HARLOW (BLACKWATER) SAILING CLUB

MINUTES FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 30th November 2025.

John Wilmott (standing in as Commodore) called the club's Annual General Meeting to order at 12.10pm and welcomed those members present.

PRESENT: 26 members with voting rights signed the attendance register

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
   Keith Martin, Marjie Islin, Lewis & Izi Bell, Keith Taft, Peter & Jenny Robinson, Vicki Riley, Terri & Richard Sharman, Ian & Teresa Henderson, Ron & Laura Suffield, John Hockley, Andy Lager.

2. **Minutes of 2024 AGM (held on 24.11.2024)**
   These were agreed to be a true record.
   Proposer: Mark Batt Seconder: Neil Clark Carried unanimously.

3. **Annual report of the committee.**
   John Wilmott gave the committee report.

   John thanked members for coming to their AGM and asked for a moment's reflection in memory of David Islin and Ernie Dennington; two very long-standing Club members who passed this year.

   Committee Changes: *We have had resignations from the Commodore, Hospitality Secretary and Sailing Secretary. In the latter case, Vicki continues to offer support to dinghy racing.*

   Club Health and Safety: *We have introduced temporary membership for guests who participate in water sports. This ensures that visitors are aware of their responsibilities regarding medical fitness and accident liability (the same as all members).*

   Club Equipment: *The Club has bought two new double-handed kayaks. The old Club Laser dinghies were replaced with two newer boats thanks to a donation of one from Bob Swanston and another sold at a very advantageous price to us by Dave Connor.*

   Club Improvements: *New veranda benches and side tables have been provided.*

   Ladies and gents changing rooms in the Clubhouse are in the process of renovation, with new cupboards below the sinks.

   There has been a reorganisation of storage, with member's kayaks relocated from the container to under the clubhouse (therefore closer to the jetty) and the container used to store mowers and other equipment. Electricity has been installed in the container and ventilation improved. A separate storage area for petrol next to the container has also been installed.

   On the water: *We continue to have successful joint dinghy racing with our neighbours at Maylandsea Bay. The Icicle race last Christmas was very successful, with 24 dinghies racing including 9 visitors from 5 different clubs. The Laser Open in September was also successful, with 18 boats including 12 visitors.*

   The committee is keen for our safety boats to be used more, not just for the dinghy racing, and they were available for Saturday 'Have a Go' sessions throughout the year.

   It has been a challenge at times to find members to crew the safety boats and we are very grateful to Peter, Chris and Elspeth for doing more than their fair share of duties. We will be looking at recruiting more volunteer members to cox and crew safety boats and there is

a training session programmed in March next year, with further training sessions to be organised as required.

The kayaks continue to be very popular and we have purchased two new double-handed kayaks.

The cruiser fleet has been very active and in response to feedback from novice cruiser members, to provide more support we will be holding mini-flotillas accompanied by a safety boat on the 'Have a Go' days next year. The aim is for novice cruiser members to sail their own boats around Osea (for example) with a cruiser 'expert' in the safety boat offering support and advice.

Club Publicity: *A successful Open Day was held with as many as 150 people attending. A celebration of the Club's 70th Anniversary with a display of our heritage was very well received and the committee would like to thank Hazel and her team for their efforts putting the display together.*

Club membership: *We have had a successful year, and although we had 14 members resign these were replaced by the same number of memberships, with more family memberships.*

Membership fees received were £29,881, an increase of about £1,600 on the previous year

There are currently three Honorary memberships, but one will be retiring at the end of this year. Club rules allow for a maximum of six such memberships, as long as this figure doesn't exceed 5% of the total membership. There is a proposal at this AGM to offer both Marjie Islin and Sylvia Batt Honorary memberships in recognition for the all the years of help and dedication they have given to the club.

Club Week/Socials: *The season began with the Fitting Out Lunch in April, which was attended by 31 members and guests. Special appreciation goes to Marjie for providing an excellent meal.*

Club Week was blessed with sunshine, steady winds and a turnout across all ages. Racing took place jointly with Maylandsea Bay, supported by Peter and his team in the safety boat. Alongside the sailing, the club was full of activity, including windsurfing, kayaking, paddle boarding and enthusiastic crab-catching.

Children enjoyed a fun programme of activities thanks to Vicki, including raft building, painting and the mud race. Catering was a real team effort. Evening entertainment included a wine tasting quiz, bingo, a beetle drive and a music quiz. A huge thank you to everyone who helped before and throughout the week.

Both the Fitting Out Lunch and Club Week covered their costs and generated a small surplus, which will support future events.

The Laying Up Lunch was unfortunately cancelled due to recent circumstances.

Next year's Club Programme: *Work parties: We expect all fit and able members to attend at least one work party (or make a donation of £50, but we would rather have the help). There are 4 or 5 winter work parties and a monthly maintenance work party from March to October. The monthly ones have all been on a Friday but next year some will be held on a Saturday to give non-retired members the opportunity to attend.*

Club Week will be 10th to 14th August

Have A Go days will start earlier in the year and include mini-flotillas as already mentioned.

Dinghy Sailing: some cup races will be included in series races to reduce number of Saturday races, which have been poorly attended.

John Wilmott ended by thanking all the members of the committee for their help running the club and also the other members that give their time to help out, as without this the club would not survive.

4. Treasurer's Report.

Sandra Hockley (Treasurer) gave her report:

As at 31.10.25 the Clubs bank account stood at £27,998.17 in credit which is £6,392 up on last year.

Our finances have kept much the same as in the previous year. We held our annual successful Open Day/70th anniversary celebration in June, which again boosted our membership numbers. In addition to that, cruiser membership has increased.

Club Week was held in July and although a shorter affair than in previous years, we still managed to make a profit of £1,600. The two annual lunches we held were well attended and covered their costs.

Insurance costs have reduced as we have now changed insurance companies. Mooring costs were down as less repair work was required.

Again, Club equipment has been updated and we have purchased another Laser dinghy and 2 new double kayaks and trolleys. Also, we have two lovely new wooden benches and tables for the veranda and a new gazebo.

Our charitable donations this year have been to the RNLI £200, Essex Air Ambulance £150 and finally 'Become' £25, a charity supported by Edward Skinner, one of our members.

I would like to thank Anthony Gray for carrying out the independent review of the annual accounts.

This concludes my report.

There were no questions and the Club accounts were agreed.

Proposer: Steve Leeks Seconder: Barry Knights Carried unanimously.

5. Election of Auditor and Trustees.

Anthony Gray was proposed to continue as auditor for the club accounts.

Proposer: John Bowers Seconder: Martin Tarling Carried unanimously.

The current trustees Mark Batt, Mike Bryant and Barry Knights are willing to continue.

6. Agreement of subscriptions for 2026.

The committee have proposed that subscriptions for 2026 be increased by a below inflation average from 2025 in order to partially cover increases in Club running costs (rates, insurance, maintenance etc) and investment in Improvements.

Elsepth Missen asked about the offer to new members. Barry Knights explained that new members joining on or after Open Day pay a full year's fees which covers the remainder of the year and the following year.

John Bowers commented that it is important that the Club maintains an increase to keep up income and prevent large increases in future.

There were no further comments regarding the proposal.

Proposer: John Bowers Seconder: Julian Plummer Carried unanimously.

7. Proposed amendments to Club Rules

Section 2(8): Members Conduct

The committee has reviewed Club Rule 2.10 (Visitors), which allows members to introduce guests limited to 4 guests not more than 3 times per year. A temporary membership has now been introduced for visitors participating in water activities to ensure they are aware of their

responsibilities regarding medical fitness and accident liability. The committee is proposing that temporary membership for visitors is limited to 2 visits per year, after which they are expected to apply for membership. Visitors not participating in water activities do not require temporary membership (but should sign the visitors' book) and it is proposed there is no limit on the number of visits.

Rule 2.10: Proposed Amendment

10. Visitors.

    a. Members may introduce visitors who wish to participate in water sport activities to the Club as temporary members, subject to restrictions and regulations, which the Committee may make. Any visitor may register as a temporary member up to twice per year in total, after which they are expected to join as a member. The member introducing a guest or guests shall ensure that a temporary membership registration form has been completed for each visit and shall be responsible for the conduct of the guest(s).

    b. Members may introduce visitors who are not participating in water sport activities to the Club as guests without restriction on the number of visits. All such visitors should sign the visitors' book.

    c. Visitors taking part in Club Week, Open Day or any regatta or sailing competition authorised by the Committee shall, subject to restrictions and regulations that the Committee shall make, be admitted to the facilities of the Club for the period of the said function. The visitor must complete an event registration form before taking part in any activity.

Removal of Bylaw 6

6. Members may bring visitors up to three times per visitor per year. After this they are expected to apply for membership.

Mark Batt commented that there are members bringing visitors who use their own equipment and do not register for temporary membership. Tony Everitt stated it is important that any visitors taking to the water, whether using their own equipment or not, should register for temporary membership and it was suggested a reminder is sent out with membership renewals.

Elspeth Missen felt that there was a discrepancy between allowing visitors to attend Club Week (5 days) and then only allowing 2 visits per year at other times. She also felt that it was unwelcoming of the Club to expect visitors to complete temporary registration forms. Chris Missen felt that certain members give a lot to the Club and that there should be some 'give and take'.

Edward Skinner felt that visiting only twice a year was restrictive and suggested the limit should be 3 times a year. Steve Leeks commented that he takes visitors out on his cruiser more than twice a year but they are not interested in any other water activities or becoming members.

Following further discussion, John Bowers suggested a vote on amending the proposal to 3 times per year which was agreed:

Proposer: John Bowers	Seconder: Edward Skinner	Carried unanimously with one abstention.

The amended proposal with a limit of 3 visits per year was then voted on:

Proposer: Mark Batt	Seconder: Elspeth Missen	Carried unanimously with one abstention.

The proposal was therefore accepted by a two-thirds majority.

8. Proposal to elect Honorary Members – Marjie Islin and Sylvia Batt.

John Wilmott explained that the committee were proposing offering Honorary Membership to Marjie Islin and Sylvia Batt for their many years of support and dedication to the Club, in particular providing catering and organising social events.

Proposer: Barry Knights Seconder: Martin Tarling Carried unanimously

9. Election of Officers and Committee.

There were 9 members of the Committee who were willing to continue in their current roles for 2026. No other nominations had been received for any position on the Committee. Tony Everitt explained that there were several key roles on the Committee that remained vacant and this may impact on management of some areas of the Club. There was no further nominations forthcoming.

John Wilmott proposed that the Committee members willing to stand for next year could be approved together. There were no objections to this.

Position	Name	Nomination
Commodore	Vacancy	
Vice-Commodore	Vacancy	
Hon. Secretary	Tony Everitt	Willing to stand for a further term
Hon. Treasurer	Sandra Hockley	Willing to stand for a further term
Membership Sec.	Barry Knights	Willing to stand for a further term
Sailing Secretary	Vacancy	
Cruiser Secretary	Vacancy	
Watersports Sec.	Vacancy	
House Secretary	Neil Clark	Willing to stand for a further term
Publicity Officer	John Wilmott	Willing to stand for a further term
Social Secretary	Lydia Knights	Willing to stand for a further term
Hospitality Sec.	Vacancy	
Committee Member	Peter Hardie	Willing to stand for a further term
Committee Member	Marcus Wallace	Willing to stand for a further term
Committee Member	Bob Parsons	Willing to stand for a further term on committee.

Proposer: Julian Plummer Seconder: Steve Leeks Carried unanimously.

John Wilmott reminded the meeting that there was still a vacancy for Welfare Officer. Emma Allen volunteered to take on this role.

10. Any other business (AOB).

Proposal to support an outline proposal for Safety Boat launch and recovery unit (John Bowers)

John Bowers proposed that the Club consider the need for an appropriate mechanical means for launching and recovery of dinghies and cruisers including safety boats. He cited the lack of volunteers on some occasions to recover the safety boat, which results in less mobile or agile members assisting. If proposal to submit is agreed, John is willing to forward a fully costed and feasible proposal for consideration by the committee.

The ride-on lawn mower has been used before but it is not heavy or powerful enough and using the front tow bar has damaged the steering. Mark Batt suggested a garden tractor would provide a good, cost-effective solution for recovery of safety boats but would not be suitable for most cruisers. A tractor capable of recovering cruisers would be too heavy for the jetty. Lewis Bell has by e-mail pointed out similar concerns with recovering cruisers in addition to problems with storage, maintenance and driver training.

Proposer: John Bowers Seconder: John Hawker Carried unanimously

The proposal was therefore accepted by a two-thirds majority. Chris Missen suggested a working sub-group to look at options and this was agreed.

Proposed amendment to bylaw 9 on wearing of buoyancy aids (Elspeth Missen)

Existing Bylaw 9:

The wearing of buoyancy aids for all members is advisable when on the jetty or on the water.

Proposed Amendment to Bylaw 9:

The wearing of buoyancy aids for all members and visitors is advisable when on the jetty and mandatory when on the water, except for experienced windsurfers wearing a harness or for open water swimming.

Notes: The rationale for excepting windsurfers is due to potential for restricted movement and risk of being trapped under the sail after a crash. This is accepted practice at water sports centres eg. Neilson.

It is already mandatory under bylaw 8 for children to wear buoyancy aids when on the jetty and when on the water (Bylaw 8).

Elspeth explained the background to this proposal and her concerns after witnessing some worrying situations that could have led to serious incidents. She commented that water safety should be at the forefront of the Club's priorities.

Lewis Bell had e-mailed that he felt mandatory wearing for adults was overkill as adults are able to make their own choices and are fully responsible for them.

Marcus Wallace pointed out that inflatable life jackets are not buoyancy aids and suggested that 'buoyancy aids and life jackets' would be a more accurate terminology.

Several members expressed concern regarding policing a mandatory requirement, which may be difficult to enforce except when using Club equipment.

Following further discussion, the proposal was voted on:

Proposer: Elspeth Missen Seconder: Chris Missen 18 for, 4 against and 4 abstentions.

The proposal was therefore accepted by a two-thirds majority.

John Wilmott concluded the meeting by showing the appreciation of the committee for the number of duties undertaken by Peter Hardie on the safety boat and Jackie Everitt in the galley.

John thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 1.20pm.