Sadly, Council was somewhat depleted this time, probably several were affected by rail problems. 81 delegates attended for a meeting when there was far more talk than action as there were very few items that needed a vote on the short agenda.

That was not necessarily a bad thing, as taking time to pause and reflect can be worthwhile when it’s an opportunity for challenges to be made and/or views can be given to inform future decisions. Opinion on some issues, particularly the show calendar will be fed back for Board discussion, though it has to be said that although there were some new ideas, there was no Eureka moment, and by the end of the afternoon some delegates were becoming annoyed with others and frustrated by no definitive conclusions.

The Chairman, John Hansson, welcomed delegates shortly after 1pm and as is customary read out the names of the old friends who had passed on since June. Yvonne Clubbe, Sylvia Gibbons, Irene Jessop, Patsy Knight, Jenny Parsley, Charles Patey, Kay Short, Molly Southall, John Walker and Brenda Wolstenholme (GCCF Vice-President and former Chairman) were all remembered in a moment of silence.

**Election of Two New members to the Appeal Committee**

Elisabeth Stark and Pat Cherry had both come to the end of their term on the Appeals Committee and chosen not to stand again. There were six interested in the two vacant places. Their written applications were available to delegates and had been published on the GCCF website. The result of the paper ballot was:

- **Gavin Eyres** (25) and **Lynne Shirley** (24) are both now AC members until October 2021.
- **Vanessa Marriott** (23) and **Robin Kempe** (21) are both now reserves until October 2019.
- Steven Abrahams (18) and Owen Maudlin (8) were unsuccessful this time.

**Breed, and Show news**

**Promotion, registration policy and SOP approvals**

The British Shorthair Section have two new patterns at Championship status in a single class: the **Van Patterned** and the **Harlequin**. Breed classes can be included in show not yet closed, and should be in all schedules by mid-February, which should mean they will be chasing their certificates soon. The promotion was approved unanimously so congratulations to all who have worked for this.

*The photographs are courtesy of S Dalton-Hobbs*
The Persian LH and Exotic BACs had both amended their registration policies to make it mandatory for cats registered active to be deemed clear of PKD. From 1 January 2019 there would be no further use of the Genetic Register that currently allowed non-tested or tested positive cats to be used for breeding. It was clarified that deemed clear included cats that were tested and those who were descended from proven clear cats on all pedigree lines validated by results recorded by GCCF. Therefore, most breeders would not be required to do a lot of retesting of lines already cleared by results obtained over several years.

The Australian Mist BAC and the Suffolk BAC had both incorporated the new GCCF rules (Section 1:12cii & 17a) into their registration policies which allowed for quicker progression to the supplementary register for foundation imports and outcrosses. There was also some relaxation for LaPerm breeders in the cats permitted in the pedigree background, as this would enable the registration of some imports that were currently excluded.

The Ragdoll and British SH Red Tabby both had minor amendments to their SOPS. The Ocicat and Aztec SOPs both had several identical revisions supported by a rationale.

All registration and SOP amendments were approved unanimously with the exception of the Persian LH that had just one abstention. Clean copies of the policies and standards should be available from the GCCF website breed section as soon as the BACs have a chance to send them.

Judges

All judge appointments were confirmed. There were three (Lizz Adair, Karen Kempsell and Joanne Seggie) newly promoted judges who became Full Judges for the first time. (Section 3). Congratulations to them.

Council Reports

Implementation of the Animal Welfare Act

Steve Crow reminded delegates that from 1 October those selling kittens as a business needed to be licensed within the pet vending schedule by their local authority. Many within GCCF would not be affected as they bred as a hobby and not with the intention of making a profit.

However, he had become aware that several local authorities were not applying the rules correctly. Instead of giving consideration to the full guidance of what should be within and outside the scope of the requirements for a licence they had focussed on a single sentence that defined on HMRC terms what excluded a small business from the necessity of applying for a licence. Those with a turnover of less than £1,000 gross were exempt, but many breeders were not breeding with the intention of making a profit so did not come within the definition of a business at all. Different criteria applied to those engaged in a hobby, such as demonstration of lack and profit and show records. These had been ignored.

Steve had already successfully challenged two local authorities on behalf of GCCF breeders and promised to help others who were being given an incorrect response. He advised using information available from the GCCF website and the link to the guidance notes to local authorities.
Steve represents GCCF on a number of DEFRA Committees and gave additional news to inform delegates of possible future legislation on a number of topics.

1. A new law restricting the sale of puppies and kittens is to be drafted. However, this will not affect those who breed unless they should be selling to third parties and agents rather than directly to new owners. This is a practice GCCF has strongly advised against for many years so it will be no disappointment that it will become illegal.

2. However, the proposal that all rescue and rehoming agencies should be licensed would have a considerable impact. At present it’s planned that it should cover all, no matter how small, so it would include little charities and clubs. Inspection would be required for licensing even if it was one or two cats occasionally. Several delegates commented on how this could result in volunteers dropping out, resulting in more cats needing the services of the large charities, and possibly being dumped or euthanised if space could not be found. Steve responded that all these points were being made in the ongoing discussion. He agreed that the consequences of what had been proposed so far had not been given sufficient weight and could be subject to change. No new law was imminent, but it was as well to be aware of what was under discussion.

3. A further addition to the Animal Welfare Act was also at the planning stage. This was described as the ‘protection of offspring’. It would be a breeder’s responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent puppies and kittens being born with genetic disease/defects that impacted severely on the quality of life. If they did not then an owner would be able to take legal action. It would mean that breeders and BACs would have the responsibility of ensuring that available genetic tests were used, and could possibly be extended to prevention of the loss of genetic diversity through inbreeding. There was the possibility of a ban on the breeding of the Scottish Fold.

4. A code of practice already existed for dog breeding and it was planned that one should be drawn up for cats. Steve reported he had joined the committee to draft this only to find he was the sole person around the table to have actually bred a litter of kittens - others were vets or worked with charities. That would give him an opportunity for a considerable amount of input, but also brought the hard work preparation entailed.

**BAC Review Group**

Kate Kaye gave detail of what was planned for the governance of BACs if judge training was delivered by grand group rather than single breed lists. For several (where the Grand class consisted of a single breed) there would be little change, but there would be a need to hold meetings that brought together the representatives of several breeds, particularly in the large multi-breed sections (2 & 4).

After contributions from BACs the second version was less ambitious, keeping much closer to what was familiar. It was thought when required, alongside of the Joint Breed meetings, there could be “Breed Specific” meetings wherein areas such as SOP and registration/breeding policies for that breed were discussed and, if appropriate, brought to the joint breed meetings.
A number of clubs could be accommodated without making the committees too large in size by weighting the votes of each. It would be important to have independent officers, with a Chairman who enabled a voice for all rather than dominance by one person or club, and a secretary who was familiar with the system and an effective administrator.

However, although it was desirable for each BAC or Grand BAC to be operating within the same constitution and rules, flexibility would be necessary as there would be the need to deal with a different number of clubs and breeds within a group, and some clubs had the right to be represented at more than one BAC.

**The 2018 Supreme Show**

It was reported that there would be just over 600 cats present with about 40 of these representing clubs in Meet The Breeds or other organised exhibition. The one question that was asked was on the size of the deficit, with the estimation given that on the information to date (some of which could only be guessed) it would be about £12-£13,000. Money was being saved where possible. One example given was that there be no overhead signs this year, a saving of about £5000.

In discussion on whether clubs should not hold shows within two weeks of the Supreme, and when other possible venues were mentioned, the Chairman reported that no show licence had been applied for in the following show year. No hall had been booked or date fixed.

**IT Report**

Sally Rainbow-Ockwell reported first on the STAR show system. 40 shows had now been held or were in the pipeline and over the course of setting these up a lot had been learned. She thought that by the time the show manager who had first used STAR came to try it again the programme was so improved she would hardly recognise it. Thanks were given to all participating show managers for being ready to take part in the experiment and making suggestions for its development. There had been rewards. One show had saved almost £1000, but what was gained depended on the previous amount paid for show processing.

Currently set up was still offered at no charge, although expenses incurred for printing and card handling costs had to be covered. Also, it was hoped to put together a show managers' training video to give some familiarity with the process ahead of being involved in it. It was queried whether shows received money promptly after it was received by GCCF, with the OM answering that as soon as accounts were finalised and bank details were received payment was made. Also, it was wondered if those who did not wish to use computers were excluded, with assurance given that forms could be sent in and posted with a cheque as always.

Next year clubs would be able to fill in the membership returns form on line, with calculations made for them. (Accounts and club information would need to be provided in the usual way).

It was also hoped to make some additions to the Breeder Scheme to support those breeders who had joined it. Otherwise, there would be monitoring of processes already begun so that improvements could continue to be made, with less emphasis on development of the new. However, ideas for the future were always welcome from all.
Discussions

These did not have a set structure and some contributions were repetitions or reinforcements of points made by other delegates, or gave an explanation or simply answered a query.

That’s to explain how a fair amount a time is taken, but there is not a lot of detail to report.

Board Concerns

This was not a scheduled discussion, but arose from comments opined on the minutes of the Board Meeting included for information. It was observed that the future success of GCCF depended on strategic planning with the approved Business Plan as its focus, but not only was this not discussed, it did not feature on the agenda.

Also, those attending Board meetings in an advisory capacity had been shocked by a lack of professionalism. It was acknowledged that not all Board members were familiar with business practice, but thought that external help should be considered to provide some mediation and guidance.

Several delegates commented that the Board was too large to function effectively (one remarked that it was bigger than that of Shell) and it was suggested that a smaller Management Board would find it easier to function as a team, with each member being responsible for specifically allocated tasks. This would also reduce meeting costs.

Others reminded Council that this was allowed for when GCCF became a company, but when proposals to make a change were put forward (after previous advice external received) they were not accepted by a two thirds majority.

One suggestion for a way forward was to examine what GCCF’s competitors operated to determine best practice with the aim of a change of governance to ensure better planning and a speedier response to problems. However, there were no definite conclusions before there was a request that the meeting move on.

Club Name Changes

The purpose of the name changes of the title was to allow the clubs concerned to become ‘All-Breed’ clubs and so hold shows that were not restricted to particular sections or groups of colours and patterns. The clubs requesting change were not breed clubs (who had entitlement to BAC representation) but those currently designated as ‘specialist’, for example catering for longhair and/or semi-longhair only.

As observed by delegates a precedent had already been set as some clubs had been allowed to change and already managed all-breed shows successfully. It was thought that a club should have the support of its membership, and that a distinction between an all-breed and breed club should be maintained, but noted that there were no specific criteria to define an all-breed club. One reason given for maintaining the status quo was the number of all-breed clubs competing for space in the show calendar, and that a bigger show meant higher costs and not necessarily greater profits.
A show of hands was called for to indicate preference, but not taken, as the agenda item had referred to breed rather than specialist clubs. The outcome was referral back to the Board.

**The Show Calendar**

The Chairman stated that there were 51 weekends available in a calendar year and around 150 clubs wanting to hold a show. At present the criteria used for licence applications were geographical proximity and whether there would be sufficient judges for shows held on a particular date. Some clubs had managed to keep to a specific Saturday for many years, others had to change, often because of venue availability and/or sharing agreements. One move usually had ripple effect repercussions affecting a number of others on either side. The Board would welcome suggestions to ease problems and be fair.

Responses (in no particular order) were:
- priority should always be given to shows that had been able to maintain a fixed date for many years
- priority should be given to the breed clubs
- new clubs, and those clubs who had to change their date for whatever reason, should need the permission of clubs with the same date, and/or those either side before being allowed a new date
- the Supreme moved and therefore the clubs should not have to change if a traditional date was either side of it
- the number of licences per year should be restricted to a specific number, with clubs being awarded their licence on a first come, first served basis
- the show year should last for eighteen months (thought difficult because there would be issues with venues)
- breed clubs should be allowed a show each year, but all-breed clubs only one every two years (it was noted that there would be a probable drop in revenue for GCCF)

It was clear delegates would be prepared to fight hard for what was in the best interests of their own club, as would be expected. Maintaining a historic date, and the negotiations with venues to achieve contracts for long term bookings at a fixed price were a significant part of the equation. Therefore, no quick fix solutions, and cynically it could be seen as survival of the fittest. So a sombre thought to finish on this time.

*Jen Lacey 18.10. 2018*