

Letter sent to CRB Committee Members on 7th April 2021

7 April 2021

A Personal Statement from certain Members of the Executive Committee

Dear CRB Committee Members,

We are writing to you directly concerning this evening's Executive Committee (EC) Meeting following the conclusion of which the ability to appoint new EC Members will fall to Peter Cook as the sole remaining EC member subsequent to our resignations. We have taken this course of action and resigned cognisant of your views as expressed at the meeting held on 27 March and in order not to threaten the Club's future by conducting a dialogue involving members which we believe does not currently or directly impact the Club's central role of serving its members needs.

We stand by the opinions we have expressed, including the requirement for confidentiality and the invalidity of the meetings, but nevertheless the past needs to be put behind us and we wish the Club well. It has been frustrating and demoralising, to say the least, being unable to share with you the facts about the HR dispute which was the genesis of this process which has concluded with our resignations. That process is, of course, ongoing and may ultimately drag on to an Employment Tribunal. Given one of the three EC members who resigned in February recently took his last employer to an Employment Tribunal, and entered into a confidential settlement immediately prior to the Tribunal hearing, we were somewhat surprised when he appeared to question the need for confidentiality in the whole HR process.

The three EC members who resigned in February and Peter Cook all had full access to all the same information as the rest of the EC prior to the meeting of 3 February, the Minutes of which are on the Club's web site. That they made their decision as to how to vote in good faith we do not doubt. We do however question how, when furnished with the full facts and having made a judgement and resigned, they could subsequently make a statement in their name relating to the incidents in question which was incomplete and misleading by omission, how they could breach confidentiality and how they could align themselves to a statement by Ineke Sherman which they knew was also materially inaccurate or incomplete. Nevertheless we can confirm that Ineke Sherman's HR Appeal has been completed and issued to her.

There has also been much discussion of a document referred to as a Roadmap. The General Manager was instructed to undertake this task in 2020 on a strictly confidential basis by the then Chairman, and circulation was withheld pending further development/drafting. During 2020 it was recorded in the EC Minutes, signed off by all Directors, that the General Manager was to prepare a Business Plan. There were specific recommendations in the Roadmap which did not include a reduction in staff numbers.

Serious allegations were recently made against the General Manager which have been considered by an Independent Review and dismissed. The implications arising from the unwarranted complaint itself will be something for the new EC to address.

At the EC Meeting in January 2021, prior to the resignation of three EC members, the possible adverse financial implications for the Club arising from the overall HR situation, including views expressed publicly by CRB Committee Members, were outlined by the Treasurer to the EC.

To the extent that reliance was placed on the statements referred to above in determining your CRB's course of action it is, at one level, wholly understandable given their provenance. When the facts emerge we think you could well be disappointed, and those CRBs which did not wish to avail themselves of the opportunity to hear the full story might regret that decision. Nevertheless, we hand over the reins to Peter Cook and leave the Club in good order. Specifically we have delivered to Peter the collated information referred to below in order that he can fully and properly brief the incoming EC members as to the current situation. With the increased interaction between CRBs and directors envisaged by some of the incoming EC members you may wish to refer to this list in seeking their views at an early meeting.

In our combined 171 years of membership of the Club we have served in many roles within the Club and have a concern for its future largely unconnected with the concerns driving recent events. That concern relates to three specific areas:-

1. The membership profile and how to engage with and attract new members.

2. The financial risk profile to the Club arising from the Club's facilitation of Competition, an activity incidentally which we believe the vast majority of members do not participate in and in which they take little interest.
3. The challenge arising out of the structure of the Club which has, to our mind, yet again proven to be inappropriate when weighed against the fact that the Club is a Company and has to be run and managed as such.

The aspirations of the incoming EC members and their ideas about the way forward, their Agenda, are laudable and worthy of consideration by all. Nevertheless, their aspirations and ideas seem to be largely about a better way of running a Club not about a better way of running a Company and the present situation, to the extent it is founded on substantive points, has arisen out of the fact the Club is nevertheless a Company with all the duties and responsibilities that entails at EC and management levels to all counterparties, not just members. What we believe is needed is the appropriate balance between the rights of the members, the role of Council and its composition, the authority vested in, and accountability of, the EC and finally the empowering of the General Manager (who should possibly be titled Chief Executive) to manage.

We recognise that these issues are not easily addressed but nevertheless they all threaten the future of our Club and should not be ignored.

This recent episode illustrates this problem well in respect of the Club / Company conflict and, to be effective, we believe any review of governance has to go to the structure of the Club because it is only within that structure effective change can be introduced.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Williams – a Club member for 20 years
Richard Colston – a Club member for 51 years
Dave Saunders – a Club member for 49 years
George Wilder – a Club member for 43 years
Paul Money – a Club member for 8 years

Collated information which Peter Cook, as the sole remaining Director, may wish to pass to intending Directors on or prior to their appointment

HR Situation

Full time line; Chairman's Answers to questions; Original Version; Solicitor's redacted version plus advice; Investigation and Disciplinary. proceedings; Appeal Meeting I Sherman; Appeal Meeting Transcript I Sherman; Complaint concerning A Sloman and investigation by HR Department; Relevant letters to employees concerned

Staff

Relevant correspondence with staff

Financial

Current position and pending decisions

Competition

Current position and pending decisions