



**41** Club

# Shirley Late Knights

Subscription Debate - 6th May 2010

## Proposal

### Introduction

1. At its annual committee meeting held on 19 Apr, the Chairman suggested that it would be beneficial if Council were to draft a proposal around which members could better debate the subscriptions issue at the May meeting when it was scheduled to discuss alternatives for subscriptions for the year 2011/2012. This reflected concerns that certain members paid the full subscription and, due to reasons beyond their control (e.g. working away during the week), they might only be able to attend one or maybe two business meetings per year at the St John's, making membership a very expensive and unproductive affair.

### 'Pay as you go' membership

2. Council looked at the option of a 'pay as you go' membership with subscriptions around the £20-25 mark to cover National capitation and other club expenses such as Speakers, Regalia, Table Chairman's meals etc. It was felt that this would encourage selective attendance with an eventual reduction in numbers at the meetings and, therefore, a subsequent decline in quality, as the St John's became less interested in lower levels of business.

### 'Lite membership'

3. Similarly, it looked at a 'lite membership' option where a member would pay a lower fee (say £60) and then pay for meals as they attended. This meant that if they attended three meals or less then they would save money as opposed to paying the full membership fee. But this might eventually encourage members into a mentality of selecting which three meals they attended and then absenting themselves for the remainder of the year and again reduce numbers. It was thought that this might encourage less commitment in the longer term and not be in the best interests of the club.

### Special circumstances membership

4. This led to a re-appraisal of the problem. The issue was felt to centre on those members who, for exceptional reasons, were unable to attend as often as they would like. These members were penalised by subsidising those who were able to attend the majority of the meetings. But SLK was an ex-Tablers' Club and, like Table, it expected a level of commitment - we all remember the 60% attendance rule. Council did not want a structure that allowed members to pick and choose when they attended

as, whilst this might not be the case in the early days, eventually attendance could well decline if members were to start prioritising other commitments over attendance at Club meetings.

So focus was applied to some sort of rebate scheme. What follows is the debate proposal from Council:

**All full members will pay the full membership fee up front (currently £140 for 2010/2011). If a member found that, due to exceptional circumstances, they thought they would be unable to attend the meetings in the forthcoming year then they would have to approach the Treasurer and request a leave of absence for a fixed period. If the Treasurer accepted this request then, during the period of his leave of absence, the member would accrue a rebate for each St Johns meal missed. This rebate would be deducted from the members subscriptions for the following year and would be non-refundable if the member resigned from the organisation. In the event that the member disagreed with the Treasurer's decision, he would have the right of appeal to the Chairman. The Chairman's decision would be final.**

**Note: If a member on leave of absence finds that he is able to attend one of the regular meals he will of course be welcome. The member would have to book in as normal and obviously no rebate for a missed meal will be given in such circumstance. He would also be welcome at any other SLK meetings.**

**Should the circumstances of a member on leave of absence change so that he were able to recommence regular attendance, then leave of absence would automatically cease. This decision would rest with the Treasurer and, if contested, on appeal to the Chairman**

To give a feeling of the level of rebate - if the subscriptions were £140 then a level could be £15 per meal missed during an agreed period of leave of absence. This would mean that if the member were working away for the whole year then his subscriptions for the following year would be reduced by  $7 \times £15 = £105$ , effectively costing him only £35 to be a member of the club (although the missing £105 would be taken from his membership in the following year. No cash rebate would be given).

This rule accommodates those members who, through exceptional circumstances, could not attend meetings and follows a similar structure to Table, who also have a leave of absence clause in their rules. Looking at the numbers, it is likely that subscriptions would need to increase to £160 in 2011/12, to allow for a break even budget, with reduced subsidy from non attending members. But if this rule were agreed then the level of subscription and the level of rebate for members on leave of absence would need to be agreed and voted on at next year's AGM