

Discussion paper submitted by No1 Group ROCA

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In 2011 we will pass the milestone of 20 years from when the majority of the ROC was stood down leading to the peak in ROC Association membership. This milestone should also act as a marker to ensure that the Association is fit for purpose for the next 20 years. The ROC Association has evolved since it was formed as have the needs of the membership. The aim of this paper is to stimulate discussion and ensure that we identify appropriate way forward for the continued well being of the ROC Association.

Background

The role of the National Committee and Area Representatives was raised at the No 1 Group AGM and has been discussed at the Group Committee over several months. The main concern was the increasing size of the National Committee at a time when the membership is likely to decline. It was decided to raise the matter with the National Committee and this was done in October 2009 to have it returned in February 2010 with the offer to discuss the subject at the 2010 ADM - hence this paper.

The current structure of the National Committee requires the election of two Area Representative from each of the five Areas. These ten Representatives then elect the Officers. This process has failed in that there has been no volunteer for the position of Treasurer which has been filled by co-option for many years. Meanwhile the Archivist is not part of the National Committee. Both the Treasurer and the Archivist are key roles now and into the future for an organisation with a limited life span. The necessity to co-opt or invite to attend suggests that the selection of Area Representatives does not meet the needs of the National Committee to fulfil essential officer positions that the Committee has identified. Meanwhile the role of the Area Representative for disseminating information has been diminished by the advances in the means of communication

Options for change

The first option is "do nothing". If this is the general consensus then we can continue as we are. There have been several resolutions to change the governance and management of the Association over the years that have failed to gain support. Perhaps this was because the resolutions came before the discussion. No 1 Group is setting out to stimulate this discussion at the 2010 ADM rather than propose a resolution at this stage. It is important that alternative proposals, amendments and adaptations come from the remaining 22 Groups. In this way it is hoped that, having gained a consensus about the way forward, then successful resolutions can be developed for the 2011 ADM.

One possible solution

We believe now is the time to review the composition of the National Committee and reduce it back to the original maximum size of ten persons and make changes to meet the future needs of the membership. It is proposed that the National Committee be restructured to be formed of five Officers and five Area Representatives.

Officers

The Officers should include the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The Committee should

define the other two roles. These could be Membership Secretary, Archivist, Web Master or any other role as yet undefined allowing scope for change in the future. To maintain a democratic process these latter five posts could be elected one per year on a five year rolling programme, as this would avoid any major change in the knowledge base of the National Committee. When vacancies occur the National Committee can identify suitable replacements from within or by knowledge of the membership base seek suitable candidates from across the Association. Nominations should also be welcomed from the Groups within the Association. If more than one volunteer is forthcoming then elections should be arranged. All 23 Groups should be involved in the elections and appointing the Officers of the Association.

Area Representatives

The role of the Area Representative as a communications channel has changed completely since the Association was formed. Gone is the National Newsletter in hard copy format, electronic communication has ensured that "Snippets" is made available to Groups quickly for circulation to members and inclusion in Newsletters. It is proposed that the five Area Representatives should be elected, as currently, by the Groups within their Area. These Area Representatives can have a Deputy or Deputies one of whom could attend a National Committee meeting if the Area Representative was unavailable. Area Representatives could be elected one per year on a five year rolling programme

Five year appointments

Is five years too long? Currently many of the representatives serve longer than three years. The period of appointment doesn't preclude resignation; any replacement would serve the remainder of the term and then seek re-election. If the Officers and Area Representatives serve their full term the changes to the National Committee structure would be two per year (20%) providing stability and continuity for the Committee.

Bottom up

The insistence that the Association is governed by the grass roots is an illusion as the 23 Groups do not have the facility to easily communicate except at the fringes of the ADM and at the Reunion. These venues do not provide full coverage as demonstrated by the number of proxy votes cast at the ADM. Representation is variable across the Areas. Western Area has struggled to find two Representatives. Metropolitan and Midland now have two Representatives from the same Group. Southern and Midland hold elections whilst the other Areas struggle to find enough volunteers willing to come forward to fill the vacancies.

Communication

Just prior to stand down Controls had been introduced to new technology, the Message Switch and the PABX. Twenty years on many have access to a computer and most have a mobile telephone. The ROC would have had to change, why not the Association? Within No 1 Group the Newsletter is the essential means of reaching members as attendance at Branch Meetings has declined due to mobility issues for an aging membership. Access to other group Newsletter via the web site has been seen as a significant improvement on hard copy being available at Branch Meetings.

It is accepted that not everyone has access to email but things are changing. There are currently five Group Secretaries listed without email. If the Group Newsletter Editors are included this reduces the number to three. No 13 Group is the only Group that does not have a Committee member with a listed email address.

Discussion points

- What is the vision for the future and what is the strategy for delivering the vision?
- Will Groups merge as numbers dwindle?
- What will be the future role of the National Committee and how can we best meet those needs?
- How do serve the current 2000 members who are disproportionately dispersed across the Groups and Areas?
- Would No1 Group's proposals be a better fit?
- What are the alternative structures?

Your thoughts and proposals are essential for the future well being of our Association