

The Royal Air Force Club 2026 Annual General Meeting minutes

Wednesday 13th May 2026 ~ 1800hrs
The Royal Air Force Club – 1800hrs – Online & in the Presidents' Room

Those speaking:

WJ	Air Vice-Marshal Warren James	Chair of the Board of Trustees
MP	Mr Miles Pooley	Chief Executive & Club Secretary
PS	Mr Paul Sylva	Director of Finance
JA	Mr Jonathan Aikens	Audit Partner, Moore Kingston Smith (MKS)
Full Members Online		Full Members present at the Club
64 (highest point) ~ 42 (lowest point)		21

WJ welcomed those present online and in the Sovereigns' Room to the 2026 Annual General Meeting.

During the introduction, WJ reported that several questions had been submitted in advance which would be answered during the meeting. Some questions may be referred to the relevant Committee for follow-up and response to the Member. Live questions would be answered (time permitting) or summarised and answered as an attachment to the minutes.

Explaining the voting procedure, WJ stated that proposers would be chosen from those willing Members physically at the Club, and a Secunder would be sought from those attending online.

1) Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15th May 2025

WJ referred attendees to the minutes of the previous AGM, which are made available on the Club website within 30 days following the meeting to allow Members the opportunity to review them and request any amendments if required. No amendments had been requested to the 2026 AGM minutes.

Proposed for acceptance by: Air Commodore Wendy Rothery

Seconded for acceptance by: Air Marshal Sir Ian Macfadyen

Carried unanimously by those online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2.1) The presentation and approval of the Annual Accounts

WJ reported that, at the 2025 Annual General Meeting, members were advised that a tender exercise would be undertaken for the appointment of the Club's auditors. Following completion of this process, Moore Kingston Smith (MKS) were appointed. JA was welcomed to the meeting as the Club Audit Partner.

JA summarised the audit report and stated that the accounts presented a true and fair view of the Club's affairs and were prepared in accordance with UK accounting practices. The audit report is unqualified, and no issues have been found that affect the business as an ongoing concern.

Question from Squadron Leader Terence Dennett

On page 29 of the accounts, Legal Costs rose from £2966 to £37055. Can you explain why?

Response from Mr Paul Sylva (PS) ~ Director of Finance

Thank you, Sqn Ldr Dennett. The additional legal expenditure predominantly relates to the establishment of a new "guaranteed funds on demand" facility with Handelsbanken. This arrangement forms part of the Club's prudent financial planning, ensuring that access to funding is available, should it ever be required in exceptional circumstances, whilst the Club continues to strengthen and build its financial reserves. A small proportion of the additional expenditure also related to a limited number of other routine legal matters for which professional advice was required. The cost 'spike' was reported as unique to the rearrangement of finances in the past year

Proposed for acceptance by: Sqn Ldr Gavin Turnbull

Seconded for acceptance by: Gp Capt Paul Stewart

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, the annual accounts were approved.

2.2) The Club Financial update

The Royal Air Force Club 2026 Annual General Meeting minutes

Presenting the financial update, PS reported that the Club continued to perform strongly in 2025, achieving total income of £13.1m, an increase of £850k on 2024.

Growth was supported by improvements across membership, rooms and food and beverage operations, alongside the successful refurbishment of the Running Horse and Basement Kitchen. The reported surplus for the year was £1.535m; however, this included £876k in donations and legacies, resulting in an underlying operational surplus of approximately £660k.

Key highlights from the year included:

- Total income increased from £12.3m to £13.1m.
- Significant investment in the total refurbishment of the Running Horse, the basement kitchen and, latterly, the entire main kitchen.
- Staff costs remained the largest area of expenditure at approximately 55% of total costs.
- The removal of gas appliances and introduction of energy-efficient kitchen equipment to reduce operating costs and improve environmental impact.
- Strong performance across membership, rooms and food & beverage operations

The Balance Sheet reflects continued investment in the Club's long-term future. Fixed assets increased by £1.685m to almost £12m, contributing to total net assets of £12.96m, up 13.4% on the previous year. Free reserves reduced from £970k to £412k as funds were deliberately directed into capital improvements and infrastructure upgrades, including kitchens, IT systems, extraction, piping and control systems. Significant further investment of around £4m is planned across 2026-2028, as part of the Club's long-term financial planning.

Looking ahead:

- Approximately £4m of further infrastructure investment is planned during 2026-2028.
- The long-term financial plan has been refreshed through to 2040.
- The Trustees have revised the long-term free reserves target from £5m to £3m.
- A guaranteed £5m contingency credit facility is now in place to provide additional financial flexibility and can be leveraged as a rotating credit facility to smooth cashflow.
- The Club aims to rebuild reserves steadily without placing undue pressure on operations or members' services.

The Chair, on behalf of the membership thanked PS for the comprehensive update and was pleased to report that the Club remains in a financially sound position.

3.1) Report from the Chief Executive

MP provided members with an update on the Club's activity, operations and changes over the past year. He highlighted the continued commitment and professionalism of the Club team, noting key staff changes and recognising long-serving colleagues, including the retirement of Security Manager David Holland after ten years of service. The presentation also reinforced the Club's focus on staff wellbeing, development and diversity, with approximately 130 employees supported by 40 casual workers and a workforce representing more than 20 nationalities.

Membership remains stable at just over 24,000 members, with improved engagement at RAF College Cranwell (supported by the serving RAF's senior team) and strong support from RAF Club Station Representatives across the RAF community.

Member feedback continues to be extremely positive, with high satisfaction scores recorded across accommodation, dining, service and security. It was noted that leisure stays, family visits and Club events remain the primary reasons members visit the Club. MP also highlighted significant investment in the Clubhouse, including the full refurbishment of the Running Horse Tavern and basement kitchen, alongside the complete modernisation of the main ground-floor kitchens. These projects have improved accessibility,

The Royal Air Force Club 2026 Annual General Meeting minutes

operational efficiency and sustainability, while helping future-proof the Club for the next generation of members.

Key updates also included the continued growth of the Club's social and charitable activity, with more than 40 member events hosted during 2025 and over 2,200 event spaces sold. The Club's Arts & Heritage collection now exceeds 1,350 pieces, with ongoing conservation work and new silverware transferred from the RAF Museum. Members were thanked for their generosity through donations, legacy pledges and support as "Friends" of the Club, which continue to fund improvements and welfare initiatives such as the Care & Compassion Breaks programme.

Highlights from the presentation included:

- Achievement of EarthCheck Bronze Benchmark accreditation, with progress towards Silver accreditation, as part of the Club's net zero by 2040 target.
- Certification under both Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus, demonstrating the Club's focus on data security and member's data protection.
- Development of a new Club website and digital membership experience (to be launched through 2026).
- Launch of the 2025 Impact Report, which will become the Club's primary report to members, showcasing the wider charitable and community impact of the RAF Club.

3.2) Report from the Chair of the Board of Trustees

AVM Warren James opened by paying tribute to his predecessor, AVM David Murray, thanking him for his leadership, commitment and stewardship of the RAF Club during a significant period of change and investment. He recognised the important work undertaken under David's chairmanship to strengthen governance, modernise the Club's structure and commence the refurbishment projects which will benefit members for many years to come.

He also thanked Sqn Ldr John Peters for his long service as a Trustee and Chair of the Events Committee, noting that he would formally stand down from the Board later that day at the conclusion of his term, and welcomed Air Cdre Toria McPhaden as the proposed new Vice-Chair (Serving).

Warren then reflected on the Club's progress during 2025, highlighting:

- Stable and manageable finances, supported by a long-term reserves strategy, emergency funding arrangements and enhanced insurance protection.
- Continued stability in serving and reservist membership, with numbers increasing by 27% since 2014, despite wider reductions in the size of the RAF.
- Significant investment in Club improvements and approved plans for future lift refurbishment and a fourth-floor link corridor between the new and old building areas to aid safety, operations and member experience.
- Progress on governance reform, including streamlining the Board and committee structures, reducing trustee numbers over time, reducing future Trustee tenure to a maximum of 3+3 years, widening trustee eligibility to all members for future applications and aligning the Club more closely with charity-sector best practice.
- Development of a new Club strategy, informed by member feedback and surveys, alongside plans to hold occasional future Board meetings at RAF stations outside London to improve engagement across the UK.

Looking ahead to 2026, Warren outlined several priorities for the Club:

- Improving bedroom booking and cancellation systems through ongoing IT upgrades.
- Reviewing support for serving officers requiring short-notice accommodation.
- Updating rules regarding electronic device use within the Club.
- Simplifying and clarifying the Club dress code for members, guests and staff.
- Enacting a new strategy for the Club, with outreach an emerging theme.

This concluded the 2025 report from the Board of Trustees and Chief Executive.

The Royal Air Force Club 2026 Annual General Meeting minutes

4) Retirement of Trustees

Two Trustees have retired since the last Annual General Meeting.

- i) AVM David Murray (retired on 9th July 2025)
- ii) Sqn Ldr John Peters (retires COB on the 13th May)

5) The re-election of Trustees under the Articles of Association

There were no Trustees seeking re-election for a period of up to three years at the 2026 Annual General Meeting.

6) The election of new Trustees under the Articles of Association

Air Cdre Victoria McPhaden was proposed as a Trustee of the Royal Air Force Club for a period of up to 3 years, to start on Thursday 14th May 2026.

Note: Air Cdre Victoria McPhaden is known as Air Cdre Toria McPhaden

Proposed for acceptance by: Wg Cdr Clive Upton

Seconded for acceptance by: Sqn Ldr Brian Moxey

Carried (with 1 abstention) by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, Air Cdre Toria McPhaden was appointed as a Trustee.

7) The appointment of the Vice-Chair of the Board for 3 years

Air Cdre Toria McPhaden was put forward by the Royal Air Force, at the request of the Chair and Board, as a replacement Vice-Chair (Serving) for Air Cdre Phil Wadlow (remaining as Trustee but retiring from the Service). As such Air Cdre McPhaden is proposed as the Vice Chair (Serving) for a period of up to 3 years, to commence on Thursday, 14th May 2026.

Note that Flt Lt Haig Tyler, the Vice-Chair (Business) is not required to seek election at this time.

Proposed for acceptance by: Hon Air Cdre Peter Brown

Seconded for acceptance by: Sqn Ldr Brian Moxey

Carried (with 1 abstention) by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, Air Cdre Toria McPhaden was appointed as Vice-Chair (Serving).

8) The appointment of the Chair of the Board of Trustees

The meeting noted that AVM Warren James is not required to seek re-election at this time following his appointment as both a Trustee and Chair for a period of 3 years at the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

9) The appointment of the Club Auditors

Moore Kingston Smith (MKS) have been proposed as the Auditors for the coming year, and subject to their appointment, it is further proposed that they shall be remunerated in accordance with their usual terms and conditions.

Proposed for acceptance by: Mr Bernie Watson

Seconded for acceptance by: Wg Cdr Piers Morrell

Carried (with 1 against) by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Moore Kingston-Smith have been appointed as the RAF Club Auditors

10) Propositions submitted to the meeting in accordance with article 10.8G of the Articles of Association ~ 10.8G "...discuss and determine any issues of policy or resolutions of which 14 days notice in writing have been given to the Secretary"

Under Agenda Item 10, AVM James noted that no propositions had been submitted to the AGM in accordance with Article 10.8 of the Articles of Association for at least the past ten years.

As a result, the Board intended to remove this as a standing formal agenda item for future AGMs, whilst retaining the provision within the Articles of Association. He emphasised that members would still continue to have the opportunity to raise questions or propositions in accordance with the Articles where required.

11) Any Other Business

The Royal Air Force Club 2026 Annual General Meeting minutes

Questions answered in the meeting:

Question from Gp Capt Steve Harpum

I would like to ask of the AGM if the Club would provide members with digital membership cards? In this day and age where it seems as if 'apps', or at the least an ability to save cards to a digital wallet, are commonplace it surely behoves us as a Club to embrace what is hardly cutting edge technology now.

Answer from Miles Pooley

The short answer was "yes", with the Club currently in the final stages of launching a new website and integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system as part of a wider modernisation programme. The new member portal would include digital membership cards, allowing members to choose between a traditional physical membership card or a digital version, both of which would be fully operational and scannable at the Front Desk.

Question from Air Cdre John Chandler

Reciprocal Club members make full use of the RAF Club, which is good for our occupancy rates. However, I would suggest that they also tend to book months in advance. On the last three occasions I have tried to book a room a month or more in advance, the Club has been full. My supposition is that I am crowded out by Reciprocal Club members. Is that correct and if so, is there a case for reserving a certain number of rooms for full members only? I understand that a hotelier would love 100 % occupancy, but we are a club, not a hotel.

Answer from Miles Pooley

Reciprocal Members were noted as representing one of the smallest membership categories in terms of bedroom usage. In 2025, Reciprocal Members accounted for 2.86% of all bedroom reservations, equivalent to 891 room nights. By comparison, Members and their guests accounted for 96.5% of bedroom reservations, totalling 26,115 room nights, including Serving personnel travelling on duty at a reduced accommodation rate.

It was further noted that the new website, due to launch later in the year, should make it easier for members to manage bookings, and members were also reminded that the Club operates a manual waiting list process for fully booked periods.

Questions asked during the meeting

Question from Sqn Ldr Brian Moxey

When I was a Trustee - first as a serving Fg Off - there were several younger and more junior serving officers on the Board who reflected the Service. Is the current Board considering a drive to find such Trustees?

Answer from AVM Warren James

In response, AVM Warren James said the Board recognised the value of younger serving representation and confirmed that suitably qualified junior serving personnel would continue to be eligible for trustee roles where appropriate. He also noted that the Club was exploring opportunities to involve junior officers through co-opted or observer roles in order to strengthen engagement with the wider Service rather than 'waiting' for Trustee places to become available (noting the reduction in Trustees previously discussed).

Question from Lt Col Paul Jones

I hope the new digital membership card and website redesign will be able to reach over to the introduction to reciprocal clubs when RAF club members travel.

Answer from Katariina Reissaar (Club Director of Operations)

KR advised that the intention was for the new digital membership system and website redesign to improve flexibility and member access, including in relation to reciprocal clubs. However, she noted that members would still likely require a formal letter of introduction when visiting reciprocal clubs, as systems would not necessarily integrate directly between clubs and it is the Club that members visit that set the requirement for entry.

The Royal Air Force Club 2026 Annual General Meeting minutes

Nevertheless, this helpful suggestion would be taken away for further consideration as part of the ongoing development work.

Question from Mr Peter Owen

A question was raised regarding whether the Club had considered introducing a member charge card or account facility, allowing members to settle balances through a direct debit arrangement rather than using personal credit cards for transactions.

Answer from Katariina Reissaar

The introduction of the new website and integrated CRM system was intended to bring member information together into a single platform, which has the potential to support this type of functionality in the future. The concept of a member charge account facility has been considered, but the priority for the current phase of the project was to ensure the successful implementation of the core membership and information systems before expanding into additional payment functionality.

WJ added that the suggestion was a valuable one which the Club would continue to explore, whilst recognising the need to keep systems accessible and straightforward for all members.

Comment from Air Marshal Mike Harwood

A comment was received from an AM Harwood welcoming the ability for members outside London to participate and vote remotely during the AGM and suggested that similar opportunities for members to join Club events virtually and interact more actively, rather than simply observe, should be considered more frequently in future.

Air Cdre Dai Whittingham proposed that the AGM formally record its thanks to the Club staff for their exceptional efforts and support during a year of significant disruption caused by refurbishment works. AVM Warren James endorsed the proposal, praising the staff for maintaining high standards of service throughout the period, and confirmed that a formal note of thanks would be included within the AGM minutes.

This was agreed.

Closing remarks from Chair

In closing the meeting, AVM Warren James thanked members, both in person and online, for their attendance, participation, voting and submitted questions, noting that he hoped members had found the AGM useful and informative. He also thanked members for their continued support of the Friends of the Club initiative, or who had indicated their intention to leave a legacy donation to the Club.

He expressed particular thanks to the Club staff for their professionalism and support in delivering the AGM, including the successful operation of the technology which enabled online participation and voting. In addition, he thanked the Board of Trustees, and the many other volunteers who sit on the various Board Sub Committees and Working Groups.

The 2025 Impact Report, launched at the AGM (referenced several times) will be shared as a digital file to those joining online, with physical copies made available to those at the Club.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, he thanked members for their continued membership and support of the RAF Club, stating that he looked forward to welcoming members back to the Club soon, before formally closing the meeting and inviting those present to remain for refreshments.

The meeting ended at 1852hrs