

FENLAND AERO CLUB Committee

Fenland Airfield, Jekils Bank, Holbeach St Johns Spalding, PE12 8RQ

EGCL/Tel: 01406 540330/Email: secretary@fenlandairfield.co.uk

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FENLAND AERO CLUB COMMITTEE

Thursday 23rd February 2023 18.00

Present:	Braden Connolly (BC), David Petters (DP), Steve Brown (SB), Colin Albone (CA), Dave Capon (DC), Kerry Goundry, Robin Hoile (RH),
Remote:	Oliver Wheeldon (OW), Ziggy Krasa (ZK), Graham Kiddy (GK)
Others in attendance:	Michelle Parrett (MP), minute taker (remote) Joey Connolly (part) (JC)

AGENDA OF THE SAFETY MEETING OF THE FENLAND AERO CLUB THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY 2023

1) Shooting party on the runway

SB confirmed nothing to report since the last meeting.

GH stated there was nothing further to report on the shooting party, the shooting season is now closed and doesn't resume until October. To clarify for the minutes there was no confusion about the location of the shooters, they were most definitely located on the runway.

AGENDA OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE FENLAND AERO CLUB THURSDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2023

2) Apologies

Jeff Helm
Phil Parsons
Rynardt Spies

3) Minutes of previous meeting

SB raised concerns about the minutes reporting conflicting reports as to the location of the shooting party. It has been confirmed that there is no confusion now as to the location of the party, they were on the runway. However, the minutes were a true reflection of the conversation that were held during the meeting.

Minutes signed off as a true and accurate record.

4) Matters arising

a) Aerobatics questionnaire

DP confirmed end results of that survey have not yet been seen. CA asked what the benefits of having the aerobatics display were. DP confirmed traditionally it brings people into watch, meaning they spend money in the café, the display teams would also purchase fuel. SB pointed out they probably buy less fuel than visitors who probably wouldn't fly in because of the aerobatics being on. DP pointed out that this was the point of survey. DP advised the last time he had looked at the survey there was a positive trend for more aerobatics. SB asked if Committee members would receive copies of the survey, and DP advised JH would share this. BC suggested that conversations around aerobatics do not take place until the results of the survey are in. It was agreed this would be deferred until JH was present.

b) Fire Truck

BC confirmed he had spoken to the local garage; they could do the work on it but are unable to get it up on their ramps. KG had passed details of a different garage to BC who after a little toing and froing have agreed to do the work. They are identifying the chassis plate and engine from photographs to ensure the right parts are available.

c) Gas Certification for kitchen bottles

DP advised JH was unsure if the certification for the kitchen gas bottles had been completed, ZK confirmed this had yet to be done, although the toilet issued had been fixed, but hoped it would be completed very soon.

DP confirmed events timetable will be published soon to get dates for fly ins and reported positive news that fuel prices were dropping and should be reduced by 19 pence per litre.

d) Restaurant Chairs

New chairs have been purchased at half the cost of the budget allowed for them.

5) Club administration (Secretary)

a) New Members

DP confirmed JH had advised there were new members and would send a list, but this had not been done, so DP had no further details. SB requested a list of all members; DP would pass this request over to JH. **Action: JH to send full list of members to SB.**

b) Work schedule items

Nothing to report.

6) Finance (Treasurer)

BC advised that at the last meeting he had updated the Committee on the first month there had been a surplus. This month BC reported a loss of £3880, however this was a month where airfield rent is due, this amounts to £12,500 therefore if the club are only losing on average £4000 a month in a month where rent is paid that is a positive trend and on balance the club should be breaking even, especially as the airfield will start to get busier. BC noted it did feel like a corner has been turned. Going forward there should be more landing fees and more fuel purchased.

DP queried what had brought the number up. BC said in January landing fees remained low, Hangarage was £8,500, sales of gas were around £4000, and gas was not purchased during this period. BC believed the Hangarage was apportioned throughout the months, rent comes in every three months. The accountant spreads the hangar payments throughout the months, this is not done with the rent. DP advised it would be nice to know if the Hangarage income covered the rent or made a profit. BC would double check. **Action: BC to check Hangarage income and whether this covered rent/made a profit.**

BC noted the cost of heat, light and power were all running high, as is airfield maintenance but there is nothing to comment on that has not been spoken about before.

7) Fuel (Fuel Manager)

As previously noted, fuel prices are decreasing. JH put in an order a couple of weeks ago, prices were down significantly.

a) Standing water in Jet A1 hut

SB had raised this as a concern, the water was coming from the hose and amounted to a fair bit of standing water. Not sure if this is affected by weather conditions, but not a regular occurrence, JH sorted on the last occasion.

DP questioned about the trade Jet A1 is bringing in. SB estimated 2000 litres a month, DP referred to the conversations at the previous meeting where it would be nice for this to be increased. Look again at the QR code or honesty box to see if this could be a self-serving area.

BC as an aside, and with an apology if not reported, stated the IER crew advised that there was a discrepancy between the log and the pump reading, with 120 litres missing that hasn't been accounted for. BC is unaware if this has been accounted for subsequently. SB queried if it was taken for the heating, BC stated he asked for them to check this and it does not look to be the case. There is a need to check if some has been sold and not recorded, or alternatively it could have been paid for, but not entered into the log, however, as things stand 120 litres of Jet 1 has gone missing. DP queried if it was easy to access, BC confirmed there is a key box, so could be taken if known about. BC would take an action to sort out the key box and appropriate action. **Action: BC to sort Jet A1 key box.**

DP raised that there remained a need to think about testing requirements.

8) Safety matters

SB would like to thank DC and friends for concreting the floor in the fuel shed, it is much safer now. DC would like to also thank Roger Balcomb for all his assistance, he assisted with the concrete, and helped with the signs. DC confirms all signage now in place.

Discussion then moved to the requirement for a Safeguarding Policy, which came out of a complaint that BC had made, due to having no other avenue to raise a Safeguarding issue. Discussion was split into two sections, firstly the Safeguarding policy, then the Committee went onto discuss BC's complaint.

a) Safeguarding Policy

DP had spent time looking at the legislation around Safeguarding, and it is legislation that a club with minors and/or vulnerable people are required to have a safeguarding policy. DP advised there were many examples of such policies, but ultimately the club have a responsibility to Safeguard minors and vulnerable people on club premises. Action on this was required swiftly. As a minimum the club also needed a Safeguarding Officer to ensure the policy is adhered to and look after any issues/complaints that relate to Safeguarding and decide whether it was something for the club to take forward, whether it needed to be referred to the police or whether it is something that is not in the club's jurisdiction. DP confirmed he was happy to find an appropriate policy and bring it to the next meeting, and KG stated she had an interest in this area and would be happy to take on the Safeguarding role, albeit advised she had no previous experience but would be happy to be trained in it. BC who had experience in this area in further education settings outlined how Safeguarding worked, and although what was required here, was not as in depth, it was more onerous than just being an administration obligation.

SB queried the scope and the necessity for the Safeguarding policy, highlighting whether all public places have the same policy in place. BC felt there was an importance here to show that the Committee were committed to always keep all members of the club safe. DC queried how having a policy would make any difference. BC advised it would demonstrate that any concerns raised would be taken seriously and the club would take the best action they could, it could also potentially help identify potential issues happening within the club.

SB felt that this should be common sense, but BC pointed out that unfortunately this was not true for everyone. DP felt there needed to be a system which allowed a discreet channel for members to raise concerns, and a structure laid out helping the club to deal with those issues. DP also pointed out that in any event it is government legislation under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. Discussion as to whether that covered just schools and charities, and the club did not fall within these groups. BC pointed out that it is a public place. DP pointed out there were young people working in the restaurant in the flying school and generally around and it was appropriate to have some form of guidance/policy/person in place to ensure no harm came to these.

Discussion then moved to referencing BC's complaint (although not the complaint itself). The only avenue BC had open to him in relation to his concerns was a complaint, which was not really the appropriate avenue, it was much more a Safeguarding concern. This for BC made it a very frustrating process. Although the incident that occurred was probably not sinister, it did need recording and it was pointed out that in these scenarios, small signals could add up to a bigger picture. BC then chose to deal with the incident himself, however wanted it known, he did not want the complaint struck out, and wanted it raised and recorded as a concern. If the concern could have gone through a Safeguarding officer, then the process would have been faster, streamlined and more appropriate.

DP stated having a process would also protect the club. With the current policy the complaint raised, should by the club process, go out to the Committee members, and there was no way really of desensitising it, redacting names etc. In this situation it was not appropriate to be handled in that manner but there was no other avenue.

SB and DC raised concerns about how DP had handled the situation and felt that the Committee had been put in a position where it demonstrated they were not trustworthy. DC felt that all DP had to do was to inform the Committee he had received a complaint, state it involved a minor, and was of a personal nature involving a member of the club, names did not have to be included, but the Committee should have been asked whether DP could be given the authority to deal with it or assign someone to deal with it. SB and DC both felt that this would have avoided the friction that had been caused by the way DP had communicated with them. DC believes there was no transparency, certain members of the Committee felt it was being withheld, contrary to the rules.

DP pointed out neither he, nor JH are experienced in this area, and have no Safeguarding experience. DP advised that they, rightly or wrongly, dealt with it in the best way they thought possible, and accepted that aspects probably were miscommunicated. However, DC felt that the major issue here within the Committee was perception and that transparency is key to everything. DP voiced his disappointed at the lack of trust shown by certain members in relation to the issue. BC felt that even though he had subsequently provided further details in relation to the issue, DP still not receive the support from the Committee. SB and DC believed by that point it was too late, however BC advised where Safeguarding was concerned it was never too late to do the right thing. DP again reiterated this is why a Safeguarding policy is required and would have alleviated this situation.

DP again apologised for any miscommunication on his part but was very disappointed in the lack of trust around this issue, which ultimately resulted in the resignation of two members of the Committee, who have since rescinded these, but this is not a position we should have been in. SB and DC again reiterated they were concerned that the policies in place were not being followed and felt that DP had appeared to have been making decisions on behalf of the Committee without consulting the Committee. SB felt that if the initial email sent by DP had requested permission from the Committee to deal with the issue, rather than stating, he was dealing with the issue, no one would have objected. KG pointed out that DP has no experience of dealing with this type of situation and felt that even if DP had provided basic information with no details, the Committee would still have wanted further information.

BC reiterates that as there was no Safeguarding policy in place, DP tried to deal with the situation in the best way possible but pointed out to the Committee his emphatic disappointment that throughout this discussion, the concern has been over the wording and approach of DP, rather than showing any form of concern for BC's daughter or the concerns raised. SB and DC felt it was not their business. DC advised he was not ignorant of the position but just don't feel as a Committee they had been given an opportunity to deal with it.

OW pointed out that there is need to agree that certain Committee members do not agree on the way this matter was handled, and maybe have the rules modified so that it does not happen again, and a line is drawn under it.

DP offers apologies for the language used but stands by the action he had taken, felt it was the only way to deal with it at the time, and highlighted the need for why a Safeguarding policy is required. DP confirmed he would deal with another issue in the same way.

b) BC's complaint

BC exits the meeting. DP confirms that ultimately BC has dealt with the issue raised in his complaint and a line has been drawn in the sand. It was a misunderstanding and a very poor joke made, with no malice intended. If a Safeguarding policy had been in place, then the matter would have gone no further.

SB raised concerns that as BC had been the complainant, DP had chosen to deal with it without involving the rest of the Committee, GK, who also has connections with BC was involved as safety officer, it shows a lack of impartiality. DP confirmed no decisions had been made, he had attempted to apply some Safeguarding practice. If it had been deemed a club matter, then it would have been brought before the Committee to deal with. DP acknowledged that the whole situation could have been handled better, however stands by what was done, and BC dealing with it draws a line under the situation. The complaint is officially closed.

Actions:

DP will implement a Safeguarding Policy

KG will step forward as Safeguarding Officer with appropriate training.

BC re-joins the meeting.

Discussion around how actions would now be agreed as a Committee going forward, during which DC left the meeting. It was agreed formal proposals would be made and seconded, and then a vote on all actions agreed. The above actions were agreed and voted on by the Committee.

9) Airfield general (Airside/non airside Manager)

ZK advised the Health and Safety Inspection remains outstanding.

CA stated that on the gate by the flying school there used to be a sign which said no entry. Since the new fence had been erected the sign had been removed. CA had raised this more than once, but requested a sign be erected to stop people from entering the active airfield and stop unauthorised access. **Action: ZK to install sign.**

a) A/G ongoing training

BC advised that it had been agreed by the Committee that Fenland Aeroclub was the licence holder and the Committee had delegated the approval of ROCC holders to the CFI. The ROCC Exam demonstrates competence in the use of Air to Ground Radio , which means ROCC holders can use the radio to the correct standard. At each station every ROCC holder needs to be signed off to say they are familiar with the procedures at that station. This was delegated to Steve to sign off when he was comfortable that all ROCC holders were competent to operate the radio at this station. ROCC holders have asked to go into the tower and spend time up there with other competent signed off operators and to get a feeling for how things work. BC raised a couple of issues, it is regrettable that ROCC holders have not been made to feel as welcome as they should be, any member should be welcome, but even ROCC holders were not made welcome when they went up to learn and observe. Secondly, Simon Cook feels that he is the designated licence holder because he is the only Director of Fenland Aeroclub Licensing Limited, which he believed holds the licence for the airfield. BC has not seen the licence but believes it is in the name of Fenland Aeroclub which comes to this Committee to have the power to delegate to Steve Brown, not the Director of the Limited Company. Simon and Jerry who put the rotas together have sent an email out to ROCC holders saying in order to be signed off it will be at least a six-month process, there is only a limited number of operators available to spend time with the new operators. BC feels that this is excessive, many already have experience. If the Committee continues to delegate the licence approval to Steve Brown, then it may cause issues and a point of tension. This decision needs to be revisited. BC feels it is still right to delegate to Steve as he would be the most competent person in that area at the airfield, however it is how the Committee deals with those in the tower who are choosing the process of how to sign people off, rather than the CFI, that must be agreed.

SB feels a tactful letter from the Chairman on behalf of the Committee might be the best approach. DP believes that at the previous meeting when it was discussed, with the accountable manager, it was felt that CFI was the natural choice, and the Committee passed that point, that the previously agreed approach should continue. DP felt the letter issued was very restrictive. DP felt writing a letter thanking them for their efforts in running the tower and the rotas and asking for their input and help going forward would be the best way forward. DP will also point out that it was voted on in accordance with the club rules that the CFI was the appropriate authority to sign licences. BC there is a need to reemphasise that it is the Aeroclub not Aeroclub Ltd that holds the licences.

OW raised an observation, stating if you link being a member of the Committee with being a Director does that create an obligation, Committee members may step down, whereas a Limited Company needs continuity, would involve Companies House etc. OW highlights the need to think through ramifications, even if it seems to make sense.

BC proposes each year the Committee approves the Directors of the Fenland Aeroclub Licensing Limited. DP stated the discussion was that the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer would be the Directors as they were the Officers of the club. DP cannot remember why this was not followed through. OW advised he was just pointing out there may not be benefit, just an administrative burden, but might be the right thing to do, but there is no gain. DP requested that this is brought back next month and give consideration as to what is best done.

OW advises deferring, read the articles of incorporation, and come back with suggestions rather than voting on something at this stage.

Action: Letter to ATC reaffirming Committee position with the CFI and training required. DP

SB would like to thank DC and GK for spraying the weeds, they have done a fantastic job.

CA has been speaking to Lee, happy to rake and lay grass seed if the club were happy to pay for the grass seed. Committee happy to proceed with a £50 budget for grass seed.

Action: Committee members all vote in favour. CA to advance.

10) Accountable Manager

OW confirmed nothing to report. Shooting party already discussed.

The only issue that remains outstanding is that the CAA haven't been in touch since the submission of the document they requested. We have not addressed the issues with the runway taxi strips but OW will wait for this to be raised.

11) IER/RFFS (IER Manager)

Still no volunteers, still trying to get engagement. BC spoke to his contact who used to do fire service youth work but had no progress. CA would speak to the Duty Manager at Holbeach Fire Station and talk him through the situation. BC had displayed notes on IER, KG advised she had been approached by one person whom JH had communicated with. BC suggested getting some lettering on the side of the fire truck to try and increase engagement. Initiatives to bring volunteers for IER to be brought forward.

Action: CA to speak to duty manager at Holbeach re IER situation.

12) Hangars

PB confirmed one new aircraft in the old hangar, a flex wing, and that JH had confirmed payment and paperwork had been completed. Revalidation of the waiting list had also taken place as some had been on there since 2020/21, an email was sent three weeks ago, and so far, only two people had revalidated. One person coming down this weekend to look at potential space. One aircraft has been awaiting repair and PB and JH have agreed a pro rata

hangar rate, but once the repair has taken place, the space will be free. Discussions with OW about the movement of his aircraft. PB confirmed positive position, no down time or lost opportunity.

PB had also cleared weeds in the old hangars that had grown up and hoped to finish that this weekend. Further work required to stop regrowth. PB will check with GK the position with sprayer/weedkiller. GK confirmed he would take care of the outside and PB would continue to clear the inside.

Hangar waiting list is now empty, and PB was thinking about readvertising. BC felt it was probably in the club's benefit to have a waiting list, so worth advertising that although we don't have any space there is also currently no waiting list.

13) Events (Event Manager)

CA advised KG had a call from someone who is involved with the Kings Lynn Classic car cruising club who would like to come down with their cars, however the date is Easter Monday, and the club is officially shut. KG is happy to encourage this event and open for them, and wondered if the Committee would like this to go ahead. Apparently, this has taken place in previous years on John Wright's land though members were unaware. CA wondered if tower coverage could be given, agreed this was possible.

It was felt if they just wanted to meet and use the car park, restaurant etc this was fine, if they wanted the club to provide space for the cars, then the club would only do this at a charge of £5 per car as it was felt if the airside space was being used there should be a charge. There would need to be an FOD inspection following the event.

All voted in favour of this proposal.

a) Wings and Wheels/Family Fun Day Sunday 27th August

CA and KG are progressing this. Toilets to be hired in at a cost of £400/£500. Discussion around the provision of First Aid and whilst it was acknowledged that there would probably be enough first aid trained people, they would not provide the equivalent of a St Johns service. CA happy to apply for St Johns if the Committee felt it appropriate, CA is aware the cost is around £300.

BC queried at the last meeting it was agreed we didn't have the capacity and capability to do Wings and Wheels and we agreed on a Family fun day. CA idea is to have stalls, use some of the hangars for indoors stalls (outdoor £15/indoor £20). KG has sourced and negotiated with no up-front costs, a bouncy castle, inflatable slide, cup and saucer ride and face painting. CA the only condition is they must take enough money to cover their costs, if not the club pay the difference through gate money, any excess profit comes to the club. All were happy with this.

Rex is prepared to show some people around engines/props for the wings and wheels side. Other ideas discussed included, pleasure flights, raffle tickets, brass band from Holbeach, fly spot landing contest would all encourage more attendance. Raffle would be run, and donations requested.

KG has spoken to Mr Wright who has agreed to offer a field for parking, his only concern was the time of year for the event due to crops.

Discussion around entry fees. KG proposes free entry for children and a £5 fee per adult. Suggestion of giving local primary schools vouchers to help engagement with parents.

Volunteers will be required to help. Early advertising important.

BC feels like exposure is less than £1000 which BC is comfortable with. CA can proceed with bookings and send the club an invoice. CA queried if there is a way that things can be counted so that we know how much is made in each area. BC can use petty cash and card readers for contact payment on the gates, can also have a clicker on the gates. To identify what makes money, can charge slightly different fees for different events.

The proposal was made for CA and KG to continue with their plans for a whings and wheels event on the 27th August, with a limited financial liability of up to £1500. All voted in favour.

b) Air Racing

DP has been speaking with the Racing and Rally association. They would like to run the Kings Cup Air Race on the 19th and 20th August and have sent DP a draft contract for consideration. The proposal is that the club provides an airfield and there is one landing fee per aircraft for the weekend and would uplift a lot of fuel refuel. On the Saturday a practice slot is required between 12.00 and 13.00 where they practice the race circuit and how to join that, followed by a race on the Saturday between 3.15 and 4.45. On the Sunday there is a reserve day and a second race, with the reserve taking place between 10.15 to 11.45 and the last race between 13.45 and 15.15. There can be no other activity during those periods. DP advised they got a good following and could be good for publicity, it can be advertised as an air race, as they have an exception from the CAA allowing them to fly below 500 feet to any level we decide as a club. The club have a say in the route, and DP read out the proposed detailed route. OW requested, as accountable manager, to be kept in the loop in relation to the proposed route.

DP believed it would be an interesting event to trial. BC concurred but felt it was worthwhile speaking with other clubs who have hosted this event to see if there were any other impacts, it was also worth looking at what might be lost in terms of surplus.

SB raised concerns about the impacts on neighbours, but DP felt that this could be averted with proper engagement and advertising.

SB asked whether the flying school would be compensated for any hours where they were unable to fly, given weekends are their busiest time. DP did not think this was possible, BC

suggested that the Flying School advises the Committee of their profits over the same periods in 2022 and that the air racers could be asked if they were willing to offset those profits.

Action: DP to do some background work on previous events held and come back to the Committee. DP/JH to send Whats App the draft contract to members.

KG leaves meeting.

14) Fenland Flying School (Steve Brown)

SB presents the Committee with a written document, which is not an official complaint but something he wishes to share with members as an observation and bringing it to the attention of all Committee members. Please see addendum to minutes with full details. This is relation to the operation of G-SAPI at Fenland Airfield and BC reads verbatim from the document.

DP concurred with SB that we were no further forward, and Mr Sapiano continues to deny everything. BC correspondence to this date has been gentle, he has been invited in to talk to us so that we can understand his position. BC proposes that we write again saying that we have invited you to come and talk to us and discuss this mater, you haven't done so. We are inviting you one final time to come and talk to the Committee about the matter and how we can bring your operation within the rules or understand how it does fall within the rules. If he chooses not to engage, then we act on the basis of the information currently available to us.

DP stated when he was first contacted, we discussed the possibility of it running under the flying school with an agreement, SB doubted that would be an option because it used to run like that and was terminated because it wasn't generating enough income, but SB confirmed it was still a proposal that could work and could be tabled to him and was a fair solution. DP indicated if it was accepted the Committee would need to think of what sanction could be proposed.

DP agreed that BC's proposal of an initial letter with a final invite to speak to us is the way forward, but we need to decide a way forward if he doesn't engage. BC stated it would be an idea to include in the letter, if he doesn't want to talk to us and explain why it falls within the rules, the matter will be presented back to the Committee to determine the action that should be taken. The ultimate sanction may be to remove the aircraft from the airfield if its operation is in contravention of the rules.

All in favour of Braden's proposal of a letter.

Action: DP/BC to draft letter.

a) Formation training chit chat

Resolved, nothing to add.

15) Runways Restaurant

KG had left the meeting. Since the previous meeting the restaurant had been decorated with a very positive impact. The new chairs purchased had been half the budget allocated, and BC had been in contact with the manufacturer of the previous chairs, however, is not holding out huge hope for a satisfactory response/refund. BC confirmed he has however sold six of the chairs for £30 and hopes to sell more.

16) Questions from attendees

None.

17) AOB

None.

18) Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

Addendum 1:

To all committee members,
17/2/2023
Operation of G-SAPI at Fenland Airfield
It is five months now, since this was raised and very little appears to have changed. G-SAPI is registered to a limited company, 'The Biggleswade Flying Group Limited' (which itself is a misleading misnomer, as there is no 'group'). The only asset the company appears to own is the aircraft and that is operating at Fenland. The only shareholder and owner of the company is Angelo Sapiano (as per the Companies House website). Consequently, it is fair to say, that he is operating a business from the airfield. Rule 6.18 states that any business operating at the airfield must have a licence/agreement from the committee to do so. Furthermore, Mr. Sapiano is not the only pilot operating G-SAPI, as others do so, on a regular basis. As none of these other pilots are owners or part owners of either the aircraft or the 'company' to which the aircraft is registered, they are, by definition, hirers, (there being, in law, no such thing as

'non-equity shareholders'!) As you know the FAC has endowed the Fenland Flying School sole hiring rights at Fenland.

At FFS, our concerns are two-fold:

Firstly, by allowing a limited company to operate a business at Fenland without complying with rule

6.18 the committee appears to condone this activity and is in danger of breaching the rules.

Secondly, allowing Mr. Sapiano to continue to hire out his aircraft, the committee appears to be in

breach of the FFS licence/agreement.

Regards,

Steve Brown