

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF VERBATIM REPORTERS

Company Registration No. 23811

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

Held on:

Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2012  
at 2.00pm

Held at :

Premier Inn, Reading Central  
Letcombe Street, Reading  
Berkshire. RG1 2HN

Council Members:

Helen Edwards (President)  
Sheryll Holley  
Ann Lloyd (Vice President)  
Susan Humphries  
Elisabeth Willett  
Georgina Ford (co-opted)  
Leah Willersdorf (co-opted)  
Karen Young

Present:

Paul Brincau, Helen Edwards, Georgina Ford, Naomi Forrest, Pat Frith,  
Jean Gough, Sheryll Holley, Pauline Humphreys, Susan Humphries,  
Ann Lloyd, Mary Sorene, Karen Stevens, Miriam Weisinger, Elisabeth Willett

THE PRESIDENT: Welcome everybody to our AGM. Mary, would you read the Notice of the meeting. (The Notice was duly read)

MARY SORENE: We will get to the special resolution later, which I will read out then.

BETTY WILLETT: Maybe you can tell us what the special resolution is about?

THE PRESIDENT: Shall we do it when we get to it? So, the Notice has been read out. Apologies for absence?

MARY SORENE: Apologies were received from Diana Tapper, Franny Barrett, Joan Webb, Amanda Taylor, Victoria Davies, Sandra Khan, Lindsay Bickers, Pam Crooknorth, Jackie Brown, Pauline Miller, Norma White, Helen Davies, Nicole Harrison, Jane Norman, Margaret Beaumont, Linda Nicholls, Jenny Chandler, Carolyn Stewart, Neill Scott, Iris Butcher, Davina Hyde, Tom Chamberlain, Louise Frith, Melanie Ball, Michael Laidlaw, Audrey Shirley, Laura Harrison, Christine Armstrong, Christine Lawton, Jackie Roper, Ashleigh Roberts, Jill Mason, Robyn Nott, Kath Sykes, Leah Willersdorf, Jean Lukins, Ian Roberts, Hilary Maclean, Mirella Fox, Wendy Osmond and Claire Hill.

THE PRESIDENT: The minutes of the last meeting have already been circulated to members. There are some spare copies here that can be handed out.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: I wasn't here, so I can't really comment.

MARY SORENE: Do you want a copy over that side to just glance through? (Pause)

THE PRESIDENT: Are they agreed?

MARY SORENE: In other words, do you agree they are accurate? Are they agreed?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: I wasn't here, so I can't comment.

(The minutes were signed by the President)

MARY SORENE: Thank you.

PAUL BRINCAU: Madam President. Just a question. Are there matters arising from the minutes?

MARY SORENE: If you have any matters arising?

PAUL BRINCAU: Just one small one. In fact I think Betty and I are probably disagreed on it. I asked if either minutes could be communicated or

we could be briefed somehow on the discussions at Council meetings. I only ask that, not out of curiosity, but it is possible that maybe matters that are discussed some members could help with.

One doesn't have to be on the Council to be able to assist with maybe matters that are discussed at a meeting or are brought up, if they are communicated, like they are at an AGM. I know that, in certain other organisations, these things are done, and what happens is that delegates would brief their constituents. We don't have that sort of set-up here, but really, we elect a Council and that is all we do, and until the next AGM we don't know what has happened on the Council, or what has been done. Nothing much.

THE PRESIDENT: I think, Paul, that is the same question you ask every year.

PAUL BRINCAU: Do I ask it every year?

THE PRESIDENT: You do, and I think it is really the same answer; come on the Council.

PAUL BRINCAU: No. That is not a very good answer at all.

THE PRESIDENT: Because it is not the answer you want to hear.

PAUL BRINCAU: No. And I will tell you why. It is like people telling a manager their job shouldn't be done like that, it should be done another way, and his answer would be, "Well, why not come and do it yourself?" That is not a good answer, because you are there, and you have got yourself elected to do a job.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

PAUL BRINCAU: And you are doing it. Now, the fact that I want to know what goes on, if I go on the Committee or the Council, there might be somebody else who wants to know what goes on.

MARY SORENE: Our minutes are private and confidential.

PAUL BRINCAU: Why?

THE PRESIDENT: They are confidential and we have to discuss individual members often.

PAUL BRINCAU: You say they are secret?

BETTY WILLETT: Not "secret" in the sense we are trying to hide anything from you, but sometimes we have to discuss issues that relate to one person.

PAUL BRINCAU: That would be an exception, for personal things.

MARY SORENE: No.

PAUL BRINCAU: It is like, if you work in an office, you have secret files, confidential files, staff in-confidence files. But there are things that you could ---

MARY SORENE: Any matter that we need the members' opinion and input on goes out to the membership. That is in the newsletter. We ask them, "What do you want us to do?" It is sent out to them. But there are private and confidential matters.

PAUL BRINCAU: I appreciate that.

MARY SORENE: There are a lot of private and confidential matters, such as people taking exams and how they did. We can't publicise that to the general public, membership, "So and so did so well, but---"

PAUL BRINCAU: If they did well, it is nice for us to know.

MARY SORENE: If they do well, it is in the newsletter, but if they don't, then we can't publicise that. It wouldn't be fair. It is that sort of thing.

PAUL BRINCAU: That's not what I meant, actually.

MARY SORENE: I think, actually, we are doing this at the wrong end of the meeting.

PAUL BRINCAU: Usually it is matters arising out of the minutes and it was raised last time.

MARY SORENE: And last year you were told you couldn't have them.

THE PRESIDENT: Actually, if you read the newsletter, we do try and reflect what is happening in the profession and what we have been discussing, but really leaving out other confidential bits.

PAUL BRINCAU: I would never expect to see any of that in anyway. In fact I would be going the other way if you did. Thank you very much. I think you have answered my question.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Maybe you could put a heading in the newsletter "From the last Council meeting", making it clear it is feedback from the Council meeting, so that everybody will know and understand what it is. It could say, "This is from our previous Council meeting. The following..." Perhaps something just to indicate that's what it is, so we all know then.

THE PRESIDENT: A heading "News from the Council."

NAOMI FORREST: I sit on another committee, and that's exactly what they do. The secretary basically sends out a very short précis of what happened at each Council meeting.

ANN LLOYD: Is that what you mean, Paul?

PAUL BRINCAU: Yes. It doesn't have to be too "heavy", but it is nice to know what the Council are doing, just generally.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: One year you will join, Paul.

PAUL BRINCAU: Maybe I will!

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Would it be an idea to put "Items discussed at Council meetings", maybe on the members' part of the website, under headings similar to those you would have in a newsletter?

ANN LLOYD: To let them know the date of the meeting and the main issues that arose during the meeting?

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Yes. Nothing huge; just bullet points.

THE PRESIDENT: So, we will get back to my speech.

PAUL BRINCAU: Thank you, Madam President.

THE PRESIDENT: "Wow, why haven't we done this before?", "I didn't know my software could do that", and, "I learned more in that hour than I have in my entire career", are some of the comments from participants that we received after our March training seminar. Of course, we don't know how long that person's career has been thus far, but let us hope we have managed to enrich the rest of it.

From the presenters, the comments were more along the lines of not having enough time to cover everything they wanted to, or in the amount of detail, and many had to ditch information that they wanted to share or exercises they wanted to demonstrate.

At this point, I should like to thank Andrew, Shane, the Council members and, of course, our secretary, Mary, without whom the event would not have taken place.

Amongst the participants we welcomed particularly two editors, who came along in order better to support their writers. We plan to hold another training day in October and would welcome more aspiring editors. Any knowledge is empowering, and these events can be pitched at different levels, so next time join in and expand/diversify your skills.

To sum up, the seminar was financially successful in that we managed to cover our costs, and the general consensus was that we need another one.

Shane, the Eclipse expert, charmingly said that we needed some technical support with regard to computing, but I think we know he meant that we need more basic computing skills. This is a sentiment that especially those of us who miss our Golfballs will agree with, so we shall try to add that in next time.

Other than that, it was a great chance to mingle, meet new friends and renew old friendships. Further, training is tax deductible, so why not take something from the Government instead of giving?

I turn now to other news. Most will have seen the articles in various newspapers regarding the final departure of shorthand writers from Crown Courts. Mary and I even managed to get into the Independent, and you can see the piece on BIVR's Facebook page. So far, I have met only one of the Old Bailey boys and girls who has dared to come into the private field. He reports that the firm with the contract told the others there was no more work, but that they could stay at home and type tapes for 50p a folio. Of course, some of them are: what a waste of some fine skills.

There are many tales of prosecution counsel having to start speeches over and over again, and of Crown Courts not sitting because of tapes not working, but I am afraid there will be no going back, however many people are disadvantaged.

The tape pilot at the GMC is concluded and we await its results. In London, another large regulatory body has changed its rules with the result that the amount of transcription has diminished. As a counterweight, others are holding ever more hearings. I have just returned from a job with another health body where we work alongside tape transcribers. I was surprised to be greeted with, "Nice to see you again. Do they only send you on the difficult or tricky jobs?" Well, I don't know whether they do or they don't, but it is nice to know that someone is actually noticing when shorthand writers are used.

I am convinced that if we maintain our standards and continue to hone our skills, and tell people about ourselves - as most people don't have a clue what we can do, or actually do - then we will continue to fill our individual niches, whether it is realtime reporting or delayed transcription.

Today is our new-style AGM, with exams in the morning for new members in the general category. Throughout the year we admitted several new members into the STTR category. This has been done with Jean Gough assessing their performance, for which we thank her. We need to encourage as many shorthand writers as we can to join us to present a united professional front.

Now, for those of you who are reading this, and who have not been able to attend, I hope you have remembered to use your proxy vote. High on the subject is that we are still desperately short of Council members. Why not think about joining? We need new people with new ideas. Nowadays you don't even have to turn up at the meetings, just be near a phone so you can join in by tele-conferencing. Come and join us, as together we can make

a difference. That's it.

So, are there any questions or comments?

PAUL BRINCAU: I would like to learn something here, because you mentioned editors, and I know editors from the old days when we first started. I used to do editing for some very good writers. I didn't have much to do; I would just sit there putting in the odd comma. The ones who tried to do some for me said they were stressed! (Laughter)

Did I hear or understand you correctly, that we have seminars where there are people who are trained as editors?

THE PRESIDENT: We have certainly been discussing this, only just this morning, about whether to put on training for people who would perhaps like to be editors.

PAUL BRINCAU: It is a great idea actually, especially for some of the writers.

THE PRESIDENT: It is another string to your bow.

BETTY WILLETT: Particularly for ex-pen writers, who have been displaced and don't have much work, it is something that they might find interesting. I think you should explain, Madam President, as there are perhaps people here who don't know what an editor does. Perhaps you should explain how it works?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, basically, an editor goes along with a writer. I used to edit a bit for Jean, and it was a breeze, I can tell you. You would go along, and it's actually well paid. I believe you're paid £200 or more for the day. The stress is taken off you, and you just use your English skills to produce a nice transcript.

BETTY WILLETT: You sit next to the writer with a different screen.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. They write in one window and you edit in the other window.

PAUL BRINCAU: I know how it works, I understand it, but is there anybody who doesn't know what editing is, and what it involves?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Oh, I can tell you, I know what editing is.

ANN LLOYD: It's not an easy option. It is quite difficult to get a nice finished product from the note that's coming through.

PAUL BRINCAU: I was lucky because, when I was doing it, I was working with a girl called Amy. Maybe someone knows her? She went to France.

NAOMI FORREST: Amy Jenkins, as it was. I don't know her married name now.

PAUL BRINCAU: Like you say, I worked with her and it was a breeze. She actually used to split the fee with me, and I would say, "No. You are doing all the work". She said, "No. We are both doing the work." But, apart from the fee, thinking from the point of view of how useful it is, sometimes it takes a lot of pressure off both people, because the writer can just go straight on and do the next job. You are basically doing realtime.

All right, we are talking about money, and you get paid more for doing certain things, but sometimes it is nice to give the client something quickly. I like doing it. They might not say "expedite", but if I can give them the transcript tomorrow, they will be happy, and if they are happy they will do what the courts are doing now, putting ---

THE PRESIDENT: It is just another way of working.

PAUL BRINCAU: Yes. And it gives work to other people who can join the Institute.

ANN LLOYD: And it is a lot faster than tape transcription, as a rule.

PAUL BRINCAU: It is a lot faster and, as Betty said, they really have to have the same skills basically as shorthand writers. They might not need to be able to take it down but they need the knowledge of what is going on around them.

I say that because I was talking to a lady shorthand writer this week, and she said to me that a lot of the work she does involves tapes which she is given, I think she said by Smith Bernal, which they get from New Zealand. She just gets these transcripts back to tidy them up and make them read like they should. She said, "I do a lot of that. It's amazing what you get. It is awful," she said. So, having editors is a good idea, actually.

THE PRESIDENT: How about even having proof-readers?

PAUL BRINCAU: We always had that.

THE PRESIDENT: It would be nice to just write, fix it, and have somebody to proof-read.

PAUL BRINCAU: Again, you need people with the same skills. I wouldn't give my transcripts to anybody to proof-read unless they are shorthand writers.

THE PRESIDENT: Exactly.

PAUL BRINCAU: Because otherwise they don't know what they are

reading. They don't make sense out of it sometimes. But, yes, I thought I would mention that.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Shall we move on? Are we ready to move on? Jean, did you want to speak?

JEAN GOUGH: Actually, I had just one quick comment, Helen. You mentioned I had assessed some of the speech-to-text reporters. I did assess quite a large number and Betty also assessed a few.

THE PRESIDENT: Therefore, that should read Betty and Jean. Thank you, Betty.

BETTY WILLETT: Could I say something about those assessments? I don't quite know what is going to happen in the future with the assessments, but it is about time that we started taking control of them. At the moment, the person who really is in charge is a sign language interpreter, because none of the speech-to-text reporters, or even verbatim reporters, have the necessary qualification that we have to have in order to be able to invigilate these meetings.

Action on Hearing Loss has said that they are going to run a course, and I think we really should be on their backs to get this up and running, so that we can go in there without having to have a sign language interpreter as our boss, essentially, and we are placed in a sort of secondary role. They don't always appreciate the difficulties of our job. They see it through their own eyes as interpreting, and the sooner we can get that course up and running with AOHL, the better. Mary may have more information because I know I keep prodding her to do something about it.

MARY SORENE: Jean, Betty and myself put our names forward to go on the course, and we did put out a message to the wider membership, but so far nothing has come through.

BETTY WILLETT: But what has been the feedback from AOHL?

MARY SORENE: No feedback. We will have to get on to them again.

JEAN GOUGH: There is a new qualification that has now come on board. Signature has approved it and that comes under the National Occupational Standards. I am not even quite sure if the assessments that Betty and I were involved in will follow exactly the same format. It may be broadly similar; I don't know. Members of the AVSTTR Committee may know a little bit more than I do, but certainly, having done a lot of assessments, I fed back to Action on Hearing Loss on the problems that Betty and I felt we needed to raise. At that stage they really didn't want to listen because, they said, all of these assessments needed to be done to exactly the same standards. Therefore, they couldn't alter them halfway through.

Believe me, before each assessment day, I certainly put forward our

concerns, but each time I was met with the same argument that, basically: "Well, we didn't do that at the last assessment, therefore, we can't be seen to be doing something different now."

Personally, yes, I would like to see the professional bodies having far more input rather than Action on Hearing Loss taking over. I am very conscious it may almost seem as if it is an Action on Hearing Loss qualification. They have certainly put a lot of work and time and resource into it, but I think the professional bodies need to be feeding into that much more, so that it maintains its independent aspect as a proper qualification.

BETTY WILLETT: May I propose that we do take this back to AOHL and say our Annual General Meeting expresses concern that there seems to have been no decision about running the course that was evidently very much needed. I will need a seconder for that. (Seconded by Georgina Ford)

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Also, I was talking to a lady this morning who has been completely missed in the last exams. Even though she was put forward and she was given the dates - it was Mandy Clare - she said she was not even aware there was another exam that had gone ahead on 20th April, and of course that was the last free one, so she has missed that now.

MARY SORENE: I was at an ACE (Access to Communication in English) meeting the other day at Action on Hearing Loss, who host it. They said they will be having more of these STT assessments, but they can't do them free of charge any more; they have to charge. They have run out of funds for it, which is fair enough, but they are going to continue with them.

BETTY WILLETT: But if they pass them over to us, that would be for our decision, not theirs. I think the next step is to get some qualified assessors, so that we can then take it over, and then whether we charge or we do it free of charge is up to us. We don't want it to be dependent on AOHL.

GEORGINA FORD: Now the NOS has been written and basically approved, it will be easier for us to take it back and keep AOHL out of it.

BETTY WILLETT: But we can't do that until we have our qualification. What is it called?

MARY SORENE: It was an A1 assessor, but I think they have even changed that name to something else. Of course, at AOHL, they were using their premises, but they are happy enough for us to have our meetings there free of charge. We may be able to do something. Otherwise, if we hold these STT exams for the NRCPD qualification, effectively, we will have to fund a room. It is not impossible.

BETTY WILLETT: We could do it as we have done this year.

MARY SORENE: Yes, sure.

JEAN GOUGH: I think Action on Hearing Loss have really almost “spoonfed” the people who have been able to take the interim assessment, in that they found deaf awareness courses for them and they had one-to-one sessions with them, before they actually took the assessments, so that is obviously something that the professional bodies are going to have to take back as well. It is quite time consuming, so that might be something we need to bear in mind.

BETTY WILLETT: It is not impossible, but I think we really must get this back under our control. Let's face it, the numbers are not going to be hundreds.

THE PRESIDENT: Have we finished that discussion? If so, I will call on the Treasurer now to report.

MARY SORENE: The Report and Accounts were previously circulated, but I do have a few copies here. They have been e-mailed out, they are on the website, and it is really a question of going through them and saying whether we approve them. These accounts go up to 31st December 2011. We will just pause while people read them and think of any questions.

PAUL BRINCAU: We have made no political donations? For instance, Boris Johnson?(!)

MARY SORENE: We always put that down.

PAUL BRINCAU: He keeps us amused!

BETTY WILLETT: I see we have fewer retired members. This is me.

MARY SORENE: Yes. I fear it is because they have passed on, or they have died. I don't have a note of the people who died in that year. We have recently heard about Ron Chartres, who passed away in April at the age of 93.

BETTY WILLETT: He was born in 1920.

PATRICIA FRITH: He was my boss when I first started, a lovely man.

MARY SORENE: Unfortunately, his passing and funeral was over before I knew about it. I posted the newsletter to him at the home where he was living. Subsequently, I received an e-mail from, I believe, his grandson, to say that he had passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of 93, in the home.

We always used to think of him as Mr Pastry. Do you remember Mr Pastry? Richard Hearn, who was the white-haired Mr Pastry, used to do the road safety films for children. He looked just like him, for those of us of a certain age!

BETTY WILLETT: He used to say at Council meetings, "Perhaps I could just prepare a short note on that?" About a week later, you would get something typed on an old manual typewriter, because even in the days of Golfballs he still used a manual.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: We are referring to Golfball typewriters.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: I was really confused with golfballs!

MARY SORENE: A Golfball typewriter.

BETTY WILLETT: He used to produce 12 pages in single-space typing, crammed in, and I used to think, "Have I really got to read this?", but it was full of great knowledge and wisdom.

MARY SORENE: Are the accounts approved? (Silence)

THE PRESIDENT: Should we have a show of hands?

MARY SORENE: Are they adopted?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Do you need proposers and seconders, or do we just adopt it?

MARY SORENE: You can propose. Miriam proposes, seconded by Paul. Thank you. Are we all agreed that the accounts are agreed. (Show of hands. Passed nem con)

THE PRESIDENT: Now we turn to the election to Council. There are two nominations for vacancies, therefore no election is necessary. We can have up to 12 Council members, Paul.

BETTY WILLETT: How many do we have now?

MARY SORENE: Six, I think.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: If you can attend by teleconference, I don't mind joining. I can't come up to London all the time, but I would be quite happy if I could be present by telephone.

THE PRESIDENT: You are in. Sign her up!

MARY SORENE: Miriam is co-opted for this year. Thank you. Any others?

BETTY WILLETT: We held the last Council meeting here this morning, so, if you can do that once a year, that would be one meeting when you can come.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Fine. If I am in London when there is a Council meeting, I don't mind attending.

THE PRESIDENT: Sue does it by telephone all the time.

BETTY WILLETT: I have done it as well. It is a very strange experience sitting in your own front room listening for two hours.

THE PRESIDENT: But pleasurable!

MIRIAM WEISINGER: That's fine.

MARY SORENE: Anybody else? Looking down the end of the table?  
No?

NAOMI FORREST: Maybe next year.

THE PRESIDENT: Note that! Next year, Naomi Forrest! Georgina Ford and Leah Willersdorf, we are welcoming you. We welcome Georgina and Leah, who were co-opted after last year's AGM.

BETTY WILLETT: I think we should also thank Karen, who is retiring, because she hasn't managed to come to many of our meetings.

MARY SORENE: Nor by phone hardly either.

BETTY WILLETT: No, but when she comes she usually has something very useful to say, so we shall miss her.

THE PRESIDENT: We thank Karen. So, we are on to the election of President for the following year 2012-2013. Those eligible are Sheryll Holley and Susan Humphries.

MARY SORENE: I will hand out the voting papers.

(A teller was appointed. Votes were cast, collected and counted)

THE PRESIDENT: We now have the results. It was terribly close, but I would like to welcome, as the new President for 2012, Sheryll Holley.  
(Applause)

PAUL BRINCAU: So, how close?

THE PRESIDENT: Two.

SUSAN HUMPHRIES: It was two last year, wasn't it, Helen?

THE PRESIDENT: You got away with it last year!

Now we turn to the special resolution. We have a special resolution to

put to the membership. This is going to be done globally on a show of hands as each one is read.

Those holding proxy votes will use them, for or against, as well as their personal vote. I have three, Mary has three, and Susan has one.

PAUL BRINCAU: Special resolutions have to be passed by a two-thirds majority, is it, or not?

MARY SORENE: It has to be a majority. I don't know about two-thirds. A simple majority.

PAUL BRINCAU: Why is it so special?

THE PRESIDENT: Because it is going to change our Memorandum and Articles.

PAUL BRINCAU: I thought they were special resolutions because they were so significant.

BETTY WILLETT: Do you have the mem and arts with you?

THE PRESIDENT: It is a little tweaking that we need to do. We can explain why.

PAUL BRINCAU: It's the rules.

MARY SORENE: It's in here as to why.

THE PRESIDENT: Those holding proxy votes will use them, for or against, as well as their personal vote. I will just read the explanation.

"The numbers voting for or against do not need to be read out, merely that the resolution is passed or fails on the show of hands."

The special resolution is to consider and, if thought fit, to pass the following special resolution:

To remove all reference to "auditor" or "auditors" from our Memorandum and Articles of Association by deleting the words "and Auditors", "and the appointment of the auditors" in article 37, and the words "or auditor" in article 69, so that the articles read:

"37. All business shall be deemed special that is transacted at an Extraordinary General Meeting, and also all that is transacted at an Annual General Meeting, with the exception of the consideration of the Accounts, Balance Sheet and the Reports of the Council, the election of the President and of the members of the Council in the place of those retiring."

"69. Subject to the provisions of the Act, but without prejudice to any

indemnity to which a Council member may otherwise be entitled, every Council member or officer of the Institute shall be indemnified out of the assets of the Institute against any liability incurred by him in defending any proceedings, whether civil or criminal, in which judgment is given in his favour or in which he is acquitted or in connection with any application in which relief is granted to him by the court from liability for negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust in relation to the affairs of the Institute.'

The reason for this is that we no longer appoint an accountant. Do you want me to go into a bit of detail? It is simply that it was costing, what was it, £900 a year for an accountant. That is quite a lot of money when you are a very small membership such as we are, so we decided to bring it in-house.

MARY SORENE: Can I just say, we actually took out the need to have an audited account several years ago, under the small companies procedure, but they were just left in. They were overlooked at that time, but they don't need to be in our Memorandum and Articles at all.

BETTY WILLETT: Are we under the law required to have our accounts examined rather than audited?

MARY SORENE: There is nothing to say that we do, but we should have somebody look at them.

BETTY WILLETT: I think, to protect Mary, we should have someone examine them. It could be another member of the Council, if necessary. All they have to do is look at them and sign that they have examined them and there seems to be nothing adverse.

THE PRESIDENT: There are a couple of us on the Council who are actually accountancy qualified, to varying degrees.

SUSAN HUMPHRIES: Are you looking at me?

THE PRESIDENT: And me. We could do this.

BETTY WILLETT: I think we should have some protection. We all know Mary, and she is as straight as a die, but you never know what's going to happen in the future.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Do we need somebody from outside to have a look at them?

BETTY WILLETT: I belong to another organisation where someone from the Council does it. They scribble on the top "Examined", and the date. They are not even company registered, but I think under the company registration it does sometimes use the word "Examined".

SUSAN HUMPHRIES: But the accounts are prepared by an accountant, aren't they?

THE PRESIDENT: This year they have been prepared by an accountant, but what we thought should happen is that we bring it in-house and Mary is shown how to do it. Mary already inputs it all. It was just the final formulation of the accounts. As you know, it is very easy for you to input your accounts, and then you just click a button and you have your trading, profit and loss and balance sheet. Then you just have to file them. Mary was going to have a couple of sessions with our new accountant - actually my daughter is a chartered accountant - to learn how to do it properly.

PAUL BRINCAU: Did you say we have an accountant, or we haven't?

THE PRESIDENT: No. The accountant who has helped with the accounts this year is my daughter, who is a chartered accountant. She has undertaken to give Mary a series of tutorials throughout the year, and to hold her hand through it.

MARY SORENE: In any case, on the Government website, which is called the Government Gateway, I now have to put the accounts online in that way, and they have to be in a special format. I can't find a way in to see that format, but Sarah will help. She is going to show me how and take me through it.

PAUL BRINCAU: However, I do agree with whoever raised it, for Mary's protection, somebody else should look at them. It would be very difficult, if something goes wrong, for Mary to say, "Well, I didn't know. That's a mistake." I don't want to point the finger.

SUSAN HUMPHRIES: What do you think about that, Mary? Would you be happy with that, or not?

MARY SORENE: They should be looked at independently, but we don't have to have an accountant. It can be another Council member, a non-Council member, a member, or it could be somebody totally independent, but they need to just look at them and see that the figures are right.

BETTY WILLETT: I think we should explain that the accountant we had for years, Mr Kypri, who used to do a fairly cheap rate, as accountancy goes - it wasn't nothing, but it was fairly cheap - retired because of ill-health. The firm with whom he had been associated took over and the prices just shot up. It is ridiculous for a small body like us to be paying nearly £1,000 a year. Under law, certainly, it is no longer necessary to have a fully audited account, but I think it is recommended that everyone should have an examined account. I know we can't amend the special resolution here, but ...

THE PRESIDENT: No. We can.

BETTY WILLETT: Can I propose an addendum to the special resolution, that forthwith, or in future, the accounts before publication should be examined by a member of BIVR, who can be either a Council member or

a non-Council member?

SUSAN HUMPHRIES: To verify them.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. To verify.

BETTY WILLETT: And I shall need a seconder.

PAUL BRINCAU: I will second that because it doesn't matter who verifies them. As long as they put their signature as well, then they are saying, "I looked at them and they look okay", and Mary is protected.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

MARY SORENE: All right. Thank you.

BETTY WILLETT: In which case, we have to put the amendment to the vote, first of all, and then the amended resolution.

THE PRESIDENT: All right. So, the amendment is that, in future, accounts before publication to be examined by a member of BIVR?

MARY SORENE: Who could be either a Council member or non-Council member.

THE PRESIDENT: To verify them. So we have our proposer, seconded by Paul. All those in favour? (Show of hands. Passed nem con)

And the special resolution, all those in favour? Anybody against? (Show of hands.)

BETTY WILLETT: Are you unhappy, Pauline?

PAULINE HUMPHREYS: I can't vote because I am a retired member.

BETTY WILLETT: Should I have proposed it? I am a life member.

PAULINE HUMPHREYS: I have no voting rights, as a retired member, but I would much have preferred it to be examined independently.

PAUL BRINCAU: I think we said independently.

PAULINE HUMPHREYS: No. You have agreed now, and I take no exception to it now.

THE PRESIDENT: It is a member of BIVR who can be a Council member or non-Council member.

PAULINE HUMPHREYS: I speak as a past Treasurer, by the way. The accounts are usually independently examined, and I would have

preferred that, but it has been voted on. I accept the vote. I don't wish to raise any queries now.

THE PRESIDENT: We still have Sarah helping us, holding our hands.

PAULINE HUMPHREYS: I have had my say, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. It is noted.

PAUL BRINCAU: Of course, that would be preferable.

BETTY WILLETT: But it might create problems.

PAUL BRINCAU: Then we are going to get back to somebody who is independent, who is not going to put his name down to a set of accounts for nothing.

MARY SORENE: Very likely.

THE PRESIDENT: That was the rationale behind it.

PAUL BRINCAU: That is why we are putting it the way we are, to save money, but we are quite happy to have somebody who is going to look at them. I think it achieves most of the objectives.

THE PRESIDENT: All right. Shall I say the couple of things that I was going to say?

BETTY WILLETT: Have you put the amended resolution?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. We have done the amended resolution and that was carried.

BETTY WILLETT: I know you have done the amendment, but have you done the amended resolution as well?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Just before we fix the date of the next Annual General Meeting, I was going to mention that Jack Ashley, or Lord Ashley as he was, has died. Many of you will have noted that from the newspaper. There is a memorial service for him on 2nd July, where Susie Romeo will be providing the speech-to-text communication support on that day. If anybody wants any details of that, we can give them.

The other thing is I felt that we should perhaps mention Linda Nichols. I don't know if Miriam just wants to say something? We wish her well.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Yes. I am sure she won't mind, although it is medical. Linda suffered a heart attack on the way home from work about two weeks ago, I think. Fortunately, her partner Jeff realised that she was having a heart attack, when she spoke to him while she was on the bus and asked

him to meet her at the bus stop. She lives in Oxford. She was taken to the John Radcliffe and had a stent fitted within 24 hours, whereas most people have to wait two months for a stent. She was given the all-clear to fly and she has gone on her booked holiday to Canada. I hope she doesn't overdo it in the future, but she says she is going to be back to working normally.

ANN LLOYD: She does work too hard.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: We have to be aware that our work is very pressured and we should heed warnings.

PAUL BRINCAU: But was that because she ran for the bus?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Maybe, but I think our job is very stressful, so you have to bear that in mind when you are, as we all are, getting a little bit older.

PAUL BRINCAU: You don't notice it if you are a workaholic.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: You don't know these things, but we wish her well.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Two more things. We have CPD forms at the bottom of the table, as well as the "How was it for you?" form.

The last thing is to set the date of the next Annual General Meeting, which has to be within 18 months of today's date. I think perhaps May or June 2013. We have previously clashed with Deaf Awareness Week and the Cup Final. Also, we want to avoid the Bank Holiday weekend.

BETTY WILLETT: And also the NADP AGM, which is today, which I would like to have attended, but couldn't.

PAUL BRINCAU: And the Champions' League final with Chelsea, which is this afternoon.

THE PRESIDENT: My husband, my son, and just about every single male relative of my family are all there, expected back some time in the night, or tomorrow, or the day after!

ANN LLOYD: It depends who wins, doesn't it?

MARY SORENE: I don't actually have a date in my head.

PAUL BRINCAU: Do we have to fix the date today?

MARY SORENE: We have usually put it in the minutes. If we put it in provisionally, it has been changed before.

PAUL BRINCAU: A suitable date?

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps Sheryll would like us to come to Wales?

ANN LLOYD: We are all going to Cardiff then, are we?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: It's straight down the motorway, a lovely place.

PAUL BRINCAU: There might be a game at the Millennium that day!

SHERYLL HOLLEY. 4th, 12, 18th, 25th.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: The 4th will be the May Bank Holiday.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: 11th or 18th. The problem is if NADP decide the same date.

PAUL BRINCAU: Pick a provisional date. I was just going to mention that there were so many apologies today. We all have commitments, and a lot of our members are ladies and they have families and children. Surely, you could put aside a little bit of a day, if you are given a year's notice. You could record the match, you know.

BETTY WILLETT: We have to remember half-term.

PAUL BRINCAU: You can't try to avoid all these things.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: 27th will be half-term date.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Shall we go for 11th May.

THE PRESIDENT: That is the business of the AGM concluded. Thank you all very much. See you next year.

NAOMI FORREST: Thank you, Madam President.

BETTY WILLETT: And can we record our thanks to Helen for being a very good chairman and President throughout the year.

SUSAN HUMPHRIES: And Jean received the Communication Professional of the Year Award from Signature. I think that should be in the minutes. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: I do apologise. I should have put it with my few notices. Can I offer Jean our congratulations on the Signature award.

BETTY WILLETT: Which used to be called CACDP.

(The meeting closed at 3.19pm)