

## CHICHESTER YACHT CLUB LIMITED

### **Minutes of the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held at the Club, Chichester Marina, Birdham, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 7EJ on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 3 pm**

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**Dr Tony Mobbs, Commodore and Chairman of the Board presided  
until Item 6, Resolution 3.**

70 members were present, no Proxy Forms were received.

46 apologies were received.

The Meeting opened at 3 pm.

1. The Chairman opened the meeting.
2. The Chairman welcomed members to the Annual General Meeting of Chichester Yacht Club Limited.
3. **Resolution 1:** The Chairman asked that the Minutes of the AGM held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020 be received and adopted as a true record. Proposed by the David Pearce, seconded by Tony Mobbs and confirmed by a unanimous show of hands in favour.
4. **Chairman's Report of the General Committee**

It gives me great pleasure to present this report on the activities of the General Committee and on the Club's position for 2020 and 2021.

2020 represented the first year of the Club's new 3-year Club Strategy. Our previous Club Strategy focused on developing the Club to become more sustainable, the focus for the next 3 years is to become more resilient (a word you will hear a lot) and robust.

Our overall vision is to be recognised as a leading sailing club both locally and throughout the Solent sustainably supporting the interests of our members.

Our key strategic goal of the Club remains to be an informal, family-friendly sustainable and resilient club, supporting water-based activities in all its forms and providing a range of experiences both on and off the water for our members.

To help deliver our Club Strategy, we have defined 4 key strategic themes:

1. To maintain membership recruitment and retention
2. To facilitate member and non-member development, e.g. training and winter lectures
3. To integrate marketing and communications to improve the Club brand
4. To develop a sustainable and resilient Club for the future

This strategy is supported by a 3-year Management Plan and an annual Business Plan to ensure we deliver on our strategic goals. We would have liked to have made more progress on point 3 but we were overtaken by events.

We have also changed the Governance of the Club, with the General Committee now focusing on strategic issues, but supported by a Member Services Committee and a Board Sub-Committee, the latter focusing on financial and operational planning for the Club.

We have always been a family-orientated club but families change and we have adapted to this, for example grandchildren can now be added to family membership. We also have a phased

increase in subscriptions according to age. We offer an increasing variety of different activities including stand-up paddle boarding and gig rowing.

We started 2020 in a very strong position. We had the highest number of members at the start of the year, together with the lowest attrition rate for many years. Also, the forecast for our external events business was the strongest we had ever seen.

However, at the end of March when the country was forced into lockdown, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Club had to close all its operations for the first time in our history.

I activated the Club's Major Incident Protocol, which allowed us to establish a Major Incident Committee to provide leadership and management for the Club throughout the crisis.

The Harbour Master closed the harbour and the marina closed the access road. Overnight, the Club became a virtual club. I was impressed by the way our members, through their creativity and innovation, developed new ways of keeping everyone engaged. We discovered Zoom meetings to replace our physical section meetings. New e-Racing took the place of our dinghy racing series and new social groups were established, including quiz nights, book clubs, coffee mornings and the Motor section even held a dinner party online.

As soon as Government restrictions started to be lifted, the Committee developed a phased Pathway Plan to open the Club, ensuring we provided a safe and secure Covid environment for our members and staff alike and that we were compliant with the latest legal requirements.

By May, we were allowed to access the Dinghy Park and marinas and the Harbour Master allowed sailing to recommence within the harbour.

We were also creative and started up a new takeaway service from the Club to provide drinks, snacks and meals to members and the public. We installed Portaloos to support members visiting the Club whilst continuing to advise members to come "sail ready". Our Dinghy programme started operating under severe Covid protocols. Our showers and tea bar remained closed.

By July we were able to reopen the Club fully with a restaurant service; yacht and motor cruises could start again, together with dinghy racing and cruising. Our RYA training programme started, albeit with reduced numbers to ensure social distancing under strict Covid guidelines. However, our external events business was a major concern.

Throughout all of 2020, the loyalty of our members was outstanding and the numbers returning to the Club after we re-opened was higher than we predicted. Supported by the Government's Eat-Out-On-Us scheme, followed by our own "Dine-Out-On-Us" scheme until September.

However by November, the Club was forced to close again by the Government due to rising numbers of Delta variant, both locally and nationally. Although we were allowed to re-open again in December, our usual Christmas and New Year celebrations were understandably curtailed.

2021 started with the Club being closed again as all the country was placed under Tier 4 restrictions. We became a virtual club once again and restarted our previous on-line activities. By March the harbour was re-opened for leisure sailing. By April we were allowed to re-open a garden service and our RYA Training could re-start under strict "bubble" guidance.

By May we were allowed to welcome members back into the clubhouse and section socials re-started. July represented the full lifting of government restrictions. We decided however to continue table service in the main Restaurant, as it was welcomed by members, whilst maintaining a hatch-type service in the garden.

Despite the disappointing start to the year, we managed to complete a full programme of dinghy racing and yacht and motor cruises, with only a few being cancelled because of bad weather.

Our Club and RYA Training Programmes were oversubscribed and the number of members having 1-1 coaching sessions significantly increased over previous years.

From July, our external events business started to recover, albeit with smaller numbers attending weddings and parties. By the end of the year, our Christmas Party season was almost back to normal, although there were a few cancellations and postponements.

Most importantly, the number of members increased significantly. So much so, we have decided to hold the membership (i.e. subscription payers) to around 1150, which represents about 2500 members in total. This is to ensure members continue to have a positive experience when coming to the Club.

This growth in membership has undoubtedly had an impact on our facilities. The Dinghy Park is now full, ticketed events are selling out quickly and at times car parking can be a challenge.

Our other, non-sailing members' activities have returned to some degree of normality:

- Winter lectures
- Pilates and Yoga classes
- Club rambles
- Classic cars
- Computer Club
- Art group (starting soon)
- And of course, our Section Socials on Friday evenings which have had great attendances.

On the water, we now have a very active rowing community. The Club hired a Cornish Gig for the year, so we will be making a decision later this year as to the future of rowing within the Club. A committee has been formed with a view to purchasing our own boat.

Wing Foiling took off during 2021 and it is pleasing to see the radio controlled model boats have started up again

With the Club returning to some degree of normality, and as we learnt to live with Covid, I decided after 18 months of fortnightly meetings to stand down the Major Incident Committee in September. However, by the end of the year Omicron had become a variant of concern and was starting to gain hold.

Finally, as we enter 2022, I can report that the Club is in a strong position. Membership remains high with a low member attrition rate. We have over 70 bookings for our RYA Training courses and we have a strong book of business for external events which are starting to return. The Club Programme for the year has now been uploaded onto the website. I am sure with your continued loyalty and support the Club will have a successful year.

Looking at some graphs, it can be seen that our Club is growing much faster than the regional average. The attrition rate is falling and well within our strategic goal. We start 2022 with over 150 more members than at the same time last year.

Throughout the whole Covid crisis, we have continued to invest in the Club and its facilities. We have installed two new pontoons to replace the old ones which were becoming a health and safety hazard. We have updated our furniture in the garden and improved accessibility there with a new ramp and steps. We had to buy a new cooker for the kitchen and we will be buying a new RIB shortly to support our training activities. Recently, we migrated our tills onto a new system and you will shortly notice some of the new facilities available to you to improve your experience in the Bar and Restaurant, including staff tablets for taking orders at table and an app which will permit you to check your balance and top up.

The Omicron infection rate is beginning to fall and the final Covid restrictions are being lifted. We will be reviewing our current Covid precautions shortly. However, it has not gone away. At the time of writing, we have three members of staff off work with Covid (who are all now back at work). We will continue to give priority to the health and security of our staff and members alike.

Without doubt, the Covid crisis has had a detrimental effect on our staff, their welfare and their mental health. We have supported our staff throughout. We supported them financially through the government's furlough scheme and in addition we introduced a Staff Support Scheme to provide external professional support if requested.

We have also improved the resilience of the staff teams. We have appointed deputies for all the key management roles within the Club. In addition, we are now recruiting mainly full-time casual staff who have previous experience in the hospitality business, rather than relying on a larger number of part-time staff who can only work a limited number of hours. Also, this year we have started to invest in training for staff by external agencies and team-building exercises for the leadership team..

The role of the General Committee and in particular that of the Commodore, is to ensure the Club grows and progresses to the benefit of our members. I hope you will see that despite the Covid crisis, we have developed the right strategy and made the right decisions to ensure the Club is in a good financial position. With your support, we will remain viable into a future where the Club continues to develop and grow, as well as offering a welcoming and friendly environment which provides an exceptional experience for all our members. Whenever I speak to visitors to the Club they always compliment us on this.

This has undoubtedly been a very hard two years for the General Committee. I do not think anyone who stood for the Committee last time could have guessed at the year we would have.

There are a number of directors standing down and I would like to thank them for their support through this difficult time.

I would like to thank particularly all the Rear Commodores for an outstanding effort in engaging with their sections and keeping everyone up to date with excellent communications. We maintained our regular weekly On-Board Newsletter throughout and I tried to keep members informed of our position through my Commodore Communications.

I must also give particular thanks to the members of the Major Incident Committee, who have all put more commitment into keeping the Club going throughout the last two years than would normally be expected.

- Roger Marshall, our Club Treasurer, and Liz Adlington, our Accounts Manager (who was the only member of staff not put on furlough), ensured we successfully received all the business grants and loans we were entitled to, plus producing regular updates on our financial position. In fact, they changed the way we managed the Club's finances.

- David Pearce for keeping on top of the Government and RYA guidance, the legal restrictions and ensuring our risk assessments and in-house guidance were compliant.

- Philip Brown (in 2020) for his knowledge of health services and systems, together with his expertise in HR.

- Gavin Crick (in 2021) for his financial expertise and also his knowledge on restructuring business. It was noticeable that the RYA guidance on re-opening clubs did not address the question of whether or how we could afford to re-open.

- Tom Dewey for keeping the Club ticking over during the lockdowns and preparing the Club for its reopening, for example by legionella testing and grass mowing.

- Manu Jenkin for converting guidance into practical procedures within the Club, plus liaising with our HR partner to ensure our staff received the correct advice.

The growing success of the Club is very much a collaborative and team effort. I would like to thank Manu Jenkin for her strong leadership and tenacity. I have had many constructive

debates with her after which my final word was usually “sorry”! She is ably supported by Lucy and Carolyn in the office and they provide a warm welcome to members entering the clubhouse. Drew Gibson for organising and delivering a top-rated training programme and courses; Drew now has a higher level power boat qualification which means we will be able to run more advanced courses. Tom Dewey for his business leadership in developing our successful external events business together with Cat Scott. David and Josh for organising our year-round social programme and the delivery of good service in the Restaurant. Andy and Keith, Craig and Alex for producing varied and appetising menus throughout the year. It is important to note that we could not “bubble” our kitchen staff and at one stage we had to close the Kitchen for a week due to Covid.

In addition, the Club is supported by nearly 50 part-time casual staff and instructors; in total we have over 65 staff at the Club. They can be under a great deal of stress at times so please be patient and respectful towards them.

And, of course, there is a key member of the team missing, and that is my wife Alison. She has been my rock and of great support to me throughout the crisis. And she has got used to me saying I am going to the Club for a few minutes, knowing that I will be away for the rest of the day! After just over 4 years, I am now standing down as your Commodore. Undoubtedly it has been a very challenging time for both myself and the Club but it has been very rewarding and in the main very pleasurable. Mostly it has been quite good fun but I look forward to being able to spend more time with my family.

It has been an honour to serve and lead this Club.

Martin Willard asked whether there were any key staff positions remaining unfilled. The Commodore replied that we are still trying to recruit one chef. If we were to lose another, we would not be able to continue to provide the same level of operation. It is very difficult to recruit staff in the hospitality sector at the moment although we are paying well. We are building loyalty in order to retain the staff we have.

## **5. Treasurer’s Report:**

It seems a long time since our last accounts in 2020. Members will remember that we changed our year end last year, so the accounts for this meeting are unusual in that they are actually for a 15 month period to 31 March 2021. They are also unusual because they cover a period when the Club was shut for major parts of the year.

As Tony says in his report, the period started in a benign way with our budgets forecasting a strong year. By March 2020 we had torn up the budgets and were carrying out stress tests to see under what circumstances we would run out of money. The fact that we didn’t run out, and ended the period in a reasonable position, is due to four main factors:

- Our members showed great loyalty. We were worried that many would resign given that the Club was only operating virtually for a number of months. In fact very few did and we gained many new members over the period, helped by the proactive work of the Sections. However, of course, sales were down but costs were not.

- Significant government support. As the accounts show, we received over £215,000 of grants in the 15 months, mainly to pay furloughed staff. In addition, we received council tax relief, a reduced VAT rate and the ability to defer tax payments.

- Great work by the senior staff who kept the ship afloat in very difficult circumstances at a time when all other staff were furloughed.

- We managed the Club for cash rather than profit during the period. We avoided all expenditure which was not absolutely necessary. However, we were committed to the new pontoons which involved major capital expenditure of £150-160,000. These were required for health and safety reasons but they will now last us for many years.

As a result of all this we ended with cash, net of the £50,000 Bounce Back Loan, virtually unchanged from the previous year end, although this was flattered by deferred VAT liabilities which we have since paid. Members approved us taking out a Bounce Back Loan as a precaution but in the end we did not need it and we repaid the loan in September 2021.

Membership remained strong and functions gradually improved. It was not a great year financially but reasonable in the circumstances.

The current year to March 2022 has shown signs of returning to normality, although function income has taken time to recover, and we continue to incur high Covid-related costs. During the period we also installed, and paid for, the second pontoon. Our forecasts show that the year end cash position will be down on the previous period end but should nevertheless be satisfactory.

It has been a challenging time over the past four years but we have benefited from a lot of good teamwork.

**Resolution 2:** To receive the Accounts and Report of the Auditors for the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This was proposed by Chris Lane, seconded by Robin Hamilton, and was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

6. **Resolution 3:** That the firm of Lewis Brownlee be re-appointed auditors for Chichester Yacht Club Limited. Proposed by Roger Marshall, seconded by Tony Moore. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

7. **Election of the General Committee**

**Resolution 4:** To elect Simon Benson as Commodore, General Committee Chairman and re-elect as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Tony Mobbs and seconded by Gavin Crick. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

Tony Mobbs presented Simon Benson with his Commodore's burgee and retired from the Chair. Simon Benson took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**Resolution 5:** To re-elect Karen Cheeseman as Rear Commodore Dinghies and as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Tony Mobbs and seconded by Lucy Apsey. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 6:** To re-elect John Lake as Rear Commodore Yachts and as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Paul Simmonds and seconded by Kerry Jackson. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 7:** To elect Digby Armstrong as Rear Commodore Motors and as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Gavin Crick and seconded by Caroline Crick. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 8:** To elect Steve Cray as Rear Commodore Membership and re-elect as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Simon Benson and seconded by Tony Mobbs. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 9:** To re-elect Helen Green as Rear Commodore Training and as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Karen Cheeseman and seconded by Simon Benson. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 10:** To re-elect David Pearce as Honorary Secretary and as a Director of the Company. Proposed by Simon Benson and seconded by Philip Brown. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 11:** To elect Philip Ladds as Honorary Treasurer and Financial Director of the Company. Proposed by Roger Marshall and seconded by Gavin Crick. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

**Resolution 12:** To elect or re-elect four nominated members to the General Committee and as Directors of the Company. There were no objections to an en-bloc vote.

James Connell (election) proposed by Simon Benson, seconded by John Lake.  
Tony Moore (re-election) proposed by Simon Benson, seconded by Karen Cheeseman.  
Louise Varley (election) proposed by Karen Cheeseman, seconded by Helen Green.  
Martin Willard (re-election) proposed by Andrew Mill, seconded by G Smith.

This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

Simon Benson presented a Rear Commodore burgee to Steve Cray and confirmed that a similar burgee would be presented to Digby Armstrong who was not present.

8. **Resolution 13:** At the request of the General Committee it was requested that Tony Mobbs be elected as an Honorary Life Member. Simon Benson said that Tony was a great friend who had given him excellent support. Tony knew everything about how the Club works behind the scenes and liked to spend time here helping out both staff and members, particularly over the last two years. Simon said that when he first joined the Club it had only 670 members and didn't know whether or not it would last. Tony was part of the team and eventually became Commodore, sticking with the post for the last four years. Given the difficulties the Club faced during the pandemic, Tony rose to the occasion and there couldn't have been a better man for the job.

Proposed by Jenny Woodcock and seconded by Robin Hamilton. This was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

Simon presented Tony with the Past Commodore burgee. Tony said this was the burgee every Commodore wants. He had been a member of the Club for over 40 years, in which time he had made two mistakes. He had responded to a request to help with programming the Club's first computer and later he had asked by Commodore Peter Buttery about a sensitive IT question, to which he had asked if there was anything he could do to help, something perhaps you should never say. It was though the Club might survive for only two years but I had a plan. I was elected to GC and things went from there. The Club has since moved from strength to strength. It now has a huge membership but this has not led to too much overcrowding. In addition, we are supported by the income from external events which, if we hit our target, is worth £75 off our subs. Manu has led a great team for six years and we are very lucky to have such a strong team. Tony said that the Club is now a very strong, resilient club and thanked everyone for giving him this honour.

Simon then presented engraved pewter mugs to both Tony Mobbs and Roger Marshall in recognition of their service to the Club. He also presented a potted plant and a card to Alison Mobbs to thank her for her support.

9. There being no other formal business, the meeting closed at 4.00pm.

The Chairman then went on to present the annual Club Trophy awards.

### **Club Trophy Presentations**

The new Commodore, Simon Benson, explained that the General Committee had this year devolved the annual Club awards to the Member Services Committee, which he had chaired.

**Endeavour Trophy** Presented to the Club by the Reverend Stephen Pakenham and awarded by the Flag Officers for meritorious achievement in the services of the Club, presented to

**Jane Gosnell:** in recognition of her contribution to the winter activities of the Club by organising the winter rambles. Not only did Jane keep these operating during the Covid pandemic, she actually managed to double the number of rambles held. Well deserved.

**Woodham's Wheel** Presented to the Club by Roger Woodham and awarded by the General Committee for services to the Club, presented to

**Roger Marshall:** in recognition of his outstanding service as Financial Director of the Club, especially during the Covid pandemic. His steadfast work kept the Club afloat.

**Cruiser Cup** Originally presented to the Club by Chichester Yacht Basin and awarded by the Flag Officers. It was decided to re-interpret the criteria for this award to better reflect the current Club activities. This award will now be in recognition of an outstanding submission of logs, stories, reporting or recording of Club activities, presented to

**Ian Payne:** in recognition of 20 years meritorious service compiling the dinghy race results. When I heard what Ian had achieved, I couldn't believe a single member would do this. For 20 years Ian has compiled the results, calculated handicaps and posted all on the website. He is the sort of person we are so lucky to have in this Club.