

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the NRA Pavilion
on Saturday 18th February 2017 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Mr JGM Webster (Chairman)

Members: Mr GK Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr AM Bullen
Wg Cdr DP Calvert
Dr A Cargill Thompson
Mr M Charlton
Mr PR Coley
Mr M Cotillard
Mr DC Crispin
Mr CES Dickenson
Mr HF Dunton
Mr DGF Evans
Mr NJ Francis
Dr N Fyfe
Wg Cdr CJ Hockley
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr GAE Larcombe
Mr D Lowe
Mr M Maksimovic
Mr TS McDowell
Mr JF Miller
Mr J Morgan-Hosey
Mrs K Robertson
Mr P Ryder
Mr AJD Saunders
Mr R Sayer
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Mr IR Thomson
Mr PDC Turner
Dr J Warburton (Vice Chairman)
Mr MP Watkins

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Secretary to Meeting

Apologies for absence: Mrs ID Bennett, Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Mr CM Brooks, Maj R Bruce, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Sqn Ldr A Fox, Mr GMLN Gilpin, Mr J Harper-Smith, Mr J Harris, Mr K Hocking, Mr JA Horton, Mr AD Hunter, Mr D Kent, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr DR Lamb, Mr T Lehman, Cmdr M Magan, Mr MF Martell, Mr CN McEachran, Mr W Mott, Mr K Nash, Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mr R Roberts, Mr G Trembath, Sqn Ldr P Upham, Dr AP Wolpe, Mr MJ Wood, Mr D Young.

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chairman commenced proceedings by requesting a moment of silent reflection following the deaths of two Vice Presidents, Simon Fraser and Bob Aitken, since the last meeting.

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G460 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as noted above.

G461 – RE-ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Vice Chairman informed the General Council members that the current Chairman's three year tenure is due to end on 28th February 2017. The Trustees have nominated the Chairman for a second three year period. The Secretary General confirmed that no other nominations had been received. The Chairman has expressed his willingness to re-stand.

The Vice Chairman asked the meeting to vote on the re-election of the Chairman for a further 3 years.

The Chairman was re-elected by 28 votes to 0. There were 5 abstentions.

G462 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 2ND SEPTEMBER 2016

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 2nd September 2016 were received.

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

G463 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 2ND SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman informed the meeting that following the question from John Kynoch regarding the recommendations made in the David Lacey (DLA) and Alice Gran (AG) report, the Council had approved all seven recommendations.

Guy Larcombe (GL) raised the point that at the previous meeting it was suggested that a report on the Rule 150 situation would be circulated by the end of 2016. GL asked for an update as no report had been forthcoming.

The Chairman remarked that the release of this report was in the hands of the Birmingham Proof House. John Bloomfield (JB) informed the meeting that there were still ongoing discussions with the Proof House about what the content of any new memorandum would be and whilst those discussions continue we are unable to set a timetable as to when the report will be released.

A request had been put forward to General Council for consideration regarding the issuance of the draft minutes to GC members within two weeks of the meeting taking place. The draft minutes are currently sent out a week prior to the next meeting.

Concern was raised that draft minutes do end up in the public domain prior to being agreed by GC. Members must be aware that any decision to circulate the minutes prior to the next meeting is likely to result in them becoming public.

Alex Cargill Thompson (ACT) commented that General Council members have a duty to treat the minutes as confidential until they have been approved, and suggested that the draft minutes should be marked accordingly. He also suggested that early circulation would help ensure that General Council members who miss a meeting are suitably sighted of what has been discussed, and pointed out that the increased transparency provided by prompt approval and publication would be appreciated by the wider membership.

Following discussion it was agreed that draft minutes would be sent out for review by General Council members within ten days of the meeting with a request for any amendments/changes to be made within a further two weeks. The file will be password protected to try and help with security of the minutes.

It was also agreed that if no major amendments/changes are requested the minutes would be deemed approved and be published on the NRA website. Any amendments/changes which are not able to be dealt with remotely will be discussed at the next meeting before the minutes are approved.

Charles Dickenson (CD) asked for clarification whether the guidance from the Charity Commission on mixed motive investing is now available. The Chairman believes that the guidance is not yet available and will check.

CD asked whether any further work had been done on website and Facebook statistics, as CD felt that the numbers given at the previous meeting misrepresented the actual figures of people viewing the NRA's social media. Following discussion around how the figures are analysed from the website, AM will try and get more accurate statistics on 'likes' and the actual reach of the social media sites.

No further matters were raised.

G464 – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman addressed the letter circulated to the members from Tim Kidner (Scottish Regional Representative) and also an email circulated by the Vice Chairman from Silke Lohmann (SL) surrounding club rents and accommodation costs. Steve McDowell (SMcD) informed the Chairman that he had also received 12 emails on the same subject.

There are three main points raised by both of these pieces of correspondence; firstly the email from SL suggests the Trustees are hiding behind Charity Law and that they could act differently and should therefore explain their thinking; secondly that the Trustees are being short-sighted by upsetting the traditional TR community and by their actions could make accommodation much more expensive for those members travelling from afar; and thirdly that members have asked some MPs to give input to the Trustees, which has been ignored. SL believes that the Trustees therefore risk bringing the Association into disrepute.

The Chairman first explained the position of the Trustees with regards to the discussions with MPs. The Trustees were contacted by an MP and the Trustees, as a group, responded to his request to meet with a group of MPs as the Trustees were concerned that if they didn't, there could have been a knock-on effect to the NRA's reputation.

Because of the nature of those conversations, the Trustees subsequently made a full disclosure of all communications with the MPs to the Charity Commission (CC). The CC responded by confirming that matters of estate management are entirely for the Trustees to deal with and the CC would not get involved. The MPs have been informed of that.

The second issue concerns accommodation costs and the traditional TR community. Both TK and SL are members of clubs on camp and the TR community in general.

The Chairman explained that many of the club houses have been around for a long time, some over 100 years. In that time the circumstances of the Association have changed dramatically. 100 years ago the sport of full-bore rifle shooting was dominated by Service Rifle. Now it is a much broader community. TR, which can be seen as SR's successor in many ways, represents less than half the NRA's membership. The Trustees have a duty to all members and disciplines of the NRA.

The make-up of today's typical Bisley shooter has also changed such that the majority of Bisley clubs now act as private members clubs, not as a base for "volunteers", i.e. regular or auxiliary service personnel, as they did 100 years ago. So the case for a "subsidy" rent for these clubs seems to have disappeared.

Thirdly, many of the club houses were built by the “volunteer” regiments themselves, at their expense which made a ground rent, and in some cases a compensation clause, appropriate at that time. 100 years later these buildings have been written off twice over by the clubs concerned as depreciation on land and buildings is 2% per annum, and the people who built those buildings are no longer around to be compensated.

Ground rents and compensation clauses are therefore no longer appropriate. Were there a similar process of a club building its own club house today, eligibility for a ground rent would only last for 2 periods of tenancy as per the published Real Estate policy, and after that a rack rent (ground and buildings) would be payable.

Most importantly, the law says that at the end of the first period of tenancy, the building reverts to the landlord. The Trustees do not have any discretion to change that as it is the law.

With regards to the cost of accommodation, the Chairman referred to a paper on the rises of costs of the various types of accommodation available on camp that the Chief Executive had circulated. Over the last four years, costs of ABC lines have fallen, costs of JK lines are flat, caravan pitch costs have increased by 4.3%, and the costs of seasonal huts by 9.5%. In comparison, over the same time period the costs of Bunkabins which we have to buy in for the Imperial Meeting and therefore the costs of which are not controlled by us, have increased by 15.5%. The only place where cost rises have exceeded this number is for a tent pitch, where 2 things need to be born in mind; 1) the % rise starts from a very low base, and the absolute number remains very low, and 2) additional shower and toilet facilities and phone charging points are often bought in to service these tent pitches. The Chairman commented that he believes this demonstrates that the Association is doing a good job in keeping accommodation costs under control.

The Chairman then turned to the explanation of the Trustees thinking. The Chairman and the Trustees have spent a lot of time with many lawyers on this subject, including Julian Smith of Farrer & Co., who is the “legal adviser to the Charity Commission” to whom SL refers. Far from choosing to take a different view as has been claimed, Mr Smith’s advice is central to the position that the Trustees are currently taking.

Mr Smith advised on two key elements:

1. that we should recognise that at its heart, this is a conflict of interest issue. It is either charitable objects versus some form of commercial interest, club members versus non-club members, or shooting interests versus private member interests.
2. that to resolve the conflict issue, the Trustees should ground their thinking about what is best for the charity in the Charity’s objects; namely the promotion and encouragement of marksmanship throughout the Queen’s Dominions in the interest of Defence and the permanence of the Volunteer and Auxiliary forces.

The Chairman continued that the subject of mixed motive investment has been discussed at prior meetings. Mixed motive investment is an asset that produces a return for the NRA, and at the same time, pursues the objects of the NRA. Because all the 100+ buildings subject to tenancies on the NRA estate have covenants that result in their use having to be related to shooting, they all, to some degree, pursue the charity’s objects.

What the Trustees, both current and previous, have done is divide these 100+ buildings into three broad types; commercial, residential and club houses. The Trustees have allowed the market, either via a bidding process, or as judged by professional advisors, to set the terms and the rent payable for each type. Therefore the Trustees feel they have fulfilled the second piece of Mr Smith’s advice which is to ensure they meet the charity’s objects.

In order to fulfil the first piece of Mr. Smith’s advice regarding conflicts of interest, the Chairman continued that we must all remember that as members of the NRA, we are all conflicted (and he also noted that Julian Smith had reminded him that this included all the Trustees). There are two things which can be done to manage a conflict in such circumstances. Firstly one needs to throw daylight onto the issue; this has been done through various discussions at all the General Council meetings held in 2016. Clearly this process will be ongoing. Secondly one must treat everyone in the same situation fairly.

And since one person's view of fairness is different from another's the best way to treat everyone fairly, when everyone is conflicted, is to treat them equally. That is the key principle behind what the Trustees are trying to do. Every tenant, particularly those who are members or represent members, will be treated equally within the particular group in which they sit and pay the same rate therein to ensure equality across their building type. This is the essential thrust of an NRA standard lease for each property, as it ensures that 2 clubhouses based next door to each other, of exactly the same dimensions and with exactly the same facilities, compete on level terms.

SMcD commented that there remains a great deal of concern among the membership and clubs that the current levels of rent being put forward will damage the membership of those clubs to make it unsustainable.

ACT remarked that he doesn't disagree with the concept that the basic formula for rent reviews needs to be the same. ACT believes people are struggling with how the benefit to the NRA's objects that different club houses may contribute is then calculated as a discount off the full rent of that property. There is also the benefit of all the buildings on camp making Bisley what it is; these buildings cost a lot to maintain and it is the clubs who are responsible for ensuring the maintenance – either through contractors or voluntarily. ACT believes that is the part that members are unhappy about as the NRA is not recognising that contribution by members to their club houses.

The Chairman remarked that Mr Smith's advice was that the heritage aspect of the clubhouses at Bisley would not be a good argument to put to the Charity Commission to defend a discounted rent. The Charity Commission exists to give people who give donations to a charity confidence in giving to that charity. The NRA is somewhat of a different charity to traditional ones in that to a large extent we take money from the same group of people that we give it to.

The Chairman has said on several previous occasions that the money the NRA gets from commercial clients is to be reinvested into the infrastructure and fabric of Bisley and shooting generally, and that the members' activity should at the very least break even. The Chairman believes that is fair as future generations are not subsidising this generation. The heritage aspect is not an object of the Charity – the NRA is not here to protect buildings – the NRA is here to protect and foster shooting.

SMcD raised the issue of the NRA spending members' money to sue other members/tenants.

The Chairman responded that the Trustees, through the Chief Executive of the NSC, want to have amicable negotiations with tenants, and for the most part, do so. But if no negotiation is forthcoming from the other side, then the NRA have no choice but to follow a legal path, otherwise the Trustees would be abrogating their responsibility as Trustees.

If the Trustees do not follow every possible way of negotiating and agreeing terms, they risk perpetuating a level of unfairness, and the Chairman is not comfortable signing off on that. The Chairman went on to say that Richard Bailie continually reminds him that the Trustees are facing up to a problem which is an unintended consequence of some very good thinking 100 years ago. When a building was built for the volunteer regiment by the volunteers, then the last thing anyone wanted at that time was for the NRA to take that building at will; so at the time a ground rent was offered as a reasonable subsidy along with a compensation clause should the building be appropriated. 100 years on, that doesn't feel right because there are neighbouring clubhouses that now service private members rather than volunteers that are paying a fifth of the rent compared to the club next door even though to all intents and purposes they are exactly the same.

The Chairman also stressed that the NRA aren't the ones setting the rent level – the market sets the rents. That's why the NRA have a professional advisor. The NRA only has the opportunity to change a lease once every 21 years. The current group of Trustees could have decided to do nothing, but this only postpones the issue as opposed to dealing with it. So it was felt best to deal with it as each renewal comes up.

Robert Sayer (RS) remarked that this whole situation is about heritage. The very nature of the clubs make Bisley what it is. If those clubs are being put at risk because of higher rents than they can afford then that should be addressed. The Trustees have the power to help the clubs survive by letting them pay a rent they can afford rather than force them out of business by applying the rules rigidly regardless of consequences. Where are the other clubs going to come from? It is a limited market.

Have the Trustees asked the General Council members whether they support what they are doing or do they disapprove and rather they took the more lenient line.

The Chairman remarked that the General Council members were asked that very question at the last meeting. The Chairman then asked RS to explain why the three most successful clubs on Bisley camp do not pay a ground rent, but pay a rack rent – those three clubs being the Old Sergeant's Mess, the RAF and Surrey Rifle Association – if paying a rack rent is going to kill off the clubs.

The Chief Executive added that all club houses have a market rent set which recognises the repair liability of their buildings. The NRA have spent a considerable amount of time with expert assistance looking at the various terms and conditions including repair and decorative covenants and liability. There is a line set by the market that all clubs follow to ensure fairness and equality across all clubs and the NRA are simply bringing all clubs up to that line as each lease renewal comes up.

Chris Hockley (CH) remarked that this new way of implementing the renewal process has only just come about and it is a huge step change for club houses to manage.

AM responded that when a club house states they are not willing to change and are only prepared to do what they've always done that is a challenge.

Matthew Charlton (MC) wanted it minuted that it is unfair to describe Tim Kidner as representing the TR community as his interests are much broader.

The Chairman apologised and made it clear that Tim Kidner represents Scotland and TK's point had been that the NRA were making the accommodation on camp more expensive for those who travel from afar. The point about the Trustees being short-sighted was SL's point.

MC then asked whether as the NRA are taking on the ownership of the buildings on camp, would they also consider taking on the maintenance of these buildings rather than expecting the club houses to take on what can be considerable costs for maintenance and repair. After some discussion, it was viewed that such a policy, while applying to many short-hold residential tenancies, should not apply to 21 year leases. Such a move would have to be reflected in a rent increase anyway.

David Crispin (DC) believes he speaks on behalf of most of the clubs on camp when he says that they don't want or expect subsidies and discounts - they just want a fair rent. DC also added that with regards to the Surrey Rifle Association, this is a successful club, but this is due to thousands of hours of unpaid volunteer work goes into the maintenance and upkeep of the clubhouse.

AM responded that that is typical of clubs and that is how they function, with the assistance of their members. The Surrey Rifle Association is flourishing, despite belief from some members that a rack rent is unsustainable for clubs. AM understands the concerns, but doesn't see the evidence that what the NRA have done to date has had the impact that some members are forecasting.

DC remarked that the increase that the SRA have had is not the same as the increases being levied against the North London Rifle Club and the Artists Rifle Clubhouse.

AM responded that the figures are exactly the same as those agreed for the SRA and that the SRA is the main comparable used by the surveyors for all new leases.

CD remarked that the members need to consider the potential consequences of increased rents on camp. There is a limited pool of potential members out there. The NRA is recruiting well, but not all of those members are joining Bisley clubs, and not all live within the area for Bisley.

If the consequences of a large rent increase causes a club to struggle financially to the point where it has to pass very large increases onto its members, it is a vicious circle and as the number of members dwindle the burden on the remaining members increases and everything eventually disintegrates. This could impact of the number of people who continue to shoot at Bisley which would impact on the NRA's objectives of furthering shooting in the UK.

AM responded that last year the NRA recruited 850 new members. AM believes that clubs need to embrace the fact that Bisley is getting busier and the nature of full-bore shooting is changing. Price rises for membership, range hire and ammunition has been kept to RPI levels for the last four years so the NRA is playing its part. The clubs need to embrace the new members coming through the gates by offering the right facilities in the right manner which will give them the opportunity to grow.

The Chairman added there is a balancing act – there is a large demand for residential property – but club houses are very important to Bisley. It is clear that some clubhouses are flourishing and some are not. That is more likely a consequence of the choices made by the clubs themselves rather than the level of rents.

CH wanted to reiterate the Chairman's point about fairness and transparency with which he totally agrees. To go back to AM's points in his Chief Executive report, the rates for the NRA's accommodation facilities that haven't gone up by much and would ask whether the NRA have looked at the occupancy of those facilities. For example, five years ago there was a waiting list for caravans, but now there isn't one. Maybe if the NRA's accommodation occupancy has been poor then they would need to keep those rates low to try and improve occupancy figures. Compare that with the economics of the club houses, there doesn't seem to be any assessment of the differences in the economic viability of the different clubs. The RAF has a restricted ability to increase members (being limited to those connected to the RAF) but are supported financially by the RAF Sports Federation.

AM remarked that the NRA's occupancy levels are poor because most people want to stay on a Friday and Saturday night only. The accommodation doesn't result in any profit at all, but it is used as a facilitator for shooting at Bisley. The NRA are sensitive to the fact that some clubhouses have been re-let to non-clubs and recognise that the stock needs to be managed better. For example the English Twenty clubhouse is coming back to the NRA and the NRA will update, improve and install some accommodation before putting it back out to tender to potential clubs. The NRA recognises that it needs to be more prescriptive in terms of who is able to tender for potential properties to ensure they go to the correct people, such as clubs. There is only one vacant building on the camp at the moment – Exhibition Hut – which is vacant due to errors made by AM during the renewal process. There is no evidence of large voids of empty properties on site due to the lease renewal process currently being undertaken.

John Warburton (JWar) wished to reflect on his view of the discussions held over the last year and believes that the issue of ownership of the buildings has been dealt with; a lot has been said about fairness and JWar doesn't believe that anyone would disagree that larger buildings should pay more than smaller buildings in a way that is fair and transparent to all. The main issue of this subject is about money and what people have to pay for their sport.

JWar stated his support for a fair & transparent approach to setting rents, but asked the Trustees & Chief Executive to consider if in doing so have got the level of the rents wrong.

AM responded that they would consider that.

Harald Dunton (HD) remarked that he hadn't voted at the last meeting about the situation of increased rents because he hadn't had the opportunity to discuss the subject with members in his region. However, he has since done so and those he has discussed it with are broadly accepting of the fact that this is a unique rental opportunity and very difficult to compare to the outside. However, when they hear the special pleading from Bisley clubs that they are furthering the objects of the Association and therefore should have reduced rents, the regional members question what are they doing and what kind of discount recognition can they expect. The rental on the range in the East has gone up from a guinea a year to £900 a year – can they have a subsidy on that too?

RS remarked that the NRA are not making any money on their accommodation so are therefore subsidising regional visitors to the ranges. The NRA are willing to subsidise their accommodation but are not willing to help the clubs who are having to pay market value. RS believes that the NRA are genuinely wrong if they are treating the clubs as a business and not as a club and all members should be treated as club members and not just as a source of income.

AM asked for the evidence of where the clubs have been damaged by the change in rents. RS responded that every single club says they are going to be damaged.

AM remarked that the experience of the Surrey Rifle Association suggests something very different.

RS responded do the SRA's members know they are putting in their time into a club which no longer belongs to them. Would they agree to spend the amount of time they do if they knew that the NRA owns their club?

DC remarked that the members were unaware until the renewal was undertaken. JB remarked that it was clear from their original lease that this was the state of affairs, so they should not have been unaware.

RS believes that everyone is forgetting the fact that the NRA is a members club.

AM responded that the NRA is a registered charity and it exists for current and future generations of shooters.

JB remarked that the reason the NRA have been in trouble in the past on a number of occasions is because it was never ran as a business – it was run as a member's club and if we went back to running it in that manner, there wouldn't be an NRA.

Derek Stimpson (DS) remarked that he is a member of a local club and the landlord of their range is the local council, not the NRA. Their 21 year lease is reviewed every 5 years, of which there has just been one undertaken by the council surveyor, and an increase of RPI has been levied by the council. The club is over 100 years old, and the range now belongs to the Council. The options put forward for the renewal was that they could surrender the lease and start again, with a higher rent, or continue as is. The Council remarked that if the club started to run out of money over the remainder of the lease due to the increase then they should surrender the lease, take their chances, and put in for a grant. DS would like the members to consider that shooting is under pressure across the UK and there are affiliated clubs all over the country going through similar issues and pressures.

Alister Bullen asked whether our primary focus is shooting, or what we get up to after we've shot. A lot of time has been spent discussing what we do once we have finished shooting rather than get on with the business of shooting.

ACT remarked that he is a member of the North because it has a very good gun room and is able to keep his rifles at Bisley as part of that membership which is a value to him.

The Chairman remarked that provision of accommodation, food, beer etc are not part of the objects of the NRA whereas facilities to store a rifle might be. This is not about market values, it is about comparable market rents – the clubhouse rents are the cheapest rents of all the Bisley building stock because we are trying to make allowances for the fact that clubs do help pursue the objects of the NRA more than the provision of a caravan site or an office or retail space for commercial purposes.

RS asked for clarification around the mixed motive investment calculations for properties on Bisley.

The Treasurer, Derek Lowe, remarked that it is the surveyors that are using the three levels of property types on Bisley when considering the rent increases – commercial, rental accommodation and club houses.

RS then asked for examples of how the mixed motive investment would affect the discount for clubhouses.

The Chairman responded that a good example for the members is what a former clubhouse (the HAC) would be valued at as a clubhouse today, and what it is currently valued at as a commercial property. The difference is somewhere in the region of £50k per annum.

RS asked how the market rent for a clubhouse such as the Artists Rifle Clubhouse would be before the mixed motive investment discount and after.

The Chairman remarked that isn't how it works. There is a set of lease terms with covenants which is what sets the rental value. The covenants describe the use of the building, which determines the level of mixed motive investment return.

Richard Bailie confirmed this to be the case. The terms and conditions which apply determines what the market value is.

SMcD remarked that the lack of communication is one of the main issues which creates a lot of misconception and asked that the Chairman's address be published alongside the minutes to help inform the members.

CD asked whether the Real Estate Policy has been revised yet as per the minutes of the previous meeting.

The Chairman confirmed this was still a work in progress.

G465 – FINANCE

The Treasurer presented his report to the meeting.

The NRA has a healthy financial position over the last year, with a turnover of c.£6m and a modest surplus of £114k. The cash balance was maintained above the agreed level of £200k and the closing cash balance was £655k. The net current assets ended at -£43k. The capital expenditure for 2016 was just over £700k which doesn't appear in the surplus figures. The maintenance spend was £450k which appears in the surplus figure.

The auditors completed their audit at the beginning of February and we expect their report by the middle of March with a view to publishing the accounts by the end of March, following sign off by the Trustees.

DC asked whether the difference between the forecast and the budget is what has been spent on legal fees.

DL responded that all components in the surplus figure would need to be considered when viewing the accounts against the budget. Nonetheless, maintenance expenditure (which contributes to the surplus calculation) was just short of £100k higher than originally budgeted.

John Miller (JM) presented a question from one of the members on camp asking what the expenditure had been on legal fees fighting the rental disputes.

AM responded that the figure is less than £100k and he would be happy to give an accurate figure at the next meeting.

CD asked whether the changes to the club renewals from March to December had affected the profile of the figures we are looking at.

AM confirmed that it affects the cash flow figure but not the current expenditure account as we accrue the income into the profit and loss account and move it into the expenditure account as it falls due, not as it is received.

G466 – OPERATIONAL UPDATE

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

The main issues for concern are the leases and the Home Office's interest in an incident at Cheshunt Rifle club where a round escaped the range and caused damage to a residential property 500 yards away. This has caused, understandably, significant ripples and the NRA are working very hard to ensure the consequences of that are kept to an absolute minimum.

The police have expressed some concern as they have some responsibilities with issuing firearms certificates to ensure they are being used on safe ranges. The question of how ranges are being maintained, managed and licensed is causing some significant amount of work at present.

AM also reported that the two toilet blocks on Memorial Lawn have recently been demolished.

The electronic targets have been trialled by a large number of members and AM thanked them for their support and feedback. The NRA will now consider the feedback with a view to making a decision by the end of February for an order of 11 targets for Stickledown range.

David Calvert (DCal) asked what percentage of misses on the electronic targets have been put down to non-technical reasons. DC also asked whether a report on the success of the electronic targets recording misses correctly is available.

AM responded that following guidance from the staff, less misses had been recorded as the trials continued. AM remarked that there would be a report on the electronic target trials.

CD would like to thank the Chief Executive and those who supported him on the advice put out about the Home Office approvals consultation. CD believes it was an excellent piece of work and hope that everyone responds to it. CD understands that the Chief Executive had a meeting with the Home Office on 2nd February and is he able to tell the meeting anything about that outcome meeting.

AM reported that he would be having a further meeting with the Home Office coming up but was unable to comment further.

HD remarked that three clubs in his county had to renew their approval as they had lapsed and the HO input to two of those clubs was 'go to the website' and the next input was a bill for £84.

AM remarked that a number of clubs have missed the deadline to renew their Home Office Approval. The Home Office have been very helpful to them.

HD asked how the Home Office can justify a £900 bill when all they are doing is telling clubs to go to the website and complete the application online.

The Chairman remarked that this is an important issue and the Chief Executive is continuing to work with the Home Office to reach an agreeable conclusion and will keep the members up to date. The Chairman asked that if anyone can assist or help AM with the process, please do so.

AM asked that all GC members make sure they ask their members to respond to the renewal suggestion and not leave it up to others.

ACT remarked that the online questionnaire is very loaded and doesn't give you much opportunity to express your views.

CD added that it would be much more beneficial to write a letter and put all your points down.

Martin Watkins wanted to take the opportunity on behalf of the Welsh region, to thank the Trustees, Andrew Mercer and Nic Couldrey for all the help, support and assistance for bidding for the Pentre Barracks range, even though they were narrowly outbid.

G467 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Mik Maksimovic (MM) gave a verbal report on the Membership Committee meeting on 18th February 2017.

The meeting was very constructive looking at the objectives for 2017 which include the disparity of meeting membership costs across the different disciplines, looking at clubs and organisations and how the NRA and membership committee can assist if required and assisting the Secretary General with the Home Office approval renewals.

The committee are also looking at the possibility of reducing the age limit of shooting at Bisley to allow members to bring their children with them to shoot.

There will be a 'Meet the Clubs' session on Saturday 27th May during the Phoenix meeting in the Pavilion which will allow the clubs to introduce themselves to NRA members with a view to inviting them to join. Details will be released in due course.

DC asked whether the different classes of membership, i.e. full or affiliate could be reviewed and make everyone a full member which would significantly increase the number of members and allow the price to be lowered accordingly.

MM responded that this would be a strategic decision and not for the Membership Committee to agree.

Karen Robertson (KR) remarked that this had been tried before when James Watson was chairman of the Membership Committee and that it could be revisited.

The Chairman remarked that the Trustees had this under advisement for the Strategic Plan for 2018-2020 that is currently under development.

No further questions were raised.

G468 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

John Bloomfield informed the General Council that he had retired as Chairman of the Shooting Committee in January 2017. James Harris was elected by the Committee as their new Chairman.

JB will report on the minutes of the minutes of the Shooting Committee, both in JH's absence and as the chairman during those meetings.

There were no matters arising from the meeting of 1st September 2016.

JB then gave a verbal report of the meeting held on 21st January 2017.

The meeting was mostly devoted to setting in train the bible for this year and initial arrangements for the Imperial Meeting. The bible amendments were put to the Council on 17th February and were approved with some minor amendments. Because of changes in the way the military look at the status of regular forces and the reserve forces, there have been some adjustments to the Service Rifle Burdwan competition, but these do not affect the main meeting.

Safety issues were discussed including the SAKO rifle incident which is still under investigation. The other issue was a range incursion reported by Peter Turner which has been dealt with.

The NRA have purchased a mobile shooting platform which will be used to providing shooting from undercover throughout the winter months. The platform will be parked behind the firing points and members will be able to shoot out from the platform in poor weather and the platform can be moved to different distances. Delivery is expected by the end of February.

Changes to target dimensions for Target Rifle and Match Rifle are being discussed by the Target Rifle Sub Committee. The Shooting Committee have recommended that the TR and MR target sizes be reduced as of 1st January 2019. The timetable was approved by Council. The TR sub-committee will be putting forward their recommendations on targets sizes at the Shooting Committee in May 2017 for discussion. They may be accepted at that point and sent to Council, or the Shooting Committee will ask for a review which would then come back to the Shooting Committee in September 2017. The new dimensions will be released in the autumn. That will give clubs and ranges the opportunity to use up old stock prior to the new dimensions being implemented in 2019.

The Cadet Forces Imperial TR meeting (Cadet Imperial) was very well received after 2016's inaugural event. Some problems have arisen subsequently with the MoD failing to place a servicing contract for the Cadet Target Rifle. This has now been partially resolved with 1300 rifles being issued for the event in 2017. It is hoped that more rifles are made available in July.

Peter Turner has been put in charge of organising the event and reported that it is the intention that the rifles will be ready for issue to units in early March with no more made available for the remainder of the year. PT has created a fielding plan which has taken into account units' use of major level at competitions which has been well received which should result in a sufficient number of rifles being made available for cadet competitions.

The Council has agreed to present a trophy for the Cadet Imperial in memory of Simon Fraser.

DC asked if there was any update to the report of the Proof House's testing results.

JB confirmed that the situation is still ongoing and once it has been resolved the final report would be released by the Proof House.

John Saunders (JS) asked with regards to the changes in target dimensions, a list of options was sent out by Charles Dickenson, one of which was to change the ICFRA target dimension. Since we are a member of ICFRA could we try and make sure that everything is the same?

The Chairman responded that future TR & MR target dimensions would be a recommendation put forward by the TR sub-committee for consideration by the Shooting Committee and not something that could be decided at this meeting.

DCal expressed his thanks to John Bloomfield for his considerable contribution and considerable amount of work during his tenure as Shooting Committee Chairman and asked for this to be acknowledged. The meeting wholeheartedly agreed.

DS asked that a minor change be made to the minutes of the Shooting Committee of 1st September under S794, point J (Sporting Rifle). JB requested the change be sent by email for amendment to James Harris.

ACT asked that as the Trustees have agreed to the principle of target sizes changing from 1st January 2019, it be publicised actively to the membership as soon as possible.

It was agreed this would be publicised in the coming weeks.

G469 – THE COUNCIL

The minutes of the meetings held on 20th August 2016 and 14th October 2016 were presented to the members.

The Chairman also gave a verbal report on the meetings held on 10th December and 17th February 2017.

Discussion at those meetings were mainly around the Real Estate Policy. The Chairman added that the Trustees would like to suggest a change to the Second Schedule which would enable the NRA to undertake electronic voting alongside postal voting for wider Council and other elections. This would help significantly reduce the cost of running such elections. The current cost of running a paper election is £15k.

This will be raised at the meeting on 16th June, immediately prior to the AGM, at which the NRA would ask the membership to adopt that change.

The Chairman asked for any strong views to be expressed to the Secretary General as soon as possible.

KR asked what had happened to the previous plans for changes to the Second Schedule which had first been planned about three years ago and was supposed to have been put to AGM in 2016.

The Chairman confirmed that the Second Schedule is being reviewed by David Lacey and he has found a lot of areas for improvement, particularly in the connectivity of all the terms within the schedule. The Trustees have therefore decided that more time should be taken to review all of those changes prior to putting them forward for agreement by the membership, and in the meantime put forward the electronic voting change for a decision in 2017. Other changes will be requested in 2018.

Chris Hockley asked that election for the elected members be done in reverse alphabetical order next item and then alternated on each occasion.

ACT asked what the cost would be to run an electronic vote. AM responded that it would be about 20% of the cost of paper voting.

Matthew Charlton (MC) asked if Dewdrop Lodge had been put out to tender and, if not, why. AM responded that it had been let on an assured short term tenancy basis to a member of NRA staff and therefore did not need to be advertised.

George Barnard asked for an update on the use of mono-metallic bullets as he believed them to have been banned on MoD ranges years ago. AM confirmed that the rules haven't changed.

No further questions were raised.

G470 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

For information under Rule 7 (g) (iii) – Elected Members of the General Council who retire in 2017 who have been invited to declare if they wish to stand for re-election. (* not standing)

Five Ordinary Members

JPS Bloomfield (GM2 SC)
Wg Cdr (Retd) DP Calvert MBE (GM3 SB3 SC2)
DC Crispin
GMLN Gilpin*
TS McDowell

Four Regional Members

HRM Bailie – Northern Ireland
GV Barnard – East Midlands
TLW Kidner – Scotland*
DG Young – North Western*

Four Shooting Discipline Members

Dr AMW Cargill Thompson – Match Rifle
NJ Francis – Gallery Rifle and Pistol*
I Shirra-Gibb – 300 Metres
PN Ryder – Historic and Classic Arms*

G471 – ELECTIONS TO PRINCIPAL COMMITTEES

The results of the nominations for the two principal committees were read out:

Shooting Committee – 2 vacancies

David Crispin
John Miller

Membership Committee – 1 vacancy

Steve McDowell

The Chairman declared the above candidates elected to the principal committees.

Steve McDowell informed the meeting that a decision had been made at the Membership Committee meeting to co-opt John Morgan-Hosey to the committee to take advantage of his skills and experience, which compliment Steve McDowell's own skill set.

G472 – RE-ELECTION TO THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The results of the re-election to the Disciplinary Committee were read out.

Legal Members

Charles Brooks
William Mott
Robert Sayer

Lay Members

Neil Fyfe
Alexander Hunter

The Chairman declared the above candidates re-elected to the Disciplinary Committee. The Chairman informed the meeting that Colin McEachran has decided not to re-stand following ill health.

G473 – VACANCIES TO THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The Chairman announced the following vacancies on the Disciplinary Committee:

2 x legal members (2 nominations received)

2 x lay members (6 nominations received)

An election will be held for the Lay member vacancies.

G474 – KOLAPORE CAPTAIN 2017

The Chairman announced that Lindsay Peden was elected to the captaincy of the Kolapore team for 2017.

G475 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ACT asked whether consideration could be given to having a telephone conference option for General Council meetings now that the NRA have updated the meeting room in the Pavilion to try and secure better attendance at the meetings.

Matthew Charlton asked that more weekend or out of work hours meetings be considered in future to increase attendance and to allow for the possibility of a General Council that more accurately represented the broader membership.

The Chairman agreed that these would be looked in to.

JWar has been asked by a member of the NRA, John Howell, to raise his concern regarding the increase of club rents. Mr Howell is convinced that some of the issues the NRA are currently having with their relationships with the lease holders of club houses may be a symptom of a lack of strategic direction at the NRA, particularly in relation to its strategy and vision of what role clubs play in delivering the association's objects. JWar would ask that this be taken into account as the Chief Executive redrafts the Association's three year strategic plan.

AM agreed he would consider the point raised as part of the review of the strategic plan.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 16.40pm

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Smith".

Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 16th June 2017
Followed by the AGM

3.00pm
6.00pm

NRA Pavilion
NRA Pavilion