



East Cowes Sailing Club

Notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)

Thursday 27th of September

At the Masonic Hall Osborne Rd. East Cowes. Commencing at 7:30pm.

Introduction.

Early notification of an EGM was given at the February Annual General Meeting, when a short paper was presented. The paper covered a range of issues which impact on the Club. The aim was to make members aware of the need to ***look to the future*** and consider ways of protecting the Club against a number of potential threats to the long-term financial solvency of the Club, and as a diverse community or social enterprise of boating enthusiast, held together by common ideals.

The collective governance of the Club is at the core of maintaining stability and also enabling progress. The governance of the Club stems from how it is constituted (the management structure of elected Officers and members) and the operation of the Clubs Rules and Bye-Laws i.e. the behaviour and commitment of all members towards these common objectives. From time to time the Rules which govern the Club need to be updated to reflect changing circumstances.

The business of this EGM is part of that ongoing process. It is an of acknowledging change, taking the opportunity to share information across a range of matters which affect the Club and agreeing a way forward with the best interests of the Club at heart.

The Rule changes which are outlined below and which we hope will be vigorously debated and voted on at the EGM, are aimed at protecting the traditional culture of the Club as a close community of likeminded and mutually supportive members and in turn its material resources and facilities from which we all benefit greatly.

At the outset, it is important to bear in mind that NO final decisions have made, these are simply ideas to be considered, with an opportunity for

members to contribute their own thoughts. The outcomes of the meeting will give a clear steer to the Clubs management team, which will act on the consensus of members views.

Core Objectives for the EGM; -

1. To put forward a range of proposals for discussion, which aim to better prepare the Club against faltering membership numbers and a shift in active membership participation (willingness or availability), to undertake tasks which maintain the Clubs facilities and operational business.
2. Following discussion of the proposals put forward, to vote on a series of specific Rule changes which will be proposed from the Chair.

Background remarks – supporting evidence behind the proposed Rule changes.

1 A perceived change / shift in the culture and ethos of the Club / attitude of some members.

The Club was founded on the principles of ***mutual support and social engagement i.e. as a self-help Club***, with members actively and extensively, participating in the Club across a range of activities which included maintaining and developing the Clubs facilities as well as supporting *sporting events* such as yacht racing or fishing competitions further supported through the occasional social gatherings.

Anecdotal / empirical evidence indicates that the current membership is less engaged or willing to actively contribute to the operations of the Club. Arguably, some members are less interested in the founding principles of the Club and their attendant obligations as a member, than for example, securing access to a low-cost mooring and storage facilities. For many, ECSC is simply a ***walk-through facility***, motivated by low cost and convenience, with little thought given to who does the work to keep it going as an entity. Indeed, on occasions there is an expectation that they are entitled to receive a ***range of services***, as well as access to resources and facilities for the price of their membership subscription(s). There is from time to time a disregard for the fact that the Club does not employ anyone to maintain the yard facilities or undertake the extensive amount of administrative work necessary to

maintain the Club as an **accountable entity, and to preserve and improve on its facilities and resources.**

Put simply, ECSC has become more of a *boat yard business* than a Club with *social engagement* and *personal responsibility* at its core.

2 However – times have changed People have busy lives and competing demands on their time.

It is accepted, that the points made above are in the context of **people and families being under pressure with busy personal lives, work related pressures and more demanding, complicated and diverse family lives**, than was perhaps the case a few years ago. Therefore, it may be unrealistic if not unreasonable, to expect more of people than they currently contribute? So, the question becomes - How do we strike a balance – i.e. set reasonable expectations of members contribution and the need to offset what can't be done by volunteers through for example employing help.

3 Demographic changes / shift.

ECSC in common with all other local Clubs has an ageing membership demographic – i.e. fewer younger people are joining and engaging in Club life. With fewer younger able bodied young members available and who are less able to commit themselves to take on work within the Club, a greater burden of work falls to those with more time available to them, i.e. the retired community of the ECSC membership. This state of affairs is understood, accepted and even enjoyed as it provides a social focus for those retired members as well as a sense of purpose.

However, the total burden of work is at times too much and too demanding for it to be a reasonable solution to meeting the Clubs needs. Help is needed, which means either more help from other members or from time to time a need to buy-in services in order to get important jobs done in a timely way. The latter has always happened and is not something new, however perhaps the need for outside help is increasing and with it an increased burden of cost to the Club.

4 Club Membership.

As implied above, fewer people in general are interested in joining Clubs, or joining with a view to a long-term commitment. ECSC in common with many sailing clubs, both locally and nationally, is experiencing falling membership numbers and a change in the social structure / demographic. In many respects, the ECSC of 2018 is a far cry from ECSC of the 1960s and 70s. and as such, there is a need to modernise our expectations of members and reflect this in the Rules.

What we provide and do as a Club also needs to be looked at to make membership an attractive and valued proposition in a competitive environment for members.

5 Increasing Complexity.

This applies across a range of areas within the Club and is another area of concern which exerts a pressure for change, in order to, ***keep things safe, and legally compliant as well as facilitating the cohesion of the Club as a community.***

Simple examples would include, the operation of machinery in the yard or the annual maintenance of pontoons and moorings. At one level these tasks mean more work for individuals but also the need for supervision, training and control, in order to meet essential Health and Safety legislation and our Public liability Insurance Requirements and so on. Similarly, the ageing pontoon and small craft berthing arrangements are another area where management complexity has increased. It is worth bearing in mind that the majority of the small craft berthed on the pontoon rarely receive their owner's attention or leave their berths. The net result is that boats are at risk of becoming unsafe or unseaworthy as a result of long term neglect, and the pontoons also now require extensive refurbishment and in due course replacement, this all needs to be addressed and planned for and represents increased liabilities for the Club. Such work is made more troublesome and difficult as a result of boat owners / members lack of engagement, with as a result, the burden of work falling on a small number of volunteers. In addition, we have a greater burden of general administration than in the past, e.g. the need to actively manage the allocation of Club moorings and storage, access to yard facilities, dealing with contracts, insurance provision and managing the Clubs finances etc.

6 Unreliable members.

In this regard we annually experience a range of issues, (all hidden from the general membership), which from the point of view and practical experience of the Clubs Officers, are time consuming and demanding to manage and resolve. Examples include; -

- **Non-payment** of membership renewals subscriptions and storage charges on or before the due date.
- **Dealing with abandoned property and boats.**

By way of example - Every year a number of members flout the current Rules regarding the timely payment of dues on the grounds that there is

some *ambiguity* in the Current Rules and also no meaningful sanctions to encourage reasonable compliance with the Rules as they are intended. The General Committee therefore wish to clarify the cut-off dates and sanctions in the Rules regarding payment cut-off dates and the sanctions which will apply for non-compliance. This behaviour on the part of some members generates unnecessary administrative work, i.e. chasing debts, as well as stress and frustration for the Clubs elected Officers who manage the Club. Such conduct is in effect, an insult to the rest of the membership who pay on time at the first request. Finally, there is an *attitude of expectation* e.g. *someone else will pump my boat out; someone else will sort my mooring lines out; someone else will sort the cradle for my haul out; someone else will clear my rubbish and abandoned kit out of the Club*. These kinds of behaviours i.e. members not taking personal responsibility, is at times very unreasonable and shows a lack of community spirit as a member of a self-help Club where incidentally, volunteer help is on hand when asked for in a reasonable way.

Some positives to conclude.

In contrast to much of the above (the source of problems), the Centenary Room has encouraged members to socialise and provides a comfortable retreat when working in the yard or after sailing or fishing. The planned social events that have been held in the room have been well attended and prompted calls for more. The Club has invested in cradles, a tractor, winch gear etc. all to maintain the boat yard side of our facilities and we are currently finishing off the redevelopment of the Centre Store to provide a new Bosuns Store, kitchen and dry storage loft. The racing, fishing and cruising events have all been well supported by an enthusiastic core of members.

These financial investments in the Clubs facilities and resources, are matched by the investment of personal effort by a core of available and active members, collectively this has done much to stave off *decline*.

Conclusions

Complacency is a risk to the future stability and long-term existence of this unique Club. To sustain the Club into the future and to protect its resources, which in turn facilitate convenient low-cost boating, what we need is a more active and involved total membership, characterised by people who; -

- visit the Club regularly.
- give a little in return for what they take.
- are prepared to help and support others.
- will take responsibility for various aspects of the Clubs needs and business.
- will from time to time undertake practical tasks to maintain the Clubs facilities.
- will look after and use their boats.
- will join in and support social gatherings as well as sporting / boating events.

In summary - ***play by the Rules of the Club.***

Proposed Rule Changes (summarised and not prioritised in list order): -

1. The introduction of a probationary period of 1 year, for all new members joining after October 2018.

During the probationary period the new member will be expected to actively participate in the workings of the Club e.g. undertake Club Duties and participate in occasional social events i.e. demonstrate compliance with the Club Rules and Bye-Laws.

Compliance will allow progression to full membership status.

2. A Restrictions on full membership privileges during the Probationary Year, specifically, NO allocation of Club Mooring until Full Membership Status has been conferred.

3. Clarification of Full Membership status and associated responsibilities in relation to the following categories of membership; -

- a) Joint Membership
- b) Family Membership

4. The exclusion / expulsion date, of members who fail to renew their membership on or before the 1st of January i.e. without prior notice to the General Committee and the agreement of the General Committee.

5. A variation in the rules relating to the 10 hours of work on behalf of the Club and the payment of the £75-00 levy.

Either – a) All Full members (with yard storage and / or a Club mooring), must complete the 10 hours work obligation before October 31st. i.e. in advance of membership renewal notices being posted at the beginning of November. If in default a **fine** of £75-00 will be payable (i.e. a change

in wording from levy to fine in this context). The fine will be payable in advance of and separately to membership renewal. Should the member fail to pay their fine, membership will not be renewed. Should the member default 2 years running, automatic expulsion from the Club will take place.

or b) An option to prospectively seek exemption from the 10 hours of work obligation and pay a **levy** of £75-00 at the beginning of the membership year together with the membership subscription.

6. **Payment for storage and berths must be undertaken in a timely way, failure to do so will result in a surcharge of 10% / 20% (% to be agreed).** The total sum payable must be settled with 1 month of the date on the final invoice (sequence of due dates to be corrected and specified within the rules). Failure to comply will result in a withdrawal of storage and mooring facilities, the General Committee will also consider expulsion from the Club on the grounds that Rules have NOT be complied with. N.B. All such decisions will be voted on in a secret ballot by the members of the General Committee – the unanimous decision will be supported by all. Prior to any such vote, the member in question will be invited to offer an explanation / present any extenuating circumstances to the Committee in person.

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