Ranges to help them understand the safe operating procedures that are implemented at Bisley and how these could be used for self-certification of safety at their own ranges.

John Kynoch asked when the Disciplinary Committee elections had taken place as he had not heard any results. GT to confirm a letter had been sent to John Kynoch.**

*** Postscript: The following members were elected as Legal Members of the Disciplinary Committee following the election: Gwynne Jarvis and Leslie Christy. The following members were elected as Lay Members of the Disciplinary Committee: Paul Charlton and Anthony de Launay. All unsuccessful nominees were informed by letter from the Secretary General.*

No further questions were raised.

G480 – FINANCE

The Treasurer presented his report to the meeting.

An article has been published in the Spring Journal and DL will also be making a speech to the AGM later today.

The finances for 2016 resulted in a turnover of £5.73M, up from £5.48M in 2015. Capital expenditure was just over £700k, bringing the three year total to £1.8M eclipsing the level of £1m the Trustees had set as an objective for the period. The cash balance was £709k, higher than that of the previous year as the membership fees are now received before year end and there was less ammunition stock at the end of the year. The NRA have a policy of a minimum cash balance of £200k which is both a defensive measure against anything unforeseen, but also allows us to take on opportunities at short notice, such as bidding for Pentre Barracks. 2016's surplus was £108k and this year's budget is for £230k, along with a capex of £650k.

2017's performance to date shows us slightly ahead of budget from a surplus point of view. Cash balance is just over £350k. Net current assets are negative at c.£280k reflecting capex to date.

DL expressed his vote of thanks to the Support Services team. They provide the management and statutory accounts very promptly which is much appreciated.

G481 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The Chief Executive presented his report to the General Council members.

The Phoenix Meeting ran very well with number of cards shot and competitors up year on year. The ability to grow the meeting is going to be dependent on having sufficient range space as well as having enough Range Officers and RCOs to be able to conduct the meeting safely.

The Arms Fair was moved into a clear span pavilion on Sit Pet Lawn which worked well.

The 'Meet the Clubs' day, hosted by the Membership Committee, was held in the Pavilion and went well with a good turnout. The NRA will ensure they extend the invitations to clubs further north to allow them to represent themselves. We will look to hosting such an event on an annual basis.

Work on the Pavilion is progressing slower than expected due to unforeseen issues being uncovered such as leaking roofs, questionable plumbing, mysterious cabling and asbestos under the ballroom floor. This is delaying works and adding to the costs but we are making steady progress. The training team have moved into the building, along with the Commercial, Housekeeping and Range Office back room teams.

The tarmac contractors have been booked to undertake work on various areas with potholes on camp on 27th and 28th June.

AM also reported that there has been a steady deterioration in the bespoke software used to book ranges which has caused a large amount of frustration amongst the staff and equally to members trying to book the ranges. We have invested a large amount of time both in terms of the contractor and our IT staff and have failed to make any progress. To that end we have commissioned a new system which is being written now, and will be ready for testing in August. Until then we have reverted back to the paper system.

The service we have offered to our members has not been as good as we would have liked and AM has issued his apologies to various people who have complained, with justifiable reasons.

GL asked whether the NRA had any recourse against the people that provided the system which is declining. AM responded that we do not.

SMcD asked AM what 10 tonnes of lead/copper was worth to the association (following the clean up of Century Range butts). AM confirmed that the price of the scrap lead/copper was £500 per tonne and that would pay for most of the screening, but not all of it.

John Miller (JM) asked when the training armoury would become active for the training team in the Pavilion. AM confirmed that we are waiting for the main armoury in the ballroom area to be completed because there will be one overriding alarm system put in place and this will be commissioned for both armouries at the same time, rather than incurring additional cost by doing them separately.

JM also asked whether any investment will be made in the training firearms as three of the five firearms used on the last course JM ran failed. AM remarked that there is a budget for training firearms and that should be spent. The Chairman added that training is very important to the NRA with more and more probationary members coming on board, as well as implementing training courses throughout the regions, and investment will be made in these areas.

Charles Dickenson (CD) asked whether the new booking system will allow members to see what is available at the point of booking. AM confirmed this would be the case, but that manual confirmation of the booking would still be involved. The Chairman added that until this new system is actioned, the process will continue to be manual and there may continue to be some frustrations, but the NRA are trying to ensure the traditional and usual bookings are maintained on the system for the calendar year.

GL asked for some feedback on the new firing point trailer. AM confirmed that although the trailer arrived in time for the good weather, it has been used for a couple of corporate events and by some clubs, and the feedback has been positive. We need to work out how to place it, how to book it and we will be rolling that out as the season progresses into the winter months. JM asked how much it would cost to book. AM confirmed at present it is free of charge.

Karen Robertson (KR) asked with regards to the new booking system, as a club secretary who makes a lot of bookings, when is the better time to make bookings, when the new system comes online, or for testing? AM confirmed that the staff are already working on the 2018 bookings so to make bookings from now onwards.

Chris Hockley (CH) asked whether any input could be given on the design of the system by members/club secretaries. AM confirmed that there wouldn't but any suggestions could be forwarded to Rick Wells for consideration.

Peter Coley (PC) asked whether the floor of the shower blocks by the target shed could be addressed as there are lots of large cracks in the floor which are dangerous. AM confirmed he would look at that.

PC also wanted to make an observation regarding the electronic targets they used when visiting Jersey recently. The Silver Mountain targets were really good and the NRA should consider them for Bisley. AM confirmed that the Silver Mountain electronic targets were very good, but the NRA would not be buying them as they did not perform as accurately as the other systems tested. The Chairman added that the Silver Mountain system has an acknowledged problem recognising subsonic or trans-sonic bullets at long range which is not suitable for Bisley. The software that is used to portray the fall of shot can be developed for use on any system. Accuracy at long range is the critical issue.

David Crispin declared an interest as the UK importer of Silver Mountain electronic targets. DC confirmed that the Silver Mountain system did not work as well as it can only detect supersonic bullets. It works well at 900 yards but not at 1000 yards as some rounds are not supersonic at that distance. It is a disadvantage of the system.

HD added that his club had tested the Silver Mountain system at Barton Road and were very pleased with the results – surpassing HD's expectations at 1000 yards. That was in May when it was warm and it is HD's understanding that in colder months of the year, rounds don't travel quite as quickly.

SMcD asked whether a presentation could be made at Shooting Committee to see the new range booking system before it goes live. AM remarked that the system wouldn't be launched cold and that having some critical users test the system would be a good thing to do.

Charles Brooks asked what the plans for the old range office and armoury are once the Pavilion has been completed. AM remarked that better office accommodation for the Membership Team was one priority. The Chairman added that the main building would be used for a series of more formal meeting rooms to host meetings. The NRA are also thinking of what to do with the Museum and the archives and that will form part of the plans.

CD asked whether any additional toilets are planned for Stickledown during the Imperial meeting. AM responded that nothing additional is planned imminently. There are long term plans to install some toilets up by the clock tower, but these are being knocked back at the moment. AM hasn't heard any material complaints about the shortage of toilets on Stickledown.

HD asked for an update on the safety incident with the shotgun and what the repercussions are. AM confirmed that there are those who are looking to file a personal accident claim against someone. It has been a career changing injury to a serving police officer and there is action being taken between the shooter, the person who lent him the shotgun, the club that organised the competition and the NRA who provided the range. The NRA are proceeding with care because there could well be a substantial claim. There is a risk that the NRA's insurance policy may be affected, but it is a disputable claim at the present.

No further questions were raised.

G482 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the 21st January were presented to General Council.

James Harris (JH) then gave a verbal report of the meeting held on 19th May 2017.

The main items arising from that meeting were that John Bloomfield was appointed Vice Chairman of Shooting Committee and will continue to report in JH's absence. JH confirmed that David Calvert (DC) had stepped down to concentrate on the Palma Team. JH thanked DC for all his assistance as Vice Chairman over the years and wished him the best of luck with the Palma team.

Entries to the 2017 Imperial meeting are on par with 2016. Scrutineering will be in place at the meeting with details being posted as and when applicable.

The new batch of GGG is selling well and is shooting well.

There has been a proposal to have a special anniversary 150th Meeting in 2019 which will involve as many disciplines as possible. Any ideas for ways to celebrate and for possible legacy initiatives should be emailed to JH in the first instance.

The handbooks have been published. New for this year is the Civilian Service Rifle and Practical Rifle handbook which has been separated from the main bible and is in the same format as the Gallery Rifle & Pistol handbook. Thanks for this hard work are due to John Morgan-Hosey and Iain Robertson.

There is an intention to separate the publication dates for the various handbooks where applicable for each discipline. The GR&P handbook is published in January, Target Shotgun & CSR handbook to be published at the start of their season. It will not affect the workings of the Shooting Committee, but will make it easier for meeting directors and competitors.

The outstanding item of TR target dimensions was discussed at length. The sub committee, lead by Charles Dickenson, are still working on the data and we hope to have an outline report in July which will be discussed by Shooting Committee later this year.

GL asked whether any further progress had been made regarding the use of muzzle brakes. JH confirmed that testing is being conducted with a view to noise levels, disruption and the possible allocation of a marker flag by the NRA Range Office to indicate to other shooters that a muzzle brake is being used and has been agreed by the professional staff.

Alistair Bullen (AB) asked whether muzzle brakes on the firing points are being monitored at present which haven't been agreed by the Range Office. AM stated that more monitoring is required and the idea of a flag being issued by the range office will certainly help the monitoring of firing points more easily and should hopefully help discourage members using muzzle brakes without prior permission.

ACT asked whether the move to the new online booking system will give consideration to earmarking particular sessions when muzzle brakes will be allowed. AM stated that the use of muzzle brakes should be pre-notified upon booking so the range office staff can allocated the targets in an appropriate manner. We need greater visibility of who is bringing muzzle brakes and have the ability to ask them to be removed if not notified prior to booking the target.

No further questions were raised.

G483 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

In Mik Maksimovic's absence, AM reported that the Committee had held a productive meeting. Matters covered including the churn rate of lost members, disparity of costs for meeting membership, and the matter of club administration for clubs who serve young shooters. It was decided that Richard Stebbings of BYSA would be approached for his advice.

AM reported progress on the negotiations to moderate the Home Office's proposed club fees. There was also a lively discussion regarding the age limit for shooting at Bisley and some suggestion that we should consider allowing parents and guardians to bring children for supervised shoots. That has caused some concern amongst the professional staff and we are working up some proposals to discuss with the Membership Committee at their next meeting.

Discussion was held regarding the preparation for the 'Meet the Clubs' event which resulted in 52 new members for the clubs that attended. The clubs gave very positive feedback for the event. JM offered a vote of thanks to Georgina Thatcher and her team who set everything up for the event.

David Crispin (DC) remarked that there had been previous discussion regarding doing away with affiliate membership and converting everyone to be full members of the NRA. AM remarked that is a subject which is being considered with care as part of the three year strategic review. There are suggestions that the NRA are being too generous to members of affiliated clubs to the detriment of the full paying NRA members. This disparity needs to be addressed, particularly as the demands for range space increase.

DC remarked that dropping the cost of full membership would be helpful as we would be asking affiliated members to become full members so you would get the same amount of income for many more members. AM agreed with 50% of that argument.

The Chairman added that we need to be careful with how we proceed with this as it would be a very significant change which needs to be managed carefully.

HD remarked that of the 12 fullbore rifle clubs he knows in Suffolk, none of them book or use MoD ranges and as far as they are concerned they do not require anything other than the affiliation they have. The services supplied by the NRA are not applicable to them.

DC remarked that it is important to have the strength in numbers and people should want to support the sport they participate in and they would have advantages of insurance amongst other things as an NRA member.

The Chairman understands that and there is a whole range of things which need to be understood and fully socialised before any decision can be made.

CD added that the General Council's thinking can be very 'Bisley centric'. Shooting goes on in the regions and there are a lot of people out there who have never been to Bisley and never will, so the membership needs to reflect that and we need to be very careful not to alienate them by forcing them to become a member of an organisation which will give them no benefit unless they do visit Bisley. The NRA's expansion into the regions will address that in the future, but not at present.

Paul Charlton (PC) made an observation that training will be paramount to being able to increase the membership to the numbers being discussed and this will need to be nation-wide.

KR asked whether anyone has volunteered to run the Young Shooters Fund. AM confirmed that no-one has put themselves forward. KR will send all her YSF information to AM for the future incumbent.

KR then asked whether the BYSA could be considered for assistance from the Young Shooters Fund as they are doing extremely well and are very enthusiastic but are struggling for setting up events from a cash point of view. AM asked that Richard Stebbings arrange a meeting with AM to discuss any assistance required. AM added that there are a number of organisations who promote youth shooting and we need to be fair in the support we give everyone.

CB asked whether there were any minutes from the Membership Committee. AM confirmed that the minutes were still in draft format and would be agreed at the next meeting, prior to circulation.

G484 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

It was recorded that the following Elected Members of General Council under Second Schedule Rule 7(g) have been proposed for election:

Ordinary Members

JPS Bloomfield (GM2 SC)
N Brasier
Wg Cdr (Retd) DP Calvert MBE (GM3 SB3 SC2)
DC Crispin
P Hobson
SS Lohmann
BS Morgan
T Stewart

It was recorded that the following Elected Members of General Council under Second Schedule Rule 7(g) have been elected unopposed:

Regional Members

HRM Bailie – Northern Ireland
GV Barnard – East Midlands
B Ritchie – Scotland
Vacant – North Western

Shooting Discipline Members

E George – Gallery Rifle and Pistol
I Shirra-Gibb – 300 Metres
N McFarlane – Historic and Classic Arms

The Chairman recorded his congratulations to the Regional and Shooting Discipline Members and wished the nominees for the Ordinary Member positions the best of luck in the forthcoming election.

G485 – CASUAL VACANCY TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Dr AMW Cargill Thompson was unanimously elected as Match Rifle Representative following the announcement of a casual vacancy as per the Second Schedule, Rule 7g(xi).

KR asked who was being put forward for election as Deputy President at the AGM. The Chairman informed the meeting that unfortunately the candidate who had been approached for the position, Lord Dannatt, had to turn the offer down due to other commitments. The Chairman confirmed we would be looking at alternative people to invite and asked the meeting for any other suggestions to be put forward to him. It would certainly be good to have someone in place by the 150th anniversary meeting and someone who would be able to assist the Association in engaging with the Government in light of recent terrorist events, given the amount of assistance the NRA are providing to police forces via the training infrastructure at Bisley. This is very much aligned with the NRA's Royal Charter and charitable objectives around "Defence of the Realm".

G486 – SECOND SCHEDULE AMENDMENT – ELECTRONIC VOTING

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Trustees would like to put forward an amendment to the Second Schedule for presentation to the AGM, regarding electronic voting. The Chairman asked David Lacey to address the meeting with the proposals.

David Lacey (DLA) reported that the origin of this request was from the ever increasing cost of producing, handling, distributing and collating papers for annual elections. The last General Council election cost in the order of £18k. This could be better spent on electronic targets, fixing the floors of showers etc.

There were several options 1) go straight to all electronic voting, 2) or a combination of electronic and postal voting, the latter seeming to be more reflective of the NRA membership. 8% of the current membership do not have an email address.

It is suggested that the total voting process is fully electronic and those members without an email address would receive a postcard through the post informing them of an election and how to vote. Members would receive all the relevant CVs and instructions by email or by logging onto the relevant website and make their votes entirely online, thereby saving the association a considerable amount of time and money. An upcoming election would be communicated via the website and social media. Eventually it is believed the system would be fully automated as more and more members go electronic.

Ken Nash asked whether an electronic voting system would be secret as the current postal voting system is. AM confirmed that the company managing the system would have the information, but the NRA would not be informed until the results are complete, therefore it would remain secret to the association.

KR believes it is the right way to go, but has a concern that if someone feels they haven't had their vote or have been misrepresented, how will that be dealt with. The whole election would need to be run again if anything goes wrong. AM cannot give the answers to all the problems that may occur, but best endeavours will be given to ensure the process is followed.

ACT also welcomes the process of electronic voting. If a third party is used to process the voting process then the membership need to be informed of how the process works to ensure anonymity is not eroded. ACT would also like to state that one of his concerns regarding online voting is that everyone gets bombarded with emails these days and to miss the one important email is easy. Whereas post is more obvious, so communication is key. As the current proposal is written it raises questions.

AM understands the concerns and part of the process of going to electronic voting would be to investigate all these concerns before making a final decision. Today is about agreeing the principle to put forward to the AGM later today for agreement.

HD is also in favour and asked how would the Association verify that an electronic response to communication had been received effectively.

DLA responded that if any member were concerned that their electronic response had not been received, they would phone up to check it had been.

CD remarked that he has undertaken electronic voting through two organisations he is part of and they send a username and code to each individual and regular weekly reminders to vote so the communication works well and keeps people informed.

CB is in favour of electronic voting but is worried that the 8% of the membership who do not have email addresses will be disenfranchised and we cannot do that. DLa remarked that we wouldn't be disenfranchising people and they would be asked through a postcard to go online to vote.

AM also added that the cost to run an electronic vote would be £1,500-2,000 and that 75% of the eligible membership do not vote.

A vote was taken at the meeting and it was approved that the amendment for electronic voting would be put forward to the AGM.

The Chairman thanked DLa for his input.

G487 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

DC wanted to discuss the situations of how the lease renewals with the Artists and the North London Rifle Club have been handled with all the awkwardness and upset it has caused. DC would like to try and draw a line under the situation. DC's understanding is that the NRA and the Artists are going to arbitration to determine the amount of rent.

AM confirmed that the arbitration is already happening. AM added that on the 10th February 2017 terms of the lease were agreed and that was confirmed via Consent Order filed at court by both parties. That consent order agrees the terms of the lease and the main matter outstanding was the quantum of rent. Both parties agreed at that time that they would put their respective surveyors to work for a period of 3 weeks to agree the rent. Both parties had the option that after 3 weeks if an agreement hadn't been reached to refer the matter to an RICS arbitrator. The NRA waited 3 months and with broad agreement from the Artists the matter has been referred for arbitration. The surveyors are now busy with an RICS surveyor to reach agreement. AM believes there is no longer a dispute with the Artists; we have an agreed lease, we have an agreed procedure to determine the rent. When the rent is determined by the RICS arbitrator, the tenant should sign the lease as agreed and pays his back rent and we carry on.

DC understands that there is still something outstanding to do with the landlord's fixtures that is in dispute. AM responded that it has minimal impact on the rent and they are referred to in the lease. The tenant is making some fuss over this and the NRA are mystified why as it is not material to the question on rent. If there is an issue then that would be a matter for the RICS arbitrator to decide.

DC remarked that when they took on the building it was an empty shell without many landlord fixtures. The Chairman stated that a report from August 2002 states that the fixtures existed so to say that the building was an empty shell is incorrect. JPSB added that he went into the building in 2002 and it was certainly not an empty shell.

AM continued that specialist surveyors would state what would be considered as fixtures and fittings as part of the process. AM's simplistic view is that if a tenant fixes a boiler or a radiator that is fixed to the property and is therefore part of the landlord's fixtures and fittings. This needs to be handled by a professional property person, and will be by the RICS appointed arbitrator, not the NRA.

DC then asked how much does it cost to get the arbitrator to agree the rent level. AM responded that the arbitrator's rate is £350 per hour. DC has been told it is going to cost the Artists £20k to conduct this arbitration. AM responded that he believes the fee will be c.£10k-15k and is a joint and several liability. The arbitrator will make the decision as to whom he believes should pay the fee and will not release his award until the outstanding amount is settled.

DC believes that everything has got out of control and would like to see the NRA sit down with all the interested parties who are currently renewing such as the NLRC or up for renewal in the near future such as the LMRA and share the evidence of the process of renewing leases to give them a full understanding of why the association are moving from ground to rack rents and the impact it can have on the club houses. DC asked whether there is a way forward to avoid expensive arbitration and try to set some precedents for future leases when both sides can talk about leases and understand each other's points of view rather than involve an arbitrator.

AM responded that it would be wrong for people to get the impression that there are disputes on every lease renewal. There are some tenants finding the transition more difficult than others and it is fair to say that there has been a particular challenge with the Artists in terms of engaging in dialogue. There has been extensive dialogue with the North London Rifle Club. We are still some way from agreement but at least we are talking.

The reason why the Artists renewal has been so difficult is because it took over four years to come face to face with Moss Mustafa.

DC added that the NLRC and LMRA are going through the same thing and most of the dialogue is going on between solicitors which is racking up costs.

AM responded that is simply not true. There has been no solicitor to solicitor dialogue with the LMRA and with the NLRC there are some points of principle which the solicitors are opining on now. Part of the challenge has been the fact that we started the process with the NLRC in March last year and it took until August to have the first meeting.

DC asked that apart from crossing the 't's and crossing the 'i's, the biggest issue is the increase in rent and the size of the increase which hasn't been staggered over a period of years, but this is everyone's biggest problem and DC doesn't believe the NRA have done a good enough job in telling people why this has to happen, and getting people onside.

AM stated there was an offer made to the NLRC in terms of stepping the rent which was declined. AM and Richard Bailie (RB) have been at pains to reach agreement with terms for the lease renewal over numerous meetings and all variations, including offers to pay the rent quarterly in advance instead of annually, have all been rejected out of hand. The challenge is that despite the NRA's best efforts, the communication of offers and concessions haven't been well reported back to the NLRC's membership.

DC remarked that the problem is communication and dialogue. A lot of people feel they have been hit around the head by a big stick and people don't respond well to that kind of treatment. A lot more effort has to be made to resolve the situation more amicably. People are resorting to lawyers and legal fees as a last resort.

Reg Roberts (RR) remarked that it is very interesting that DC has been given a story by the Artists but hasn't been given the full story; the Chief Executive has just refuted what DC has said and has stated the process being followed by the NRA and yet DC doesn't accept.

DC stated that if both sides are being economical with the truth it still doesn't explain why we are at the point we are at. DC only has a short history of being at Bisley but has never heard of this going on before with lease renewals and it hasn't ever been this bad.

JPSB remarked that he has been around for a very long time, over 30 years on GC alone, this is certainly not the first time by a very long way that there have been disputes with rents. JPSB attended a meeting when the English VIII Club were renewing their lease and there were 11 different lawyers there! This is nothing new. People take entrenched positions, refusing to move, the NLRC being a classic example. They have been given some excellent advice for nothing and have ignored it as they do not want to face the reality of the situation they are in.

DLa asked whether the Chairman has any figures of the number of leases the NRA have conducted in the last few years.

The Chairman reported that since 2013, of the 108 leases under tenancy agreements on property, the NRA have issued 42 new leases. AM added that in Charity Law, a 21 year lease is subject to the same rigour as if we were selling the land. It is treated as a property disposal. The legal costs, even on an uncontested lease, can be £2-2.5k. The survey is another £1.5-2k. The Charity Act report can be a further £2k. The last thing the NRA wants to do is litigate and we are trying very hard to agree all the terms before it goes to the solicitors for sign off. We have been doing this with success since 2013. You never hear of the successful leases, only of those which have proved contentious, which distorts the view of how the NRA behave. The NRA are trying very hard to communicate with its tenants but it is difficult when they don't respond.

CH stated that they are currently becoming a charitable, incorporated organisation, and have been presented with their last year's accounts in a completely different format which takes things such as new boilers and depreciates them by 20% each year. Fixtures and fittings are being depreciated under Charity Law and wondered if this applies in the Artists' case.

Peter Coley asked why the Imperial Entry form is still showing a £20 paper entry fee on it. It was agreed two years ago that a discount would be given to online entrants rather than a surcharge for paper entries. PC asked that the minutes be referred back to and the correction made.

The Chairman agreed this would be checked.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm

Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 8th September 2017

2.00pm

NRA Pavilion