

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF VERBATIM REPORTERS

Company Registration No. 23811

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on:

Saturday, 12th May 2007

Held at:

Rooms 5 and 6
Royal National Institute for the Blind
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE

Commencing at 12:00 noon

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DIRECTORS

Robyn Nott (President)
Lisa Cordaro, Valerie Doyle,
Frances Dobson (President Elect), Shelley Dutton,
Ann Lloyd (Immediate Past President), Jean Lukins,
Virginia Wason, Miriam Weisinger, Betty Willett

Secretary)
Treasurer) Mary Sorene
Registrar)

IN ATTENDANCE

Roger Bell, Lindsay Bickers, Paul Brincou, Gillian Croft,
Frances Dobson, Shelley Dutton, Sharon Golder, Jean Gough,
Susie Lithman-Romeo, Ann Lloyd, Jean Lukins,
Robyn Nott, Mary Sorene, Michele Sowerby,
Virginia Wason, Leah Willersdorf, Betty Willett

THE PRESIDENT: I'll just welcome everyone to the AGM. Thank you very much for giving up your Saturday to come here. That's very much appreciated. I will hand over to Mary to read the notice of convening the meeting.

(Notice is read by Mrs Sorene)

THE PRESIDENT: I shall now ask Mary to give the apologies for absence.

MRS SORENE: Miriam Weisinger, Jenny Chandler, Pauline Miller, Cynthia Sherry, Ruth Bronzite, Dawn Scott, Margaret Beaumont, Chris Armstrong, and apologies, I forgot to include her last year, but she did give them last year, as well. Annabel Caine, Mary Rice, Heather Morris, John Larking, Ann Hill, Ivan Trussler, Kath Sykes, Rita Fox, Iris Butcher, Neil Scott, Julia McGoveney, Margaret Wort, Carol Evans, Julie Smith, Jill Mason, Paul Sanders, Lynn Briault, Jackie Roper, Mirella Fox, Amanda Colton and Diana Burton. That completes the list that I have - oh, sorry Valerie Doyle.

THE PRESIDENT: The minutes of the last meeting have been circulated. People have them there or already have them.

MRS SORENE: They were sent out already, but I brought 10 copies today to share around.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I ask if they are agreed? Are they agreed? Yes.

MR BRINCAU: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: So they are agreed. We have a special resolution to put to the membership. I shall ask the Secretary to read it.

MRS SORENE: Thank you. The special resolution to consider and if thought fit to pass, the following special resolution -- that the subscription be increased from £35 to £40 for Fellows, Members and Associates with effect from 1 January, 2008.

THE PRESIDENT: I am reminded that only members can vote. Can I ask for a proposer and a seconder?

MR BRINCAU: I second it.

MRS SORENE: We need a proposer.

MR BRINCAU: I propose it.

THE PRESIDENT: Paul Brincau proposes it. Can I have a seconder?

MISS GOUGH: I'll second it.

THE PRESIDENT: Jean Gough seconds it.

MRS SORENE: The motion is carried?

THE PRESIDENT: The motion is carried.

MRS SORENE: Any dissenters?

THE PRESIDENT: No.

MRS SORENE: I think we say it is passed *nem com*.

THE PRESIDENT: That resolution has been passed?

MRS SORENE: I think so.

THE PRESIDENT: Now I have a few words to say about the year.

This has been a very busy year for the Council and quite a lot of projects, both new ones and old ones have finally come to fruition. It always seems the case that nothing much happens for ages, and then everything comes at once... a bit like buses.

The manual is now finally up-dated and can be downloaded from the website. At the moment it should be downloaded from the "What's New" section, which I hope will be the case, rather than the "Download BIVR Manual" part of the website which only contains a draft copy. Obviously there are a few technical hitches with setting up a website, and that's one of them in terms of the fact that the download BIVR manual part is only the draft. It is available now in electronic format. This is one of the areas which we are still working on, but I'm assured that Frances has that in hand and it should be resolved shortly. If you are unable to download a copy from the website, our Secretary, Mary Sorene, has a copy in Word and PDF format which she can email to you. We are not proposing to provide it in a printed format as in the past. A lot of time and effort has been put into creating a digital copy, and we think it is not too much to ask members to make their own arrangements if they want a printed copy. It is not difficult to print up your own copy either from a Word file or PDF. It's difficult for BIVR, not to mention expensive, to order large numbers of printed copies which then have to be stored somewhere, perhaps for quite a long period of time. It is also a time consuming and expensive exercise for our hard-working secretary to arrange for them to be then retrieved and posted out to members.

Revising the manual has involved a considerable amount of time by quite a large number of people, some of whom I can see sitting in this room now. I thank all those contributors who have re-typed, edited and added to the various sections. Large parts of the manual were merely retyped, and I know how time consuming that was. So those who compiled the original version

back in the early 1980s performed a positively Herculean task. Many hundreds of reporters over many years have benefited enormously from their efforts and expertise, and we all owe them a huge debt. Let us hope that the next up-date will not take another 25 years.

As I said, there were many contributors to the revised edition, but I would particularly like to thank Miriam Weisinger who took on the job of getting it into its final form to present to you today. I do have copies printed out so that you can see it in its final printed form. It would not have been completed for this AGM without a huge amount of work on her part, and I'm extremely grateful to her, as we all should be, for taking on that role and producing the final, what I think, is a very professional looking document.

As many of you know, we now have a new website. Some of you are still negotiating your way around this. After our AGM we will have a short presentation of the website, how it works, and how you might make the best use of it and what you, as members, can contribute to make it a much better, more attractive and more user-friendly resource. We also have a short handout on getting started, and this can also be sent out to those who have been unable to attend today.

This project has also taken up a great deal of time for some members of the Council. I wish to thank especially Frances Dobson and Mary Sorene, and also initially Ann Lloyd, for their tireless efforts and many countless hours spent in meetings and email exchanges in getting to the point where we are today. I know it is not as complete as we would like, but it is certainly a start, and we would not be where we are today if it were not for their efforts. Mary's daughter Carryl was the one who started us off with our original website for which we are very grateful, and Mary still takes on many of the tasks associated with maintaining a website. She puts in a lot of her time and effort, and we should all be very thankful that she takes this on so graciously and without complaint.

It is very much a work in progress as it is extremely difficult to allocate sufficient time to get a completely perfect version up and running within a specific timeframe. We now need some input from you, the members, in order to make this website work better. Of course, it would have been preferable to be able to present a fully completed site, but it is sometimes difficult, or at least it is for me, to work in the abstract. I felt it was important to get something up-and-running, even if in a fairly simple format, so that other people can see what it is and what we have to work with.

People must be realistic as to just how much time each of us has to spend on such a time-consuming exercise when we all have full-time work and families to take care of. I would like to think of it as a starting point and would encourage everyone to make use of this potentially valuable tool. Its success entirely depends on it being used and improved by you. The Council can only take things so far, and now we must be met half way by you, the members, to make it fly.

This is perhaps a turning point for BIVR. With the new website we would like to become a much more on-line organisation. It is much easier and more efficient to communicate via email and through the website. The Council, and particularly the Secretary, would like to use the website as our primary means of communication with you, the members. Our Newsletter will now be posted on the website as well as the past ones. The Forum offers the opportunity for members to exchange information, find work, keep in touch with colleagues and friends and be connected with BIVR in their own time and when it suits them, which is very important when we all have so many demands on our time.

I will just add, because these minutes will be circulated to the general members and not only to the ones that are here, so they won't see the presentation we make on the website, that the Forum up until now, even though it is not completely in its final form, there have been people who have got work from the website. Jobs have been posted, and they have managed to get work from it, so it has had some success even in its early days. Also there's a section in the members' part called "Heritage" which Betty and Virginia are going to work on, and there are in the archives, which at the moment have been stored, large numbers of documents from the past and photos of the Institute going back many years. The idea is that they will be sorted out and documents of some sort of historical interest can be scanned and then put on the website for people to see in the future and for people to access. We think that's quite an important thing that our history and our heritage is preserved, and having it in boxes in storage doesn't do any good. I think it will be quite a large task. I don't think they've realised quite how large it's going to be, but I think Betty, as our most senior member, if that's the polite way to say it, and Virginia have taken on the task of sorting through that and working out what are the documents which they think the members might be interested in. Even today Betty has mentioned other documents that she has found which she thinks might be interesting and we should preserve. Now that we have a website, we will be able to put those on the website so that they are preserved and also available for everyone to see. I think that's a very positive venture.

For those reporters working in the Crown Court, the Crown Court contracts have been extended for another year from August 2007 to August 2008. Hopefully our new website will prove to be a valuable way of keeping abreast of what is going on in the coming year, and also to inform us of what is happening in sometimes far-flung centres. As soon as we are aware of anything that affects our members, we will post it on the website so that you can be that much more in touch with what is happening beyond your own Crown Court and in the wider profession.

The Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People have now adopted their own qualification for STT Reporters who wish to be placed on their register. Further qualifications will be required in the future, especially for those wishing to work in the Criminal Justice system. This places increased demands on STT Reporters beyond their core skill as shorthand writers. Betty Willett has worked extremely hard for many years on behalf of

BIVR promoting the interests of STT Reporters, and we hope to continue that tradition in the future to inform and assist those shorthand writers who wish to carry out this interesting and very valuable type of work. There are a lot of changes occurring in 2007, and we will endeavour to keep members informed of what they are and how they may affect those working in this field.

We all live increasingly busy lives and the demands on us both professionally and personally seem to increase year on year. In the past, reporters worked in a variety of areas with colleagues who had very different skills. This enabled people to better appreciate the broader spectrum of the profession. Our work today seems to be much more compartmentalised. Job requirements have become much more demanding and specialised and, therefore, limited to people with very specific skills. People retreat, through necessity and an ever-increasing need to work at the top level, into these specialised areas. This can sometimes create a sense of difference and a lack of understanding of what other reporters do.

It is very easy to be critical of people who work in a field in which you may have no experience and no understanding of the demands placed upon those who work in it. It can be important to gain an insight into the work that others do, because inevitably what happens in other areas of the profession will at some point impact on what you do. Although we may all do different work, have different skills, and have different working environments we are, at the end of the day, all shorthand writers. This is the common link between us and what brings us all here today.

We may all be competitors for the work that is available, but I like to think we are also collaborators. We gain far more through our collaboration with each other than our competitiveness. If nothing else, it makes work a much more pleasant experience. We are a very small profession and we cannot afford to alienate ourselves from our fellow shorthand writers. Understanding and being supportive of colleagues working in other areas means that one day they may be able to help and support you to meet the challenges that will come in an ever-changing workplace.

Both the website and the manual are important tools for that collaboration and ultimate understanding of the variety of work that shorthand writers do. Perhaps it will reverse the trend of recent years of isolation and parallel working. In some ways, it is a pity we changed our name from Institute of Shorthand Writers because that focussed us more on what is our common bond, which is that we are all shorthand writers, whether pen or machine, and something which we should all keep in mind.

We should all be extremely grateful to Mary Sorene, our Secretary, who almost single-handedly holds BIVR together. She is the hardest working secretary any organisation could have and works tirelessly on your behalf. I thank her particularly for the huge amount of work she has done this year in helping to get members on to the website. For those of you who may have had some problems logging on to the website for the first time, please bear in mind that she also has other work to do, and it is worth a bit of patience and perseverance on your part before imposing on her endless patience.

We are very fortunate to have as our next President Frances Dobson who, more than anyone, will be capable of building and improving on what we have done so far. All of us need to give her our full support, so that she can make the most of what I am sure will be a very productive year.

As always, there are vacancies on the Council, and any member who feels they have something to contribute or who feels that we fall short in some way, is most welcome to put their name forward. Your thoughts and views are always welcome, but perhaps it is time they are expressed from this side of the table.

Thank you. Are there any members who would like to ask questions at this stage? Not at this stage? No. I call on the Treasure to report the accounts.

MRS SORENE: The accounts are here today, and I think they have all been handed around. There are at least 20 copies. These are the accounts as of the 31st of December 2006. It is in its usual format if you want to take a few moments to read through them, as not many people have had them in advance. Having read through them, if I can help with anything, I will.

MRS BICKERS: I just have one comment.

MRS SORENE: Sure, Lindsay.

MRS BICKERS: I'm sure the website is great, and it's going to get even better. I know that you appreciate there have been some difficulties, but that is to be expected, and we can all work with that, but I am rather surprised at the amount it has cost. The figure here is "web in progress payment" £2,256, and then there is something allocated for the following year, and I made that the figures came to £3,700 together for the two years. I just haven't got all the information in front of me here.

MRS SORENE: I believe that those figures are correct.

MRS BICKERS: £3,700 for two years seems like an enormous amount of money. We already had a website that did seem to work, and Carryl had put a lot of work into it. Perhaps, could that not have been up-dated rather than spending £3,700 of our money? We've got 177 members. At £35 a year, that would absorb a whole year's income just from subscriptions, and we have other outgoings. Maybe that is the cost of setting up a website, but it does seem enormous to me. I know you have managed to split it over two years, which is very good, but was there no way it could have been done more reasonably than that?

MRS DOBSON: The new website is actually two websites. You've got the Forum, which is like the old website and will only serve as the Forum. The new website will be used as a more living thing, and you've got the public face and you've got the members' area. Now, the members' area, you can't see everything that's going to be happening in that area yet, but we have parts where there will be extra content, and we will be able to stream from this. We

will be able to add a heritage... What I'd like to do, we have talked about the heritage already, and there will be the documents on there. I'd also like to have podcasts and interviews with people who are in this profession. Our profession is changing over time, and I think it is important that we have a record of the way our profession is evolving. And you know, we also have payments online now. It does cost more money, but it also helps Mary, because people always have to be chased. People don't like parting with money. You said most of us have been in BIVR for many, many years, and the way that this website is working is it is bringing work to the members. In the past you were only getting a newsletter twice a year for your subs. You weren't getting very much in the past, but I think you will see a lot of improvements over this coming year.

THE PRESIDENT: Just a very short answer, Lindsay, no, we couldn't have up-dated the old one.

MRS BICKERS: That is the question, and that is the answer. I'm quite happy to accept that. It just seems an awful lot of money from 177 members. The NSS put a lot of money into BIVR when we amalgamated. I don't remember what the figure is now, but I could find out. It was really earmarked for training, and we did really want that money to be used for training, and it seems as if it is probably the NSS money from the stocks that is being used on this.

MRS SORENE: It is an amalgamation of all our money. If you recall, the library was sold many years ago, and that formed a very large part of our budget.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. The bulk of the money, of course, almost all the money that is in BIVR now, was the result of having sold the library. Now, the library was a resource tool. Now we're moving forward, and this is our new resource tool. So I think that this is a very good way to spend the money. I completely agree with you that it is a lot of money. I'm sure that people have done websites that have been cheaper, but there comes a point when you've just got to say, "We have someone that's going to do it, and that is what they charge."

MRS BICKERS: Can I ask who did it?

THE PRESIDENT: A company called Nuvola did it. I'm sure there are people who may have done it cheaper, but we asked. We looked around. I asked people who have experience of websites to contact us, and that was, in the end, who we chose to do it. It would have been nice to get it cheaper. It would have always been nice to get it cheaper. I'll point out that part of why it is more expensive is because we did ask for more things, which made it expensive. We made it very flexible. We wanted extra things in it so that in the future it would be easier, because you could get a very basic, cheap website, and then at some point in the future if you wanted something else, you're stuck and can't do it. So we did pay extra to build in lots of things for the future. We wanted to make it very flexible. We wanted to make it so that we

could administer it ourselves, which would in the end make it cheaper. Whereas the upfront cost may be slightly higher, the long term running costs of it will be cheaper. That was the idea behind it. We could have got a cheaper website, but it wouldn't have done all the things that it does now, and it would have cost us more in the future. That is why we said we wanted it to be flexible, and that adds up the cost.

MRS SORENE: Could I just point out that on page four under "Capital and Reserve" the education and training fund stands at £309, the same figure as the previous year. I think that may reflect the balance of the NSS money. I think over the years previous when we've had various training seminars the money went there.

MRS BICKERS: Thank you for answering.

MRS DOBSON: Could I just add a little thing, which is a bit more hopeful on the training front? A few days ago I made an application for a grant to Polycom, which is a company that does video conferencing systems. They contacted me back on Friday, and they are very interested in BIVR, and it sounds like they do actually want to help us. I pointed out that it is very difficult for our profession. We're a non-governmental organisation. We've never had a penny from the government. Our equipment is expensive. The members are spread out all over the country. It is very difficult to run training, and I think they're going to help us. They sent me a very positive email. They sent it to America.

MRS BICKERS: What was the name of that organisation?

MRS DOBSON: Polycom.

MRS BICKERS: Polycom?

MRS DOBSON: Yes. I made the application on behalf of the BIVR and of the Association of Lipspeakers.

MRS BICKERS: Good.

MR BRINCAU: They can help us, the Institute, by perhaps giving us some sort of grant?

MRS DOBSON: What they will do is provide us with equipment. For example, maybe for our meetings we need audio conferencing telephones. I'm very keen that we have high-definition video conferencing equipment so that a member in any area of the country can train and that there will be training online. A lot of the public sector actually does have video conferencing equipment that we work with, but we don't have any ourselves. So that's why.

MR BRINCAU: How does our training system work then? Obviously you have to draw somebody in off the street to train them as a shorthand writer.

MRS DOBSON: Betty is going to be talking about CPD. Building up to my presidency, I've personally invested in a Stenograph platform so that training will be available online and that will be linked to our website. Some of it will be free, and if you're interested in a specific thing for CPD, for example, if you want to know how Windows XP works and you want to do a CART course, or you want to do a captioning course, there are now thousands of hours and lots and lots of training online and it is interactive. There is the performance evaluator as well, which analyses the way you write and rather than going through a transcript saying, "I seem to have made a few mistakes here and I'm looking for a pattern." The software finds the pattern for you, then it links you to exercises and suggests ways that you can improve your writing. It gives you a report at the end of it as well. So all these things are new things for our profession, but they're good.

MS CROFT: Is that for Palantype as well steno or just steno?

MRS DOBSON: Yes, it is.

THE PRESIDENT: As we were talking on the financial side of it, the website overlaps a lot of that. So it is not just a website. It involves the training part. It involves reducing, perhaps not initially it hasn't reduced Mary's workload as the Secretary, but hopefully it will make it easier for Mary if people pay by Paypal, and it covers a lot of areas within BIVR. The website is not just a forum. It covers a lot of areas and a lot of people will be able to access it. So, the cost is spread over a lot of sections within BIVR that we work with.

MRS SORENE: On that, I could just say that the Reporters Search section that we now have up-and-running has worked, as Robyn said, in that we are getting work. We are being approached for work, but firms who still email me, "Can I have a reporter for this place, that place?" I can just email them back and tell them to look on our website at our Reporter Search section, which is in the public section. Hopefully they will be able to find somebody there. Beforehand, I had to email various members or put it on the old website somewhere so that hopefully everybody would see it, or the forum because I couldn't just select one or two people to give the work to. It had to be seen by everybody. Now, the Reporter Search piece for people who have already booked on and I've put their details in, those people are being accessed by the public for work. So from that point of view, I no longer have to write a long email back explaining things. I can just tell them to search on the website. Hopefully they are doing that.

THE PRESIDENT: And also Mary has posted jobs on the forum that have come through to her just generally. She has posted them on the forum, and reporters have responded to those and have gotten work. So that is why,

Lindsay, we didn't have that facility on the old website. We had to have a new one. It wasn't a matter of upgrading the old one.

MRS SORENE: I think Paul asked earlier if we were taking fresh people off the street and training them up in stenography work.

MR BRINCAU: When you mentioned CPD and training people, I wasn't thinking of training on the software Microsoft. I'm thinking about training people in our profession. CPD to me is having a basic stenographer, for example, going on to realtime.

MRS SORENE: Yes, I think that is what Frances meant.

MRS DOBSON: There will be training for that.

MRS WILLETT: Can I just say something? There has been a group set up called ACE, Access to Communication in English, which is to do with deafened people, because that is what the government will always look at. They'll always look for a group with disabilities to give money to rather than to give money elsewhere. ACE has produced a document advancing the cause, if you like, or the case for requiring more people, bums on seats, hands on machines. The situation now is that another meeting of the ACE group, which has not met for some time because it was waiting for the assessment of that document, is due to meet again. I think they will meet July 4. I am on that committee. We are going to meet then and hopefully talk about setting up training sessions online from basics, whether it will be steno or Palantype. We're hoping to do both because Palantype is now in a situation where we have a couple of new machines we have access to rather than the Possum one that we didn't like the electronic version of, which has been up-dated. So, I think that is a glimmer of hope for the future, because if we don't do anything about the bottom end and bringing new people in, we're not going to have a profession. We've probably got in membership now and working all those people who exist who know how to use a machine of whatever make. So we have got to start looking at bringing in new recruits, 18-year-olds with decent education and good English. It is very difficult, but I'm not too pessimistic. I've given my life to this job. I love it. The first time I put my hands on that rotten old Palantype machine that we used to thump -- but we never got RSI using that, strangely enough, the thumping we did on that old Palantype machine -- I fell in love. It's a love affair that has lasted 50-60 years for me. I don't want to see it die, and I hope it won't.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I just say that that's one reason why we thought that we had to improve our website and spend that money, because otherwise we would just be stagnating, and we have to move forward.

MR BRINCAU: It is money well spent if it draws new people to the profession.

THE PRESIDENT: Exactly. It's not just an amount of money for this year, it was looking to the future, way into the future, and that is why we felt we had to do something.

MR BRINCAU: Especially as you are posting people online. I missed it, Mary. I was going to ask a question, but I always put my finger on the wrong button and erase everything on my laptop. I couldn't find a list of all the members and what they do and where they are in case. Sometimes people do ask, "Do you know somebody in the North?" I met a young lady here and then I say, "No, I don't." So now maybe I can find a list of Institute members at least.

MRS SORENE: No. The actual list is not on the public area. What is on the public area is the Reporter Search section, and my handout will show you that. I have asked the members who have responded whether they are willing to go on that area, and I can only put them on if they agree to it. Because of Data Protection et cetera, we cannot just put them on. On the forum, however, I believe all the members -- if you log on to the forum and click on a piece at the top which I'd forgotten about, the whole membership list is there, or virtually the whole membership list.

THE PRESIDENT: That's within the members' section.

MRS SORENE: Again, not everybody has got back to me and gone in there and up-dated their details there.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I ask that we have this discussion just a little bit later on because we're still on the Treasurer's report, and that is why we spent so much money on getting the website up.

MRS DOBSON: Just a final note about the training, I did actually get £4,000,000 worth of software from Advantage Software International, so that is available for people who want to learn machine, whether it's a steno machine or a palan machine -- £4,000,000 worth.

MISS CROFT: Can I just ask what software that is?

MRS DOBSON: That is Advantage Software, Total Eclipse.

MISS CROFT: Is that for editing transcripts?

MRS DOBSON: No. It's realtime software. I use it.

THE PRESIDENT: We can talk about that later. Can we get through these things, and then we'll have the discussion. We are on the Treasure's report. Are we all agreed on the report? Do we have to agree the report?

MRS SORENE: We have to agree the accounts.

THE PRESIDENT: Do we agree the accounts?

MRS DUTTON: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Is that a yes? I think we can agree the accounts.

MRS SORENE: Who proposed it, and who seconded it? Can we just have that?

THE PRESIDENT: A proposer?

MRS DUTTON: Can I propose it?

MRS SORENE: It can be any member.

THE PRESIDENT: Shelley Dutton proposes. Can I have a seconder?

MRS SORENE: Jean Gough.

THE PRESIDENT: Jean Gough put her hand up. Now we come to the election of the Council. Have we had any nominations? Have we had any new nominations?

MRS SORENE: No.

THE PRESIDENT: Am I looking at you Jean? Are there any new nominations? Do you want to sit on the other side of the table?

MRS WILLETT: We don't always have our meetings on Fridays.

THE PRESIDENT: We shall accommodate you, Jean.

MRS SORENE: Can I just report there were no fresh nominations. Shelley, who was adopted -- co-opted, I beg your pardon -- who was co-opted last year, had to be nominated and seconded this year, which was duly done. I think there are five other vacancies for Council. We do not have more nominations than places, so no election on to the Council is necessary. Those who had to retire by rotation did so, and they did not have to be nominated. So we are all back on, but no fresh people.

THE PRESIDENT: Are there any fresh people?

MRS SORENE: No election is needed for Council.

THE PRESIDENT: We'll go on to the President-elect for next year. So now we need voting slips.

MRS SORENE: Just to let you know, there were four candidates who were eligible, Valerie Doyle who is not here today, Jean Lukins who is sitting at the end, Virginia Wason who is sitting at this end, and Miriam Weisinger who is unfortunately not able to be here today. So those are the four

candidates who are eligible, and I have the voting slips here. Apologies that some of them I missed changing the dates on, but I have done it by hand. I'll pass around the voting slips. Voting is for full members only, members or fellows. Associates cannot vote.

(Leah Willersdorf and Roger Bell were appointed as tellers)

THE PRESIDENT: Our next President-elect will be Miriam Weisinger.

MRS SORENE: She is not here, but give her a little round of applause.

THE PRESIDENT: I'm sure she will be an excellent President. We are very fortunate.

MRS SORENE: Thank you to the tellers for doing that.

THE PRESIDENT: Next is the appointment of our accountant Mr. Kypri who has been our accountant for many years.

MRS SORENE: He is still willing to be our accountant. I'm pleased to say he hasn't put up his fees for several years.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have a proposer?

MRS SORENE: Roger.

THE PRESIDENT: And a seconder? Gillian. So, we are all agreed he will be the accountant?

MRS SORENE: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: We should now be setting the date of the next AGM, but as Miriam is not here, it is Miriam who will be the President for that year, so we're just going to leave it. May is becoming quite difficult now with all the bank holidays.

MRS SORENE: And the football.

MR BRINCAU: It is World Cup week. Be careful.

THE PRESIDENT: Exactly. We're not going to set the meeting now. We have to make sure it is within 15 months from today's date. We will obviously notify people.

MRS WILLETT: Can we ask people -- I don't know when the World Cup is.

MRS SORENE: It's the next week.

MRS WILLETT: There is the cup final and then there is the World Cup. Do people prefer April or June if we keep clear of May?

MRS BICKERS: There is Easter in April.

MRS WILLETT: When are you least busy, so that you all turn up in your thousands?

MR BRINCAU: Sometimes April is a very busy month. For some reason or another April seems to be quite a busy month.

MRS BICKERS: I think with the holiday times often people are away.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. If you push it into June, you get into half-term for people with children. So, that's not particularly good. We're going to leave the date, because it's becoming quite difficult to fix a date, and we need to consult with Miriam who will be our President. She must be here for the next AGM, obviously. We're going to leave that for the moment. I think that completes our business for the AGM.

MR BRINCAU: I have some points to raise.

THE PRESIDENT: Pardon?

MR BRINCAU: I've got some points to raise.

THE PRESIDENT: Sorry.

MRS SORENE: Any other business?

THE PRESIDENT: Sorry. Beg your pardon.

MR BRINCAU: I'm interested in the speech-to-text. I always was, and training was brought up, and training is a very important part of our work with what we do. For example, is there any way that we can spend some money for people who want to learn how to do speech-to-text? I don't know anything about it, and I'm quite interested in it. I always was. I meet the odd person from time to time who finds time to do other work, and they usually say, "I do speech-to-text." Is there any way that we can say...

MRS WILLETT: I think you need to talk to the speech-to-text reporters about it. If you email me, this is the better way rather than go into it in an open debate here.

MR BRINCAU: It is not an open debate. It's a question so that members could go on to the website and find out. Otherwise, if I speak to a speech-to-text reporter, I'll be the only one who finds out about it. Whereas, really, if we want to make sure that everybody finds out what has been discussed at an AGM... It would be beneficial to every member rather than just me.

MRS WILLETT: The only reason I'm hesitating is because I think that it is a specialist subject, and it needs somebody. These three ladies here all work as speech-to-text reporters and they are all at the top of their tree in it.

MISS CROFT: The CACDP are in the process now of setting up a course for people who want to make the transition. I think it's going to be 20 hours, but the course isn't ready yet. It will be quite shortly, I would imagine.

MR BRINCAU: That's great. Thank you.

MRS WILLETT: I heard it will be ready in the summer.

MR BRINCAU: Maybe other people will find out now when they get the minutes.

MISS CROFT: It's not training from scratch. It's for people who want to make the transition.

MR BRINCAU: I don't know what it involves. I assume when you say training from scratch, you have to be a reporter first?

MISS CROFT: Yes.

MR BRINCAU: That's maybe the main obstacle.

MISS CROFT: Yes. It's just the techniques.

MRS WILLETT: I missed out Jean. She works as an STT as well.

MR BRINCAU: That's fine. We'll talk about it afterwards.

MRS WILLETT: We could perhaps put a page on the web.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I did say that things are in flux at the moment. Training programmes are coming through. They say spring 2007, which is kind of now. So, I did say that. When we do have something definite about the courses or what's available or how to make that transition, we can obviously put that on the web for everybody to see.

MR BRINCAU: Because it is training that would draw more members to the Institute. We have to provide something for people who are outside the Institute and within it to attract them and keep those that are in, in. Frankly, even if the £40 a year goes up to £50, £50 a year is not a terribly big sum of money. Some of the younger people who have just joined the profession find it difficult to spend two years training out of their own pocket then they have to buy their equipment, and really we should be providing some incentive for them to train. Somebody mentioned £4,000,000 of software. That's a lot of money to keep somewhere.

THE PRESIDENT: It is.

MR BRINCAU: I mean, we've only just found out about it.

MRS DOBSON: Because quite a lot needs to be set up to establish a training programme. It is a lot of work.

MRS WILLET: We have to be careful that we're not talking about £4,000,000 being given to the Institute. It is a personal thing to Frances. It has nothing to do with the Institute.

MR BRINCAU: I assumed because it was brought up at this meeting that it had something to do with this.

MRS WILLETT: I thought that I should point that out.

MR BRINCAU: Well, if it isn't available, it shouldn't have been brought up here.

MRS DOBSON: It will be available.

MR BRINCAU: If it is a business venture, then let it be put somewhere else.

MRS DOBSON: The software will be available.

MR BRINCAU: It's not actually for us to benefit from.

MRS DOBSON: I should just add one thing, the qualification for STTRs is now being awarded by the CACDP and not the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters.

MR BRINCAU: Who is the CS...

MRS DOBSON: Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People.

MRS SORENE: We still have our QRR qualification if members want to take it, we could set it up, Qualified Realtime Reporter.

MISS LUKINS: I think it may be very useful to just have a very simple item which possibly could just go on to the website just setting out actually what speech-to-text is what it entails, the type of qualifications that are going to be required because they have changed relatively recently and in actual fact the new CACDP qualification has a number of elements which to my reading possibly could be available not necessarily purely for machine writers but could be used as CPD for just general interest for other people in the institute. I think there could be just an item to give a bit of awareness of actually what speech-to-text is.

MRS DOBSON: There is a link.

MISS LUKINS: In your opening speech you were saying about awareness of other elements.

THE PRESIDENT: And in our manual which is available to members, there is a section at the back called "Speech-to-text reporters - What are they?" And it explains exactly what speech-to-text reporters are and it has a list of associations who will assist and inform you about what speech-to-text reporters are.

MR BRINCAU: I'm really silly, because I used to think that speech-to-text was realtime.

THE PRESIDENT: It is realtime.

MR BRINCAU: So really it is someone there with a laptop in front, seeing everything that's being said coming up. That is what I'm failing to...

MS GOUGH: It has a slightly different element in that we're using the term "verbatim speech-to-text" to refer to people working with deafened people. That is the context in which we're talking about at moment.

THE PRESIDENT: But it is in our manual, and at bottom it says "should you wish to know more about training as a speech-to-text reporter..." which obviously you do Paul, they have got a list of the people to contact and what you need to do. It explains what it is, and it is in our manual. That's not the only one. It explains a lot of things, which is what people contributed. In fact, I think you contributed it. Yes, you did, Jean. So that is where you can find that information. Now, is there anything else you wanted as part of the meeting, Paul?

MR BRINCAU: No just those two things.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anybody else have anything to say as part of the meeting, or can we close the meeting now?

MRS BICKERS: Before we close the meeting, I'm sure the few of us that are here and those who aren't here would like to thank the Council for all their hard work. It has obviously been a very busy year, and we very much appreciate the work you've all done.

MR BRINCAU: I second that. (Applause)

(The meeting was closed at 13:09 p.m.)