

SUSSEX YACHT CLUB
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAIN COMMITTEE
Held on Monday 18th May 2026

Meeting begun at 19:00

Item	Actioned By	When to do

	Title	Name and Initials
Present	Flag Officers	Robin Stevenson (RS) – Commodore, Sue Large (SLa) – Vice Commodore, Aidan Tuckett (AT) Treasurer, Chris Hawkes (CH) – Rear Commodore, Neville Blake (NB) – Rear Commodore
	Directors	Des Silverson (DS), Erika Peck (EP), Martin O’Sullivan (MO), Yvonne Campbell (YC), Anne Gisby (AG), Kevin Knight (KK), Jon Ellman-Brown (JEB), Kevin Headon (KH), Chris O’Neil (CON), Giles Weston (GW), Jon Ellman-Brown (JEB), Terry Kinch (TK)
	Ex-officio	Ruby Alabone (RA) – Minute Secretary, Paul Fisher (PF) – General Manager, Ian O’Dell (IO) - Ex officio
Apologies	Directors	Gemma Hawkes (GH),
Absent	Directors	

joined the meeting virtually via teams

Apologies and Absences

Apologies were received from Gemma Hawkes

1. Declarations of Interest

2. Last meeting – Adoption of the minutes

Proposal: Adoption of April Board Minutes

Proposed: Commodore; In favour All; Majority; Abstained : KH, GW, TK

3. Matters Arising and Actions from Previous Meeting

Covered in the agenda items.

4. Update on Flood Defence Wall

RS reported that the project continues to progress broadly in line with previous updates. A start date remains anticipated for the end of June.

RS advised that SYC has reviewed and signed off the latest planning condition documents, which have now been returned to Adur District Council (ADC). A significant remaining workstream is the Deed of Transfer for the land involved in the project. A draft has now been issued to the Club's solicitors for review and circulation to ADC.

RS stated that he did not believe as Commodore that he should formulate the drawings in relation to the land transfer plans and confirmed that independent external support has been engaged to ensure the process remains appropriate and transparent.

In response to a question from YC regarding access arrangements, RS advised that ADC has agreed to provide site access via the western entrance from the outset of the project. Discussions continue with neighbouring landowners and ADC to ensure this arrangement is in place from day one.

KK queried whether the west sheds would be removed as part of the works and noted that alternative storage arrangements would be required if this proceeds. RS advised that the Club is still awaiting supporting documentation from ADC to accompany the Deed of Transfer before the land transaction can be finalised.

RS confirmed that meetings between SYC and ADC continue on a fortnightly basis. PF commented that the relationship between SYC and ADC remains very positive and constructive.

KK advised that the Raft Race is scheduled to take place on 15 August. It is anticipated that by that stage there will be greater clarity regarding the site layout, enabling detailed planning for the event. RS noted that work is underway on a revised yard layout to accommodate activities and storage requirements for SB20s, Shoreham Outriggers and other users. KK confirmed that a contingency layout is available for the Raft Race should it be required.

5. Advisory Committee

SLA reported that the Advisory Committee Working Group has met twice since the previous Main Committee Meeting.

The most significant outcome from these meetings arose from contributions made by SN regarding the future role, responsibilities and governance framework of the proposed Advisory Committee, together with the supporting documentation required.

SLA advised that RS is preparing materials illustrating the proposed "before and after" governance arrangements. It is intended that communications regarding the proposed changes will be introduced to members in a phased and structured manner.

KH asked whether there was any available data that could support the transition process. CON advised that detailed information should not yet be released, but that progress updates should continue to be provided. RS confirmed that more structured materials will be presented in due course.

6. Paddle Section Report – Verbal

JEB reported that discussions have taken place with PF regarding relocation of key paddling equipment during the flood wall works. Provision has been made within the SOCC budget to secure external storage facilities if required.

JEB advised that the main SOCC event will take place from 20–22 June. Discussions have been held with the Club Steward regarding catering arrangements and pricing for the event. JEB outlined approaches adopted by other clubs and suggested a similar model may be appropriate.

RS requested that JEB and NB finalise arrangements and report back.

The event will continue to start from Littlehampton and is expected to attract approximately 100 surf skis and six outrigger canoes. Additional single-outrigger canoe entries are anticipated on the second day.

JEB confirmed awareness of parking restrictions associated with the event.

7. Dinghy Section Report – Verbal

IO not present to report KH reported on behalf of IO.

KH reported that the family cadets sessions have now started, with additional improvement sessions taking place on Wednesdays. Training and dinghy activity are now running up to five days a week, and activity levels have increased significantly since the start of May. KH noted that this is very positive start to the summer season.

8. Keelboat Section Report – Verbal

CH reported on the first Summer Regatta event, which has replaced the former Summer Inshore Series. Feedback received has been positive overall, with some constructive comments regarding race flow and organisation.

Participation levels on Sundays have increased compared with previous years. CH explained that the Summer Regatta concept consists of three regatta weekends spread across seven Sundays during the summer period. The format reflects a wider trend among Solent clubs to consolidate racing activities into larger, more attractive regatta-style events.

The second event is scheduled in three weeks' time, with the final regatta taking place in August. The intention is to prioritise these weekends and create greater activity both on the water and within the clubhouse.

CH provided an update on the Royal Escape Race (RER), which will commence on Friday. There are currently 35 entries in the main race and six entries in the Supporters' Cruise, representing the highest participation levels since the event was reintroduced following COVID-19.

The competitors' briefing will take place on Thursday evening, and there are plans to livestream the start to both social media and the Champagne Breakfast event.

CH reported that six entries have been received from the Offshore Sailing Club, whose participants will depart on Wednesday for Brighton before undertaking a week-long cruise through France. More than nine SYC vessels are participating, together with strong support from SOYC, BMYC and other clubs.

Notable entrants include *Overlord*, the 1936 training sailing vessel, and Jazz Turner of Project Fear, whose recent achievements have attracted national attention. CH noted that it is particularly encouraging that she will be competing in RER 2026 as a double-handed entry.

YC referred to recent BBC Radio Sussex coverage involving Jazz Turner and PF and thanked those involved in arranging the interview. CH commented that the coverage provided an excellent opportunity to promote sailing and Sussex Yacht Club to a wider audience. EP confirmed that Sarah from BBC Radio Sussex will attend the race briefing.

9. Events Committee Report -Verbal

NB reported that the Club has entered into an agreement with a new supplier for the Members' Bar. Under the arrangement, the bar will operate as a free house through a supply agreement with a Carlsberg buying group..

Changes to the draught offering will include Sapporo, Poretti, Carlsberg, Hobgoblin and Thatchers Gold, alongside some existing products. NB advised that for every qualifying volume sold, the Club will receive complimentary barrels which are expected to offset the annual cost of live music events.

NB proposed introducing a Saturday Happy Hour during the flood wall construction period and exploring monthly weekend music events.

PF noted that the new supplier arrangement provides greater flexibility in pricing and product selection. NB stated that the intention is to maintain pricing at levels that benefit members.

Wine selections are currently being reviewed but we have flexibility moving forward.

NB also reported that Quiz Nights continue to perform strongly and that the recent Elton John evening was well attended, with positive feedback received regarding both the entertainment and service.

10. Financial Update and 2027 Budget Planning

RS thanked PF for assuming responsibility for financial reporting following the departure of the Treasurer.

RS advised the Board that AT has formally stepped down from his duties at SYC. The Board recorded its thanks and appreciation for his significant contribution and support.

PF presented the April financial results for both SYC and SYCOPS and introduced discussions regarding the 2027 budgeting process.

April income was approximately £4,000 ahead of budget, partly due to the cashflow benefits achieved through early payment discounts. While some costs exceeded budget, overall performance remains positive, with approximately £50,000 profit recorded year-to-date against a budgeted position that had forecast a deficit of approximately £16,000. He went on to explain that he expected this to unwind over the coming months however.

PF explained that additional costs have arisen through wages, salaries, disposal of the old travel hoist and increased staffing hours. Nevertheless, the Club remains in line with budget expectations at this time.

SYCOPS continues to perform strongly, recording approximately £14,000 net profit against what was a budgeted loss. PF noted that only twelve months earlier SYC had been required to support SYCOPS financially, making the turnaround particularly significant. SYCOPS is paying down its historical debt as the cash position allows.

KH queried whether any supplier debts remained outstanding. PF confirmed that all historical supplier debts have now been cleared and that legacy credit card balances are being progressively repaid.

SLA commented that a stable staffing structure has supported improved delivery of external events and greater consistency within the bar and restaurant operation.

Looking ahead to 2027, PF advised that the Club could reasonably expect annual profits of £50,000–£60,000 if current performance is maintained. However, recent investments, including approximately £350,000 on the new travel hoist and around £100,000 relating to the Stirland's settlement, have significantly reduced available cash reserves.

PF identified several major capital priorities requiring future investment, including:

- Landscaping following completion of the flood wall project;
- Redevelopment of Southwick;
- Resurfacing of the yard;
- Reinstallation of Meter-Macs infrastructure;
- Ongoing clubhouse maintenance requirements; and
- Mooring and pontoon improvements.

PF asked the Board to consider the Club's long-term financial strategy and how future investment should be funded.

RS reflected on the significant costs incurred over the past four years, including legal disputes, disposal of abandoned vessels and investment in the new travel hoist. While the return on investment from the hoist remains uncertain, initial estimates suggest potential returns of approximately 30–35% per annum.

Discussion followed regarding future funding options, including borrowing, member investment schemes and debentures.

SLA noted that previous Boards had sought to maintain substantial reserves and referenced earlier decisions to restrict non-essential expenditure, resulting in reserves of approximately £800,000.

CON commented that the Board has a responsibility to support PF in developing a sustainable financial strategy for the Club.

KH highlighted the importance of aligning investment decisions with a clear long-term development plan, noting that some projects have remained under consideration for many years.

GW observed that the Club's strategic focus has understandably been dominated by the flood wall project but that discussions are now beginning to address future priorities.

It was agreed that a structured approach to future capital expenditure planning will be required.

11. Travel Hoist Sale

PF advised that the former Blue Wise travel hoist has now been sold to a marina in Oostende, Belgium. They will be responsible for dismantling and removal, which is expected to take place within the next two to three weeks. A £4,000 deposit has been received, with the total sale value agreed at £40,000.

PF noted that discussions with the Italian installers of the new ASCOM travel hoist confirmed that the agreed sale price represents fair market value.

12. Any Other Business

NB advised the Board that Neil Fraser-Betts is currently in hospital and is expected to remain there for an extended period. Members were encouraged to contact him with messages of support.

YC reported that Shoreham Sailing Club has expressed interest in purchasing SYC paddleboards.

KH advised that any decision regarding the sale of equipment should be considered alongside the Club's wider development and training plans. The paddleboards continue to have potential value within the training programme.

RA provided feedback on recent marketing activity and member engagement.

Meeting closed at 20:30 pm

Date of Following Meetings –

Monday 15th June 1900h

Monday 20th July 1900h

Approved by: RS, Commodore

Signed: _____