

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DOG SHOWING LIAISON COUNCIL HELD
AT 10:30AM on 17 FEBRUARY 2026 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT

Mrs A Cawthera-Purdy
Mrs M Chapman
Miss D Cruttwell
Mrs K Farrar
Mr K Greenland
Mrs H Johnstone
Mr P McClure
Mr D Simpson
Miss D Wallwork

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar Senior Manager Canine Activities
Miss A Morley Activities Liaison Manager
Miss S Hibbin Breed Shows Liaison Advisor

GUESTS

Ms F McDonnell Health & Breeding Manager (to paragraph 13)

**ITEM 1. TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR FOR THE LIAISON
COUNCIL TERM FOLLOWING A SECRET BALLOT CONDUCTED
VIA EMAIL PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

1. The office confirmed that Mrs A Cawthera-Purdy was duly elected following the secret email ballot prior to the meeting.
2. It was noted that the Chair and Vice Chair would attend the Show Executive Committee meeting to represent the views of the Liaison Council.
3. The office also reiterated the need for confidentiality on discussions and outcomes, until such time as the minutes of the meeting could be published.

**ITEM 2. TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIR FOR THE
LIAISON COUNCIL TERM FOLLOWING A SECRET BALLOT
CONDUCTED VIA EMAIL PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

4. The office confirmed that Mr McClure was duly elected following the secret email ballot prior to the meeting.

ITEM 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

5. Apologies had been received from Mrs A Keyte, and Mrs T Johnson. All other members were present.

ITEM 4. HEALTH AND WELFARE

6. The Liaison Council received a presentation from Ms F McDonnell (Health & Breeding Manager) which explained important health initiatives at the Royal Kennel Club.
7. The Liaison Council considered the Royal Kennel Club's position in relation to the Innate Health Assessment (IHA). It was noted that, while the principles of the IHA were supported, there were concerns regarding extreme conformation and the need to develop an improved alternative. Concern was raised that the IHA website indicated endorsement by the Royal Kennel Club, which could cause confusion at grassroot level. It was confirmed that although the principles were endorsed and recognised, current challenges remained. The importance of supporting the IHA, while working in parallel to develop an alternative was emphasised. The Liaison Council agreed that clear communication to the public was necessary to reduce the risk of losing grassroot support.
8. The Liaison Council queried whether the presentation would be shared with breed clubs. It was noted that this had not yet been determined and would be considered internally, taking into account the potential benefit to the wider community and the importance of encouraging engagement.
9. It was noted that Breed Health Coordinators had been incorporated into the process, and were recognised as a significant resource, and would continue to act as the main point of contact for the department. It was acknowledged that considerable reliance was assigned to them, and that they had been encouraged to invite wider participation from their respective breed communities.
10. The Liaison Council discussed how the nose-to-tail project would operate in practice. It was noted that the project was presently in the early stages of consultation and criteria development. The assessment would consist of a

non-invasive veterinary evaluation of conformation, conducted in accordance with an agreed protocol. The protocol and criteria were yet to be finalised, with consultation ongoing to ensure the assessment would be practical for both veterinarians and breeders.

11. The Liaison Council noted that there would be no mandatory requirement associated with the nose-to-tail assessment. The IHA was currently being implemented by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (APGAW) for licensed breeders, and the pre-breeding assessment would support the initiative. It was intended that the nose-to-tail assessment would be rolled out at Championship shows, and participation would be voluntary, and dogs would not be hand selected.
12. Concern was raised regarding the potential cost of the nose-to-tail assessment, particularly for larger breeds, and the possibility that some owners may be unwilling to pay additional expense. It was acknowledged that a fee would apply, however efforts would be made to reduce costs as much as possible by ensuring the assessment remained efficient, non-invasive and practical to deliver at shows.
13. The Liaison Council discussed Breed Watch and noted concerns regarding the role of non-veterinary judges assessing clinical conditions if the nose-to-tail assessment was introduced. It was acknowledged that Breed Watch had evolved over time, with its primary purpose being to raise awareness of health conditions and concerns within dogs. The importance of retaining this core purpose was emphasised, and it was noted that the introduction of the new assessment could have implications for how Breed Watch operated in practice.

(Ms F McDonnell left the meeting)

ITEM 5. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB & DOG TRAINING

14. Apologies had been received from Mrs H Lawrence and Mrs F Moore who were unable to attend the meeting. It was hoped that this would be included on the agenda for the summer meeting instead and questions would be welcome over email in the meantime.

ITEM 6. PROPOSALS

15. No proposals were received for the meeting.

16. To submit a proposal or discussion item, the community was invited to use the online form so the Dog Showing Liaison Council could discuss and review any suggestions prior to the next meeting in June. Submissions were accepted at any time of year via the online form: [Liaison Council Agenda Item](#).

ITEM 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

17. Award Boards
The Liaison Council considered a proposed amendment to Regulations F(1)3.f.(1) and F(1)3.f.(2) to remove the requirement for award boards to be provided in all rings at Championship shows, whilst retaining the requirement for all shows to provide an area for the display of awards. It was noted that the use of award board was now potentially outdated and created additional work for stewards.
18. The Liaison Council noted that 343 responses had been received following publication of the discussion item. Of those, 53% supported the proposed amendment and 47% opposed it. Concern was expressed that the margin did not demonstrate a sufficiently clear majority to justify change.
19. It was agreed that although a reasonable sample of data had been collected, it represented only a small section of the dog showing community. The data had been obtained from a single survey, focused on first joiners to the RKC Dog Show Liaison Council Feedback group on Facebook.
20. The Liaison Council agreed that an alternative method of data collection would be required. It was agreed that Liaison Council members should engage directly with grassroots at shows to gather additional information. It was queried whether a central area could be used at shows, such as the Royal Kennel Club stand, however it was noted that those stands were not present at every show. It was further noted that, at present, members attended only All Breed Championship Shows. The use of a ballot box at General Open Shows was also considered, but concern was raised that this could cause confusion, as the proposed amendment related to Championship Shows only.
21. It was suggested that Fosse Data or Higham Press could assist in collating data, however concern was raised that they were commercial companies, and the Liaison Council did not have a budget.
22. The Liaison Council agreed that taking the survey to grassroots at Championship Shows would provide an opportunity to increase engagement. It was raised that communication could improve between the Liaison Council

and grassroots, and queried how the office could assist. The Liaison Council queried if the survey could be issued as a Royal Kennel Club communication, however it was noted that the current platform utilised Facebook.

23. It was suggested that the specific questions be used to filter and refine feedback. The Liaison Council agreed that a concise survey would be the most effective means of collating relevant data, and that Liaison Council members should liaise directly with grassroots to obtain a greater volume of results. It was agreed that Mrs Cawthera-Purdy would work on survey questions, before sharing them with the Liaison Council.
24. Grand Champions/Champion Class
The Liaison Council considered a proposal to introduce a Grand Champion title, competed for only within Champion classes, with Open classes restricted to non-champions, due to concerns that the current structure limits opportunities for long-standing exhibitors.
25. The Liaison Council noted the collated information from Beyond the Dog House and The Scottish Show Dogs Facebook pages, which indicated that the majority of respondents opposed further change. It was suggested that this may have been due to the nature of the question asked, or that respondents may have been fearful to go against the majority.
26. It was noted that a significant proportion of contributors favoured retaining the current system with minimal change. A small group of exhibitors did support the change in order to improve participation and retention. Across all viewpoints, contributors expressed a shared desire to maintain breed quality, meaningful competition and the long term sustainability of showing.
27. The Liaison Council acknowledged that opinion appeared polarised, with the majority favouring to keep the existing system. It was agreed that additional information would be required before any further discussion. The Liaison Council discussed the most appropriate method of obtaining that.
28. It was suggested that, alongside the survey on Award Boards, a further question be included regarding Challenge Certificates. The Liaison Council agreed that one clear and concise question could be incorporated to obtain the necessary information. Mrs Farrar agreed to work on the wording for the question. Mrs Johnstone agreed to collate all questions and formulate a Microsoft Form link.

29. Conduct of Exhibitors

The Liaison Council discussed concerns relating to the conduct of exhibitors. It was agreed that the current red and yellow card system should be highlighted more widely, as greater awareness was needed to ensure it was used effectively.

30. The Liaison Council requested to review the data from the Governance team detailing the duration for which the current card system had been in place, the number of red and yellow cards issued within a six and twelve month period and the frequency with which the system had been utilised, prior to determining any further discussion.

31. The Liaison Council noted that it must assess the effectiveness of the current system in managing exhibitor conduct and ensure that clear and comprehensive guidance was in place, as awareness of the system was considered limited.

32. Concern was expressed that the requested statistics may not sufficiently inform the Liaison Council to assist discussions. It was noted that the Liaison Council was currently unaware of the number of reports relating to poor conduct, and could not consider potential improvements until the relevant data had been reviewed.

33. It was noted that current perception suggested a lack of disciplinary action regarding poor conduct. It was acknowledged that any disciplinary action must be supported by appropriate evidence and due process. The Liaison Council highlighted its responsibility to demonstrate that action would be taken, and noted that increasing awareness of disciplinary systems was a priority. It was noted that current procedures were outlined on the website: [Conduct Complaints Yellow/Red card | The Royal Kennel Club](#).

34. The culture and sportsmanship of the activity was discussed, noting a perception that poor behaviour was not reprimanded. It was noted that penalties and formal warnings were published in the Royal Kennel Club Journal, and the process was currently under review to make reprimands and penalties more visible.

35. The Liaison Council agreed to defer the item for further discussion until the requested information was received from the Governance team, and requested that the office collate the information accordingly.
36. Inconsistent or Biased Judging
The Liaison Council discussed concerns regarding the perception of inconsistent or biased judging. It was noted that concerns about inconsistent or biased judging had been present in the dog showing community for a long time.
37. It was highlighted that judges should be empowered to exercise their role, however it was also observed that dog showing is inherently subjective, as it depends on the individual judge's opinion against the breed standard.
38. A discussion took place regarding the General Championship Show judge selection process, and a club's principles when selecting judges, however it was noted that most General Championship Shows did not appoint the same individual to judge a specific breed on a regular basis.
39. The Liaison Council queried whether Championship Shows observe their judges. It was noted that CPD now exists for breed judges. It was agreed that this was a matter for the Judges Education Programme.
40. It was argued that the matter should not rest solely with the Dog Showing Liaison Council, as it related to judges. It was suggested that the Judges team observe and investigate patterns within judging to ensure transparency, in addition to developing systems that supported fair and unbiased judging to support consistent and appropriate judging practices.
41. The Dog Showing Liaison Council requested that the office redirect the matter to the Judges Education Team for consideration alongside the JEP review.

ITEM 8. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN

42. A brief discussion took place regarding a strategic 5 year plan and it was agreed that it would be beneficial to create a new document that better reflected the new Liaison Council's aims.

43. It was agreed that the below topics would be used to provide the grounds to produce a strategic plan over the next 12 months:
- Communication
 - Culture and sportsmanship
 - Participation and recruitment
 - Sustainability of the activity

ITEM 9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

44. There were no items raised under Any Other Business.

ITEM 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

45. The Dog Showing Liaison Council noted that the date of the next meeting would be 10 June 2026.

THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB'S STRATEGIC AIMS

- Champion the wellbeing of dogs
- Safeguard and enhance the future of pedigree dogs, addressing breed-associated health issues
- Protect the future of dog activities together with our grassroots network
- Become relevant to more dog owners to increase our impact
- Deliver an excellent member experience and widen our community