

**THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION**  
**Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held at  
the Hinckley Island Hotel, Leicestershire  
on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

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

The attendance register was signed by 97 members from more than 20 Societies.

**Opening of the Extraordinary General Meeting**

The Chairman, Albert Astbury, opened the meeting at 2.30 pm by welcoming delegates and inviting them to adopt the Standing Orders in Schedule 5 for the Conduct of Debate for both the EGM and the following AGM, an invitation they readily and unanimously accepted.

He spoke of the reasons for calling an Extraordinary Meeting, explaining that approval of the linked proposed Changes to Rule would enable the Board to progress their ideas regarding the Constitution and the well-being of the Association after a stormy year since the last Conference weekend. He explained in detail to the delegates the complex problems encountered regarding the submission of ballot papers and the counting of votes. An explanation was given about exactly how the votes should be cast and would be counted. Apologies were offered for any inconvenience caused by the Board 'working in the dark'.

Approval was given for a panel of four Scrutineers under the supervision of Roly Croysdale. These were Karen and Andy from the RA Office and two of the stewards, Dave and Lawrie.

A roving microphone was made available to delegates by technicians from First Media.

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RULE**

*(See Appendix 7 of the Delegate Papers for full details)*

*Rule Changes 1, 2 and 3* were proposed by the Chiltern District Referees' Society and presented by its member Len Randall. These referred to:

*Rule 9 The Board of Management* requiring the declaration of any potential conflict of interest concerning a Board Member. The reason was the promotion of 'unfettered transparency and absolute integrity', after the Board of Inquiry had raised some general concerns about the conduct of some former Board members.

*Rule 10 Finance* sought to create in the Constitution formal control of electronic payment systems, and also to create strict control over capital expenditure, another matter raised by the Board of Inquiry.

*Rule 11 Expenses* required strict control over expenses claims made on the Association's funds, which would allow for the incorporation of Recommendation 7 of the Board of Inquiry as a solid base for codes of practice.

The Proposer said all the recommendations were concise and unambiguous.

It was agreed by the delegates that the three Proposals should be taken together.

The proposed changes were formally seconded, and it was pointed out that if approved by the delegates these changes would be incorporated into the Constitution.

Paul Gresty (Bury) asked what was meant by 'reasonable' in terms of expenses, the response of the Treasurer Paul Field being along the lines of comparison with the corporate industry, several examples being mentioned.

Another delegate, Life Member Peter Molyneux, was against the proposed changes, saying that the Association now had a new Board, so why should we dictate to them when they intended to take appropriate action anyway. Board Member Ian Davies (Chester) disagreed with these comments on the grounds that the Board's integrity needed to be strengthened through more safeguards in the wording of the Constitution. This would lead to more accountability to the membership.

In summary, Len Randall, himself a Board Member, spoke of the detailed guidelines currently being prepared regarding expenses. He emphasised that transparency was to be evident.

Voting took place on Proposed Changes to Rule numbered 1, 2 and 3 in the AGM Papers, and the results were as follows:

**Rule Change 1 was carried by 4,726 votes to 56**

**Rule Change 2 was carried by 4,726 votes to 175**

**Rule Change 3 was carried by 4,695 votes to 206**

**Rule Changes 4 to 7** were proposed as 'to be taken together', which was acceptable to the delegates. These proposed changes were presented on behalf of the Board by Treasurer Paul Field. These referred to:

*Rule 5 Definitions*, which allowed for an additional definition of a 'centrally recruited member' being a member of the Association recruited directly through any initiative conducted nationally by the Board.

*Rule 6 Membership and Affiliations* referred to the allocation to local associations of any centrally recruited members.

*Rule 8 Subscriptions* referred principally to the subscription and insurance premium of any centrally recruited members being collected directly by the Head Office.

*Schedule 1 Subscriptions and Car Mileage Allowance* referred to the various subscription rates being due on the 1<sup>st</sup> April annually via local societies or centrally, with a new paragraph to the effect that in respect of each centrally recruited member paying £21 (plus the insurance premium of £4) a sum of £9 would be remitted to the appropriate local society by the Head Office, as per Rule 6(e). This remittance of £9 would be reduced to £5 for members under 18 years of age at the time of registration, on account of their lower subscription rate.

The reasons applying to Proposed Rule Changes 4 to 7 inclusive centred on the main challenge to the Association's survival and the need to recruit and retain more members. During the past year only seven societies had shown membership growth. This additional central recruitment path was seen as a method of supplementing the efforts of local societies. The Constitution did not currently allow for any recruitment campaigns on a national basis, hence the need for rule changes to be introduced.

The Proposed Changes to Rule were formally seconded.

Paul Field, Board Member and Association Treasurer, presented the proposed changes with the aid of visual displays to assist his arguments. There was a need to transfer those referees in associate membership to full membership, and the Board was seeking to introduce an online recruitment process that most potential members would find convenient and in line with contemporary general procedures. Such a system could save much work for local societies.

Mike Potter (Norfolk) suggested that new members might be allocated to a local society at the outset rather than have their membership registered via a national system and then have their details passed on to a local group. The same delegate expressed concern for under-18 referees

thus recruited who needed nurturing, and he also wondered whether the Head Office would have the capacity to cope with renewals after one year. He said there was no need for such a complicated approach to recruitment, as immediate local integration was preferable.

Speaking in opposition to the proposed changes, Brian Reader (Woking) asked why local societies had not been consulted before a sum of £9 had been decided for remittance to the society. He thought the Board was correct to encourage strong societies but questioned whether this was the best approach for local societies. This delegate also thought the administrative work load on the office staff was excessive. More details were needed regarding the proposals, and he called for their rejection.

A third delegate, Bart O'Toole (AFA and Lonsar), felt unclear about the Board's plans to allocate newly registered referees to societies, explaining that there were many overlapping areas in, for instance, the London area. It would also be cheaper for a recruit to pursue RA membership via online registration at £21 than rather locally in the London area at £32. He wondered how this new system would attract additional members. It was what happened locally that often sold the idea of RA membership, and he was not convinced by the Board's proposals.

These views were followed by comments from David Price (Bristol), who explained that membership could already be registered online in Bristol and Cheltenham. The poor quality of the national RA website for a considerable time was hardly convincing, and it was queried whether the RA had the mechanisms in place to make these proposals deliverable.

In summary, Paul Field said that with extensive coverage of fine RA work with young referees on this very day in Hinckley, including via the BBC World Service and six national newspapers, there was a need to have an online central registration facility available for the RA to recruit new young members. The process would be effective for the first year, after which the local society would normally take over future registration procedures for each referee. It was acknowledged that certain RA societies would fold in the foreseeable future, so a means must be made available for existing members in these societies to continue their membership if they so wished. A nationally conducted survey had revealed that 80% of people in the 18 to 45 years age-range preferred online registration for membership of organisations. The RA needed to be mindful of such attitudes and introduce appropriate registration systems than can later be amended and improved as necessary; the Board was aware that things like this do not just happen overnight. Various retailing organisations were also aware that they 'win' by using an internet approach. The aim of the Board's proposals was to help referees. The Association had 18,000 members ten years ago but now had only 10,000. The RA must not deter younger referees from joining by not having a system in place for online registration. The Board needed a mandate to make this happen.

In conclusion, the Chairman said that with the Association currently involved in recruiting a General Manager or Chief Executive, it was important to increase income to this end by increasing membership to facilitate an incentivised salary package.

Voting then took place on Proposed Changes to Rule Numbered 4, 5, 6 and 7 as listed in the AGM Papers. The results were as follows:

**Rule Change 4 was carried by 3,938 votes to 963**  
**Rule Change 5 was carried by 3,754 votes to 1,174**  
**Rule Change 6 was carried by 3,769 votes to 1,160**  
**Rule Change 7 was carried by 3,852 votes to 1,177**

The business of the Extraordinary General Meeting was concluded at 3.40 pm and was followed immediately by the Annual General Meeting.