

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF VERBATIM REPORTERS

Company Registration No. 23811

127<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held on:

Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009

Held in:

The Brighton Room

At

Premier Inn

26-30 York Way

King's Cross

London N1 9AA

Council Members

E J Willett – President

M Weisinger (President-elect)

F Dobson (Immediate Past President) (resigned)

V Doyle,

S Dutton,

A Lloyd

J Lukins,

R Nott (resigned)

Present

Chris Armstrong, Roger Bell, Valerie Doyle, Shelley Dutton, Helen Edwards, Pat Frith,  
Jean Gough, Ann Hill, Sheryll Holley, Ann Lloyd, Robyn Nott, Pauline Miller, Jackie  
Roper, Mary Sorene, Michele Sowerby, Virginia Wason, Norma White,  
Leah Willersdorf, Joan Webb and Betty Willett

THE PRESIDENT: We have Michele Sowerby taking the verbatim report for us today for which we are very grateful. I'll call on Mary, our Secretary, to read the notice to open the meeting.

MARY SORENE:

“Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of this Institute will be held on Saturday, 9 May 2009 at 2:00 p.m. preceded by workshops at 11:00 a.m. and lunch in the Brighton Room at Premier Inn, 26-30 York Way, King's Cross, London N1 9AA for the purposes of considering and if thought fit passing resolutions as to the ordinary business of the Company relating to the Council Members, accountant and accounts. To receive and adopt the Report and Accounts, to elect members to serve on the Council for the year 2009/2010, to pass a Special Resolution to elect a President for the present year 2009/2010, to pass Special Resolutions 2 to 15 regarding the Memorandum & Articles of Association as detailed below, to appoint an Accountant for the ensuing year 2009/2010 and to appoint the date of the next Annual General Meeting and any other business.”

That was signed by me on 16 April 2009.

THE PRESIDENT: If any of you were not here this morning and want a copy of Andrew's handout on assertiveness training, it was very good. I think there are still some copies, but if not, if you let Mary know, we can photocopy it.

Everybody welcome and now can we have apologies for absence?

MARY SORENE: Mirella Fox, Iris Butcher, Stephanie Stamp, Jean Lukins, Margaret Beaumont, Diana Tapper, Karen Young, Sue Wiltshire, Georgina Ford, Ian Roberts, Laura Harrison, Lindsay Bickers, Christine Lawton, Kathryn Sykes, Miriam Weisinger, Natalie Bracken, Nicky Leahy and John Larking. They are the ones that I have.

THE PRESIDENT: Any more from anybody on the hall?

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Hilary Maclean.

THE PRESIDENT: We now come to the minutes of the last meeting. You probably all forgot them, but you were circulated with them some months ago. Mary has a few spare copies, but obviously you do not have time to read them and see if there are any corrections. That being said, I have to ask if they are agreed, and I do not intend to adjourn the meeting for half an hour while you read them. That is what I call assertiveness, not aggression. Is there any objection to my signing them as correct? (None) Can anybody remember anything that was misreported? So there is no objection to my signing them? (Minutes signed) The next item on the agenda is my address.

When I was asked this time last year if I would accept nomination for President of BIVR I had to think very long and very hard. I do not like accepting tasks where I feel I am not completely au fait with the current situation and, as I was practically fully retired, I was afraid that I might be out of touch with the main BIVR membership. On reflection, however, I did see that there were one or two areas where, as an outsider, so to speak, I might be able to bring a bit of balance to the Council's deliberations and so I agreed for my name to go forward and I have to thank everyone who voted for me at that time for the confidence you placed in me.

Our 2007/2008 year ended, of course, with that marvellous exhibition of BIVR history. Mary continues to store this material in her house, but at some time in the future we shall have to decide what we are going to do with it. We do not want it just to decay and eventually to be binned; too much social as well as professional history is tied up in it all. Suggestions have been made about offering it to a museum, but it will take a lot of investigation because it is such very specialised material and may not have much appeal to Joe Public. But that is for the future, and continually we are finding more material to add to our exhibition. As you know, we have been talking about a change of venue for our AGM next year and if, as has been suggested, we hold our AGM in 2010 north of the Watford Gap it may be that we can hold another exhibition in parallel with that meeting so that our members in that part of the country can also enjoy perusing the history of our birth and the consequent struggles we have endured.

We come then to the year 2008/2009: What have we done? Well, we started with a mammoth task which was to register BIVR with the Information Commissioner's Office under the Data Protection Act. We had thought that as a not-for-profit organisation we did not need to register, but queries arose over this and we therefore decided to try and get some advice. That advice, so-called "professional", turned out to be rather questionable and so in the end Mary spent a lot of time with the ICO staff who were most helpful and steered us in the right direction. We did not want to fall foul of the law because it would have cost us a lot of money, and so the Council spent a whole Saturday in the rehearsal rooms of a small London theatre - quite a change from our normal venues - going through the multifarious documents that we had to fill in, deciding which category we could ignore and which we had to complete. But it was quite a happy day for us all; we broke off now and again for a social break when our brains became addled and at the end of the day I at any rate did not feel at all aggrieved that I had given up a day of a very precious weekend to BIVR business. I am pleased to say that the ICO accepted our submissions and all we have to do now is to pay our annual subscription. There was some question at the time that individual BIVR members, more particularly our STTR members, might have to register (an argument based on ownership of the product) but fortunately the ICO and ourselves were able to resolve this issue and in the end individual registration was found to be unnecessary.

Having got that problem done and dusted, we then turned to the eternal request for the AGM to be held elsewhere than in London. BIVR meetings have changed

considerably since the days when I first joined what was then the Institute of Shorthand Writers Practising in the Supreme Court of Judicature. Then the meetings were held on a Monday, at 12 noon, so as you can imagine it was really only appointment holders/directors of firms (principals) who could get along to the AGM, and the needs of the employees/freelance reporters were very much at the bottom of the agenda if they were there at all. Gradually, with a bit of persuasion from those freelance reporters who sacrificed a day's fees to make sure that they attended the AGM, we managed to get the meetings changed to an evening and although this did mean that non-principals could attend we did not have large numbers turning up.

And so to the Saturday slot, which appears to suit people more although it has to be said that nowadays we do not seem to attract the principals so perhaps we have gone full circle! By making the AGM something other than just the dry crusty business that has to be dealt with at these events, by providing a light lunch and by laying on other talks or lectures, we hope that we are making it more attractive to the membership, although sadly the numbers are not very great. However, those who do turn up seem to enjoy the more social atmosphere of the present day meetings so that at least is progress. These occasions are inevitably quite expensive and this year we have asked you, if you feel able, to contribute some portion of the cost of lunch, but not if you find this onerous. At any event, the meal is still subsidised. I hope that you enjoy time to mingle. I will not use the more fashionable word "network" because that smacks too much of work.

Now to the challenge of how to involve the membership all over the country. The Council looked very extensively at the possibility of having a two-way link -- in professional venues providing this facility -- for this year's AGM so that we would attract more of our membership from "up north". The costs were quite horrific. We then looked at holding a simultaneous meeting at the Premier Inn in Manchester, via a two-way video link, but here again costs were the deciding factor against in the decision not to proceed in this respect. Finally, two Council members conducted an experiment from their own homes by way of a video cam, but the results were technically not very satisfactory and so reluctantly we were forced to abandon our ideas and stay with the one-site meeting for this year. But we shall be exploring this option further for a future occasion. We really should be able to make the technology work for us.

However, the Council has decided to recommend that the 2010 AGM should be held in Manchester or its environs providing that sufficient numbers of reporters from north of the Watford Gap are prepared to commit themselves to attending. Obviously, the Council will have to travel up, which would be an expense either to themselves or the Institute, and other members from the south might also wish to travel. We would once again make it a day-long event, with some form of talk or exhibition, and of course an opportunity to socialise over lunch. Mary will be writing to everyone about this in the near future.

One of the things that has given me great pleasure this year is the closer working

co-operation we have established with our sister organisation, AVSTTR. This started off last year when our attention was drawn to some quite scurrilous advertising on their website by a firm called Global Lingo. They carried what they called samples of transcripts prepared "in the old fashioned way", to use their words, which were obviously first drafts of transcripts without any editing at all, and alongside them they gave examples of what they would have done if they had been responsible for production of the transcript, obviously a very much Hansard-style editing job, and then asked "If you were given the choice, why should you prefer the former when you could have the latter?" Needless to say, this caused quite a lot of anger and anguish amongst those of our members who had visited the website, and so Jean Gough -- Chairman of AVSTTR but also a BIVR member we have with us today -- and I jointly wrote to the Chief Executive of Global Lingo protesting at their advertising and asking them if they would like to talk about it and also to withdraw some of the more salacious examples. Needless to say, we received no answer although we do know that the letter was delivered. I have tried telephoning them on occasion, but their telephone always seems to be switched to fax, so we have got nowhere very fast with that particular problem. However, one surprising outcome has been that they have obviously visited our website and have offered assignments to one or two of our members.

One other matter on which we are currently cooperating with AVSTTR is the new test devised by Signature (formerly the CACDP) to accredit speech to text reporters. The test comprises a twenty minute piece, on video, read by an actress at 180 wpm. On the occasion of a trial run recently the piece was all about kangaroos and the syllabic count was way above that normally used in speed test conditions. Even very experienced STTRs found the test completely unacceptable, and I have been told by colleagues that they believe that no one would pass the test and therefore become accredited if Signature were to continue down this road. Those currently on the register are for the moment exempt from sitting this new test but this may change, and in any event newcomers to the profession without a lot of experience behind them I am sure would be put off for ever if faced with such a requirement at the start of their career. Signature in their defence say that they consulted with the profession on the minimum speed needed in order to provide speech to text and of course we all think that 180 wpm is an acceptable target, but not delivered in the manner now suggested by Signature. Some of the people participating in the trial had speed certificates very much in excess of that speed but still found it impossible. After many protests and exchanges of emails, Signature have now come back to ask the profession what we think would be reasonable. I well remember that when BIVR conducted its first realtime reporting test with a live person dictating the piece, with a variation in speed and for five minutes only Stewart Simpson, the then Chief Executive of CACDP, who attended the event with a watching brief for CACDP, said that we were asking too much of ourselves. It would be interesting to know what his views would be on this little experiment. But watch this space; talks are in hand.

Since writing the above I have had the opportunity to watch the video and although the actress is very accomplished and spontaneous, the whole thing is, to my mind,

a reporter's nightmare. We do have a copy of that if you have a chance to have a glimpse of it. Some of the people here have done so over the lunchtime. It really is awful.

Our membership now covers many fields of reporting from Parliamentary reporting to providing live output for deafened people. The end product required in each field is vastly different, and once again AVSTTR and BIVR have worked closely to compile a guidance note on just how this is to be achieved. Jean Gough did a fantastic job in producing the draft document, and we are very grateful to her. Reporters know their own skills and their own strengths and should only accept assignments where they feel able to produce a transcript to the standard required in that field. Both organisations have published the guidance note in their own publications and, as far as BIVR is concerned, it also appears on our website. It is well worth reading. Whilst on the subject of standards, it would not be a BIVR AGM if somewhere we did not comment on maintaining standards even under the ever-increasing pressures that are put on reporters these days. You will have heard this morning about health and safety in a working situation, and the importance of breaks. With the shortage of skilled reporters and the more litigious nature of society these days, reporters are being asked to work longer hours, for less money very often, with fewer people on a team in a writing-out case. However, we must look after our health as well as our standards and reporters must be prepared to speak up for themselves and draw the line when the health and safety protocol is being breached. Thanks to our assertiveness training this morning, you may now find this easier to tackle. The obvious place to raise this is with the contract holder. After all, he or she is the person who will suffer most if reporters succumb to aching joints, heads and backs and are unable to work or, even worse, forced into early retirement due to ill health. Above all, we must ensure that pressure of work does not mean that at times we overlook the importance of careful reading of those transcripts where a polished version is required and not just skim over or speed read. We are professionals and must be seen to be acting as such.

The Council has also during the year revisited our Memorandum and Articles, which were last revised in 1996, and obviously some of them were slightly out of date. Later in the meeting we shall be discussing the Mems and Arts, so I will say nothing more about them at this stage.

We have an innovation in our calendar this year in that by kind invitation of Shelley Dutton and her husband we are to hold a summer party during the first weekend of July, in fact the 4th of July, at Shelley's home in Old Coulsdon, when hopefully the sun will shine because Shelley has a magnificent garden by all accounts and her husband will be on hand to give a guided tour. We do not have too many details as yet, but if you think you might like to come along -- with your partner if you so wish -- and join the Council on that day, please give your name to Mary before you leave today if possible. She will let you have all the details as soon as they are finalised. Numbers are limited so it is a case of first come first served.

The Council has worked extremely hard over the past year. I have made a lot of demands upon them and they have responded well. However, it has to be said that our numbers are small and dwindling, and if we do not manage to recruit more people to our Council there may come a point when we can no longer continue. We shall start the new BIVR year with only five on the Council, plus our Secretary, and with the demands placed on verbatim reporters these days Council members cannot always guarantee that they will be able to attend all meetings. We need some volunteers. If we do not have people offering to come on to the Council -- and we only meet four/five times a year, plus the AGM -- we shall either have to offer an inferior service or donate our bank balance to charity and close shop. Lest you think I jest, I must emphasise that I am deadly serious. The problem is that with so few of us on the Council we run the risk of not achieving a quorum at our meetings and therefore cannot conduct our business officially. We cannot continue on the basis of a three-line whip. It is just not possible in our profession.

Finally, of course I must thank all Council members for their support over the past year. We seem to have covered a lot of ground but more remains to be done. During the year Robyn and Frances resigned from the Council, and with the close of today's meeting Valerie and Miriam will also be leaving us. After last year's AGM Norma White and Sheryll Holley both indicated that they would like to join us, and they were a most welcome addition to our ranks. They were co-opted on to the Council, as permitted under our Mems and Arts. Unfortunately, Norma's circumstances have changed and regrettably she has indicated recently that she would after all be unable to accept nomination for the Council. Sheryll, however, has been nominated and will, I am sure, prove a most useful addition to our ranks. I must pay tribute to Valerie and Miriam who retire today. We wish them well and hope they enjoy their extra leisure time. As I have said, Robyn and Frances left the Council earlier in the year, but this is the first occasion I have had to thank them publicly for their hard work over the years. I would like to thank Norma for her contribution over the last year and express the hope that when she has a little more time she will be able to come back on to the Council. We welcome Sheryll who now joins the Council as a full member. Of course, we must not forget Mary who always works hard but this year has done an incredible amount over and above what normally we ask of her. We owe her a big vote of thanks. Our thanks are due too to Michele for acting as reporter at our meeting today. Really, it is just a big thank-you everyone!

So that is all for now. I will be delighted to answer any questions you may have, if I can, but please remember the golden rule: Give your name clearly for Michele's sake! Any questions?

PAUL BRINCAU: Not a question, just a reference to the meeting in Manchester. I think it is a very good idea actually, and if I may say we don't exactly get paid in pennies. A train to Manchester return fair is ---

HELEN EDWARDS: £66.10 return.

PAUL BRINCAU: £66.10 return. Anybody who wants to stay the night, maybe another £40.00. It is a nice day out.

THE PRESIDENT: You say we don't exactly get paid in pennies, and we don't, but some people have children and some people have mortgages.

PAUL BRINCAU: That is another ---

THE PRESIDENT: We have to take these things into consideration.

PAUL BRINCAU: But people maybe can go, if they leave early in the morning, like people who are here today. They could still make it up to Manchester, maybe come a little later on in the day.

THE PRESIDENT: The people from Manchester don't manage to make it down here. Why should the people from down south make it up to Manchester?

PAUL BRINCAU: Because we have been holding the meetings down here for a number of years. It is about time we changed.

THE PRESIDENT: We do intend to.

PAUL BRINCAU: I do not know how other people feel about it. I don't mind going up to Manchester. I am terribly busy today. That is why I didn't attend the first part, and I apologise for that, but I still made it here and still have work outstanding but a bit of an effort.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you for coming. We're glad to see you if only for a short time.

MS GOUGH: I wondered how much would it have worked out at to have a video link between here and Manchester? Ballpark figure?

THE PRESIDENT: I cannot remember exactly. It was Jean Lukins, who unfortunately cannot be here today, who made these investigations, but it was four figures, not three.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: I think it was about £2,000.

ANN HILL: I agree with Paul. I think it is about time we do go north of the border for a change, Manchester or even Birmingham. I suggested it last year, and anyway to be quite honest if we all know when the date is going to be you can book your train fare ahead. So if you're looking at Birmingham to London 66 quid - no way.

THE PRESIDENT: I have been having ideas about hiring a minibus and taking a party up. Or we could get a block booking on a train if we knew how many people



were going up, but we all come from different parts.

PAUL BRINCAU: Madam, actually if I may say so, some of us have cars and what I would be happy to do is I can drive and I can take four people with me. I will pay for the petrol.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. The most important thing is that we get the people up north to attend. That is the whole point of going, so we shall be writing to our membership up there and asking them more or less if they would attend. If they are not going to, then we might as well go to Blackpool or Lowestoft and have a weekend at the seaside or something.

ANN HILL: What about Birmingham?

THE PRESIDENT: Or Birmingham.

ANN HILL: I come from down here Worcestershire, and that is a fair old trek. I don't know how many members there are.

THE PRESIDENT: I must assure you we have spent an inordinate amount of time on the subject. Unfortunately, one of the meetings where we were really going to discuss this was right in the middle of the snow storms in February, and so that did not happen. Apart from that, we have had emails flowing backwards and forwards, and meetings, and we really did try. It was Sheryll and Norma who did the experiment with the video cam and it would not have been sufficient to have taken the lecture we had this morning to an extent that it would benefit the people who were 200 or 300 miles distant. That was a decision, and these people are quite expert in that field, but we will be looking at it. As long as we get the support, the next meeting will be north of the Watford Gap. If no one supports us and says, "We're not going to come", then let's make it cheaper on ourselves.

ROBYN NOTT: Can I just say that it is not just what suits the members. Having been on the Council for many years, it is also what suits the Council. They make six meetings a year and the members only have to make one and most of the people sitting on the Council are either London or South East-based. That is why it has always been in London because that also suits the Council, and, as I said, the Council make an effort -- six meetings, six times a year to come to a meeting -- and members only have to make one commitment a year. Really the convenience of the Council must be taken into account, not just the convenience of the members.

ANN HILL: I appreciate that, but I think it is about time some effort was made. It is not just for the convenience - okay, the Council are from down here, but...

THE PRESIDENT: What we really need to know is, apart from that, whether you want to go back to the old style day where we would just have a meeting that would last an hour and a half with no lunch, nothing else, and then all go home.

ANN LLOYD: The feedback we have had is that people do prefer the new style of meetings.

ROBYN NOTT: It all depends on the numbers. If there is just 20, if there are more people up north who want it than there are here today, then that is fine, but I would suggest you count the number of people who are here today and then see if there is the same number for next year.

THE PRESIDENT: We have about a half-dozen people who said they are coming today and who have paid for their lunch and have not turned up.

MRS NOTT: Are they London people or South East people?

THE PRESIDENT: All over the place.

PAUL BRINCAU: Have we ever tried to contact all the members - I notice there are about 150-odd - and ask them why they cannot attend the meetings? I know some of them will come up with some excuse, but there are about 110 missing. More than that. Where are they?

THE PRESIDENT: Every year we write to people, say, "We have our AGM. Please indicate if you are coming." Apart from a small handful, no one bothers to reply.

PAUL BRINCAU: I know it is another task for our Secretary, who is very busy and she does an excellent job, but maybe if we put ourselves out a bit, write to them individually and ask them why they cannot attend and it maybe will contribute to this problem we're talking about now.

THE PRESIDENT: Mary did send round a letter asking people if they would attend if the meeting were north of the Watford Gap. How many replies did you get?

MARY SORENE: I think we had three replies.

THE PRESIDENT: Three replies. Apathy really is quite prevalent. I will take Jean, and then we will change the subject because I think we have done this to death.

JEAN GOUGH: This morning's talk was really excellent, and I wonder whether a way to encourage people to people to come is to actually let them know that they may be missing something that it is worth attending.

THE PRESIDENT: I already have the headlines for the next newsletter: "If you were not at our AGM, you missed a great opportunity, you missed a treat". Andy was quite exceptional in his delivery.

ANN HILL: Can I just say, do you not think that the lack of response is due to the fact

that you were contemplating doing it by video link? To be honest, who wants to fork out a fortune getting themselves to the centre of Manchester to watch something on a video clip? I mean, I wouldn't. Let's put it that way. What's the point? Generally the AGM lasts about an hour. I think if you said there would be something like a heritage exhibition, I think I think a lot of people would attend. I would like to think they would.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we will see. We're going to write to them and say, "Would you come?" If we get less than ten positive replies, we will have to think again, but we will ask them and we will say perhaps that we will put on -- mind you, transporting the exhibition is going to put a lot of work on Mary. She definitely will not be able to take it on the train. It would be a car job - driving back and forth to Manchester in a day, so it would necessitate an overnight stay.

ANN HILL: Paul has offered.

MARY SORENE: I should just say then when we asked the membership -- the whole membership -- about meeting up north, that wasn't via video link. That was for us all to go up north and have the AGM there, and it was about three people who responded favourably. That was all. It was later we started discussing could we have the video link or webcam link.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: I may have missed something, but we used to meet in the early evening of a weekday. Is there no possibility that we can think about that again?

THE PRESIDENT: You obviously weren't listening, because I did say ---

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: That's what I said, "Did I miss it?"

THE PRESIDENT: It wasn't this morning. It was just now.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Whenever.

THE PRESIDENT: We did have the meetings, and the turnout used to be half a dozen. We get more on a Saturday, Chris.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: No, the last one I attended, do you remember, Paul, we were in Fleet Street. There were far more than half a dozen. We all rushed in after write outs and jobs that we were on. Am I the only one saying that?

JACKIE ROPER: I do believe Chris is talking about a meeting ---

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: No, it was an AGM meeting.

JACKIE ROPER: We were discussing fees, an extraordinary AGM meeting, possibly.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Have I got it wrong?

VIRGINIA WATSON: No, you haven't got it wrong.

JACKIE ROPER: Could I just add my little bit on the North? Would it be possible just to have a meeting in the north and see if people will vote with their feet? You have done it and you have fulfilled all the criteria. If they miss the trick, then they miss the trick. "Well, you missed your chance."

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is definitely the way we're thinking at the moment. We are bending over backwards to try and get people up in the north to feel contented about the service BIVR are offering in the way of meetings. We should just have to see. If we go up there and it is just the Council and a couple, well, we should know not to do it again. It will be a very expensive experiment, but we will see. Any questions on any other subject?

ROBYN NOTT: The question about the guidance note on the website, did you draft that, Jean?

JEAN GOUGH: Yes.

ROBYN NOTT: It has obviously been cut and pasted, I assume, straight from the AVSTTR website. Is that right?

JEAN GOUGH: No. I think I sent it to Mary?

ROBYN NOTT: Well, it is in two sections and it explains what the STT people do and then it explains what the verbatim reporters do, and I suggest that the section that deals with verbatim reporters should be first as we are the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters and then the STT thing. That would be a simple matter of just swapping it over. I think that is how it should look on our website.

JEAN GOUGH: In fact I did ask for that to be done.

ROBYN NOTT: I'm surprised that you were responsible for drafting it. It mentions palantypists and then it talks about stenographers. We are all stenographers whether we are palantyping, or whatever. That is a generic term, rather than stenotypist which is what I think you really meant, distinguishing between people who use a palantype machine and people who use a stenotype machine. I don't know why there is that distinction myself. I think that that is not the issue, but certainly on our website if we're describing how people take something down, you either describe them as stenographers, which covers everybody, which is palantypist, stenotypist and pen writers, or at least the bulk of our members, should be the first one and I don't think that would be palantypists. It makes it look like palantypists are the most people and then there are other people, which I don't think actually reflects the true situation, certainly on the BIVR website. I would be surprised if there are more palantypists

than, say stenotypists, or pen writers. I just make that point. I mean, it is a bit more obvious that it has been just cut and pasted. It may be on the AVSTTR members there are more palantypists, and that is how it was written, but if it is on our website I think it should look slightly different.

NORMA WHITE: I think you are right. I think it should be on the BIVR website. I think the term "palantypist" is actually for perhaps people who are looking for a speech-to-text service. I don't know why this happened, but people tend to refer to speech-to-text reporters as "palantypists".

ROBYN NOTT: That is not right and we are encouraging that by having it on the website. Machine writers. You could have maybe just said machine writers, and maybe that is something we should look at, trying to educate the people who use machine writers because pen writers cannot do the STT or realtime work. It doesn't matter whether you use a palantypist or a stenotypist, it is a machine writer.

NORMA WHITE: Or perhaps realtime reporter.

ROBYN NOTT: They think that there is a distinction between palantypists and stenotypists, which of course is not right.

NORMA WHITE: Well, no. They think everybody that does STT is a palantypist.

ROBYN NOTT: They don't understand that that just describes the machine we are using. I think on our website we're encouraging that wrong distinction so perhaps we should ---

PAUL BRINCAU: I thought that they were called CAT writers collectively -- CAT, computer assisted.

THE PRESIDENT: Usually when people are working with the deaf they are called STT writers not CAT writers.

PAUL BRINCAU: Oh, I see.

JEAN GOUGH: I think in the speech-to-text field, as Norma said, people tend to refer to us as palantypists. I probably deliberately put palantypist because that is what people associate in the speech-to-text field and stenographers. I think to call us machine writers may actually confuse some of the clients even more because they might say, "Machine writer. So that is a palantypist, full stop." They actually don't recognise the term "stenographer" at all at the moment.

ROBYN NOTT: What they want is a machine writer, basically. Isn't it?

THE PRESIDENT: We have to be very careful.

ROBYN NOTT: If you turned up Jean on the job, they're not going to say to you, "No. I don't want you, Jean, because you are not a palantypist. Are they?"

JEAN GOUGH: They just assume I'm a palantypist.

THE PRESIDENT: We have to be very careful because there are people called electronic notetakers who work straight on to a computer, and they are sometimes also calling themselves a verbatim reporter now or speech-to-text writers. We have to be very, very careful here. We have a bit of a battle going on. People who have done this course for high-speed work on the computer are beginning to call themselves speech-to-text reporters when they are not.

PAULINE MILLER: I'm a pen writer and I would never call myself a stenographer because I do not use a machine. The word "stenographer" comes from the Stenograph machine. Doesn't it? I have had job offers from the BIVR website asking for a machine writer, which I cannot take up because I'm a pen writer and there is a lot of confusion out there.

NORMA WHITE: If there is going to be change to anything on the website I think it should be perhaps to speech-to-text reporter because that is qualification that we have to take. So perhaps speech-to-text reporter (palantypist), stenographer.

ROBYN NOTT: It is a stenotypist, isn't it, as opposed to a palantypist? We use a stenotype machine, so that is the distinction. It should be a palantypist, or stenotypist I think rather than a stenographer. I think, Pauline, you are wrong. Stenographer is actually for everybody. We are all stenographers.

PAULINE MILLER: I would never presume to call myself that.

ROBYN NOTT: If we all call ourselves shorthand writers, we're all right.

THE PRESIDENT: I think stenographer actually is the generic term. It is what the name was originally.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Can I just say that those of us who work with attorneys from the US will know that they understand the phrase "court reporter" which is a stenographer in their understanding. Those of us who are palantypists know the name came, as you referred to much earlier, from Madame Palanque. Madame Palanque was the inventor of the French machine. That is where it comes from. The Stenograph machine came from the States. There is no difference, really, between us. If we use paper, we have the same paper coming out. We cannot read each other's notes because we take down in a different way, but we are all court reporters in that sense. I don't think we need to get too excited about whether we are a palantypist, as with the STT, or whether we are a court reporter with the Americans, or whether we are a stenographer.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. Any other matters? I have not heard anybody jumping up and offering to come on to the council. This time next year you may have the new President saying, "I am afraid this will be the last AGM because we now only have four people on the Council. That means we are no longer quorate and we cannot function." So I really do urge you to go out and spread the news that BIVR is in danger of folding unless we get more people on the Council.

If there are no more questions, we have a lot of business still to get through. Can we now go on to the Treasurer's Report, and I will ask Mary to present this piece. These have previously been circulated but, if any of you do not have copies, Mary has additional copies. Mary is going to present it first of all.

MARY SORENE: The report and accounts have already been circulated, and I have handed a few around. It is a question of you approving them for the year.

THE PRESIDENT: We have found that this venue today, together with the food, has been slightly cheaper than last year and we think it is superior both from the point of view of lunch and the point of view of comfort and accessibility. A lot of people come into King's Cross, and this is quite good. Even those of us who live on the Southern Line and never have any trains on a Saturday are able to get here via Victoria quite easily. Have you found it good? (All agree)

THE PRESIDENT: If we come back to London, we will book this room.

PAULINE MILLER: Can I say the catering is certainly a lot better than last year.

MARY SORENE: It would not be difficult to beat it, but it was.

THE PRESIDENT: If we go to Manchester, perhaps we'll try the Premier Inn there or wherever we go north of the Watford Gap.

MARY SORENE: Does anybody have any questions? I don't know what I'll be able to answer, but if you have any questions.

JEAN GOUGH: Just looking at page 5, the balance sheet, current assets, cash at the bank and in hand, £22,293 last year. I believe I asked a similar question last year. What are those moneys actually being saved towards? What would they be used for?

MARY SORENE: General running expenses is the answer, really. We are, unfortunately, running over our income. Our outgoings exceed our income most years, and for most years past we have actually gained some interest on our savings. This year we will not because of the credit crunch. We are now getting zero percent, so we have taken steps to actually find an investment for some of our money, but that is what it is for. It is used for whatever it is needed for. Obviously, these events have to be paid for, and you see the various expenses that go out. Postage has gone up. One of the reasons you will see in the resolutions to be hopefully passed is to save

money on postage by emailing things, but it has to be approved.

THE PRESIDENT: We run in excess of our subs income and before we always managed to pay that excess out of the interest on our investment. Now that the interest is nil practically, that means we're going to be eating into our capital. At the last meeting Mary did report a way that we could get some interest, so we should be doing that.

MARY SORENE: Part of the loss, as Mr Kypri said to me, is that we are writing down the cost of the website over the course of three years, and that comes in as a loss, effectively, because it is considered an asset. Therefore, it would be written down and eventually be written off. That is why one figure, depreciation provision of £1,504, is effectively a portion of the website cost. We have already paid for it, but it is an accounting procedure. That is why it is there. It does not mean that we are that much out of pocket, but as I say it is an accounting procedure. You can see income over expenditure.

Any more questions on the accounts? Could we approve them? We need a proposer and a seconder to approve the accounts.

THE PRESIDENT: Proposed by Roger Bell. Seconded by Paul Brincau. (Carried)

We move to the next item which is the election to the Council. Over and above those on the council already we have one nomination which is for Sheryll Holley who has been co-opted during the year but has to stand for proper nomination this year. Sheryll has been duly nominated and seconded. The number of nominations is less than the numbers required on the Council, so we do not have to have a vote so the Council for the ensuing year, taking account of those people I told you who have resigned during the year, will be Ann, Shelley, Sheryll, Jean Lukins and me. Mary Sorene is not a member of the Council. She is a paid official. So we have five people and we are allowed to have 15 so we don't need a vote. That will be your Council for the ensuing year.

MARY SORENE: Unless we get any volunteers.

THE PRESIDENT: Unless we get anybody.

JEAN GOUGH: I'm not volunteering. How many members do you need to have to be quorate for a committee meeting?

MARY SORENE: Our Mems and Arts say with 12 or fewer on the Council we need 4. If we have more than 12 on the Council, it goes up to 5. We have reduced that some years ago.

THE PRESIDENT: You can see we're sweating a bit. For example, this morning we had a pre-council meeting and only two of us turned up, so we could not do anything.



MARY SORENE: Travelling difficulties.

VALERIE DOYLE: If you were to reduce the total number allowed on the council to 12, that would reduce your necessary quorum to four.

THE PRESIDENT: Twelve and below to four.

VALERIE DOYLE: It is 15 at the moment, so you need five?

THE PRESIDENT: If we have less than 12 our quorum is four which is what we are working on at the moment. That means we only have to have one person not there and we can't operate. If we go up to London, I get very agitated if we're not quorate, and me being agitated is not a pretty sight.

JEAN GOUGH: Is it feasible in order to be quorate to actually just have a member, not necessarily co-opted on to the council, but somebody who you could actually ask, "Would you like to attend a council meeting?" Is that feasible?

THE PRESIDENT: I think they have to be a Council member, but we are going to try -- Norma, although she is not staying on the Council, has volunteered to come and give us instruction on how to use Skype. We may be able to have a Council meeting remotely. We'll have to try. AVSTTR do this on occasion, so we really must try. As I said before, we have to make the technology work for us. It is hard going up to London if you have not been working in London at a quarter-to seven on a winter's night with the snow or rain belting down, pitch black on a Thursday night or whatever night we have, going home at half-past nine, ten at the end of a long day. It is not fun. It does require a certain amount of dedication. We will keep you informed and if we can get some meetings done by Skype, that might encourage more of you to come on and I see heads nodding, so I'm smiling.

Okay, the position of President. We have to have a Special Resolution for this again this year. If you remember last year Miriam should have been taking over as President-elect having been elected as that the previous year. Last year she agreed that she would stand this year when she had sorted her domestic problems out. Unfortunately, it has not proved the case and we have to appreciate her reasons, but she has had to withdraw from taking office as president. Therefore, we are back in the same situation as last year. We have no president to take over from me. So we have to put a Special Resolution to you which is the first instance where you will have to vote - and I'm afraid all of these things have to be done on paper according to our Mems and Arts. I cannot ask for a show of hands. This is to permit the names of Shelley, Ann and Jean Lukins to go forward to stand as president. You are not voting in this occasion, just that they should be allowed to go forward because in some cases they do not meet other criteria, but we have to vote on the fact that they can be permitted to go forward for election as President for next year from today onwards. Mary will hand out some ballot papers, and you are going to be given a pack which

you will need for the rest of the meeting.

MARY SORENE: Can I just say that you are voting for these names to go forward to be voted on this year. It is either for or against that.

THE PRESIDENT: What you are voting for -- and I propose it from the chair -- is to allow those three names to go forward and you vote either yes or no as to whether you agree. Then after that you have to vote next time for which one of those three you would like for your President.

(Two tellers were appointed)

(Brief adjournment)

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the vote yes or no? It is a unanimous "yes".

Now I propose from the chair to proceed to vote for the person who is to serve as President for this coming year from those three names.

(Brief adjournment)

THE PRESIDENT: Your president for next year -- unfortunately she's not here this year -- is Jean Lukins, which will mean a big sigh of relief from the other two people who stood, who will break the bad news to Jean in her absence. Congratulations to Jean.

Now we come to the resolutions on the Mems and Arts. As I said in my speech, these are quite old-fashioned now. We have tried to do our best to bring them into the real world. We have to have a 75% vote in favour of any of these amendments. Mary has laid them out all carefully for you. Unfortunately, we have to have a written ballot. We cannot do it by a show of hands according to our Mems and Arts. I think that will be something else to change for next year.

Resolution two, the examination we have for Associates, the Associate category is really no longer possible in our modern world because the Associates really were for people working in court. They were examined in court, and they were always working under the supervision of someone who was a full member. That cannot happen any more because we do not usually have that kind of situation. So many of the courts are taped, and it does not exist, so we thought that we would try to keep our Associate level but make them really the beginning of their career which is those who have just completed a course and are starting out on their reporting field and had the necessary speed qualification but not the experience. They can come into the body of BIVR, would not be allowed to vote but could use the website, get themselves more okay with things. There it is. That is all I can say about it. You have either got to vote "yes" or "no" for that. Mary has handed out a copy of the Mems and Arts with the suggested amendment in red to make it easier for you to look at. Don't count them

yet; I will go through them all and you can vote after.

Resolution 3, is on withdrawals, article 10. This is about people saying, "I don't wish to be a member of the Institute anymore", and giving notice. Well, people don't do that. They just don't pay. We cannot make them pay if they don't want to. Therefore, we are asking them to give notice in writing that they do not want to pay, but we cannot put that last sentence in. We would be proposing to delete the last sentence.

The next thing is resolution 4. It's under complaints. We already have the rest of article 11 which more or less allows for what happens if there is a complaint.

Article 12 is really irrelevant, so we propose that we delete that.

Re-admission, article 18 is long-winded, convoluted and we don't really need that any more, so we have very much shortened that.

Article 17 it will be now. Except that in Article 17 where it says.

"...the Council shall have power in on any application by any Member who has withdrawn or ceased to be a Member..."

Your notes will say "under Article 12". Mary and I in looking at this today realise that we had deleted Article 12. There is no Article 12, so would you just delete those three words, "under Article 12" so it reads, "...or cease to be a Member to be reinstated with the agreement of the Council upon payment of the current year's subscription."

This is in practice what we are already doing now. We're not asking people to pay six years of arrears.

Resolution 6 to reword article 24 -- which is now number 23, which is about co-option on to committees. It originally talks about fees, only we don't have a fees committee any more because the Institute no longer lays down a schedule of fees as we used to in the old days, so it is a little bit defunct.

"The Council shall be empowered to co-opt one or more Fellows or full Members to serve on any Committee it may establish."

So that we can call on some special help if we need it.

Elections, because we had this problem of electing people the year before they are going to become President, we have now had it twice or three times actually, technically. It is giving us problems because people don't know what they are going to be doing 12 months down the line. We're going back to the original method which is you elect a President who will take office "as from today" -- except that this will not come into force until next year. We are now going to elect our President for this year rather than next year.

Resolution 8,

“The outgoing President shall act as Vice-President for the ensuing year”.

Before it was the President who was going to be President twelve months down the line acting as President-Elect. We're doing away with having a President-Elect and having a Vice President who is the outgoing President. It just simplifies things. People are not prepared to commit themselves 12 months down the line.

29 is just allowing us to co-opt members on to the Council as we have with Sheryll and Norma this year. They stand for election at the next available Annual General Meeting.

New Article 30, meetings:

"An Annual General Meeting of the Institute shall be held... in the third week of the Easter sitting..."

That is all related to the old wording where we worked to the Supreme Court of Adjudicator. We just thought it would be easier to say, "no later than 15 months after the last one" without making any time limit on it.

The others are just tidying up, deleting the word "elect" where it appears. Article 40 tells us what we want to do in the case of the President not being there to chair the meeting and the Vice President not being there, electing someone from the Council.

Resolution 14 gave us a little bit of trouble because under our existing Mems and Arts we have to deliver notices of meetings by post. We had to do it. We had no alternative up until now. What we're saying now is if we could do it by electronic communication as an alternative -- not on the website. We decided not at the moment to put it only on website because a lot of people don't use the website and we don't want people to be disenfranchised in any way. They can get it either through email or through post and they can opt for whichever they like. You just have to tell our Secretary, Mary, what you want. Obviously it is going to save money if we do it all by email, but some of our members still haven't got email.

59 is, having sent things off by post, you assume that they are delivered within 48 hours. That is a little bit difficult to assess at the moment because posts can take quite a bit longer these days. We have still kept it at 48 hours. That it's it.

(Brief adjournment)

ROGER BELL: All the Special Resolutions have been passed in favour.

THE PRESIDENT: Our thanks to the tellers for doing much more than they normally have to do.

The next item of business is our appointment of Mr Kypri, who trades under the name of Alliance Accountancy. He is willing to continue.

Proposed by Jean Gough.

Seconded by Robyn Nott.

Carried.

The date of our next AGM will be within 15 months of today. We have to avoid clashing with the Deaf Awareness Week which was last week and the Cup Final which is next week, so it looks as if this weekend next year, namely Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

Is there any other business?

JEAN GOUGH: I would just like to say thank you to all members of the Council for their work this year and also thank you for organising today. It has been very good. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to put on record our thanks to Michele for taking the note. (Applause)

(The meeting closed at 3.42 p.m. )