

THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at
the Hinckley Island Hotel, Leicestershire
on Friday 5th July 2013

These Minutes should be read in conjunction with the AGM Papers issued to Societies.

The attendance register had been signed by 97 delegates from more than 20 Societies.

Opening of the Annual General Meeting

The Chairman, Albert Astbury, opened the meeting at 3.40 pm by inviting delegates to accept the Standing Orders for the Conduct of Debate, an invitation they readily and unanimously accepted. Members also agreed to vary the order of business from that printed in the AGM Papers to facilitate the system for counting the votes and allow the motion to be discussed first.

Proposal of Motion by AFA and Lonsar Referees' Society

The Amendment to the Proposal, submitted by the same society, was received for debate by the delegates with their approval, and the full wording is printed on the lower half of page 33 in the AGM Papers.

The Proposer was Bart O'Toole and the Seconder was Board Member Ian Davies. The aim was to persuade members of the need for the Board to appoint a suitably experienced team of five RA members, not more than two of whom should be Board members, to serve as a constitutional review team with six points of obligation. After appropriate deliberation and consultation, this team would be asked to submit Proposed Rule Changes to the Board by the 31st January 2014 for eventual proposal of recommended changes at the AGM in 2014.

Referring in his speech to the Report of the Board of Inquiry, Bart spoke in detail of aspects of poor management regarding Eve of Final Rally expenses, the staffing of the Association, the culture of the Board and the expenditure concerning the RAMMS database. He said that a small group of powerful members had treated their Board colleagues 'with lures and contempt', a situation that led to dysfunctionality marked by 'domination from the top and acquiescence from below'. A small, elite inner core of Board Members had assumed control over matters for which the entire Board was constitutionally responsible, but the latter had been marginalised by this inner core.

Calling for a constitutional review team to be appointed, the Proposer outlined the lines on which it should concentrate: examination of the Constitution and Structure of the Association along with the recommendations of the Board of Inquiry; consultation with the Board and the wider membership to ascertain views and wishes; consideration of the possible need for constitutional reform; the suitability and effectiveness of the electoral system within the Association. Areas of special concern were County RA reform, which was promised in 2011 for 2012; the electoral system; the operation of the Board; and any other proposals put to the team by the Board and the general membership.

In conclusion, Bart called for matters to be put right in order to provide for the long-term future of the Association.

In seconding the Motion, Ian Davies spoke of three constitutional reviews in the past ten years and said there was much to do to make this final review effective. He said he was in full support of the Motion and concluded by adding, "Let's do it once and for all, and then get on with the real work of the Board."

There were no comments forthcoming in opposition to the Motion and the vote was taken, resulting as follows:

The Motion was carried by 4,221 votes to 125.

The Chairman then proceeded with the remainder of the business, commencing with mention of a number of apologies received for non-attendance.

Obituaries were recorded as follows, and delegates stood in a mark of respect for their departed colleagues:

Jack Taylor (Wolverhampton); Robert Kerry (Witney); Bert Mayes (South of Thames and Woolwich); Norman Whereat MBE (Cirencester); Claire Tierney (Gateshead); George Todd (Durham); Les Eyers (Gravesend); Ian Murray (Coventry); Malcolm Smith (Coventry); Roy Goodinson (Rotherham); Chris Leggatt (Harrogate); Patrick Reilly (RAF RA); Brian Voyzey (Yeovil); Alan Weston (Yeovil); Tony Pennie (Ealing); Ernie Bell (Ashington); Jim Saville (Basildon); Michael Stevens (North Devon); Neville Chamberlain (Life Member, Norfolk); Ken Hampson (Life Member, Southport); Michael Lowe (Sheffield); John Chalmers (Life Member, Bridgwater); Bill Castle (Wolverhampton); John Lowery (Sunderland); Joe Wright (Lancaster and Morecambe); Bill Atkinson (Nuneaton); Roger Wood (Birmingham); Douglas Milton (West London); Bill Baldwin (Gravesend); John Quinn (North Riding); Mike Avel (West London); Steve Venables (Mexborough); Neil Conlon (Dover); John Crowther (Life Member, Cheltenham); John Davis (AFA and Lonsar); Brian Martin (Nottingham); Derek Dawkins (Andover); Chris Black (Andover); David Mann (West Middlesex); George Scott-Wood (Bicester); Derrick Aspland (Newmarket).

Minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting as in Appendix 1 were proposed, seconded and approved as an accurate record, and there were no matters arising.

The Annual Report, as printed in Appendix 2, was presented by the Chairman, seconded and approved. He spoke to delegates of his disturbing and distressing experiences after joining the previous Board. The Chairman at that point made a suitable presentation to John Starkey, who was standing down from the Board after being in office for nine years and was a founder member.

One delegate, Alun Owen (Cannock Chase), said he felt insulted, as an active RA member and as a Referee Assessor, but not now a registered referee, to be classed as a 'social member' in the membership categories. He called for a suitable re-wording of the appropriate section. The Chairman said that by registration with the FA problems with CRB and DBS could be avoided, as there was a need to protect the 14-18 age-group as much as possible. We must have a means of controlling centrally who can and who cannot be RA members.

The report was accepted by the delegates.

The Finance Report and Accounts, as printed in Appendix 3 of the AGM Papers, were presented.

After comments by Reg Pullen (Hampshire), who showed concern at some of the financial figures presented, it was agreed that the company Walker Thompson would be asked to prepare the Association's accounts for 2013-2014 and that they would then be independently verified.

The Treasurer, Paul Field, commented in respect of sales and profitability by stating that appropriate amendments had already been implemented to a large extent. More bias towards the RA would be introduced regarding discounts on items sold to both County FAs and to Association members, under the previous Board 25% and 15% respectively. The Board was, however, conscious of the income stream coming from County FAs. Continuing support for

Conference from various senior professional football organisations in England was much appreciated, while a negotiation regarding hotel costs had realised an extra £1,000 for the Association. We needed, he said, to 'refresh who our stakeholders are' and he hoped for a big improvement in the financial situation in a year's time. There had also been a £15,000 rebate from Aviva with respect to the insurance policy. Individual sub-committees of the Board and all their activities were now being properly financially monitored.

The Chairman added that the Association was contractually committed to the Hinckley Island Hotel for 2014, but he assured delegates that the Board was working very hard to make various general improvements for the benefit of the Association.

Having been proposed and seconded, the Finance Report and the Accounts were accepted.

The Benevolent Fund Report and Accounts, as per Appendix 4, were presented by John Harvey, who reported a healthy situation in general. However, he urged delegates to make the possible provisions of the Fund more widely known to societies, especially those with members they knew were having hard economic times. In the past year only four applications were made on behalf of claimants and these had been generously met by the Trustees. The report was then seconded and approved. The Chairman added that, like the general accounts, those of the Benevolent Fund would be independently verified in future.

Life Membership Awards were approved to five members, namely Frank Broughton (East Riding); Kenneth Cartwright (Nuneaton); Mal Davies (Solihull); Geoffrey Hanson (East Riding); Brian Pearce (North Devon).

Long and Meritorious Awards were approved for eleven members: Donald Amos (Ashford and Weald); Bruce Dixon (Liverpool Sunday); Edward Hughes (Weston-Super-Mare); Andrew Lawrence (Cannock Chase); Barry Leaning (Ashford and Weald); Ian Milberry (Ashford and Weald); Dennis O'Brien (Norwich); Reginald Pullen (Alton); Geoffrey Stanborough (Ashford and Weald); Montague Weighill (Andover); David Winder (Ashford and Weald).

Fifty Year Membership Awards to the following members were approved, Ian Campbell (South Bedfordshire); Frank Gardiner (Kingston); Dennis Hedges (Witney); Gordon Isaacs (Harrow); Max Lea MBE (AFA and Lonsar); Norman Newby (North Shields); John Oxley (Chiltern District); Dennis Woodward (Mid Cheshire); Ray Lewis (Kingston). Immediate Past President Peter Willis, recovering steadily from major surgery, presented one of these awards to John Martin (Alton).

An award to John Starkey, retiring from the Board after the maximum permitted term of nine years, was presented by colleague Eddie McGrath. Tribute was also paid to John by Life Member Bill Bombroff, saying that the Association could not afford to lose men of such calibre. The Chairman said that John, like several other willing volunteers, would still be helping the Association in the future, as the Board could not carry out its work entirely alone.

The Chairman then closed the formal business of the Annual General Meeting at 4.40 pm.

The FA Panel Meeting

A brief session was then held to allow delegates to put questions to **Neale Barry FA Head of Senior Referee Development & Ian Blanchard FA Senior National Game Referee Manager**.

Mick Brookes (Coventry) asked about the **initial examination system** that called for candidates to make considerable journeys to other areas and why there had been no examinations in his area for two years, causing a loss of perhaps eighty possible members. Ian explained that the

basic written qualifying examination is now only multi-choice and also involved a practical assessment. County FAs would soon have their own education management schemes, so that it would be necessary to log details with them for processing. There was a need to have the right people in place to educate young people to a consistently high standard. He said he would look into the particular situation mentioned.

Another question raised, by Brian Wratten (Reading), was about the scheme to invite potential **Lead Tutors** in Mini Soccer to offer their services. In reply, Ian spoke of the need to have the best people qualified to train referees for Mini Soccer Programmes involving nine hours and three modules of study.

In answer to a query from Alun Owen (Cannock Chase) about the degree of **moderation of assessment marks**, Neale explained that about 95 per cent had been down-graded and the remainder up-graded.

Neale also spoke regarding the concern of Malcolm Henderson (Hampshire) about the **poor standards of behaviour shown at times to senior referees**. He said that the FA had introduced more robust and speedier processes regarding managers stepping out of the accepted line regarding comments about referees, and it was desirable that all people involved in such investigations felt comfortable about the process, referees included.

Ian then responded to a query from John Smith (Devon) regarding the **refund of £20 when promotion candidates were successful** and met all the requirements. This should happen in all counties, and The FA would soon be offering suitable guidelines.

Regarding the **cost of CRB checks**, a matter put by Bart O'Toole (AFA and Lonsar), Ian said that as from 1st August 2013 all new referees over the age of 16 years would have to be checked at a cost of £54, and individuals could be re-checked online annually thereafter as a cost of £10. The government no longer classed referees as volunteers, because of their remuneration. Such provisions applied to all referees involved in youth football. Where a senior team included more than half of its members from the youth age-group, the match would have to be refereed by a referee who had received official clearance. This topic of CRB and DBS appeared on the agenda for every FA Referees' Committee meeting. An encouraging aspect, however, was that clearance could now apply to more than one organisation, for instance for someone who was both a referee and a teacher.

Answering a question by Bart O'Toole (AFA and Lonsar) regarding **repeat substitutions**, Neale assured delegates that this was a two-year experiment, with a report to IFAB due in October 2014 leading on to the annual meeting of IFAB next March. He had no evidence of referees not applying the laws correctly at such substitutions in terms of the checking of names and equipment.

The latest RAFA Instructional DVDs were now available for collection.

The Chairman said that **queries on matters destined for The FA** should be sent via the RA Representative to the FA Referees' Committee, David Crick.

He then thanked Neale and Ian for their input to the session.

In view of the lengthy and complicated nature of the counting of votes, all the results mentioned earlier in the EGM and AGM Minutes were formally announced and displayed on screen before the afternoon's proceedings were formally closed at 5.18 pm.