

GUILDFORD & DISTRICT GROUP of ADVANCED MOTORISTS

MINUTES OF THE 48th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 26th OCTOBER 2023 – 19:30

Held 'on line'

The Chairman, Gordon Farquharson, opened the meeting at 7:30pm and welcomed everyone to the 48th Annual General Meeting of the Guildford & District Group of Advanced Motorists. 13 Group Members and 1 Associate were present.

The meeting was advised to members in a newsletter posted on or around 15 September 2023 to all Members and Associates. All members have been given the opportunity to send notification of motions to be discussed at the AGM. None were received.

Gordon reminded those present that IAM RS HQ and the Charities Commission have raised no objection to Internet based AGMs. The meeting was not recorded.

Voting will take place on-line for the items noted in the agenda. Members unable to be present were given the opportunity to send their proxy vote to the Secretary. Associate Members are not permitted to vote. The Secretary had not received any proxy voting papers.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Received from 11 individual members, Gerry Raleigh, Julie Collins, Clive Collins, Martin Staniforth, Alan Philpott, Sandra Philpott, Graham Stanley, Michael Hughes, Michael Hopkins, Rex Ingram, Paul Burn.

MINUTES OF 47th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING in 2022

The minutes of the 47th AGM held 'on line' were made available in advance to those at this meeting.

No comments were received in relation to the accuracy of those minutes and there were no questions arising.

The committee proposes that the minutes of the 47th AGM be accepted as a true record. This was accepted by all those present.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello, good evening everyone. Welcome to the GAM 2023 AGM. This year has seen our activities settle down to a more normal regime with a slightly reduced (compared to pre-COVID), but steady stream of associates and continued support from our faithful committee and Observer volunteers. Our finances remain stable, enabling us to support our volunteers and members. Whilst we continue to deliver the IAM RoadSmart advanced driving course with some success (see Secretary's report), the world of GAM is not without its challenges.

I must bring some of these to your attention as it is very important to recognise that along with many voluntary organisations, our volunteer workforce is getting older and individual circumstances change, preventing them from continuing their support. This applies to both Committee and Observers. Likely new observers will mostly come from Associates who have passed the test. We have had some success recruiting, but sadly, like many other Groups, a majority of the new Members (those who pass the test) decide not to renew their IAM-RS and GAM membership at the first time of asking.

Clearly ongoing membership isn't a priority for many. You might be interested to note that IAM RoadSmart has changed the Observer qualification. There is now a single level of qualification equivalent to the national observer (NO) level that you will be familiar with, and the Local Observer (LO) will disappear.

On the subject of Observers, I would like to thank David Clifton, our Chief Observer, for his efforts during the year coordinating, encouraging, informing, and training our Observers. It is this dedicated team that our Associates interact with most and see as the essence of GAM. We work hard to keep abreast of our Observers needs in terms their qualification through IMI and their personal development. Some key actions this year have been sessions on vehicle technology, best coaching practices on "progress" and peer-to-peer Observer check-drives.

Cars are becoming easier to drive, but technology is making vehicles in many ways more complex. Some of our Associates often see the technology as a magic 'black box', and whilst Advanced Drivers don't need to be technical gurus, they often need Observers to help with the safe and effective use of the tools at their finger-tips.

During the year we have continued working in the virtual world. The most positive aspect is improved attendance at Committee Meetings, probably due to avoiding travel time on dark nights. In October and November (2023) we have or will have held face to-face lecture meetings. Some Groups deliver regular monthly meetings to Members and Associates on-line or hybrid. Apart from our sessions during COVID we haven't made these a regular feature....would members like regular events on-line?

Returning to the subject of GAM's volunteer support, I need to appeal once again for volunteers to come forward to reinforce and ensure succession in the committee and officer structure. Why not share the camaraderie and satisfaction of being part of our vibrant team. We are particularly looking for a general secretary in waiting. Paul Whitehead knows the role backwards and is looking for a sidekick to shadow and learn the ropes. We published four editions of our Newsletter in hard copy during the year, covering a broad range of Advanced Driving and motoring topics. We are looking for somebody to take over the Editor role, a chance to put their own stamp on this important GAM publication. We have well established standardised procedures and templates for drafting, printing, etc.

Neil Fuller has moved out of the area (sorry to see you go Neil, and thanks for all your efforts supporting our GAM ambitions), and we need somebody to take on the role of associate coordinator. This is a great opportunity to be the link with our associates and generally organise "Sunday Rundays" from the GBC Depot to ensure they run smoothly for Associates and Observers. If you're interested, then give Paul Whitehead or me a call. On the subject of coaching, many of our Associates are looking for runs on different days of the week.

Clive Heavens, one of our NOs, coordinates our so called AORs (Appointed Observer Runs). We are really grateful to all those Observers who have supported this way of working. I'm delighted to welcome Alex Masters to the GAM committee. Alex passed his test in a Tesla, one of several this year, and helped us with aspects of living with the special features of the marque. Anyway, his arm was twisted, and Alex will take on the administrator role for our Microsoft Office 365 account, a key operational platform for GAM. Clive Heavens will continue his role as Webmaster.

A couple of IAM-RS matters. A number of members have taken advantage of IAM RoadSmart skills days at Thruxton where they have the chance to drive their cars enthusiastically within the safe confines of a racing circuit. We attended the IAM-RS Regional Forum again this year where we learned about some of the corporate plans and charitable missions of the organisation. None have a major impact on GAM. It was a good opportunity to catch up with returning area service delivery manager, Stuart Haythorn, a good friend to GAM before his time away travelling.

Finally, I thank our Committee and Observers for their unstinting support of our mission and objectives and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

A year of consolidation following the disturbances of pandemics and other activities – “steady as she goes” is probably the best description.

Group committee and Officers

Your Officers remained in post at the last AGM and under Gordon's leadership we have continued to hold on-line committee meetings, with ad-hoc discussions and meetings through the year.

Your committee is still running very 'lean', and some new members to help with some of the tasks would be really appreciated. New ideas are always welcome; nothing is cast in stone, and if anyone fancies being Group Secretary please note as always that I will not be at all offended by your kind offer! Full training provided.

Associates and tests.

Observers carried out nearly 200 Sunday runs in the year and a further 70 runs outside Sundays. For a team of just 17 available Observers that is a lot of work completed!

We had a smaller number of new Associates join us over the last year (around 50); we now have around 35 names on the list, and we will be working hard to get them all up to test standard as soon as possible. Communication is key, so we ask all Associates to keep us up to date with their intentions regarding their advanced driver training.

In the last 12 months – as at the end of September – we have had just 11 test passes (two of them F1rst). We had a short spell where there were a small number of unsuccessful tests, but we and the Associates involved all persevered and we got there second time around. There have been no test failures for several months now.

Observers and Training.

It has been a busy year for the Observers and we send our sincere thanks to all those who have given up a lot of their free time to train Associates for their test. 'Appointed Observer Runs' (AOR) are a popular route to the test for those who cannot manage to get to us on a Sunday, but we retain our monthly Sunday meetings as these have benefits in allowing all Associates and Observers to meet on a regular basis, and, when space allows, to extend our reach to member refresher drives, charity assessments and new Associate 'taster' sessions.

We have 17 Observers in the team; all but two are qualified as National Observer and this will be the standard in the future as the Observer training and qualification process moves towards a single tier.

IAM Region and HQ liaison.

Our Area Manager, Stuart Haythorn, has returned to the role, as his replacement from last year, Katrina Lowe, has decided she needs more family time at the moment and has moved into a less busy but equally important position as an IAM ambassador. Welcome back Stuart – everything is running well, just as you left it!

We retain a good working relationship with the staff at IAM HQ who help us with Membership matters and Associate progress, and we have just been in attendance at the Region 2 meeting in October where it was a great opportunity to discuss matters with fellow Group staff.

Newsletter, web site and social media

Gordon produced some more very good newsletters during the year, with many technical articles and useful material for all Advanced drivers. We could always do with more contributions from members to keep the content fresh and relevant – do please think about making a contribution. Your personal motoring stories or questions are always of interest to our readers.

However, we really do need a new editor. It's only 4 issues each year and we have several sources of relevant information, so please consider if the journalist inside you is keen to find a new outlet for your skills. We will be publishing all the newsletters as printed matter since some members are not keen on the on-line version and we need to ensure that those who do not have internet access are still in receipt of certain essential documents. Please pass your copy on to members of your family or another potential IAM Associate rather than recycling it – every contact helps!

The GAM web site has been operating effectively and Clive Heavens keeps the web site updated and continues to make improvements along the way.

Our social media activities have also benefitted from Clive and others taking the time and trouble to ensure that we remain well connected and as relevant as possible in the modern world of communications. Some discussions during the year looked at the possibility of having a members' forum as part of the web site, but with falling member numbers, software requirements, operating costs and other limitations this option was not pursued. We will be looking at refreshing the Group WhatsApp account for those who are interested in this form of communication.

Summary

Overall a quiet year, mostly 'business as usual' but with a noticeable decline in the number of people willing to part with their hard earned cash to improve their driving skills, and a similar reduction in numbers of retained IAM members. GAM and IAM are well aware they need to offer something for the members, but without members telling us what they want, this is all guess work. Please engage by whatever means is most suitable for you so that we can direct our resources towards things you want us to do.

My personal thanks as always to all my colleagues on the committee and all our helpers and observers for all their hard work – it is greatly appreciated.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Group Treasurer, Michael Tilney, gave an overview of the Group's accounts and current financial position. Copies of the accounts were distributed before the meeting and placed in the latest newsletter for members to review. The overall position in 2022/23 was stable, and income and expenditure very much in line with expectations. Slightly reduced membership fee income was offset by slightly higher Associate fee income, leaving a surplus of £100 more than last year overall.

The posting of a newsletter 4 times per annum was a planned decision and seen as worthwhile for the marketing benefit of a printed booklet. Observer clothing had been updated in certain cases to keep the team looking smart and professional.

The accounts were checked against Group records by an independent Chartered Accountant, and were proposed by the committee for acceptance by those present at the meeting.

The accounts for 2022/23 were unanimously accepted.

Michael was thanked for his diligent attention to the financial record keeping for the Group.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS and PRESIDENT

The Officers all resigned as required by the Group Rules.

The following four nominations have been received:

Gordon Farquharson – Chairman

Michael Guest – Vice Chair

Paul Whitehead – Secretary

Michael Tilney – Treasurer

Proposed by the committee.

There were no other nominations and these proposals were accepted unanimously

The position of President is vacant. If any members have any suggestions for the role please let us know.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

One third of the committee members must retire each year, and this year Clive Heavens is retiring and will be seeking re-election. Neil Fuller retires and is not seeking re-election.

Clive Heavens is proposed for the position of AOR Manager.

Alex Masters, who was co-opted to the committee earlier in the year, is proposed for the position of IT Officer.

No other nominations were received so Clive and Alex are proposed for committee membership.

There were no objections to this proposal – accepted unanimously.

The committee for the forthcoming year is therefore:

Chairman	Gordon Farquharson
Vice Chair	Michael Guest
Secretary	Paul Whitehead
Treasurer	Michael Tilney
Chief Observer	David Clifton
Observer Training Officer	Paul Burn
Membership Secretary	Maria Young
Associate Co-ordinator	Paul Whitehead, awaiting new volunteer
IT Officer	Alex Masters
Newsletter Editor	Gordon Farquharson, awaiting new volunteer
Appointed Observer Runs Manager	Clive Heavens

MOTIONS

1 - The Committee asks to be authorised to increase subscriptions for the coming year if deemed necessary subject to that increase not exceeding £2.50 per Member per annum.

The Secretary explained that in order to raise the Group's membership fee a full meeting of the Group (such as an AGM) must vote on the proposal after it has been submitted to the Chief Executive of the IAM. Having a vote on a possible small increase at the AGM allows the committee to raise additional funds if necessary and would not require a further meeting to be called. This facility was used in 2023 to address a shortfall of fee income that was needed to cover rising newsletter costs primarily.

Motion Accepted unanimously.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:18 pm.

PW 30 October 2023

Following formal business, the Chairman invited questions and discussion from those present.

We have a meeting at Ripley Village Hall on 25 November and will be able to offer free taster sessions to anyone who may be interested. A request from Lesley Pearce (Observer) to include an older driver assessment was accepted. David Clifton will be finalising details of the event soon.

Michael Mullins (associate) congratulated the group on being approachable and efficient, and queried the £175 fee charged by IAM. The Secretary explained that the breakdown was approximately £36 to GAM, £10 for a log book, £45 for the test fee to the examiner, £45 for the first year of membership to the IAM for admin purposes (magazine etc), and the balance for the charitable objectives of the IAM.

The Chairman commented that in discussion with the IAM CEO and other group officials at the recent Region 2 meeting he discovered that IAM believe the bulk of the annual renewal for members to be a charitable donation towards the good work done by the Institute in promoting road safety causes and lobbying government etc. This was different to the widely held view that the IAM annual fee was a membership fee, a subtle but important difference.

In a discussion regarding attracting new Associates and particularly younger drivers, the secretary asked two members present who were on the IAM stand at National Motor Show in Farnborough last August if they had spoken to any interested parties from our area. Apparently, most conversations were from existing members and a large number from well outside the GU catchment area, so it transpired that Michael Mullins was probably the only new member we got from that show.

Whilst talking about events for members and others, a suggestion was made that we find a suitable location for members to bring their vehicles to discuss with others, particularly EVs and Hybrids, and perhaps classic vehicles as well. We need to find a large unused school playground or company car park to use for such an event.

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