

The Royal Air Force Club

2023 Annual General Meeting minutes

Wednesday 10th June 2023

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

Full Members Online	Full Members present at the Club
85 (at the highest point)	27

DM welcomed those present to the third hybrid (online and in person) Annual General Meeting and reported that just over 80 Members had signed up to attend online and a further 27 in person. Those on the panel were introduced.

During the introduction, DM stated that a number of questions had been submitted in advance 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 willing Members physically at the Club, and a Secunder would be sought from those attending online.

Queen Elizabeth II, Club Patron 1952 to 2022

DM wished a formal record of gratitude be entered into the minutes to HM Queen Elizabeth II for her 70 years as Club Patron before her death in 2022. Her Majesty visited the Club on many occasions, including most recently in 2018 and remained an active supporter during her time as Patron. DM further stated that there is no information regarding a new Patron at this time.

1) Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8th June 2022

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 Commodore Wendy Rothery

Seconded for acceptance by: Wing Commander Harry Lowe

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) The Annual Accounts

GO presented the 2022 annual accounts and stated that Members will have in their AGM papers, the accounts of the Club for the year ended 31 December 2022 which were signed by the Board on the 29th March 2022. 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

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

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

Proposed for acceptance by: Mr Bernie Watson

Seconded for acceptance by: Wing Commander Malcolm Ward

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

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

3) The Trustees' Annual Report

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. Trustees and the many volunteers ensure that the Club continues to operate in the best interest of the current and future members and that it remains compliant with all relevant laws and regulations.

Priorities of the Chair & Board of Trustees

DM presented the priorities of the Board of Trustees, which included:

- Succession planning. How each Committee and the Board is managed, and succession is planned.
- Fundraising for the Club's future. The *Friends of the Royal Air Force Club* scheme has already raised over £250k which has directly contributed to projects that would not otherwise have been able to be completed.
- A survey to all Members, including those who have recently resigned and those who have not chosen to join to get a better understanding and expectations of the needs of the current and future diverse membership.
- The first RAF Club Impact Report.

The RAF Club Impact Report

DM launched the first Royal Air Force Club Impact Report, which has been written to highlight the charitable good that the Club does. The report includes information on: Club Governance, Club Finances, Fundraising, Risk and Risk mitigation, Sustainability, Club improvements, Club Staff, Social Events, our Social Media strategy and the support that we give to the RAF organisations. Members were invited to give feedback on the report to the Club via the email address on the back page.

Club Update

MP stated that his report will include an update on The Club Staff, membership levels, member feedback and accessibility.

Club Staff

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

- The Club has approximately 116 "full time equivalent" staff.
- In addition, 34 casual staff are employed in the Housekeeping and food & beverage outlets.
- 48 staff are from the UK, 64 are from the European Union and 13 are from elsewhere.

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- The Club continues to face recruitment challenges, particularly in entry-level positions in food and beverage, commis chef roles, housekeeping and security positions.
- To remain competitive and able to recruit and retain staff, all positions in the Club pay more than the London Living Wage (currently £11.95 per hour).
- The Club regularly celebrates and recognises staff successes. Several Chefs have recently been successful in culinary competitions, and we continue to award our employee of the month alongside our department of the quarter and leader of the quarter.

Membership

MP reported that the Club is pleased that the overall Membership level remains high, at just above 24,100 at the end of 2023. Serving and Former Serving Members make up 49% of the membership, with the next highest category being Spouses/Partners.

Members (as of April 23)	Serving & Reservists	Former Serving	Widow/ers
24,116	20%	29%	3%
Honorary	Spouses/Partners	Family	Affiliate
3%	31%	9%	5%

Member Feedback

MP reported on the membership feedback scores, which are collated from surveys completed following a stay.

- In 2022, the overall satisfaction score is 4.72/5 with the 2023 target being set at 4.75
- 79.6% of members who stayed at the Club last year came for leisure purposes.
- The overall bedroom satisfaction level has increased to 4.45/5
- 11 bedrooms will be refurbished in the Summer and Autumn.

Accessibility at the Royal Air Force Club

MP presented a report on the recent work that the Club has undertaken to improve how accessible the Club is to its membership. The measures reported included:

- Improvements to the 6 Old Park Lane entrance, including better lighting, an improved intercom system, glass panels being installed to the door, better signage and automatic doors.
- 3 fully accessible bedrooms with step-free access, space for a wheelchair turning circle and full wet rooms.
- The Front Desk maintain a list of all other bedrooms that have step-free access
- With the exception of the Running Horse and Lancaster meeting room, all other member facilities have step-free access.

In summary, MP reported that the Club Management and the House Committee consider the accessibility of the Club a priority for the membership.

Marketing and Social Media

MP reported on the marketing and social media strategy of the Club which includes how the Club uses Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter to remain in touch with the Membership.

Comment from Club Member Professor Nick Webborn

NW thanked the Board and Miles for understanding the issues of accessibility for members who have a disability when using the Club.

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DM responded that this remains a priority. The Club has faced some challenges with statutory organisations (for example, when wanting to make building changes) however the Board is committed to ensuring the Club is as accessible as it is possible to be.

The 2022 Business update and cash position

In addition to the information presented by GO earlier, MH stated that:

- The Club is now trading at pre-pandemic levels.
- In 2019, total revenue was £9.5m with a surplus of £160k.
- In 2020 the deficit was £800k.
- In 2021, the losses of 2020 were recovered.
- In 2022 the total revenue was £10.2m with a surplus of £1.2m
- The Covid-19 business interruption loan has been repaid in full.
- Repayments have resumed making payments on the Centenary Loan.
- The Club has no free reserves, however, it will now start to build a reserves fund.
- In 2022 the financial performance of the Club was fully compliant with the loan covenants.

Question from Club Member Squadron Leader Shahid Amin

SA stated that he is pleased to see that the Club has recovered to pre-pandemic levels and that income from bedrooms and membership has remained good.

Q – SA - Requested clarification of the operating expenses increases including repairs and maintenance?

A – MH - The reasons for the increase are due to the return to pre-pandemic usage levels.

Q – SA - Requested clarification on why legal expenses have increased by 300%?

A – DM - There were a small number of very specific member related issues that required legal advice which has led to the increase. However, it was not anticipated that this would re-occur annually.

This concluded the 2022 Trustees Report.

4) Retirement of Trustees

DM reported that two Trustees have stood down since the last Annual General Meeting and are not seeking re-election.

Mr John Fisher who, since joining the Board in 2009, has held many roles including Chair of the House Committee, and more recently the Vice-Chair of the Club. Alongside the then Chair, Dame Sue Gray, John led the Board through the centenary extension and then the covid-19 pandemic.

Wing Commander James Hill, a Trustee since 2015 who also served as Chair of the Membership Committee for most of that time. James has worked tirelessly to ensure that the membership of the Club remains at a healthy level with the future always in mind.

A formal record of thanks is entered into the minutes for their work as Trustees of the Club.

5) Retirement and Appointment of Trustees

DM stated that the regular Trustee election period is for 3 years. However in 2022, to allow for a succession planning exercise to take place, a number of Trustees were elected for 1 year. Those Trustees are now seeking re-election for a period of 2 years to put themselves back in the 3-year cycle. A further 3 Trustees are seeking re-election for a period of 3 years.

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Trustees seeking re-election for a period of 2 years

	Name	Proposer	Seconder	Notes
5a	Gp Capt Jim Beldon	Flt Lt Haig Tyler	Wg Cdr James Hill	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5b	Air Cdre Barbara Cooper	Fg Off Martin Chalk	Wg Cdr Rob Stephens	Online – 1 against with the rest for. In room - unanimous
5c	Gp Capt Al Lockwood	Wg Cdr James Poynton	Flt Lt Jennie Kingston	Online – 1 against with the rest for. In room - unanimous
5d	Flt Lt Ian Melia	Mr Bernie Watson	Wg Cdr James Hill	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5e	Sqn Ldr Sean O'Brien	Sqn Ldr John Peters	Air Cdre Andrew Spinks	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5f	Hon. Gp Capt Jo Salter	Gp Capt Jim Beldon	Sqn Ldr David Hume	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5g	Flt Lt Haig Tyler	Flt Lt Ian Melia	Wg Cdr Daniel Withnall	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5h	Wg Cdr Paula Willmot	Gp Capt Al Lockwood	Flt Lt Mick Clabby	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous

Decision: Following the 8 votes, the Trustees (stated above) are re-elected for a period of 2 years.

Trustees seeking re-election for a period of 3 years

	Name	Proposer	Seconder	Notes
5i	Sqn Ldr John Peters	Air Cdre Adam Wardrope	Wg Cdr James Hill	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5j	Wg Cdr James Poynton	Fg Off Martin Chalk	Gp Capt Steve Harpum	Online – unanimous In room - unanimous
5k	Air Cdre Dai Whittingham	Sqn Ldr Sean O'Brien	Wg Cdr Gareth Cunningham	Online – 1 against with the rest for. In room - unanimous

Decision: Following the 3 votes, the Trustees (stated above) are re-elected for a period of 3 years.

6) Appointment of new Trustees

No new Trustees are seeking election in 2023.

7) The appointment of the Vice-Chair (Business)

DM stated that, at the 2022 Annual General Meeting, Air Cdre Adam Wardrope was appointed as the Vice-Chair (Serving Officer) for a period of 3 years. A second Vice-Chair (Business) is proposed by the Board of Trustees to take over the role previously held by Mr John Fisher. Flt Lt Haig Tyler is proposed as the Vice-Chair (Business) for a period of 3 years.

Proposed for acceptance by: Flt Lt Ian Melia

Seconded for acceptance by: Wg Cdr Malcolm Ward

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, Flt Lt Haig Tyler is appointed as Vice-Chair (Business) of the Royal Air Force Club for a period of 3 years.

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8) Appointment of the Chair of the Board

This agenda item was chaired by the Club Vice-Chair Flt Lt Haig Tyler

Air Vice-Marshal David Murray is proposed as Chair of the Board of Trustees for the ensuing year.

Proposed for acceptance by: Gp Capt Jim Beldon

Seconded for acceptance by: Wg Cdr Paul Serrell-Cooke

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: Following a vote, Air Vice-Marshal David Murray is appointed as Chair of the Royal Air Force Club for the ensuing year.

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: Air Cdre Dai Whittingham

Seconded for acceptance by: Flt Lt Jennie Kingston

Carried unanimously by those voting online and attending in person.

Decision: 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"*

11) Any Other Business

Questions answered in the meeting:

Question from Mr Julian Bray

As a service to guests could I suggest that the 24 hour Talking Pictures Television channel is added to the current room television service? This channel operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is free to air. It specialises in film history as it rescues, cleans up from early film stock then digitises seldom seen on terrestrial television cinema feature productions from the 1930s onwards and of course many early RAF and Wartime cinema productions.

Answer from Miles Pooley

Our Television system is provided by Sky and allows for a restricted number of channels. I am pleased however to advise that we have spoken to our provider and this has been added as Channel 15. The on-screen TV guide has also been updated.

Question from Fg Off Michael Leaver

Can the hours when 'The Running Horse' serves meals be extended as I think 2000 hours is too early to cease offering this service?. (Have to state that the food here is very varied and always good).

Answer from Miles Pooley

We regularly review our food and beverage service times. Our staffing situation has eased somewhat since we previously restricted the hours of food being served in the Running Horse. I am therefore pleased to advise that Last Orders for food in the Running Horse has been extended to 8.30pm and this was changed on 14th April.

Question from Fg Off Michael Leaver

Is it intended to resume offering light snacks in the Cowdray lounge?

Answer from Miles Pooley

We were able to offer light bites in the Cowdray Lounge both last year and this year in January when the dining room and Running Horse were closed for the first couple of weeks. Even when we did this,

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we were quite challenged to serve the hot food in the Cowdray lounge at the correct temperature due to the logistics of getting it from the preparation kitchen in the lower ground floor to the first floor. It remains a mid to long term aspiration to offer a lite-bites menu in the Cowdray Lounge. However, to offer this permanently and at the same time have the other food outlets fully operational it requires some refurbishment in our 1st-floor kitchens, particularly with the anticipated demand there would be. Additionally extensive works would be required to refurbish our food service lifts which run from the lower ground floor to the 1st floor. We would also have to review staffing levels as part of this change. Our 10-year capital expenditure plan does include these works mentioned, however currently we are not in a position to commit to when we may be able to carry out these works.

Question from Dr Chris Pell

I am not aware of the total number of Affiliate Members who comprise members of the Club, but I wish to suggest that Affiliate Members should be represented on the Board of Trustees by one of their own members. To ensure that the Club continues to develop further and implement its inclusive approach to business, I suggest that now would be an appropriate time to implement this move. Should it be considered appropriate, I offer myself as a representative Affiliate Member and as a retired Chief Scientist of the RAF

Answer from David Murray

The Club was established over 100 years ago to provide a venue for serving and retired RAF Officers and their families. Affiliate members (approximately 5% of members) are generally those who have made a significant contribution to the RAF, but who have not been RAF Officers. We are delighted to be able to welcome Affiliate Members to the Club, and indeed (with the exception of the Board) they already sit on all of the Committees where they have input into the Board via the Trustees who Chair them. In addition, if you have any specific points of feedback please do let any of the Trustees or Miles and his team aware so it can be reviewed. It is not, however, currently proposed to amend the Constitution to allow for those members who are not Serving or Former-Serving Officers to join the Board of Trustees.

Question from Mr Martin Keats

Is the Club proposing to widen its potential membership to retired Warrant Officers/Master Air Loadmasters?

Response from David Murray

I periodically receive correspondence from Warrant Officers and other non-commissioned ranks about membership of the Club. However The Objects of the Club state that "The Club is established to promote the efficiency of the Royal Air Force by improving the conditions of officers holding commissions therein". The Board of Trustees regularly review membership eligibility and at this juncture, there are no proposals to widen membership eligibility to include retired warrant officers.

Question from Lt Col Bob Lines

Would the Club consider implementing a 'day pass' for prospective Full Members, e.g. International air line pilots"?

Answer from David Murray

Thank you for your question and the detailed background notes that accompanied your question. I am going to ask Sqn Ldr Steve Potter, who is part of the Membership Committee, to contact you as he is currently running a programme targeting International Airline pilots who are eligible for membership (e.g. Former Serving). In addition, the Club Membership Department does arrange visits for prospective eligible Members to be able to visit the Club before joining, but I am pleased that Sqn Ldr Potter will be able to work with you on this.

Question – Wg Cdr James Brown

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Could the structure of club events be re-balanced to increase accessibility to members with children who do not live near London?

Answer from David Murray

Thank you for your question and for the accompanying background notes. Club Events remain a very popular offering to the Club Membership and in the past, we have run targeted events for Members with young Children such as the Christmas Parties. We also offer the Son's and Daughters dinners for older children, or older parents if they are in the Air Force – but we have probably not looked at events specifically for children of different ages. Therefore, I am going to ask Air Cdre Dai Whittingham, who is Chair of the Events Committee, to come back to you on this directly.

Comment from Sqn Ldr Shahid Amin

Those people who have been members for several years, should be asked why they retain their membership. The results of which could help shape how we recruit new Members.

Response from David Murray

Thank you Sqn Ldr Amin. I will cover your question in my closing remarks.

Closing remarks from Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen, that concludes the 2023 RAF Club AGM. Thank you very much for attending, voting and submitting questions. I hope you found the meeting useful.

The Board of Trustees now needs your assistance. As mentioned earlier, alongside the launch of the Impact Report this evening, the Club is launching a membership survey. The survey, aimed at current, future and recently resigned members has been designed to help the Board get your input into the strategic future of the Club. Please do take the time to fill it in and return it. Your views and opinions really do matter!

For any members who wish to become a Bronze, Silver or Gold 'Friend', please do not put it off. Over 500 members are already "Friends of the Club" and we are very grateful for their support. For more information, please see Miles or Claire Dakin, the Director of Fundraising.

This is our 4th live streaming of the AGM and our 3rd hybrid AGM so we would very much appreciate your feedback on the meeting today.

Thank you to the Club Staff for running the IT which has enabled the AGM and 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 1857hrs