

# **The General Meeting of Council, February 18<sup>th</sup> 2015**

## **A Report of the Proceedings**

On a bright morning, with just a hint of spring in the air, 119 delegates arrived at the Conway Hall. Although the meeting started very promptly, and did not finish until seven minutes past five, my feeling on the train home was that we did not cover as much ground as we do on some occasions. That's not necessarily a bad thing as there are times when complex issues are discussed, and deserve to have thorough examination, and that certainly happened. The downside to that is some items have to be postponed for another occasion, which means more time passes before any action can be taken on them.

I had the impression that several were disappointed because the items the Show Review Group had listed for discussion had to be deferred, every single one. During a lengthy discussion prior to a vote, one delegate did suggest that some be fitted in as the agenda progressed, but unfortunately that opportunity did not present itself. The consolation is that club AGMs will be able to air all of them in the interim and grass roots opinion will continue to be fed through.

### **BREED/BAC/CLUB BUSINESS**

I can give immediate reassurance that all BAC and club matters were considered, and the judge appointment list was brought to Council's attention. All on it received approval.

Congratulations to the Colourpointed Pattern Tonkinese who now have their own breed class at championship level, and to the other colour British Goldens who join the existing Golden breed class; both promoted today. Also, welcome to the Turkish Angora (TUA), introduced as a recognised new breed and so able to be GCCF registered and shown on exhibition.

The registration policy for the Siamese was revised, to include additional Orientals as outcrosses, and updated in GEMS code. The Standard of Points for the Tonkinese and British Goldens were refreshed to accompany their promotion, and the Korat and Thai SOP had a very small amendment to allow for teething in kittens. Check with your BAC if these are your breeds and you require further information.

The categorisation of member clubs was a matter that had received much discussion at Board level. It is intended to clarify the roles of existing clubs and enable those applying for membership to define themselves. Also, it will enable the office to streamline practice by reducing the information required from clubs running shows and so save time for staff and show managers. There were questions on whether there should be additional categories to the three proposed, and an amendment was approved to indicate that all shows held a licence at the Board's discretion, but it then received unanimous approval. Check on the GCCF website with the council paperwork if you want further information on general entitlements and the category of any particular club. <http://www.gccfcats.org/council0215.html>

For Orientals a single judge list with one BAC to administer it was given the go ahead by a majority vote. Training for judges will now be inclusive for all cats of Oriental type, as with the Persian Longhairs, British and Siamese. The Oriental Bicolour BAC expressed concern at the loss its separate existence as it had taken the breed through its development to recognition and established popularity. However, delegates closely involved with the setting up of the Persian Longhair BAC commented on how successful this had been, noting particularly that becoming involved with the whole of a breed, rather than a small segmented part of it, was empowering rather than a matter of being sidelined.

There is now a Federation of GCCF Show Managers (Special Interest Club), and the Sphynx Breeders Association has suspended its GCCF membership. Getting some advice onto the website for clubs who are struggling remained a task still to be done. It was agreed it was something that should feature on the relevant section of the new website.

## THE RESTRUCTURE OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Of course it was the discussions on the restructure of the standing committees that took the time, deservedly so. As was remarked, GCCF has seen no changes in this respect for decades. The organisation has become a company and a business, in addition to its original function as the management committee of a hobby, and a majority of the Board, with the support of its business coach, felt it was time to propose change to operate more in accordance with small business practice, with a streamlined more accountable Board to be both more efficient and cost effective, particularly as we now exist with business competitors.

However, the proposal was rejected by a majority. There was suspicion that power would reside with too few, albeit that they would be elected and answerable to Council. There was dislike expressed at this point that the Chairman had recorded that he was Chief Executive Officer of GCCF in 'Linked In' without Council's permission. He explained that it was the purpose of business connections, and that it was a function that he carried for signing off GCCF returns to Company's House, but apologised to Council as he not intended to indicate he was taking any powers or authority not designated, and promised to remove it.

Just as there will be no change to the size of the Board so the Vice-Chairman will be elected by Council in June in accordance with the existing Byelaws. The arguments for a change in that respect were also not accepted by a majority, certainly nowhere near the two thirds required for a change of this type, and loss of power for Council seemed to be reason underpinning this decision too. There was audible objection to the possibility indicated by the Chairman that the Board would appoint someone whose track record was known and who would complement an elected Chair, as is fairly standard business practice. Also the view was put that different Vice-Chairs during a term in office would not gain sufficient experience, although tenure of post for a given period for any officer can never be guaranteed.

Once voting on Board restructure was completed delegates considered the IC/DC structure. Changes were made to this and they will be radical.

- 2 Board members may sit on IC, but the other 2 committees DC and Appeals will not be open to those on the Board. This is to ensure legal compliance.

- The number of each committee will be six in June, rather than five, nine and seven respectively. This will make the committees sitting in judgment less intimidating and saves costs.

Now for the really big differences:

1. Applications will be sought from throughout the cat fancy (anyone signed up to GCCF rules), rather than delegates only, which will give a much wider pool of talent for selection.
2. Those interested will be asked to make an application to a given job description by the end of April, and a list of names and the application details will be circulated to delegates with their election pack. This should give delegates knowledge on which to base their vote, as for the first time they will something of know of the experience, background and capability of those who stand.
3. Those elected will serve for a three-year term (two retiring annually) to enable experience to be built up and ensure continuity.
4. If the committee should be inquorate (because an impartial quorum cannot be formed)) people from outside (up to two) could be asked to serve.

It will be interesting to monitor if this can be made to work, and whether people want to be involved in a different way of doing things. During the discussion of the process there was some comment that welfare had not been addressed. It was agreed by all that moving committee seats around did not help cats, or assist owners with better practice. This will be a matter returned to the Board and obviously has to be addressed, but perhaps separate from the complaints procedure itself.

## SHOW MATTERS

With welfare in mind it's a good time to report that the NFC BAC's proposal that the use of fans/cool pads/ice pads to be allowed at shows, together with the recommendation to Show Managers to ensure air conditioning is utilised in halls, received unanimous approval.

This will have to return in June as a rule, but obviously it's a matter of ensuring maximum comfort for exhibits.

It's acknowledged that little judicious trimming and plucking feature in show preparation - it's a beauty completion when all is said and done. However, it should be discreet rather than noticeable, as it may it may be penalised by judges. Therefore the rule change introduced is only to allow for what happens in practice in that respect. However, in addition, exhibits who have had eyebrows and eyelashes obviously cut or removed may be excluded from the show hall at vetting-in. This procedure could cause distress or actual harm so is therefore a welfare issue and to be strongly discouraged.

There was very little time to discuss the new certificate designs on display (and on the website) and no vote of any sort was taken. One opinion expressed by a few involved with table work was that a single colour for entires and neuters should be used, used instead of having a distinction between championship and premiership certificates.

The Chairman suggested this was widely discussed, as obviously it's a matter of pleasing most exhibitors rather than worrying too much about certificates that get spoilt occasionally. If your Champion and Premier get an identical certificate is that not a problem or is it a case the difference being more pleasing?

For those who worry about the 21-day deadline for registrations and transfers impacting on show entry this has been reduced to 10 days. This reflects the far quicker processing time for these actions. This rule change was unanimously agreed.

The one other rule change was not to do with showing, but was an update on transfers to reflect the current practice. There are now cards rather than slips to be signed. However, a manual form is needed to replace a card if loss or damage occurs.

## THE SUPREME

The Supreme Show Manager gave news that brought a ripple of applause. The qualification for show entry will return for the 2015 show (although not for kittens). Entries will be taken until 21 September, but those in the final week will pay a surcharge, as all taken before the 14th will pay £5 less. The theme of the 2015 will be witches and wizards - Hallowe'en of course!

The 2014 show made a loss of around £4000, a reduction on that of the previous year. Mrs Leighton gave assurance that all sponsorship had now been received.

## FINANCE

Good news in this area as Mark (Office Manager) was able to say that the benefits from renegotiated contracts and savings from an overall reduction in meetings were coming through by the year end. December had been a relatively good month and every indication was that a satisfactory surplus had been generated on ordinary business over the year.

For the first time the total number of registrations actually showed a very slight increase, although this was due to a higher than usual number of non-prefix ones. Prefix registrations were still down a little on the previous year, but the fall was minimal. Transfers were lower than in 2013, but still better than in the previous years, and this was an area in which growth would be aimed for.

## BUSINESS MATTERS

Sally Rainbow-Ockwell was thanked for developing the Business Plan (published on the website) and she explained the new format with the transition from the 2014 plan. Goals had been developed and it would be the responsibility of the various working groups to deliver them.

Sally also has responsibility for Project Phoenix and gave assurance that the developers were on track for a June release, and that updates could be given on the website. There would be a training and testing period to go through. The online portal would look different and would enable those making registrations to do much more than currently. In the meantime there would be final update to the present system allowing breeders to produce their own pedigrees directly from their GCCF records.

Rosemary Fisher reported that pages were now being uploaded onto the new website and thanked those who had contributed information and photographs.

The Chairman gave updates on partnership connections. These included news of a possible contract with Royal Canin to support transfers that is in negotiation, a five-week cover note from Agria, with notice of the company's interest in supporting rescue, and his contributions to Your Cats to keep raising the profile of GCCF. There was also an update on the work of the Canine and Feline Sector Group, and the formation of its Feline Welfare Committee.

Earlier, at the beginning of the meeting, Steve had updated delegates with news of various happenings throughout GCCF:

- the resignation of the Vice-Chairman,
- office staffing,
- a refresh of the review groups,
- his (and Tommy's) visit to New Zealand and the World Cat Congress (at their expense).

They concluded with news of a meeting with representatives of GCCFI. This registry was seeking GCCF support via our online system to provide them with an online service, and the possibility was being explored. That is another outcome to be awaited with interest.

There was quite a lot cheering for the delegate who reminded the Chairman/Board that GCCF existed for its customers as represented by the delegates, rather than them, as it wouldn't exist without its breeders and exhibitors. However, the converse is just as valid, as a business to provide the services used would not exist without a management team, and in GCCF's case it's an elected one by the self same delegates. Just a thought!

Jen Lacey 19.2.15