

The Royal Air Force Club 2022 Annual General Meeting minutes

Wednesday 8th June 2022

The Royal Air Force Club – 1800hrs – Online & in the Sovereigns' Room

Officials present:

DM	Air Vice-Marshal David Murray	Chair of the Board of Trustees
MP	Mr Miles Pooley	Chief Executive & Club Secretary
MH	Mr Michael Harding	Director of Finance
GO	Mr Gareth Ogden	Audit Partner, haysmacintyre

DM welcomed those present to the second hybrid (online and in person) Annual General Meeting and reported that just over 100 Members had signed up to attend online and a further 30 in person. Those on the panel were introduced.

During the introduction DM stated that a number of questions had been submitted in advance of the AGM which may require research and discussion. Those not answered at the AGM would 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, DM stated that proposers would be sourced from those Members willing at the Club, and a Secunder would be sought from those attending online.

Date of the Annual General Meeting

DM stated that as a result of the pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 Annual General Meetings were held in October. However, as announced at the 2021 meeting, the 2022 AGM has returned to June, to take place shortly after the financial results have been reported.

Group Captain Ian F Bruton~ (8th November 1950 to 20th May 2022)

DM reported on the recent passing of former Trustee and Finance Committee Member, Gp Capt Ian Bruton. Ian had been a Trustee for over 23 years, following which he remained an active member of the Finance Committee attending his last meeting in March 2022. DM wished the enormous contribution that Ian has given over nearly 30 years be recorded with the grateful thanks of the Club.

1) Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13th October 2021

DM reminded those attending that the minutes of the previous AGM are available on the website in the 2 or 3 weeks prior to the AGM to allow Members to read and to request any changes if required.

Proposed for acceptance by: Air Cdre Barbara Cooper
Seconded for acceptance by: Gp Capt Alan MacGregor

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.

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2) The Annual Accounts

GO presented the 2021 annual accounts and stated that Members will have in their AGM papers, the accounts of the Club for the year ended 31 December 2021 which were signed by the Board on the 16th March 2022.

GO stated that in summary, the audit report stated that the accounts:

- present a true and fair view of the Clubs affairs
- were prepared in accordance with UK accounting practices
- meet the requirements of the UK Companies House

GO also stated that:

- the audit report is unqualified
- no issues have been found that affect the business as an ongoing concern.

The audit took place in January and February and as in 2021, was undertaken remotely. It is expected that in 2023, an 'on-site' audit will take place. The audit went very well with good support from the Club Finance Team who were responsive to all the requests made to which haysmacintyre are very grateful.

DM stated that no questions had been received in relation to the accounts.

Proposed for acceptance by: Mr John Fisher

Seconded for acceptance by: Wg Cdr Steve Jennings

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

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

3) The Trustees' Annual Report

DM opened the presentation by stating that traditionally we would only report on the previous year, however, due to the Club being in recovery following the covid-19 pandemic, the panel would also include an update on 2022.

On behalf of the Membership, DM recorded thanks to the members of The Board of Trustees and the various sub-committees who have voluntarily given up many hours of their own time to support and contribute to the success of the Club.

DM stated that when he took over as Chair (in January 2022), he reviewed all areas including Governance, Finances, Club Rules, Charitable Status, Staffing and the Staff Structure, Membership levels, Infrastructure, Standards of Service and Member feedback and that he was pleased to state that he had found an exceptionally well run Club thanks to the previous Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dame Sue Gray and that he wished his thanks to be recorded for her dedication and commitment.

Priorities of the Chair & Board of Trustees

Presenting the priorities for the Chair and Board of Trustees for the next 12 months, DM stated that he has started a review that will include:

- Review of the Club Strategy – ensuring the strategy is fit for purpose, 2022 to 2025

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- Succession planning. How each Committee and the Board is managed and succession is planned.
- Relationship and connection with the current Royal Air Force – making sure that in 2050, the Club will still be here and that serving RAF Officers will continue to want to join and be central to the Club's future
- Infrastructure and Capital Expenditure. Some of the day-to-day maintenance over the past 2 years has not been done to the same level as pre-pandemic. The funding of future major projects also needs to be reviewed as well as future major projects.

Club Update

MP welcomed those present and online to the Annual General meeting and stated that his report will include an update on The Club Staff, Membership levels, Member feedback, The 601 Squadron Room and Marketing & social media.

Club Staff

During the update on Club Staff, the points made included:

- The Club Executive (Senior Management) Team, has been reduced in size with a number of positions removed and now being at the Head of Department level.
- The Club has approximately 120 staff, with a 'full time equivalent' of 108 staff
- In addition, 20 casual staff are employed in the food & beverage outlets
- 51 staff are from the UK, 74 are from the European Union and 15 are from the rest of the World.
- All positions in the Club pay at least the London Living Wage (which is currently £11.05 per hour)
- The Club continues to face recruitment challenges, particularly in entry level positions.
- A 'hardship and distress' fund has been created for staff who have short-term hard times, with a clear policy and process in place for its management
- A refugee from Ukraine has been employed as a staff canteen Chef.
- On 12 May, the Club was recognised by *The Caterer* (the hospitality industry magazine) as the 7th best place to work in the UK in Hospitality, and the 1st place in London.

Membership

MP reported that the Club is pleased that overall Membership continues to be at a strong level with the following points noted:

Members (end of 2021)	Serving including Reservists	Former Serving
23,779	20% of total membership	30% of total membership
Associate Members (Partners)		Affiliate (including Family Members)
31%		13%

Member Feedback

- From October 2021 to April 2022, the overall satisfaction score is 4.71/5
- The highest scoring department is the Cowdray Lounge with 4.9/5
- Over 98% of Members rated their 'welcome on arrival at the Club' as Good or Excellent
- Over 99% of Members state that they feel 'safe and secure' when using the Club

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601 Squadron Room

MP presented some images of the refurbished 601 Squadron Room (previously called the Victoria Bar). The funding for the refurbishment was generously given by members of 601 Squadron and the Club is grateful for those who donated to the project.

The 2022 Business update and cash position

In addition to the Accounts presented earlier, MH stated that:

- The Club is now trading at pre-pandemic levels.
- The projected revenue for 2022 is £9.7m which exceeds 2019.
- The projected 2022 surplus is circa £1m.
- The cash balance increases in January & February due to subscription collections.
- The Club is forecasting a dip in August which is a traditionally quieter month
- The forecasted Cash Balance as at 31/12/2022 will be between £2.6m and £2.8m.
- The £1.4m Covid business Loan was fully repaid in May 2022
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This concluded the 2021 Trustees Report.

4) Retirement of Trustees

DM reported that no Trustees have retired since the last AGM.

5) Retirement and Appointment of Trustees

DM stated that the regular Trustee election period is for 3 years. However, to allow for the work to take place on the structure of the Board, the following Trustees are seeking re-election for a period of 1 year with the vote for each Trustee being taken separately.

	Name	Proposer	Seconder
5a	Gp Capt Jim Beldon	Mr John Fisher	Flt Lt Gary Hornby
5b	Air Cdre Barbara Cooper	Air Cdre Dai Whittingham	Wg Cdr Steve Jennings
5c	Wg Cdr James Hill	Sqn Ldr Gavin J Turnbull	Air Cdre Rick Peacock-Edwards
5d	Gp Capt Al Lockwood	Wg Cdr James Poynton	Mr Kevin Horlock
5e	Flt Lt Ian Melia	Mr John Fisher	Flt Lt Jennie Kingston
5f	Sqn Ldr Sean O'Brien	Sqn Ldr Gavin J Turnbull	Air Cdre Rick Peacock-Edwards
5g	Hon. Gp Capt Jo Salter	Plt Off Stephanie Hayden	Flt Lt Gary Hornby
5h	Flt Lt Haig Tyler	Wg Cdr James Poynton	Gp Capt Paul Stewart
5i	Wg Cdr Paula Willmot	Air Cdre Dai Whittingham	Fg Off Gayle Fogg-Elliot

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following the 9 votes, the Trustees (stated above) are re-elected for a period of 1 year.

6) Appointment of new Trustees

DM stated that Air Commodore Adam Wardrope is proposed as a Trustee of the Royal Air Force Club for a period of 3 years.

Proposed for acceptance by: Sqn Ldr Gavin J Turnbull

Seconded for acceptance by: Gp Capt Alan MacGregor

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, Air Commodore Adam Wardrope is appointed as a Trustee of the Royal Air Force Club

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7) The appointment of the Vice-Chair (Serving Officer)

DM stated that, as reported at the 2021 AGM by Dame Sue Gray, the Club has always had a Chair who was a senior Serving Officer. However, due to the reduction in the Air Force of those at a Senior Rank, the decision was made to widen the pool of potential Chairs to include Former-Serving members. As the current Chair is a retired officer and in order to maintain the current links with the Air Force, a **second** Vice-Chair role has been created with the two Vice Chair positions now being:

- Vice-Chair (Serving Officer)
- Vice-Chair (Former-Serving)

Air Commodore Adam Wardrope was therefore proposed as the Vice-Chair (Serving Officer) of the Royal Air Force Club.

Proposed for acceptance by: Air Cdre Barbara Cooper

Seconded for acceptance by: Hon. Gp Capt Jo Salter

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, Air Cdre Adam Wardrope is appointed as Vice-Chair (Serving Officer) of the Royal Air Force Club

Mr John Fisher

DM requested, that on behalf of the membership, that an official note of thanks to be recorded for Mr John Fisher, Vice-Chair (Former-Serving). Mr Fisher is standing down as a Trustee and Vice-Chair in January 2023 after many years service in various roles from Chair of the House Committee, and more recently Vice-Chair. John was instrumental during the time of the Centenary Building project and more recently during the pandemic. His dedication, time and commitment to the success of the Club is greatly appreciated

8) Appointment of the Chair of the Board

At the 2021 Annual General Meeting, Air Vice-Marshal David Murray was appointed as Chair for a period of 3 years and was not required to seek re-election at this meeting.

9) Appointment and remuneration of the Auditors

haysmacintyre have been proposed as the Auditors for the ensuing year and subject to their reappointment it is further proposed that they shall be remunerated in accordance with their usual terms and conditions.

Proposed for acceptance by: Flt Lt Ian Melia

Seconded for acceptance by: Gp Capt Peter Barrett

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

haysmacintyre are reappointed as the Club Auditors.

10) Propositions submitted to the meeting in accordance with article 2.8G

DM stated that no items have been submitted in relation to proposition 2.8G "*...discuss and determine any issues of policy or resolutions of which 14 days notice in writing have been given to the Secretary*"

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11) Any Other Business

Questions answered in the meeting:

Question from Plt Off Stephanie Hayden

Will the Club consider a Club table for the dining room?

Answer from Miles Pooley

The question of a Club Dining Table has been raised before. During breakfast, the large round table in front of the window is used as a Club table. During lunch and dinner, due to the demand for large table reservations this is not possible. Requests for a Club Table at lunch and dinner have become seldom, however, we will continue to monitor the requests and will review this as required.

Question from Sqn Ldr Dave Hall

For the last few years my visits to the Club have been conducted in the company of my son who is, currently, 9-years old. From the minute we enter 128 to the minute we leave, the Club staff treat him like a member of the Royal Family and he knows several of them by name. In the wider round, the Club have also offered a substantial range of quite spectacular children's events. I know that the Club offers a Family Membership that covers a spectrum of Full Members, but this stipulates ages 18 and over. So, I wondered if some consideration might be given to a self-funding form of involvement for those below 18 years of age? I cannot speak for all Members in my situation, but would happily pay for some kind of token of representative involvement for my boy to avoid another 8 or so years of questioning on the subject. Even a "Future Member" item of memorabilia added to the brilliant range already available might do it.

Answer from David Murray

I have spoken with Wg Cdr James Hill, Chair of the Membership Committee who has asked me to report that the Membership Committee has discussed a Junior Membership in the past, but at the moment, there are no plans to introduce such a category. We have made recent changes to family membership to make it as accessible as possible, so look forward to the day when we can welcome your son as a family member or possibly a full member in his own right.

Question from Flt Lt Professor Nick Webborn

This is a follow up to my question last year regarding an accessible entrance at the front door and I would be grateful for the Club Secretary to provide a progress report. There was a commitment to engage with Sesame access to see what they could install. Thank you.

Answer from Miles Pooley

Following the 2021 AGM, I am able to report that I have met with a company called Sesame, also known as *The Invisible Lift Company*. Sesame visited the Club and carried out a survey. In principle a lift could be installed at the front and with all the associated costs it would be around £150k (£105k for basic model plus all building costs and fees) It would also require the front entrance of the club to be out of use for 5-6 weeks . It would be necessary to liaise with the planning department, building control the fire officer and appoint other professional services i.e. an architect. This would be a very desirable project for the Club to fundraise for and your question and this response will, therefore be submitted to the House Committee and the Fundraising & Legacies Committee for review.

Question from Miss Naomi Miles

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Could I raise the brightness of the lights in the corridors. I appreciate that sounds trivial but I don't think they show off the club to its best glory and a number of members & guests have said the same thing to me.

Answer from David Murray

You raise an interesting point in relation to the Club Lighting. As part of our commitment to the environment, over the past 2 years, the Club has changed every light it can to LED lighting. In this case, I am going to pass your comment to Gp Capt Jo Salter, Chair of the House Committee to review and see if improvements can be made to the lighting as we definitely want the Club to always be showing at its best.

- See appendix 1

Question from Air Vice-Marshall Michael Harwood

My one interest is to know how much longer I will pay the £10 'extra' per month, something started during that wretched pandemic. And, allied to this, if there's any likelihood of the opportunity to buy advance rooms is likely to be repeated?

Response from David Murray

As reported in the financial updates, the Club is starting to trade at 2019 levels, however we do have 2 years' worth of shortfall to overcome. The Club recently launched 'Friends of the RAF Club' scheme and those members donating £10 a month will be recognised as a 'Bronze Friend' in the coming weeks.

The opportunity to buy a block of bedrooms at a discounted rate was introduced to help boost the Club cash flow. Therefore, as we no longer need this financial income, there are no plans to reintroduce this scheme at this time.

Question from Mrs Vivienne Matthews

Could the Committee review if there could be a reduction in membership subscriptions for those in Full Time education?

Answer from David Murray

I will refer this question to the Membership Committee to review and to respond to you.

- See appendix 1

Question – Wg Cdr Clive Upton

It is pleasing to see to the surplus of £1m. With the increased costs of fuel etc, what is the risk factor to the Club of forecasting a surplus of £1m?

Answer from Michael Harding

When the budget was set for 2022, an inflation rate of 4.5 to 5% was factored into this. Inflation is currently running at 9% and therefore there is a risk, however, some of the risks have been alleviated. For example, our energy costs were fixed in 2019 at a set rate until 2024. The monthly energy costs for the Club are approximately £40 to £45k, with similar properties in London have seen their energy costs doubled. The Club has seen food and beverage costs increase but we believe that we have enough surplus to cover these costs.

Question – Fg Off Michael Leaver

The Cowdray Lounge has stopped serving the 'lite-bite' menu which was very nice. Is there a plan to re-introduce this?

Answer – Miles Pooley

In January 2022, due to low occupancy and to allow staff to use annual leave, the Dining Room (not including breakfast) and Running Horse closed for 2 weeks and a lite-bite menu was introduced in the Cowdray Lounge for this time. We expect to repeat this in 2023. The challenge with having a permanent food menu in the Cowdray Lounge is based around resource

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and equipment required. Logistically, therefore it is very difficult, however, we do take on board your comment and will bear that in mind as we plan for the future.

Comment from Club Member: Sqn Ldr Christopher Podger

Thank you for all you have done in the past 3 years to keep the Club in such a wonderful position

Comment from Club Member: Flt Lt Geraldine Linford

Great to hear Miles report. Very uplifting. Thank you everyone

There were no other comments or questions.

Closing remarks from Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen, that concludes the 2022 RAF Club AGM. Thank you very much for attending, voting and submitting questions. I hope you found the meeting useful. The 2023 AGM will be held on Wednesday 7th June 2023.

I would like to end by thanking the Trustees and Staff for everything that they have do. I have been a member for over 43 years and I did not know everything that went on here, from the Club Bees making honey on the roof to the workings of the drains in the basement.

The Club continues to recover from the pandemic and if you are able to support the Club by becoming a Bronze, Silver or Gold 'Friend', please do not put it off. Over 500 members are *Friends of the Club* and we are very grateful for their support.

This is our 3rd live streaming of the AGM and our 2nd hybrid AGM so we would very much appreciate your feedback on the meeting today.

Finally on behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for your continued membership. I very much look forward to meeting you in the Club soon.

The meeting ended at 1858hrs

Date of the next Annual General Meeting:

Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 1800hrs

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Appendix 1 Questions referred to Committees for answering

Question from Miss Naomi Miles

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Answer from David Murray

You raise an interesting point in relation to the Club Lighting. As part of our commitment to the environment, over the past 2 years, the Club has changed every light it can to LED lighting. In this case, I am going to pass your comment to Gp Capt Jo Salter, Chair of the House Committee to review and see if improvements can be made to the lighting as we definitely want the Club to always be showing at its best.

Answer from the House Committee

The House Committee agreed that the Club should always be shown at its best. The Club has undertaken a programme to replace all of the lighting with low energy consumption LED lamps. The Committee will review the lighting in the main corridors as part of a wider review of energy costs noting the feedback received.

Question from Mrs Vivienne Matthews

Could the Committee review if there could be a reduction in membership subscriptions for those in Full Time education?

Answer from David Murray

I will refer this question to the Membership Committee to review and to respond to you.
- See appendix 1

Answer from the Membership Committee

There are no plans to offer a discount for members in full time education. The Membership Committee have received requests to discount membership for various reasons including age and employment status. While sympathetic to individual circumstances, the Committee judge that a discounted system would be difficult to manage and run counter to the principle that members pay the same subscription for their membership category.