

Report of Council Meeting held on Wednesday, 2nd March 2011

Council began promptly at the slightly later time of 1.30pm. This time there was no interference from the weather, rail strikes or anything unforeseen and the clubs were well represented.

At the opening of the meeting delegates stood in memory of Carole Rouse. She will be very much missed as a judge. There was also the joyful news that Margaret and David Kidd are celebrating their Diamond Wedding Anniversary (60 years) and pleasure was expressed by applause and the wish to send a card.

UPDATES

Incorporation

After the Treasurer's report, which I've detailed as it was so important, the Chairman gave an update on incorporation. The new company is now existence, and all but one the clubs affiliated to GCCF as a private club have signed as members. The Chairman said that in view of the very large assets some of them hold that are now limited to just £1 they should be pleased.

A view was put forward that as the potential for insolvency was a reason for incorporation club assets might be considered as available in the event of the company folding. The Treasurer disagreed and stated that as the company was solvent with assets at incorporation it could be wound up prior to depletion of these and thus be able to pay creditors. Clubs had no reason to feel under threat.

Amongst detailing the various transfers that had been made from GCCF the club to GCCF the company he noted that property depreciation had meant that the Inland Revenue could not make a tax claim. The offices were valued at substantially less than the price paid for them.

There was a question raised on whether clubs should make a rule change as the relationship between them and the company was redefined. It was advised that **rules should refer to the club being a member of GCCF rather than affiliated to it** at the next rule revision. (Breeders and exhibitors were members of the clubs, not GCCF)

The Business Plan is accessible via the website. Steve Crow made comments on it, but said he'd received virtually no questions, either because it is self-explanatory or a fearsome read. His next task was to produce a short summary document to add at the end, which would perhaps make it more user friendly. It had fulfilled one aim in that it was now an 'embedded' policy that could be revised and updated on a rolling programme. It had received one change in stated priorities raising health and welfare for cats to second place from fourth. This had been identified as a feature to build on. He believed investment in the IT system was essential and that sponsorship and other methods of generating income had to be identified.

The PR & Media Group had determined that a GCCF logo that incorporated a cat was essential and new wording had been set around the centenary design. To date a publicity agent had given 5 free days of time to assisting with image and publicity and it had been agreed by EC that £2000 more should be spent to purchase the same amount of his time to see if he could identify any methods of income generation. Delegates hoped this was money well spent.

The Supreme Show Mrs Leighton reported that she was delighted by its success and profitability and there was a meeting to start planning this year's (19th November) the following week. It would be in the usual halls again which were the most well liked. Quite a lot of thought would be given on what was best for kitten entry and classes as they had presented difficulties the previous year. She also remarked that everyone should be aware that NEC functioned on strict rules that its staff were instructed to uphold. Flexibility in times shouldn't be expected.

There wasn't any new information on the Cat Planet proposals and very little on the World Cat Congress. The seminar part of this would be held at Cambridge Vet School and the show linked to it would be the Suffolk and Norfolk.

The BAC constitution (11h) was revised so that BACs with reserves of over £500 could not reclaim on current account deficits, and any deficit repayment will be restricted to £200 in any one financial year

DRAMATIC SHOW STRUCTURE CHANGE

The class structure is to be completely rejigged so that those competing for the relevant certificate will no longer compete against a cat who already holds the title. This has gone through according to the Maine Coon Cat Club's proposal so I'll use its given terminology for classes.

Pre-Champion/Pre-Premier/Breed Class (I hope it's standardised as the latter). This will be for cats who are going for challenge and premier certificates. No titled cats can enter. However, any cat of that breed in one of the other certificate classes will be eligible for BOB and be judged for this, along with the untitled cats, by the breed class judge.

Champion/Premier Class. Cats with this title compete for a Grand Certificate

Grand Champion/Premier Class Cats with a Grand title compete for an Imperial Certificate.

What do the cats who are already Imperial do? Their class is the new Olympian (and of course they are eligible for BOB). This will be judged by a judge qualified in at least 3 sections. It will have 3 levels of bronze, silver and gold and five certificates will be required for each level from different judges. However, the same judges can be used at different levels.

There was some concern expressed that as this was only going to be an award that was given at all-breed show the breed clubs would be the losers. However, some experienced Show Managers suggested ideas such as an Imperial Class for cats with the title with the winner being immediately eligible for BIS. It was suggested that innovation would encourage people to support their breed club, and many breeders wished to do this anyway.

The changes will take place from June 1st 2011. This caused some concern to Show Managers with schedules almost ready for the printer, but it was realised that the classes would be mainly the same (addition of the Olympian). A flyer would inform exhibitors of the change and obviously it would make extra work in checking that people got it right. However, probably worth the effort for being first to offer the new class structure, so let's hope exhibitors are keen. One delegate was positive the end of 'open' classes giving titles cats 'two bites of the cherry' will put people off rather than encourage them out. Time will tell.

Show rules

The rule on the need to be an Assistant Show Manager 3 before qualifying as a SM was approved. The Executive Committee also has to be satisfied the training was adequate and will keep shows where there are newly qualified people and those with past problems under review. It was made clear licenses will not be given as a matter of course.

All judge promotions submitted on the actual and supplementary agendas were accepted.

Mrs Denny, Mrs Cole, Mrs Dugdale, Mrs Moore and Mr Pearman joined the Ragamuffin list by special request of the club

Mrs Ward had resigned from the Burmese List. Judge withdrawals was withdrawn as an item.

There will be further major changes if the revision to judge training goes ahead in anything like the way suggested by the working party. The Chairman presented the paper by saying he was leaving bomb to tick away as his parting gift. (It was his last Council meeting in the chair). It proposed changes to the structure of the sections to try and streamline judge training and to even them in size (some having grown disproportionately to others who had seen numbers fall). The papers are here <http://www.gccfcats.org/notices.html#stewardjudgereview> for all to read.

There was no discussion or time for questions. Delegates were instructed to take the information back to BACs clubs and AGMs. However, Mr Hansson had one parting shot. He said he knew full well that people would want to chew over what the change meant for them, their BACs and their section, but that any proposed revision had to address the whole system, not a part, and maintain the aims of streamlining judge training to produce new judges more quickly in a show structure that permitted this; and maintained the same sort of fair balance in section size. As someone who's debated for hours in working party meetings I know just how difficult that is. I know we won't please everybody and think that's the proverbial impossibility, but am quite happy to be proved wrong.

BREED NEWS

The Sphynx, Oriental Caramel and Cinnamon & Fawn Self and Colourpointed British Shorthairs were promoted to Championship status.

The Siberian and Ocicat Classic went to Provisional status.

The application from the British Shorthair Group Committee to show in current classes Cinnamon and Fawn Patterned was approved.

The application by the Persian Tipped and Smoke BAC for promotion by inclusion of Shaded Silver Persians (55) into Classes for Chinchillas (10) was turned down by Council after a delegate representing a Chinchilla Club argued that there had been insufficient consultation.

The Ocicat and Ocicat Classic BAC's amendments to its SOPs was approved, as was the Ocicat Classic registration policy. The Maine Coon SOP amendment was withdrawn by its BAC representative

The Colourpoint Persian BAC Registration Policy was withdrawn as it hadn't complied with an EC recommendation on the number of generations that was possible. There was also allegation from other clubs that the BAC had not supplied information according to procedure.

FINANCIAL REPORT

If you've been leaping about overjoyed at the show changes, or are even feeling mildly delighted that judge training isn't going to take the rest of your life, the Treasurer's information will wallop you back to cold hard reality. No balance sheet had been in delegate's packs as the year end had only just happened (14 months because of incorporation). There was some strong feeling expressed on this, but at the end of his report the Treasurer was thanked for bringing to Council the most up to the minute details possible and there was spontaneous applause.

The good news was that that the Supreme had once again made a small profit - somewhere between £5K-£6K. Also in the final months of 2010 registration income had increased (higher fees) although the actual number of registrations was down. However, the picture for the beginning of this year was gloomy. Income had declined quite drastically and expenses were rising. If action wasn't taken to rein in expenditure over the year, it would outstrip the resources of the general fund and the company would be making losses that would be compounded month by month.

Delegates were staggered that a profit of £39,000 over the year to the general account was reduced to just £14,000 by the cost of GCCF's judicial process (IC/DC). An explanation was demanded and the Treasurer supplied the breakdown thus:v

£4023 for legal advice, £7,700 on meeting expenses which included the hire of rooms and travelling costs of those attending, and the remainder (£15,750) on wages and the national insurance for 2 part time employees who worked solely on IC/DC matters.

The Chairman reminded delegates that if a disciplinary process was wanted at all it had to stay within a legal framework or there would be the risk of being sued by an aggrieved participant. Also, that the ultimate sanction that could be taken was suspension. If fines weren't paid because people didn't want to keep using services provided there was nothing that could be done. He said that proposals from clubs to amend the system to cut expenditure would be very welcome, but an eye had to be kept on legalities. He suggested that if those who were concerned with tribunals or the disciplinary process of other organisations could possibly glean ideas that might be useful they would be welcome. Or, of course, we could suspend all rules and trust people to do the right thing. (Council hadn't thought this acceptable on a previous occasion).

The Treasurer's suggestion was an IC/DC specific levy on clubs. Their members benefitted from the operation of rules, and were sometimes the ones against whom complaints were made that had to be investigated. The system cost about £1.50 per club member. (I'm not 100% on this figure and will check). He also mentioned the possibility of clearing a part of the offices that GCCF has at Bridgwater and renting space out. However, he noted that there was already property of this type on the market for rent that hadn't takers so it wasn't an instant solution.

IT REPORT

With the bad financial news still sinking in Steve Crow was never going to find it easy asking for £80,000 for a computer upgrade. He briefed the meeting on the IT group's progress to date which had included a great deal of voluntary work from Ian Macro and John Cann. There was now a good understanding of the capabilities of the present system and the upgrades needed. Its strength was its reliability and that it could not be compromised. Software programming was required to make an interface between the mainframe, and the internet to provide on line services. It had been hoped that the Kennel Club could help with services, but although they had been happy to explain their processes they could not dedicate staff time and computer space to any sort of server link at the present time because of their own commitments. Other avenues are being explored with them in the hope that would not need to take the more expensive route of going it alone. Hence the appeal to clubs to loan money. The Chairman declared that it was known there was well over £1,000,000 sitting in club accounts.

Some delegates were hostile at the thought of lending without security. The Treasurer said bonds could be secured on the premises, but there was still skepticism that £80k would be generated to refund clubs within a 5 year period. It was an unhappy thought to reflect on that without the money GCCF would slowly go down because it couldn't adapt to 21st century practices, but that there could be no guarantee that money from registrations would increase substantially or other income could be generated that would meet repayments. Some delegates called for substantial detail in planning, but could it be expected this work should be done by the volunteers without charge? The IT Group will be putting a FAQ's on the GCCF website and questions would be welcomed and answered on that site for all members of the Fancy to access.v

Undoubtedly AGMs have been given a lot of hard choices, and fresh ideas for fund raising are always welcome. At present the raffle was not going well, which was a pity as it had been well sponsored. It was hoped there could be instant web access for ticket purchase. However, there had been a good take up for the Centenary Dinner.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

CHAIRMAN OR JUDGE?

The Old-style Siamese Cat Club had written to suggest that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council should not judge during the period they held office. The reason given was that there could be a conflict of interest as there would be no independent arbitration should complaints about their judging be made.

There was no representative of the club to speak on the matter, but the Chairman thought it should be discussed as, with the next meeting being the Electoral and his term of office ending, newly elected Officers could be put in the position of being elected only to be forced to stand down within the hour if Council decided they had to make a choice between judging and chairmanship.

However, it gained virtually no support from delegates present. It was thought to be unrealistic as it could deprive someone of the opportunity to judge for 6 years (Vice & then Chairman) if s/he had abstain, plus there would be a retraining period to be undertaken before a return could be made. This could well be a price too high to pay for many committed judges and so would lead Council being deprived of people of calibre. John Hansson reminded the meeting that the Chairman was obliged to withdraw from all club and breed committees so there could be no question of favouritism, and that neither Officer had any role in the disciplinary process. A BAC Secretary pointed out that she'd had occasion to write to the Chairman regarding judging and the office was not relevant to the necessary comment.

There was a 'straw poll' taken at the end of the discussion and I didn't see a hand raised in favour. I thought it worth bringing to your attention though, as it seemed probable that the separation between 'Executive' and 'Disciplinary' function, deliberately made by those who put the constitution together, possibly wasn't fully appreciated. Officers, whether judging, breeding or exhibiting, are subject to the same rules as the rest of us and can't influence how they are applied.

Project Russia There was very little time for much on this matter, but it was agreed that the project should be renamed GCCF International as it wasn't just Russia interested in GCCF's registration and show services. Carol Pike knew of other possible interest and offered to liaise. All in all early days, but it was something to be encouraged rather than dismissed. Indeed, it offered potential source of revenue for the future - though the online facilities would be vital.

The last point I heard raised in AOB was that judges should be reminded to wear white coats. I felt this was a good exit line as it was past 5.30.

C 1769 The rule change on registration was not discussed at this meeting (in spite of the Cat Planet report that it was passed.).

And finally: a reminder not to miss the LONDON PET SHOW on May 7th & 8th. Breed Clubs are supporting 'The World of Cats' with clubs bringing people friendly cats on both days.

Jen Lacey