

**SUSSEX YACHT CLUB**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAIN COMMITTEE**  
**Held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**Meeting begun at 19:00**

| Item | Actioned By | When to do |
|------|-------------|------------|
|      |             |            |
|      |             |            |

|                  | Title                | Name and Initials                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Present</b>   | <b>Flag Officers</b> | Robin Stevenson (RS) – Commodore, Sue Large (SLa) – Vice Commodore, Chris Hawkes (CH) – Rear Commodore, Neville Blake (NB) – Rear Commodore                                                                                                     |
|                  | <b>Directors</b>     | Des Silverson (DS), Erika Peck (EP), Martin O’Sullivan (MO), 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), Gemma Hawkes (GH), |
|                  | <b>Ex-officio</b>    | Ruby Alabone (RA) – Minute Secretary, Paul Fisher (PF) – General Manager, Ian O’Dell (IO) - Ex officio                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Apologies</b> | <b>Directors</b>     | Yvonne Campbell (YC)                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Absent</b>    | <b>Directors</b>     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**EP, CON joined the meeting virtually via teams**

**Meeting began 19:05**

**Apologies and Absences**

Apologies were received from YC

**1. Declarations of Interest**

**2. Last meeting – Adoption of the minutes**

Proposal: Adoption of May Board Minutes

Proposed: Commodore; In favour All; Majority; Abstained :

**3. Matters Arising and Actions from Previous Meeting**

Covered in the agenda items.

#### **4. Update on Flood Defence Wall**

RS updated the Board on progress with the Flood Defence Wall project and presented plans following a recent meeting between Sussex Yacht Club (SYC), Adur District Council (ADC) and the appointed contractors. The project remains on schedule, with construction expected to commence in early to mid July.

RS advised that there will be no member or contractor parking available within the Club grounds during construction. The Board was shown the proposed site layout, including construction access, the location of the works, and arrangements to maintain pedestrian access between the west slipway and the clubhouse. Temporary closures may be required from time to time to facilitate construction.

RS also outlined how the contractors intend to manage existing site constraints, including unidentified drainage infrastructure.

PF reported that the working relationship between SYC and ADC Officers remains very positive and constructive.

RS advised that a member information notice will be prepared and communicated once things are more certain and finalised. ADC will also communicate directly with local residents affected by the works and will host a public information meeting at the Club to answer questions regarding the project.

CON queried disabled parking arrangements. RS advised that disabled parking will be significantly limited during construction, although discussions will continue with ADC to minimise the impact on Sailability activities and maintain the published sailing programme where possible. GW asked whether ADC had been provided with the Sailability calendar, which RS confirmed they had.

RS emphasised the importance of maintaining clear communication with members throughout the project and working flexibly with ADC as construction progresses.

EP provided an update on the outstanding planning condition discharge applications, noting that although these had not yet been validated, the wording of the planning conditions allows certain preparatory underground works to commence before the conditions are formally discharged. It was acknowledged that these administrative matters remain the responsibility of ADC and are not expected to delay mobilisation of the project.

#### **5. Advisory Committee**

SLA provided an update on the work of the Advisory Committee Working Group.

It was noted that Sussex Yacht Club has evolved significantly in recent years and that the current Articles of Association and governance arrangements no longer fully reflect the size, complexity and operational requirements of the Club. The Working Group has therefore been reviewing the governance structure to ensure it is fit for purpose and supports the Club's long-term objectives.

SLA explained that the review has identified a number of key themes, including the need for the Board to have a stronger strategic focus, a clearer separation between governance and day-to-day operational

management, a reduction in the administrative burden placed on Directors, improved succession planning, and greater opportunities to attract members with a wider range of skills and experience. The proposals also seek to strengthen communication between members, committees and the Board, while providing a governance structure that is better suited to the Club's future needs.

The Working Group has begun drafting the documentation required to support the proposed changes. SLA thanked SN for his significant contribution in developing communication structures and reviewing governance documentation. Subject to further consultation, it is intended that revised constitutional documents will be presented to members at an Extraordinary General Meeting later this year.

PF advised that initial discussions had considered the introduction of a "shadow board" concept. However, the preferred approach is now the creation of an **Advisory Committee**, comprising individuals appointed for their skills and experience rather than elected by the membership. RS noted that relatively few members currently participate in Board elections and suggested that an appointment-based process would allow the Club to access a broader range of expertise.

It was proposed that advisory members could be appointed for specific projects or areas of expertise, providing specialist knowledge where required without the long-term commitment of a Board position. Members could join and leave the Advisory Committee as projects evolve, creating a flexible pool of expertise.

CON commented that this approach would encourage wider participation by reducing the perceived responsibilities associated with becoming a Director. SLA agreed, adding that it may also encourage younger members to become involved in Club governance.

TK noted that a similar approach had already been trialled successfully during the Shoreham redevelopment project and had demonstrated the benefits of drawing together members with relevant experience for specific tasks.

RS presented a comparison of the current governance structure against the proposed model. Under the proposal, the Board of Directors would focus primarily on governance, legal and financial oversight, with operational delivery remaining the responsibility of the General Manager and staff. Advisory Committees would provide project oversight, member engagement and specialist advice, reporting to the Board where appropriate.

EP commented that member feedback had highlighted a lack of clarity around decision-making responsibilities within the current structure. The proposed model seeks to simplify governance, improve transparency and provide clearer communication through both the Club's documentation and website.

Discussion also covered the proposed appointment process, tenure and operation of the Advisory Committee. It was suggested that members would be appointed by invitation based on relevant skills and experience, with functional committee chairs serving fixed terms. The importance of maintaining flexibility, periodic governance reviews and the need to support future succession planning was recognised.

The Board noted the progress made by the Working Group and supported the continued development of the proposals for consideration at the next board meeting.

## **6. Paddle Section Report – Verbal**

JEB reported that preparations are complete for the Coastal Challenge, with approximately 130 participants registered across the weekend. Registration will take place at Littlehampton, with competitors travelling to SYC under a structured transport arrangement.

The event will be supported by nine safety boats and approximately 60 surf skis. JEB advised that discussions with the Harbour Master at Littlehampton had been very positive, with the event safety plan receiving favourable feedback. The prize giving is scheduled for 4.00 pm.

Professional photographers have been engaged for the event, and JEB noted that imagery could also be made available to support promotion of other Club activities. RA was asked to ensure promotional material is published on the Club website.

CH commented on the scale of the event and the opportunity to create a vibrant atmosphere at the clubhouse following racing. It was also noted that sailing activity around the festival of the sea involving neighbouring clubs, including Shoreham Sailing Club and Lancing Sailing Club, would take place over the same weekend.

## **7. Dinghy Section Report – Verbal**

IO was unable to attend the meeting.

DS reported that a recent sailing event did not proceed due to a lack of participants and questioned the reasons for the low attendance. RS suggested that CF work with the Dinghy Section to encourage greater engagement and participation.

It was noted that winter sailing activities have attracted stronger attendance than some summer events. RS encouraged the Dinghy Section to meet and consider how participation could be increased during the summer programme.

## **8. Keelboat Section Report – Verbal**

CH reported that this year's Royal Escape Race attracted 35 entries, together with six vessels participating in the Supporters' Cruise. The race was described as highly tactical and well supported, with a strong presence from SRF.

The Royal Escape Race Prize Giving was attended by more than 45 people. KK complimented the quality of the catering and the positive atmosphere throughout the event.

PF, attending the event for the first time, described the Royal Escape Race as one of the Club's flagship events and highlighted the opportunity to further develop and invest in the event ahead of its 50th anniversary. CH advised that planning for the anniversary celebrations is already underway, with PF taking a leading role alongside the professional team.

CH also reported on the second Summer Regatta. Although adverse weather affected the planned format, the event provided a valuable opportunity to review race management

procedures and risk planning. The Summer Regatta series continues to be well received and has complemented the introduction of Saturday Happy Hour within the clubhouse.

RS commented that the Summer Regatta format is proving successful in strengthening participation throughout the summer sailing programme.

## **9. Events Committee Report -Verbal**

NB reported that the installation of the Club's new beer taps has been completed and that Sussex Yacht Club is now operating as a free house. The new arrangement provides greater flexibility in product selection and pricing, and performance will be monitored over the coming months. Meetings are also scheduled to finalise the Club's wine offering. Preparations for the Festival of the Sea are progressing well, and NB reported that the Royal Escape Race Prize Giving had been a successful event, with positive feedback received on the catering.

Saturday Happy Hour promotions and live music on alternate Saturdays will continue as part of efforts to increase clubhouse activity and member engagement. NB advised that bookings remain strong for the remainder of the year, with a healthy level of advance bookings already secured for 2027.

RS raised concerns regarding parking arrangements for the forthcoming Coastal Challenge weekend. JEB confirmed that competitors have been instructed to park off-site and only access SYC for boat launching and unloading. RS requested that a general communication also be issued to members regarding parking arrangements. DS requested that the slipway be cleaned in advance of the event, which PF agreed to arrange.

## **10. Financial Update and 2027 Budget Assumptions**

PF presented the May management accounts, previously circulated via Microsoft Teams.

Although the accounts show the Club approximately £36,000 behind budget, PF explained that this is largely attributable to the timing of income resulting from the 5% early payment discount scheme, which brought income forward earlier in the financial year. Expenditure remains well controlled and is currently around £10,000 better than budget.

Year-to-date, the Club has recorded a profit of approximately £28,000 against a budgeted profit of £70,000. PF advised that the principal reasons for the variance are the timing of membership income received within the budget and the write-off of historic debts associated with abandoned vessels, which are being disposed of through the Club's lien process. In addition staffing costs are slightly higher due to the longer than anticipated departure of the previous club secretary and the serious illness of one of the office team which has required additional hours being worked by the remaining members of the team.

PF commented that the financial results continue to provide a greater understanding of the operating costs associated with the clubhouse, which will help inform future budgeting.

PF also advised that the Club is now using benchmarking tools within the Xero accounting system, enabling comparison against over 3,000 organisations. Current results place Sussex Yacht Club broadly in the middle of the sector, indicating that the Club is performing reasonably well.

Looking ahead to the 2027 budget, PF proposed using an inflation assumption of 3%, reflecting current economic forecasts. Budget assumptions will also account for an anticipated reduction in lay-up income due to approximately 20% of boatyard capacity being unavailable during the Flood Defence Wall works.

PF highlighted the Club's principal capital expenditure priorities over the coming years, including landscaping following completion of the Flood Defence Wall, resurfacing the boatyard, maintenance works at Southwick, ongoing pontoon and MeterMax infrastructure improvements, and investment in training facilities and equipment. PF confirmed that he and KH would meet to discuss future training requirements and associated maintenance needs.

During discussion, RS referred to the need to continue addressing the legacy of long-abandoned vessels through appropriate disposal processes.

## **11. Speedwell**

PF advised that the future of *Speedwell* had been considered by the Legal & Finance Committee.

The vessel's owner has appointed a specialist contractor to provide repair cost estimates. However, no restoration work will commence until the vessel has been lifted from the water and an independent survey completed. Following receipt of the survey report, the Club will review the findings before determining the appropriate next steps.

RS emphasised the importance of protecting the Club from financial risk and ensuring lessons are learned from previous projects. It was proposed that a deposit (bond) of between £10,000 and £20,000 be secured from the owner, with agreed project milestones monitored throughout the process.

KH asked whether a formal project plan would be produced. PF advised that preliminary estimates suggest the cost of lifting the vessel and carrying out any necessary disposal could be approximately £6,000–£7,000, with these costs to be met by the vessel owner.

SLA noted that it is important the surveyor appointed is suitably qualified for this type of project and that the surveyor should be appointed by the owner to protect the Club from any perceived conflict of interest or future liability.

## **12. Any Other Business**

NB informed the Board that Neil Fraser-Betts has sadly undergone the amputation of his lower leg. Board members were encouraged to contact him with messages of support.

GH proposed that the Club's trophy cabinet be cleaned, decluttered and reorganised to better showcase the Club's awards and achievements.

KK, on behalf of Heidi, requested that the Club's 2027 calendar of events be confirmed as early as possible to assist with forward planning and prioritisation of Club activities.

JEB requested that the 2027 Tide Tables be prepared. RA agreed to liaise with Paula regarding this.

KK requested that a card and gift be arranged for Neil on behalf of the Club.

KH requested that parking bay markings at Southwick be repainted to improve visibility.

RA provided positive feedback on the Club's Royal Escape Race social media coverage, noting that it had generated increased engagement from younger audiences and helped raise awareness of sailing and Sussex Yacht Club.

Meeting closed at 20 :58 pm

Date of Following Meetings –

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 1900h

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 1900h

Approved by: RS, Commodore

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_