

THE ELECTORAL MEETING OF GCCF COUNCIL, JUNE 2017

The meeting began very promptly at noon and it was well past five before a halt was called. At least four items on a not overlong agenda were omitted altogether, and others had little time for full attention. However, there were two presentations from visitors, several voting sessions, with the first going to a recount, and the significant changes in show structure and judge training to debate. A fair portion of time went on discussing the accounts near the beginning of the meeting - to give some indication of how the hours were spent for those not present.

Reports and Presentations

Chairman

After the Chairman had welcomed the 118 delegates present to the sixth Annual General Meeting of GCCF as a company, and a moment of silence was held to remember how those who were no longer with us had touched our lives, it was time for the final report following his three years in office. Steve chose to make it a review of the whole of this period rather than the final stage.

His stated his overall intention had been to make GCCF relevant to, and able to operate in, the 21st century. This had encompassed keeping up to date with and being proactive for responsible cat breeding and welfare practices, as well ensuring sound business administration. He had particularly enjoyed working with the Genetics Committee and Veterinary Advisory Committee and maintaining links with outside people and organisations, such as International Cat Care, Langford and Prof Leslie Lyons

He shared his six main aims with delegates and reflected briefly on the success of these.

- The financial health of the company had been a priority. Thanks to successful commercial partnerships as well as all that had been achieved from the online developments GCCF was doing well. New equipment had replaced the out-dated and/or the faltering, loans had been repaid, and there were financial reserves. This had been shared with customers, as there had to be no increase in fees for services.
- The new computer system had been delivered and was not only functioning as a replacement for the old, but was aiding new services and more would be developed.
- The commercial partnerships had become established. He had had many meetings with Agria and Royal Canin to ensure the interests of all concerned were best served.
- There were also now well-established links to what Steve described as strategic partners. These included the Kennel Club, ICC, the Canine and Feline Sector Group and its connection with DEFRA. All discussions held had the joint purpose of establishing GCCF as a credible and ethical organisation and at the same promoting action in the best interests of our breeders.
- Office practices had needed to change and adapt. Steve thanked Mark Goadby for his particular support, and the GCCF Office staff for their efforts in this respect, and welcomed the recent new staff members who were present at the meeting. He had enjoyed his visits to Bridgwater and frequent liaison with the team.
- Change in structure had been slow in development, but was now culminating in proposals. He had overseen the establishment of the two review groups (Show and BAC) as well as changes to the IC/DC structure.

There were thanks to those who had worked closely with him during his term of office, and to all the many volunteers who worked in all areas of GCCF administratively and to keep shows viable and enjoyable. The Chairman concluded he handed on responsibility with some relief, but also with satisfaction that he had achieved results.

The Company Accounts for 2016

These were introduced by Laura Green of Monahans, who had examined the accounts. She explained that legal requirements concerning presentation had changed, but did not significantly affect the information delegates received. The company had increased its income, but it had been a year when expenditure had risen significantly. Redundancy costs, and increases in advertising and the deficit from the Supreme had contributed significantly to this, but reserves showed a slight increase and the company could meet its responsibilities and repay the club loans in 2017 as planned.

Delegates had no questions for Laura on the general information, except for a request for consistency when rounding down or up so that £7880 on page 4 did not appear as £7881 on page 7. The size of increase in the cost of advertising was queried with the response that it was used for promotion of GCCF particularly at the time of the Supreme Show to bring both the organisation and the event to the attention of a wider public audience.

There was also concern at the expense of meetings. (At this point there was an apology that room hire and travel costs headings had been reversed for the lines of figures.) A suggestion of meeting outside London was discussed, though there was concern that the difficulty in travelling to anywhere other than London would be difficult for those who lived in more remote parts of the country, or who didn't drive. Nobody should be disenfranchised by their location from participation as a delegate or committee member, and the current Byelaws require that at least two Council meetings a year are held in London.

Most concern was for the accounts presented for the Supreme. After an explanation it was accepted that income could not be broken down into the usual detail, but there was evidence presented in respect of the hotel bill that made it definite that the expenditure did not tally with known invoices. However, there was assurance that there was proper reconciliation of income, expenditure and the known balance deficit.

Eventually, it was agreed to accept the accounts, as there was no disquiet on the pages legally necessary to be lodged with Companies House. However, a more detailed breakdown of the Supreme expenses was required to be given in October.

Management Accounts & Club Loan News

There was no opportunity for the Office Manager to make comment on the operational accounts, but delegates had no questions. Mark reported about half of the clubs and BACs that had made loans to GCCF had been repaid on request, following options given in a letter sent in April, with two extending the loan to GCCF for no fixed term. Clubs who had not yet responded would be reminded in September.

The wording for the rule change on fees, agreed in principle in February, was approved.

This meant that with immediate effect no charge would be made for a change from non-active to active registration status following a mandatory health check. The one grumble about this was that it wasn't retrospective.

IT

Sally Rainbow-Ockwell outlined the recent new developments:

- GCCFI registration was now active via the online system in its own area.
- Cash Office changes had been completed
- The administrative procedure for HHP titles had been implemented
- The judge list was now integral to the system with automatic updates
- Updates had been made ready for 2017 Supreme entries

Plans for online show administration and giving clubs and BACs direct access to update their own relevant information and make returns were on going. The new Board would have to take decisions on planning for the end of Leon's full time contract and the transition to part time work for GCCF.

There were queries on an online help desk, and a request for presenting the judge lists in a publically accessible area of the website once again. Sally responded that both were on the 'to do' list. It would be for the Board to prioritise.

Agria

Simon Wheeler (Agria's MD) stated his aim was to have a conversation with delegates rather than make a presentation. He particularly wanted to know about why the majority of breeders were not using '5 week cover notes' when kittens went to their homes as these were completely free and gave some peace of mind for the breeder as the kitten settled into its home. He had a single direct answer. One delegate said she preferred to use Petplan as a better proportion of any veterinary costs during this period were covered. Nobody who did not use cover notes at all made any comment or gave any explanation.

Most queries for Simon from delegates concerned lack of knowledge and/or courtesy from staff in specific instances, and he promised to follow these through where possible. There was also an information exchange on what insurance cover was available for older cats, in cases of breed rescue or when an insured cat was being transferred to a new home.

Simon also said he was in complete agreement that people did not need multiple doses of advertising. He promised that once the company's computer system update was complete it would focus on the policy-holder rather than the policy to reduce a surfeit of mail. He noted too that there were comments on persistent/aggressive direct advertising to breeders and new owners that was unwelcome.

UK Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Ian Ronksley gave what he described as a whistle-stop tour of his organisation. It operated to established respected international regulation to provide competent, trusted assessment of standards to give both guaranteed quality and consistency.

GCCF could have an accredited Breeders Scheme on the same lines as that offered by the Kennel Club to dog breeders. It would have to determine the definition of good cat breeder and ensure this was measurable to an impartial and consistent standard. UKAS would be rigorous in assessing and interrogating the competence of the processes concerned in this and the manner in which the organisation carried them out.

When asked how long accreditation could take Ian explained it depended on the readiness and abilities of the organisation concerned. Some could be ready in under a year, others took considerably longer, perhaps up to 5 years. When talking about licensing a little later Steve Crow outlined the costs involved. It would take around £10,000-£15,000 to set up and £4,000 annually to maintain. It was not to be undertaken lightly.

Breeder Licensing

The next meeting of the Canine & Feline Sector Group would be at the end of the week. Steve expected to learn then whether the General Election had changed either the plans or the timetable for implementation in anyway. He had expressed his views forcibly that licensing and inspection were not practical for domestic premises in the terms given, but had not been encouraged by the definition of what constituted commercial activity. It seemed to be any exchange of an animal for money, no matter how small the animal or young the breeder.

Sorry, that this isn't positive news, but it looks like an issue we're going to have to face, unless the government decides it's got far more important things to do as a priority. The best that can be hoped is that farmers and fishermen have plenty of BREXIT demands to settle.

Elections

President and Vice-President

It was the election for GCCF President that was initially almost tied between the three nominees: **Shirley Bullock**, Helen-Marriott-Power and Brenda Wolstenholme, but after a second ballot between the two highest scoring candidates Shirley was a clear winner and became our President. For Vice-President there were just the two nominations, and a definite outcome. **Betty Shingleton** was elected and became a Vice President, along with Brenda, Eric Wickham-Ruffle and Gordon Butler, all of whom had sent good wishes for a successful meeting. These honorary positions are held for life and show respect for the many years of dedicated service the new incumbents have given to GCCF as respected judges, working on behalf of their breeds, and chairing GCCF (Betty) and the Disciplinary Committee (Shirley) over many years.

Chairman and Vice-Chairman

John Hansson took the Chair unopposed to a round of applause. He made the point that it wasn't his choice to have no one stand against him, he'd have welcomed a contest, but it depended on decisions others took rather than being his responsibility. He then thanked Steve Crow for his three years in office, remarking that he couldn't think of anyone who had worked harder during their term as Chairman.

An election was held for Vice-Chair. Sean Farrell was elected with 69 votes to Sally Rainbow Ockwell's 47.

The Board of Directors

Before the Board was elected a Byelaw change was approved. In future Board members will serve for three years with five needing to stand for re-election or retiring each June. Initially the five with the highest number of votes this year will serve the full term, the five with the next will stay for two years, and the final five will be those standing in 2018 if they wish to continue. This procedure was described as very similar to the manner in which the clubs appointed their committees and was to bring a greater degree of stability to the governance of the company that could be needed for credibility with other organisations it worked with.

The results were:

Hilary Dean 73, Bruce Bennett 70, Gillian Bennett 69, Steve Crow 68, Helen Marriott-Power 68 – all to serve for three years.

Jen Lacey 66, Lisa Robinson-Talboys 65, Lynda Ashmore 64, Tommy Goss 61, Shelagh Heavens 60 or Elaine Robinson 60 (after agreement) – serving for two years

Shelagh Heavens 60, or Elaine Robinson (after agreement between them) Rosemary Fisher 57, Val Anderson 55, Doreen Goadby 54, Peter Collin 52 who may stand again in 2018.

The reserves were: Catherine Kaye 51 and Heather McRae 50.

Finance Committee

Maria Chapman-Bear, Steve Crow, Shelagh Heavens, Tommy Goss, Doreen Goadby and Helen Marriott-Power as reserve.

Disciplinary Committee

Just two were needed for DC as this is a committee that retains two third of its membership, and this had worked very successfully.

Ed Merchant and Pat Perkins were elected with Shar Crichton and Julia Craig McFeely as reserves.

Investigations Committee

Again just two were required, and existing members of the committee who had stood for re-election were appointed, so Kym Jarvis and Claire Lewis, with Stephen McConnell as the reserve.

Breed, Club and Show news

Promotion, registration policy and SOP approvals

There is a new breed at Championship level, the **Silver Bengals**. 'We're ready for it', announced Barry Alger-Street, (BAC Chairman) proudly. Breed classes can be included in show schedules not yet published, and should be in all by mid-October, which will mean a breed class at the Supreme. Congratulations to all who have worked for this.

Registration policy changes (**Tonkinese and Asians**) and SOP amendments (Persian LH and Asian) were approved, with some concern expressed at the Asian BAC's decision to remove reference to coat quality in withholding faults, though it was explained that this was to keep the Asian SOP in line with the Burmese SOP. However, a BAC can always reverse a decision if it was felt it hadn't worked as intended. Changes made were not fixed for all time.

Club news

There is one new GCCF member, a warm welcome to the **Egyptian Mau Cat Society**, and two new provisional members, the **Chartreux CC UK** and **British Longhair CS**.

All those area and breed clubs that applied for dispensation to retain a delegate without the necessary membership were granted this, but there is to be further discussion of the definition of a 'club' in October. Do 20 members constitute a club? What about 15 or 5? It's a subject that delegates have considered on previous occasions without any resolution, but it was considered worth airing again

The 2017 Supreme Show

There was some concern that invitations had not yet been sent out to judges for the Supreme, though it had been planned that this should happen in March. Lynda Ashmore, SM, explained that there had been quite a lot of consideration for a different class structure, with the introduction of Olympians, but eventually it was decided to postpone any changes until 2018. However, this had caused delay, though the invitations were ready to go now.

Show Rule Changes

Rule changes at this meeting were minimal. There was rule book wording for the introduction of the requirement for the registration of Household Pets if their owners wished to claim GCC titles, and SMs should find it easier to invite overseas judges as they needed only to be fully qualified with their own organisations rather than classed as 'senior' with three years on the appropriate lists.

The Great Debate

The big event of the day was on the proposals to alter GCCF show structure and judge training. Chair of the Show Structure Review Group, Kate Kaye, presented this giving an overview of how the group had worked towards its final conclusions and stressing the need for change. This necessity was echoed by passionate speakers from the floor who gained rounds of applause, but there were also concerns expressed, particularly from those who felt that neither option offered sufficient balance in respect of some breeds (in the SLH section in particular) and a fear that the in-depth knowledge that existed in the minority breed BACs in the Foreign section would be lost.

It was stressed several times that what was being voted for was the way forward for change, rather than any finality. Kate clarified that not all ideas mentioned in the draft would be taken up, and new ones would doubtless be included. The small clubs would remain as guardians of their registration and breeding policies and SOPs. They would be sending representatives to give their opinions at BACs.

It was the format and procedure that would change rather than being a complete dismissal of the small BACs. There was no intention to disadvantage the minority breeds of the foreign section, but to enhance opportunities for exhibitors with smaller grand classes, encourage more breeder judges by ensuring they were more useful to SMs, and retain breed club involvement. Therefore there was no aim for deleterious impact and no Byelaw broken (as was suggested).

The outcome was a vote in favour of option 2 that with 87 wanting it gained considerable approval. Just 4 thought option 1 was the way to go, and 24 delegates abstained. There was then the inevitable question when change would take place. All that could be said was that it was planned for June 2018, but with acknowledgement that there was so much to do that it could well take longer.

As an aside some interesting statistics were produced to support the need for change.

- GCCF has a judge list with 193 on it, but many haven't judged for more than five years, and others are emeritus or only judge occasionally in certain areas. There are only 43 judges who travel widely, judging frequently, which explains why some exhibitors are frustrated the same person regularly doing their breed or title class.
- The average age of our judges is 67, new younger people are desperately needed.
- When a judge is lost he or she is usually qualified for many breed lists. When a new one is added they go onto a single list, and then branch out into one or two more. There's no way judge loss and gain is in any way even.
- Other organisations train judges to two lists, or four. The GCCF intention is to reduce from 39 to 14.

It was not really a surprise that 'the status quo is not an option' was perhaps the most repeated sentiment of the afternoon.

[Jen Lacey 15.6.2017](#)