

SUSSEX YACHT CLUB
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAIN COMMITTEE
Held on Monday 20th July 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, Chris Hawkes (CH) – Rear Commodore, Neville Blake (NB) – Rear Commodore
	Directors	Des Silversen (DS), Erika Peck (EP), Anne Gisby (AG), Kevin Knight (KK), Kevin Headon (KH), Chris O’Neil (CON), Giles Weston (GW), Terry Kinch (TK), Gemma Hawkes (GH), Yvonne Campbell (YC)
	Ex-officio	Ruby Alabone (RA) – Minute Secretary, Paul Fisher (PF) – General Manager,
Apologies	Directors	Jon Ellman-Brown (JEB)
Absent	Directors	Martin O’Sullivan (MO), Spencer Neal (SN) - Guest

PF Joined the meeting virtually via teams

Meeting began 19:00

Apologies and Absences

Apologies were received from JEB

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Last meeting – Adoption of the minutes

Proposal: Adoption of June 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 reported that the project continues to progress positively, with the remaining focus on concluding the legal agreements required before construction can commence.

RS advised that the contractual agreements between Sussex Yacht Club (SYC) and Adur District Council (ADC) have now been agreed. The TP1 land transfer document has also been drafted and is progressing through the final stages of the legal process. Although ADC has reached agreement with its appointed contractor, the contract cannot become legally binding until the land transfer has been completed.

PF reported that the contractors have visited SYC to undertake initial site inspections and begin investigations into the existing foundations and infrastructure in preparation for the works.

RS also advised that he had met with the project engineers earlier that day and that discussions had been positive. GW commented that the Club is now "a whisker away" from final agreement on the TP1 Deed, with SYC currently responding to ADC's final comments on the legal documentation. Overall, the Board noted the positive progress being made towards commencement of the project.

5. Advisory Committee

SLA presented the final recommendations from the Governance Working Group regarding the proposed modernisation of Sussex Yacht Club's governance structure.

SLA thanked the members of the Working Group, the Board and, in particular, SN for their significant contribution in reviewing the Club's governance arrangements and developing the supporting documentation. Thanks, were also given for producing clear guidance, glossaries and supporting materials to ensure the proposed structure is easily understood by members.

SLA explained that the review had been undertaken in recognition of the significant growth of Sussex Yacht Club. Annual turnover across the Club's two companies has increased from approximately £300,000 to around £1.2 million over the past two decades, resulting in governance arrangements that no longer reflect the size and complexity of the organisation.

The proposed model seeks to create a clearer distinction between governance and operational activity. Under the proposal, the Board of Directors would focus on governance, legal and financial oversight, long-term strategy, performance monitoring and succession planning. A new Advisory Committee would lead strategic projects, undertake research and investigations, develop recommendations and report back to the Board for approval. The revised structure is intended to improve accountability, increase transparency, reduce the workload placed on Directors and make better use of members' knowledge and expertise.

SLA advised that the Working Group believes the proposals meet the objectives established at the outset of the review. The benefits identified include improved decision-making, clearer responsibilities, stronger communication between volunteers and staff, greater member engagement, improved succession planning and reduced legal liability for volunteers serving on the Advisory Committee.

It was confirmed that, subject to approval, detailed communications will be issued to members, supported by a dedicated webpage containing explanatory information and frequently asked questions. SLA noted that the new structure would be reviewed during its initial years to ensure it is operating effectively and to identify any improvements required.

Proposal: To adopt the proposed two-tier governance structure comprising a Board of Directors and an Advisory Committee.

Proposed: Commodore; In favour All; DS,AG,TK,KH,NB,CH,RS,GW,EP,KK,YC,CON,GH
Majority; Abstained :

Following approval of the proposal, SLA presented the proposed transition arrangements. It was emphasised that implementation would take place gradually rather than immediately, allowing appropriate time to establish the new structure. GW noted that existing Board members could continue to support the transition without necessarily remaining as registered Company Directors.

Discussion followed on the operation of the Advisory Committee, including its flexibility to appoint individuals with specialist knowledge to support specific projects, before standing down once those projects were complete. It was confirmed that Advisory Committee members would make recommendations to the Board, with governance decisions remaining the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

Members discussed the importance of clearly defining the responsibilities, authority and financial arrangements of both the Board and the Advisory Committee. It was agreed that separate Terms of Reference and governing documents would be prepared to establish clear boundaries between governance, operational management and advisory functions.

The Board also discussed the future appointment of Flag Officers under the proposed structure. It was suggested that Directors would elect individuals to undertake Flag Officer roles based on their skills and experience, rather than through traditional elections. Members acknowledged both the potential benefits of this approach and the need to carefully consider member expectations regarding the appointment of positions such as Commodore.

Further discussion highlighted the importance of clearly defined role descriptions, effective succession planning and ensuring the new governance arrangements support long-term strategic leadership while reducing reliance on individual office holders.

RS concluded the discussion by thanking SLA for the considerable time, leadership and commitment shown in developing the proposals and guiding the governance review process.

6. Any Other Business

CH reported that the sailing programme remains exceptionally active, with all of the Club's SB20s participating in the 200th anniversary of Cowes Week. The coming weeks promise to be an exciting period for the Club's sailing activities.

RA provided an update on the Club's marketing and social media performance, noting that increased online engagement has contributed to higher training participation and attracted new members from outside the local area. RA also reported that the revised WhatsApp Community structure is working well, allowing members to join groups relevant to their interests and helping new members integrate more easily into Club activities.

GH advised that the new online crewing forum has launched successfully, with several opportunities already advertised.

KH reported that the Club's training programme is now operating at full capacity and has become a significant source of income. All July courses are fully booked, with demand exceeding current instructor and equipment capacity. Training is now delivered on three evenings each week in addition to weekends.

KH advised that the increased level of activity is placing significant pressure on both instructor availability and training equipment. As Training Principal, KH highlighted the importance of ensuring that the role continues to have the authority, resources and flexibility required to fulfil RYA responsibilities, including safety, compliance and operational decision-making, particularly where urgent expenditure or equipment replacement may be required.

The Board acknowledged the importance of ensuring that responsibility, authority and budgetary control remain appropriately aligned as the proposed governance changes are implemented. It was agreed that these matters will be considered further as part of developing the future operational structure and defining the relationship between the Board, paid staff and key volunteer roles.

Meeting closed at 20:54 pm

Date of Following Meetings – Monday 10th August 1900h
Monday 21st September 1900h

Approved by: RS, Commodore

Signed: _____