



**THE REFEREES' ASSOCIATION**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at  
the Hinckley Island Hotel, Leicestershire  
on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2016, starting at 10.30 am**

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

**1. The Chairman Paul Field opened proceedings.** He said it was an immense privilege to be Chairman, and he paid tribute to the hard work of the Board, then going on to introduce its members individually.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

A number of apologies for absence and messages of good wishes had been submitted and recorded at the RA Office. Delegates unanimously accepted these messages as received.

**3. Obituaries**

The deaths of a number of members had been notified during the past year. The delegates stood as a mark of respect for their late colleagues, whose names are listed here:

Keith Buller	West Somerset RA	January 2015
Joel Richards	West Bromwich RA	June 2015
Roy Holdridge	Doncaster RA	June 2015
Eric Adams	RA LM Shropshire CRA	August 2015
Len Burrluck	Gravesend RA	August 2015
Bill Darby	Northumberland RA	21 September 2015
Alan Hetherington	Cramlington RA LM	September 2015
Les Ives	Southend RA	25 September 2015
John Harvey	Solihull RA	October 2015
Tony Swindells	Bolton RA	November 2015
David Sims	Uxbridge RA	November 2015
Mike Hickling	Heavy Woollen RA	November 2015
Colin Green	West Lindsey RA	December 2015
Vic Bush	Bedfordshire RA	28 January 2016
Terry Allsop	Mansfield RA	30 January 2016
John Wilde	Huddersfield RA	10 February 2016
John Lees	Doncaster RA	31 March 2016
Peter Goldsmith	Kingston RS	30 March 2016

**4. Scrutineers**

Four members of the Hinckley Society, under the guidance of John Wilson, were approved as scrutineers. These were Dave Arnett, Lawrie Forrester, Keith Chambers, Andy Dilley

**5. Standing Orders** regarding the Conduct of Debate, as printed in Schedule 5 of the Rules of the Association, were unanimously approved.

**6. Adoption of the Minutes of the 2015 RA AGM**

The minutes of the RA AGM held on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 at the Radisson Blu Hotel, London Heathrow, as printed in the amended extended form shown in the AGM Papers, were accepted.

John Harvey gave a reminder that members may submit suggested amendments within the time stipulated in Schedule 5, Part 3 Section 2.

## **7. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **8. Chairman's Report**

Albert Astbury (Eastleigh) referred to the confidentiality of circulation of such a Report, and the Chairman promised correct procedure in future.

The Chairman spoke of the recent realignment of the Association's finances, referring to RA members' packages. He said the Board was always prepared to receive and learn from submissions by members in order to improve services available. Albert Astbury referred to various manning problems at the Office now that full-time operation was not in force. He added that extra work being undertaken by volunteers may deter possible involvement. The Chairman explained that a new Microsoft 365 system had been installed, which should make the whole operation smoother and readily available online as a self-help system. Much work had been undertaken in the past twelve months geared towards improved service for the membership. Appropriate telephone technology would be installed to create an increasingly robust platform. The Board was always ready to listen to members and review matters as necessary.

In response to a further query from the Eastleigh delegate, John Harvey clarified that voting strength was as recorded at the end of April. The Treasurer clarified that the financial year ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March and the membership year finished on 29<sup>th</sup> September. Ian Campbell urged LRAs to register new members immediately. The Chairman accepted there was still some confusion regarding these dates, adding that it would be clarified in time for next year's AGM.

Yet again there were queries from Albert Astbury regarding various procedures. He asked about RAMMS and the Treasurer Reg Pullen responded regarding its cost. He also answered a query regarding Project Sutcliffe, saying that the £670 spent had been allotted to improving the website and to security regarding Microsoft Office technology. In response to the same delegate's query as to why there was no report from the RA Representative to the FA, the Chairman stated that this had never been requested or required in the past but, he said, the Board would look into the matter.

## **9. and 10. The Board members**

Information conveyed in Sections 9 and 10 of the AGM Papers, regarding membership of the RA Board and their attendances, were received as printed.

## **11. The Treasurer's Report**

This was presented by Reg Pullen as printed in the AGM papers. The Accounts were proposed by Albert Astbury (Eastleigh), seconded by Dave Roberts (Harrow) and approved. The Treasurer stated that there had been three Treasurers in office since the last AGM, namely Paul Field, Eddie McGrath and himself. After a financial loss a year ago of approximately £15,000, there had been realignment systems introduced, the result being a surplus this year of just over £7,000. A comprehensive review had been carried out by four suitable volunteers, and this review in April 2016 showed a considerably improved financial situation. The Association's Accountants were now happier with a revised policy for expenses, adding that this should be approved and signed at each future AGM. Expenses for the purchase of alcohol would only apply to those made by Board-approved members and only for the alcohol of the Association's guests.

It was acknowledged by the Chairman that a suggestion be accepted from Mike Potter (Norwich) to the effect that a report of any annual review should be circulated before the AGM. Mike Potter also queried whether direct membership of the RA contravened Rule 4(g) of the

Constitution, which stated that Full Membership of the national Association was through Full Membership of a LRA. The Chairman explained that new recruits to membership were always pointed in the direction of their LRA, but some LRAs had not engaged with these newcomers, and by neglecting to do so they did not help the situation with a positive experience. Mike Potter also said that Rule 16, regarding Awards, was in need of revision, the Chairman conceding that this would be properly investigated.

## **12. Appeals against preliminary objections by the Board to proposed Alterations to Rule or Notices of Motion**

There had been no appeals.

### **13.1. Proposed Rule Changes**

**(a)** There were eight tabled Rule Changes, all proposed by Albert Astbury (Eastleigh). After his submission that Proposed Changes Nos 1 to 7 inclusive be withdrawn, delegates agreed that this should happen. Annoyance was expressed by one delegate that if more thought had been given by the Proposer before the suggested changes were submitted, much discussion and debate within LRAs would have been saved. Mike Potter (Norwich), noting that no proper debate had been allowed, pointed out that the Constitution did not clarify whether debate on Proposed Changes to Rule should be permitted or not. He queried how all these matters could be considered as 'routine' and asked that the matter be reviewed. He was also of the opinion that the Association's Facebook Page was not usefully productive, as had been envisaged by the Constitutional Review Team. The Chairman said that next year the Board needed to find a way for greater engagement with discussion on Rule Changes. He said that the value of Facebook was recognised, and there was a need to decide what was the best medium to adopt. Neil Jones (West Devon) expressed the opinion that the Association could not have all communication carried out electronically, bearing in mind the age of many of the people involved. The Chairman's response was that if we wanted to engage younger members more in the Association's affairs in the future, we must be mindful of the medium normally used by that age-group.

**(b) Proposed Rule Change No 8** was retained. Schedule 8 should be removed from the Constitution as it was now time-expired. Malcolm Henderson (Alton) seconded the proposal.

**Result of Vote on Law Change 8: FOR 2,392 AGAINST 204**

**NOTE:** *As Proposal No 8 referred to a Schedule and did not involve a Change of Rule, this would be implemented as soon as possible.*

### **13.2. Notices of Motion**

There were nine Notices of Motion included in the Agenda.

Numbers 1 to 8 inclusive were proposed by Albert Astbury (Eastleigh) and seconded by Malcolm Henderson (Alton).

**(a) Notice of Motion 1** concerned the development of the Participant Membership Data Base and the little use to which it had been put. Young people were in the habit of paying by credit/debit cards, a system not available via the RAMMS system. The Board was instructed via this Notice of Motion to publicise as widely as possible to non-member registered referees this method of joining the Association.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 1: FOR 1,576 AGAINST 1,024**

**(b)Notice of Motion 2** focused on the poor data-provision provided by the RAMMS system to LRAs, who needed better support in this respect. This system cost £1,000 a year and was now in urgent need of improvement. The Board was called upon to ensure matters were rectified.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 2: FOR 1,842 AGAINST 733**

**(c)Notice of Motion 3** called on the Board to register the RA logo as a trade mark in order to prevent its misuse by persons not in membership of the Association. The Proposer said the cost of registration would be sensible expenditure, and the trade mark would be a lasting tribute to the late Stephen Green of Reading RA who had designed it.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 3: FOR 2,144 AGAINST 497**

**(d)Notice of Motion 4** concerned proper methods of registering membership incumbent on CRAs and LRAs, as per Rule 11(e). In view of recent developments, this Notice of Motion was withdrawn with the agreement of delegates. One person indicated disagreement with the withdrawal.

**(e)Notice of Motion 5** referred to the QUEST scheme, and the Board was called upon to ensure extra rewards via Sporting Touch to those LRAs which have achieved QUEST recognition. The Proposer suggested that a sliding scale of discounts might apply to each of the three QUEST levels attained, as an incentive to LRAs to increase membership and raise general standards.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 5: FOR 1,873 AGAINST 713**

**(f)Notice of Motion 6** called upon the Board, in the light of changes to referee management with the Football Association, to set up a working party and produce a report by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016 containing recommendations to be put to the 2017 AGM regarding the best structure for the Referees' Association to prevent its demise. By not responding well to the various changes in recent times, the Association had lost some 12,000 members in the past 15 years, thus bringing the Association's viability into question. RA membership was currently around 5,000, as against the total of some 27,000 FA-registered referees. More work regarding the structure of the Association needed to be done to help grassroots referees attain higher standards and to increase LRA membership at the same time.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 6: FOR 1,385 AGAINST 1,201**

**(g)Notice of Motion 7** called upon the Board to append the Accounts of the RA-FA Youth Council to the Annual Report in the same way that the Benevolent Fund accounts were published. The Proposer understood that £1 from each member's subscription went as a donation to the Youth Council for its operation, and he was concerned that some non-member referees might be benefiting wrongly from such cash.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 7: FOR 2,012 AGAINST 630**

**(h)Notice of Motion 8** concerned the Board's Three-Year Plan, and it demanded that as the Referees' Association was a membership organisation the Plan should be submitted to the AGM for approval or rejection by the members through discussion.

**Result of Vote on Notice of Motion 8: FOR 1,696 AGAINST 850**

**(i)Notice of Motion 9** was brought to the Meeting by Len Randall (Chiltern District) calling for a rejection of the Board's proposal to spend £20,000 of RA money on referee training, which was the function of The Football Association and County FAs. The Chairman conceded that this amount had been overestimated and would now only be a little over nine hundred pounds,

adding that the FA would be pursuing such training and making it available via the FA website. The Proposer therefore suggested that the Notice of Motion should be withdrawn and this was agreed by the delegates.

One delegate asked that if the Notice of Motion were withdrawn, would it grant the Board freedom to spend £20,000 in this way. The Chairman's reply was that although there was a need for clarity, the Board was made up of responsible people.

*NOTE: In all cases where there was a greater number of votes in favour of a Notice of Motion, the Board would take steps as soon as possible to implement the wishes of the membership.*

#### **14. Appointment of Accountants for 2016 - 2017**

The Board proposed that Walker Thompson Ltd of Coventry be appointed as accountants to prepare and verify the accounts for the year 2016-2017. This was approved unanimously.

#### **15. Select Committee on Board Expenditure and Stock-Checking**

The Board recommended that the four members Bill Bombroff (Bristol), Dave King (York), Andrew Wait (Bristol) and Les Page (Bootle) who had carried out this work recently should be re-selected for 2016-2017. The delegates gave their approval for this to happen.

#### **16. Report and Accounts of the RA Benevolent Fund 2015-2016**

The Accounts, as printed in Section 11 of the Annual Report in the AGM Papers, were presented by the Fund Chairman John Harvey. He reported that the Fund was in a reasonably robust state. Albert Astbury (Eastleigh) asked for information about the qualification of the financial adviser, Andrew Cawson, which was clarified to the satisfaction of delegates by the Chairman. Andrew Cawson was highly qualified and had been employed for a number of years by DTE, the company being advisers for the Benevolent Fund. Albert Astbury also wondered when the last market testing had taken place. The Chairman encouraged use of the Benevolent Fund, saying that there was sometimes a need to consider the problems of some of our younger members who had various kinds of real need.

#### **17. Announcement of Awards**

The Vice-Chairman of the Board, Ian Campbell, said that there were no nominations this year for Life Membership of the Referees' Association.

There were, however, nine successful nominations for the Long and Meritorious Award, all of which were fully deserved, with two recipients being present. These were Alan Poulain of Huntingdon and Iain Tucker of Mid Cornwall, both of whom were presented with their awards.

Alan Poulain (Huntingdon), Iain Tucker (Mid Cornwall), Doug Austen-Jones (Mid Sussex), Graham Carlin (Birmingham), Bernie Cheeseman (Gravesend), David Frondigoun (Gravesend), William Gatward (West London). Alan Longford (Witney), Ian Miles (Gravesend)

The Association's Fifty Year Membership Award was made to Reg Pullen, the Treasurer.

**18. The Delegates' Forum** was introduced and conducted by the Chairman, which covered several areas of interest put forward by those present.

Points arising from the discussions included the following:

- a) There may be a need to identify through RA systems the real volunteers in the Association, by naming and listing LRA officers. We needed to assist our volunteer network as much as possible.
- b) Some problems had been mentioned by members about logging on to the RA website members' section. The Treasurer suggested that looking at what was in the 'spam box' may be helpful in some cases.
- c) There was a need to strengthen the system as County RAs did not always receive the best support they needed from both LRAs and the Board. There was a suggestion that 'cutting out the boring minutes' and involving the County FA's Referee Development Officer in training and development could lead to County RA meetings being of a better and more productive quality.
- d) A query was raised as to whether Facebook was the right way forward. The response of the Chairman was that as a membership organisation we needed to look forward to a healthy future with open minds if we were to properly serve all members in terms of communication and information. He said that more people had seen the Facebook page than were present at the AGM. One delegate said that though she personally hated both Facebook and Twitter, she simply had to use these media to keep up to date with Association developments.
- e) As the AGM clashed with other activities, we needed some of those members so involved to be present at meetings rather than just following information on Facebook, so 'overlap' must not be allowed to happen. A view expressed was that if younger members were not going to attend meetings such as the AGM, these meetings might be held in the afternoon. When indeed was the best time of the year to hold the AGM, was another thought put forward. When the Chairman had suggested the AGM might be held in June, there had been heavy criticism. One Member of the Board wondered if many youngsters knew what an AGM actually was.
- f) The question was asked whether the Liaison Meetings were to be held again in the future. The Chairman said that no decision had yet been made and the Board was open-minded on the matter.
- g) At LRA level we must recruit onto committees and as officers those who were our young members, because they were also our best recruiters of new members.
- h) Regarding Conference weekends the Association must always bear strongly in mind the cost of accommodation, considering especially our younger members.
- i) One of the smaller LRAs had attended the AGM in 2015 with a view to leaving the RA, but its young members wanted access to guest speakers and wanted to work with the Association. This society now wanted to grow, a statement of intent that brought spontaneous applause.

### **Close of Meeting**

The Chairman thanked those who had attended the AGM for their attendance and participation, and he declared the AGM and the Delegates' Forum closed at 12.45 pm, with the promise that the results of all the voting that had taken place would be made available during the remainder of the Conference weekend.