

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF VERBATIM REPORTERS

Company Registration No. 23811

133rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

on

Saturday, 5 September 2015

at 2:00 pm

Held at:

International Hall, University of London,
Lansdowne Terrace, London, WC1N 1AS

Council Members:

Georgina Ford
Nicole Harrison
Sheryll Holley (Vice President)
Susan Humphries (President)
Ann Lloyd
Jean Lukins
Ian Roberts
Leah Willersdorf
Betty Willett

In attendance:

Chris Armstrong
Natalie Bracken
Elizabeth Davies
Ian Dawson
Frances Dobson
Nicola Dutton
Shelley Dutton
Sandra Evans
Jean Gough
Neil Holley (IT engineer)
Julia Jacobie
Sam Jones
Robyn Nott
Wendy Osmond
Louise Pepper
Katy Ryder
Richard Ward
Miriam Weisinger
Karen Young

In remote attendance:

Victoria Davies
Georgina Ford
Elaine McCarthy
Cath McGuire
Susan McIntyre
Eilis Murray
Joanne Naughton
Ian Roberts
Kath Sykes
Cindy Wu

For the meet and greet:

Emma Ellcock
Emma Watmore

THE PRESIDENT: Welcome, everybody, to the AGM.

Welcome to those online as well. Before we start I would like to read a letter from Stenograph. It is addressed to the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters:

"On behalf of everyone at Stenograph, we extend our heartiest congratulations to BIVR on completing 150 celebrated years of service. You have always worked to improve the professional lives of your Members while pledging to provide quality services to your clientele.

Organisations like yours with hardworking, dedicated volunteers, only succeed by striving to accomplish a common goal and you have truly achieved a high level of success. Working with you has been a real honour and we value each and every transaction with your Members.

Your contributions to the legal business and hearing-impaired communities are instrumental in the daily lives of many. We wish you all continued success as you continue your journey. You should be very proud of your place in history.

*Sincerely,
John T Wenclawski
(President of Stenograph)."*

BETTY WILLETT: Could Mary reply to that just thanking them afterwards?

NICOLE HARRISON: I have replied to Judy Wolf to say thank you very much in an email for all the freebies.

THE PRESIDENT: Before the Secretary reads the Notice, we have set aside about an hour for the AGM, but it is not restricted to that so if you feel you have something to raise, please do.

Can I ask Mary to read the Notice to open the meeting?

(The Notice was duly read)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Are there any apologies for absence, please?

THE SECRETARY: Yes. I will read out the ones I have: Rita Fox, Joan Webb, Pauline Miller, Stephanie Stamp, Mirella Fox, Amanda Bavin, Sarah Edwards, Sandra Khan, Sharon Golder, Amanda Taylor, Lindsay Bickers, Dawn Scott, Joanne McAlister, Diana Tapper, Rebecca Roberts, Margaret Beaumont, Michelle Sowerby, Jane Norman, Laura Harrison and Paul Brincau.

That is all that I have.

THE PRESIDENT: Are there any more apologies?

(None indicated)

I will next move to the minutes of the last meeting which have already been circulated, I believe. There are a few spare copies if anyone really wants to read that tome.

THE SECRETARY: I did bring three with me. They are 79 pages long because that was the full edited transcript.

THE PRESIDENT: Are we agreed that they are agreed? *(Agreed)*

THE SECRETARY: You need to sign a copy. I will hand you one for signing. *(Handed)* Give it back to me later.

THE PRESIDENT: I will sign it.

I will start with my short address.

Welcome to the 133rd Annual General Meeting of the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters. It is so heart-warming to see so many of you here, both in person and online, given that nowadays we are all so busy and time-limited doing lots of other things.

Today is a very special day as we celebrate 150 years of BIVR. Since its inception, BIVR, in all its formations, has endeavoured to promote professional skills and standards of pen and machine writers through training, examinations and adhering to a code of ethics. This organisation has defended and will continue to defend its members from various directions or forms of attack, perceived or real, be it through the loss of government contracts, firms who outsource to other countries for transcription, or just to stenographers who come from abroad without the necessary permissions and visas.

You may ask yourselves what has been happening in the last 12 months and I hope that the newsletters have been keeping you up to date about that. The Council has been undertaking the regular work of promoting the standards of the Institute and defending against issues mentioned previously.

At last year's AGM it was decided that more information and consultation regarding the proposed merger with AVSTTR be undertaken. Following this consultation and information-sharing, the decision was taken not to hold an EGM because the offer of merger from AVSTTR had been withdrawn, therefore cancellation of the

proposed EGM saved costs and wasted journeys and people's time. However, the Council are liaising with AVSTTR so that cost savings and joint training in the future may be achieved. On that note I welcome Julia Jacobie, the chair of AVSTTR, to today's meeting and workshops.

Although there is still work out there, it has become clear over the last few years that many of our members are undertaking more and more transcription from downloads via secure internet access, whether machine or pen writers, because increasingly clients are unwilling to pay for our attendance at a venue with the associated travel and subsistence expenses. They want everything 'cheap as chips' and a faster turnaround than ever. However, they fail to realise that the digital audio option, although being less expensive, is far from perfect for the people who do the actual transcription, often not knowing who the parties or representatives are and who is speaking at a given time because of the absence of a basic log and, because of this, the resultant transcript is quite possibly not as good as they were expecting. To this end I believe that we need to keep reinforcing the fact that the presence of a court reporter is the best option but, if this is not possible, advising of best practice.

At the AGM last year it was suggested by Miriam Weisinger, director of TA Reed & Co, that a new section was needed within BIVR to help recruit, train and assess the quality of new transcribers. Of course our existing members have already been

assessed in this field so we have a number of people who would be automatically qualified already and it should not be underestimated the skill level of being able to edit a piece of text to make clear and concise sense to the reader.

Because of the lack of new steno trainees and the increasing transcription work available, the Council is in agreement that the formation of a new section is necessary and have been discussing this topic at their meetings. A lot of people in this country believe that any typist can do what we do. Yes, it is possible that they can type exactly what people say, but without the training that we have all undertaken a lot will not have an eye for the detail and understanding of what a well-crafted and edited record of the spoken word entails. It all comes down to standards and unless the Council and profession uphold and pass on those standards to new people, we will see poor English and grammar becoming the norm rather than the exception. I welcome your comments in this regard and perhaps we can have a full and frank discussion later in the meeting.

This profession is still alive and kicking in its various forms and providing a range of services to various types of clients from transcription to STTRs and captioning to StageTEXT and long may it continue to do so with the help of the membership and Council. As has been said in previous years, we need to keep adapting to changing circumstances and client requirements and embrace such changes and go with it and, in effect, lead the way. This is one of the

reasons that we have workshops today to enhance our knowledge of all things steno. We hope you will enjoy what we have to offer and take something new away with you together with the opportunity to meet and network with people whom you have not seen for some time. Please take time to view our heritage materials and both the Palan Infinity Ergo and the Luminex writers. We hope you will also be able to join us for some celebratory cake and bubbly later this afternoon.

Before closing I would like to express my thanks to you all for allowing me to serve as your President for a further term and for supporting me in office for the past year. I would like to thank all Council members, but two members of Council in particular: Leah Willersdorf, on my right, for her efficient monitoring of our Facebook page, keeping it up to date and current and highlighting all the latest news in all things steno, both serious and amusing, and Sheryll Holley on my left for being vice president for yet another year and for dealing with the Twitter accounts.

Finally I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Mary Sorene, our secretary and treasurer, for her support and guidance. Mary has been both member and member of Council for many, many years and she has been our secretary for the last 20 years. She works unstintingly for the Institute. She has been a pen writer using Pitman shorthand, is a machine writer and also a trainer at home and abroad. She is chair and Fellow of the IPS and

is on the rota to read for the IPS on Thursday evenings to provide speed ^ practise. Without her dedicated contribution to BIVR business, personally I do not believe that there would still be an Institute. The last few years have been very difficult personally for Mary to say the least, but she has never wavered in her commitment and dedication to keeping our organisation alive and moving forward. I am sure you will join me in thanking Mary, or as I like to call her "Mrs BIVR", wholeheartedly for her contributions to all things stenography over the past few years. *(Applause)* Any comments?

We need to go to the treasurer to report, please.

THE TREASURER: The treasurer's report and accounts have been sent out and I have a few here, but it is just really a question of you approving them. Does any member present have any questions, first of all, about the accounts?

JEAN GOUGH: Out of curiosity under Expenses we have got "insurance miscellaneous 447". I wondered what that was made up of?

THE TREASURER: I cannot remember, but the insurance is over £300 -- that is our public liability insurance for events such as this -- but "miscellaneous", I cannot recall what it is.

JEAN GOUGH: It says "447".

THE TREASURER: There are only so many columns across the spreadsheet and so I am afraid the "miscellaneous" goes under there. The insurance is over £300. I do not actually

remember how much it is. That is our public liability insurance that we have to have for such as these meetings and what the odd bit of miscellaneous was I cannot recall. Any other questions?

The next bit is are they adopted or effectively agreed? Can we have a show of hands for? *(Agreed)* Everybody here who is entitled to vote has voted "for".

BETTY WILLETT: Ask anybody who is Skypeing if they say no. If they agree they do not have to say anything.

THE PRESIDENT: They can hear us. Can anyone online please indicate which way you would like to vote? Are the accounts adopted or no? *(Agreed by remote attendees)*

THE TREASURER: That is the accounts accepted. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: We next move to the election to Council. That has already been agreed as there are no nominations. Can we deal with a proposal to co-opt a member to Council now?

THE SECRETARY: I do not know if anybody has been put forward?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I propose to co-opt Karen Young and Miriam.

THE PRESIDENT: Leah proposes Karen and Robyn.

ROBYN NOTT: No, I cannot do it.

THE PRESIDENT: You can do it from the floor. You would be ideal if a transcriber section comes up. That has not been

decided yet, but it would be good from an advice point of view if you could contribute. Do not feel pressured into doing it as I know you are very busy.

THE SECRETARY: We can co-opt at any time in the year.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to think about it?

JEAN LUKINS: I will second Karen Young for election to Council.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: I would like to do it because I think it is important that you get the input.

VICTORIA DAVIES: I second Miriam.

THE PRESIDENT: But you have a caveat?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Yes. I am also running the London marathon next year.

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps you could be at the meetings when you come training in London for the marathon.

BETTY WILLETT: We do not want to pressure anybody. May I suggest that Miriam is given time to reflect.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Yes, I think I would prefer that maybe. When is the next AGM going to be? Is it a year from now?

THE PRESIDENT: Not necessarily. That has got to be decided later on in the meeting.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: If it was May, then I might come on in May next year.

THE PRESIDENT: You think about it.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: I will think about it first.

THE PRESIDENT: If you do not come on, you could be consulted.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: You can still ask me any questions.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: We will.

THE PRESIDENT: I have been reminded if we can all speak one at a time. It makes us as guilty as some of our clients.

Karen, are you willing to be co-opted?

KAREN YOUNG: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think we need to vote on that because the Council can co-opt at any time.

NICOLA DUTTON: What does "co-opted" mean?

THE PRESIDENT: We just drag you on.

NICOLA DUTTON: You can become part of the Council?

THE PRESIDENT: Then the following year you are voted on. Would you like to be co-opted?

THE SECRETARY: We need time to think.

THE PRESIDENT: We have a proposal, do we?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I propose.

THE PRESIDENT: Jean, did you second?

JEAN LUKINS: Yes, I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Nicola is now co-opted. That is two. That is great. Would anybody else like to be co-opted? *(No response)*

The next part is to elect a president for the next year. Those eligible are Georgina Ford, Jean Lukins in the centre, Ian Roberts and Leah. Georgina or Ian are not here as they are working abroad at the minute. They are on Skype. Welcome, you two.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: There is a question from Victoria.

VICTORIA DAVIES: Who is Nicola?

THE PRESIDENT: Nicola Dutton. Georgina and Ian are not here as they are abroad. Jean Lukins is here and Leah is here. We can hand the voting slips out.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Georgina has said that Ian and Georgina are on the same Skype name so there are two of them there.

THE PRESIDENT: Only full members or fellows are eligible to vote. Could Skype votes be sent to Neil by messaging to ensure confidentiality? We need two tellers.

THE SECRETARY: Ian and Richard.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. That is very kind of you. If people would like to cast their votes. *(Pause for voting and counting)*

THE PRESIDENT: The votes have been counted. We are taking a record and also it is an examination so I need you to speak up loudly and one at a time. Thank you.

We have the votes in and I am pleased to announce that Leah Willersdorf will be the President. *(Applause)*

I may have to ask if Sheryll will undertake the position of vice president again for next year. Would you be willing to undertake the role again for a further 12 months?

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Yes, that is fine.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

The next item is the date of the next AGM. Has anybody got any particular date in mind? Would you prefer to go back to May/June time?

ROBYN NOTT: No, I do not think I would. It is also a busy time in May and June. May and June is a busier time than early September, I think.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anybody else have any comments?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I agree with Robyn.

ROBYN NOTT: I think it is a better time in September.

NICOLE HARRISON: I think the middle of September is better. The kids go back to school then and no one is on holiday.

THE PRESIDENT: Can we leave it to Council to finalise the date, but hopefully in September?

FRANCES DOBSON: It gives Leah a year to be President.

THE PRESIDENT: That is a very good point, yes.

FRANCES DOBSON: It takes time to settle in.

BETTY WILLETT: Do people want to circulate around the country and go somewhere north of London again, or do you prefer to stay? We seem to have more people here in London.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Every time we are in London there are more.

ROBYN NOTT: I would suggest we stay in London.

THE PRESIDENT: In York we had quite a record number last year, but I think that may have been the topic.

SANDRA EVANS: It gives the northern people a chance to get down because it is very expensive in London. Hotel accommodation is generally cheaper up north.

ROBYN NOTT: They do not come.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: A lot of people went from the south to the north last year.

THE PRESIDENT: We also had quite a number attending via Skype as well.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: That does not matter where you are then, does it? I think a lot of people from the south went to the AGM.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: At the one before in Reading

the Council nearly outnumbered the people.

BETTY WILLETT: Would you prefer to go south of London? After all, we have a president from Essex.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Australia, really.

THE PRESIDENT: I would be up for that. Could we leave it to Council to liaise re dates and venue having taken note of people's comments? *(Agreed)*

In that case we can move on to Any Other Business. As I mentioned before, there was an issue of perhaps a transcribers section. What do people think about that?

BETTY WILLETT: Transcribers and scopists.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, to encompass scopists and editors to be encompassed in one section. Robyn?

ROBYN NOTT: I think if you look at our Memorandum and Articles it says that we are a body which “promotes pen and machine shorthand”, so I do not think we can have a section which is people who are not shorthand writers. You are just thinking of transcribers who are also shorthand writers, but that is separate from having a transcribers section where you might get people who are not shorthand writers. I know that is what Miriam is saying that you need to train transcribers, but they will be not shorthand writers and that is not our responsibility as a body that promotes pen and machine shorthand. If we had not changed our name from the Institute of Shorthand Writers we would not be having this discussion because

you cannot have a section where people are not shorthand writers.

BETTY WILLETT: How do you feel about scopists not having a qualification?

ROBYN NOTT: If they are shorthand writers that is a different thing. If you open up a separate section there is the worry that in the future you are going to have scopists or transcribers who are not shorthand writers.

BETTY WILLETT: I am afraid in the future you will have that situation.

ROBYN NOTT: Not in BIVR there will not be because I do not think we should allow them.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is a very good point.

ROBYN NOTT: I am not saying that scopists or transcribers should not be trained and have some sort of body, but it should not be BIVR. There should be a new body. There is a job for you, Miriam. It should be a separate body.

THE PRESIDENT: After last year we sent out a lot of statistics. You will probably remember them coming a bit piecemeal. The problem is the membership of BIVR is reducing year-on-year. In 10 years' time I fear that there will be not be BIVR. There will be not be members of BIVR. There will be a few still going, but will there be enough to carry on through for the next 10 years? It is just something to think about.

ROBYN NOTT: You are suggesting that we bring in

non-shorthand writers into BIVR so that in 10 years' time if there are not the shorthand writers it will be a body full of tape transcribers and we will be in the minority, the shorthand writers, and then who is going to look after the profession of shorthand writers?

THE PRESIDENT: How many people are being trained to be shorthand writers?

ROBYN NOTT: That is an issue that perhaps we should encourage more trainees of shorthand writing and not be encouraging trainee tape transcribers.

THE PRESIDENT: We do and we are encouraging them. However, it is so expensive just to get your foot on the ladder and that is before you have made the basic grade.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Sam at the back, he wants to be a palantypist.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Welcome, Sam.

SAM DAVIES: It has taken me about eight years to financially be in a position where I can start looking at it, it is that expensive. Palantype, actually, is a closed book. There is nothing out there.

IAN ROBERTS: We can have a huge number of new members by having a scopist and transcriber section. We need to have all people involved in producing verbatim transcripts. BIVR is in danger of being a closed shop.

SHELLEY DUTTON: Can we do something about what

Robyn has raised? Can we change that article?

BETTY WILLETT: We can always make an amendment to our constitution. It has to be passed at an AGM.

VICTORIA DAVIES: I agree with Ian.

NATALIE BRACKEN: I was going to ask what Miriam thought about it as you are somebody who is going to need transcribers. Who were you thinking of?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Personally I think the machine/pen shorthand is a means to an end. It is the route by which you produce either something for a deaf person to read on screen at a meeting, or a transcript for someone to read either overnight or in many years to come sometimes, and it is the way in which it is produced, but it is the production of the transcripts that I think is going to be so important for clients down the road. One of the reasons transcripts are so appalling nowadays, I am afraid, is because there is no training in producing a transcript from audio.

THE PRESIDENT: Or from anything, to be honest.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: Or from anything because there is no training ground. Whether you are a machine writer or a pen writer, you probably trained originally in the Crown Court and that has gone for the last 20 years probably and there is no training field where mass numbers of people can train. That is what I think. It is the means to an end of producing what you want to read in English, whether it is machine shorthand or pen shorthand.

JEAN GOUGH: I can see how this has arisen because there is nobody out there who is able to actually define what a good transcript is, so we have almost decided that we are the people who can do that. I have not looked in the memorandum. I had not realised it was limited purely to machine or pen shorthand. Initially, until I saw Ian's comment, I was tending to go with what Robyn had thought that we need to stick to people using shorthand, but there does need to be training for people out there who are producing transcripts because otherwise one could be producing a transcript to certain guidelines and working alongside somebody who has no idea how to produce a transcript. Basically we have decided if nobody else can do it, then we would be the right body to do that. I think it would probably be a useful exercise to have a separate section.

BETTY WILLETT: Two points: I would like to think that while we have this nucleus of very experienced shorthand writers and machine writers, we could draw up a set of guidelines for scopists in particular so that we would ensure a lasting standard of how to produce a transcript. I know from personal knowledge that somebody has not come today because they think that BIVR no longer represents standards for the production of transcripts and I think we really have to get back to thinking about transcripts. It is too easy for people to say we want the transcript out tomorrow morning and you rush it, rush it, rush it and you are not doing things as you should do them. We do not do nearly the amount of editing now that we did

when I was a young shorthand writer, for example. I think we have got to start training scopists to do things properly and transcribers, I agree absolutely with Miriam, and if we do not do it, nobody else will. Next year we could make the nucleus of our AGM training scopists and transcribers.

ROBYN NOTT: Who is going to train them, Betty?

BETTY WILLETT: There must be sufficient knowledge in this room for people to ---

ROBYN NOTT: Am I going to spend my time training someone to be a tape transcriber and eventually take away a job that I might be able to do myself?

BETTY WILLETT: No. We are asking you to come along, as Jenny did many years ago, and produce a transcript on how to produce a transcript.

ROBYN NOTT: We have that, Betty. It is called the BIVR Manual. If you read that you would be able to produce a much better transcript than a lot of people do. We all give up our time to come here and I do not want to give up my time as a shorthand writer to train someone to type from a tape because that is not my job. That is Miriam's job. Miriam needs the tape transcribers.

THE PRESIDENT: You are saying you are not willing to do it.

SANDRA EVANS: I think there is a company or an association that actually does train people to be transcribers of audio.

I am afraid I do not know the name of it, but it could be that either BIVR could have a secondary part of a professional association so it is some professional, if you will, or part of BIVR, or it would be a company. As I say, this is either a training company or an association that actually trains people to do audio. Whether that would be part of BIVR, or somebody could even set up their own company or be part of a company.

IAN ROBERTS: The NCRA, which is the National Court Reporting Association in the US, is a thriving organisation in our field but in the United States. One of the reasons they are successful is that they involve all aspects of verbatim reporting, including scopists and videographers. Being frightened of change will result in the closure of BIVR in a few years when we all retire. We could also have a say in the quality of their work.

VICTORIA DAVIES: Well said.

SHELLEY DUTTON: We have the BIVR Manual but that is not available to Tom, Dick and Harry, is it?

THE PRESIDENT: Not to Tom, Dick and Harry, but it is available to download.

SHELLEY DUTTON: To someone who is not a member?

THE PRESIDENT: I think it is in the members' area.

SHELLEY DUTTON: Therefore there is no point having a manual that people who want to learn this trade cannot have

access to.

FRANCES DOBSON: I think with the changes in technology a lot of people might like to use a scopist or a real-time editor so they need to know about the technology as well as the punctuation and grammar. I think if I were to use a scopist I would probably look around BIVR membership because I know they have achieved a certain standard and they are likely to know about the technology.

There is also the thing of co-working with reporters in other countries over the internet now and that is something else. You might be co-working with a voice writer which is another area. They are using a machine -- it is just their voice -- and they are using the software.

THE PRESIDENT: It boils down to, like we said last year, as Miriam has just said, you are taking the spoken word and you are producing it on a piece of paper or on a screen. How you do it and the standards you use, because all clients have different standards. If you have a scopist, quite often they will go more real-time, contractions, dot them off, trail them off, whatever, whereas in Miriam's firm she wants a very good edited, well-crafted, no matter how you do it.

FRANCES DOBSON: Post-production is real-time.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but the standards are different for different clients' needs and that is something that also has to be

taken into account. Obviously we do not want to lose the work for the pen writers and the machine writers, but we have also got to look to the future. Is it not better that we have standards to put out there than just let anybody do it willy-nilly?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: The cost is not the only reason for clients going for digital; it is data protection. That is one of the biggest reasons for going digital is because the audio they are responsible for. You do not have someone leaving their digital somewhere. That is one of the biggest reasons for clients going to digital.

Going back to training, the BIVR Manual is okay for an experienced court reporter to produce a good transcript, but it is not good for somebody who is training, who has never ever been inside a court or a hearing room. I have a trainee who I am training in audio and expressions like "my learned friend", "burden and standard of proof", things like that, does not mean anything to Joe Public, but when you hear "burden and standard of proof" you know exactly what they are saying, even if they say it like that, it is burden and standard of proof. You just do not get it otherwise and I think we need a basic bog-standard training manual with those sorts of things in it. The next level of the BIVR manual is for when you have done some training and, as I say, people have never been inside a hearing room. Occasionally some of the transcripts I see you would think the person who had produced that from audio had never been in a hearing room

either. I have said to people when you are listening to the audio put yourselves back into the hearing room, think of what the layout of the room is and think about what you are hearing. Do not just type what you think you are hearing.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you think that the BIVR Manual and/or a transcribers section, if it comes off, should have different levels of standards? The ultimate is a transcript that has been heavily edited and beautiful to read.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: It has to be readable.

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps including what a scopist would do where they do not want that level, they want something a little bit further down; a range.

BETTY WILLETT: Before we move off this point, I do not think we have to be too complacent about the standard of existing shorthand writers. Some transcripts I have seen they have not picked up conflicts of steno or Palan because they do not read properly.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: You should see my list of conflicts. It is horrifying.

BETTY WILLETT: People no longer know how to proofread.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: No. I do not know whether they do not know, or they do not do it.

GEORGINA FORD: To be honest, the manual is not

very helpful at all. Strongly agree with Miriam.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: I agree with one phrase you used about it is not the method you use, it is the transcript that you produce at the end. I mentioned this a few months ago to one of the Council members that I have now had three different well-known clients who have contacted me and what they want is a machine writer who is manual with a paper feed, or someone like Shelley who is a pen writer. There is no backup tape, there is nothing electronic at all, and we either do the transcript where the meeting is being held or, if we take it home, we do it as a Word document and a motorcyclist comes and collects the hard copy from home. If anybody else is interested in hearing about this, what I am saying is you are quite right, if we become too inclusive and too tunnel-vision, you are right, we will not last 10 years in that way because it will become narrower and narrower. We have got to think outside the box.

RICHARD WARD: I am teaching myself stenography, but the problem I am concerned with is how to get from being a student to being a working stenographer. What other qualifications and where do I go to get those qualifications if we are told they are necessary? When I compare what is available here with when I look on the American websites, they have to go through all sorts of academics and different qualifications to be qualified, yet here the only thing I can see personally is that you just build up your speed and get 180 wpm and get your qualifications, yet once you have got that to be

a working stenographer obviously there is a lot more than that, but where do we go to get the training?

THE PRESIDENT: It is very limited. I have put one or two people on to Miriam and she has been able to help in that regard. I have got somebody else, but it is mainly on the transcription side rather than going live, where you need to cut your teeth and get the experience. That is a big problem. If anybody has got any ideas or would be willing to buddy-up with somebody like yourself.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: It is like mentoring.

THE PRESIDENT: Mentoring, but also shadowing as well. Not all the clients everyone works for will allow that, especially with the old Palan machines -- now we have the silent ones -- but they were like thunder. They used to make people literally jump when you just hit the keys. If people have got ideas, please send them forward. Let's match people up with others and try and get people like yourselves more experience in whatever field that anybody does here. I know there are Speech-to-Text Reporters here as well. There is a split of work they do.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Where do we advertise at all so that Joe Bloggs can find us, either in the telephone book which we do not have any more?

THE PRESIDENT: We have a website.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: That is our own. Nobody else knows of BIVR. People I saw this week I have just mentioned they

have not a clue. They have never even heard of the Institute.

THE SECRETARY: I get phone calls all the time, people have got on to the BIVR website looking for somebody. I am constantly telling them to go on to the reporter search -- I know it was down the other week but it is back up -- and they email people from there and they do need to have it explained to them how it works, a daily fee plus folios as opposed to a flat fee.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Could we have a section on the website that has that so you do not have to keep taking calls?

THE SECRETARY: We did try that but I am not sure how much people read it, but they certainly see that. They Google various words and up comes the BIVR website, my personal website for the training. It is out there, but I agree, and this is, I will not say it costs a lot, but it costs enough that we do not really need to start paying for adverts in magazines and what magazines would we advertise in?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Is there not a law journal that the barristers get?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, there are various journals we could advertise in, but they would charge for that. You have got to target your market. That is just a basic marketing thing where you identify your market and then you identify the medium by which you are going to get as much exposure as possible. People in schools perhaps, or maybe people going back to work after having children, or

a career break, or whatever it is.

GEORGINA FORD: The NCRA have had an advertising campaign taken out advertising to schools and to careers officers. Of course, they have a lot more money than we do.

ROBYN NOTT: The NCRA has masses more members. What is the membership? I would like to see what the membership of the shorthand writers and then the scopists and then all the other people. We are a very tiny little group and we could easily be swamped by transcribers and scopists and things like that. That is my fear.

KAREN YOUNG: I think a buddy system would be a really good idea. I speak on behalf of myself who came into STTR work two years ago and you are on your own to all intents and purposes. Sometimes I might want to say to somebody, "How do you do this?" "Can you remind me about this, or give me some advice on this?" and without Facebook, actually, and lots of pages, that has been really good. I think a buddy system, especially for you to come in with someone to a job, would be really useful.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: It also gives an incentive to say, "I want to do that".

KAREN YOUNG: Yes, because you can explain it here, but you cannot really get to grips with what it actually entails until you do are doing the job.

THE PRESIDENT: Nicola said she would be willing to

buddy up with somebody.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Georgina has come back and said that they allow scopists in as well, to Robyn.

ROBYN NOTT: Yes, but how many? Mine was the numbers. I am worried about us being swamped by transcribers and people like that. In ten years' time we will need to set up another organisation just for the shorthand writers because we will be full of transcribers and people like that.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: In ten years' time I will be 65. How many of them?

VICTORIA DAVIES: If the fear was being swamped, there could always be an article that the committee is a shorthand writer majority.

BETTY WILLETT: I was actually going to make the point that in rewriting the Memos and Arts we could say that at no point could the scopists or transcribers outnumber shorthand writers. It would be quite easy to do it that way.

NICOLE HARRISON: It would be easy to do it that way, but I also think with scopists and stuff some people might want to start doing that while they train. Going straight into shorthand writing is very expensive and very hard to get the training to start whereas, like we all said, we started in court, you did your speeds and then you were getting paid to practise basically, and now there is nothing like that for someone who wants to invest ten grand to start doing

shorthand writing. For them to start scoping to then hopefully move into it, I do not think it is a bad idea to get them in to train them, like I am sure what Miriam does, to get them to the standard that we want them, to stick them under the same area as us I do not think is a bad idea at all.

KAREN YOUNG: And lots more revenue.

NICOLE HARRISON: Lots more revenue.

KAREN YOUNG: A lot more training and workshops.

NATALIE BRACKEN: Is it a huge fear that other people here see it that it is people that are already training? There are lots of people that are not working for TA Reed, or that are not producing transcripts. You have all the court reporters that suddenly do not work at the Old Bailey or in all those other courts. Would they not be good people to train as transcribers if they were willing to? I do not see it that we would be swamped by all these millions of people coming from outside. I see it as actually existing shorthand writers training up to have a skill of being a transcriber.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is a very good point. Now we have some great transcribers who are pen writers, or machine writers, and moving over to doing that, either live or from digitally-recorded, therefore we are not going to lose anything there as they are already qualified. Let us use their experience and knowledge to actually ensure the standard of the future.

IAN ROBERTS: Scoping and transcribing would be an

ideal answer to Richard's question earlier. I am sure he will not swamp us.

GEORGINA FORD: I know a number of editors who became writers and also transcribers might well be encouraged to learn the machine.

THE PRESIDENT: Those are good points.

LOUISE PEPPER: I was thinking about what about potential members who, and I know Georgina and Ian will agree with this, people who are currently working for the big two agencies as court reporters, a lot of them do not even know that BIVR exists. A couple of us have tried to encourage some of them to come along today, but I do not think there is anyone here who is one of the agency reporters. There are so many reporters there that are really, really good reporters and at the moment they are not even aware that there is any body to be a voice for them.

THE PRESIDENT: I remember the posting that you are referring to. Thank you for promoting it as well on that particular Facebook page. They are fearful of doing an examination is the thing I got and the post I put on was, yes, you have to do a little examination but it is like your normal job. You can do it here.

LOUISE PEPPER: I do not know if I agree. I think a lot of them are such experienced, good writers that they would not worry about doing a small test. Loads of them do real-time. I think it is pure ignorance of the fact they know so little about this organisation.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Those two agencies do not promote us either so that is why they do not know about us.

LOUISE PEPPER: Of course they do not; it is not in their interests to promote us.

THE PRESIDENT: I did get in touch with people I know from the big two. One of them said, "I have been meaning to get involved and join".

LOUISE PEPPER: I was hoping to see some people here today from those big two agencies, but we all know who they are.

THE PRESIDENT: One keeps changing its name.

LOUISE PEPPER: The court reporting agencies, the two main ones in London.

SANDRA EVANS: Do we not approach companies who take on shorthand writers to join BIVR? When I started working in courts, the company that I worked for you had to be in the Association which existed at that time and you had to go into court for six months before and you had to do a test before you could be made ---

THE PRESIDENT: The problem is a lot of these contracts now do not stipulate that, whereas they did then. That is part of the problem.

SANDRA EVANS: I just thought maybe BIVR had some arrangement with companies that employ shorthand writers.

THE PRESIDENT: We have circulated to the various

companies and the Facebook page Louise was talking about today to just come in and have a piece of cake and some bubbly with us just to celebrate. Whether they join or not, it was just to make ourselves more aware, so it was a little bit of marketing.

WENDY OSMOND: It is the same point really, but is there not some way of making it worth the agencies' while to promote BIVR?

LOUISE PEPPER: That will never happen. I am telling you now, they have got those girls working under horrible conditions and they are putting them under more and more strain. It would not be in their interests if they know that they start having to adhere to better working conditions. They just do not want it because people will start sticking up for their working rights more and that is not what the agencies want. They want everybody to be over a barrel and then they can just order them around as they please, which is what they do, which is why I am trying to move away from court reporting now because I think the conditions are getting worse, the hours are getting longer, the days are getting longer, the lunch hours are getting shorter and shorter. There are lots of tribunals in places where the chairman will not even give you a break if you ask for one, judges will not give you a break if you ask for one and the agencies never want to stick up for their workers' rights. They do not want to back us up in any way shape or form. For them to encourage people to join BIVR it would be the polar opposite of what they want.

VICTORIA DAVIES: Some people will not join if they do not see any benefits. If you are getting regular money from the big two companies why would you want to join BIVR?

GEORGINA FORD: Play them off against each other. Make a BIVR certification that they can brag about for the ISO thing. That is the ISO numbers.

SHELLEY DUTTON: What is ISO?

MIRIAM WEISINGER: It is the quality assurance. It costs over £1,000.

WENDY OSMOND: Is there not something that makes it attractive?

THE PRESIDENT: You think BIVR as an organisation should go for that quality standard, or look into it?

WENDY OSMOND: I do not know about that particular standard, but whether there is something BIVR can offer these big agencies.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: It is not the agencies. The people who work for the agencies need to join BIVR as individuals and then they go to their employing agency. I now have a rough idea of who we might be talking about and they say: "We will not work for you. We have a professional qualification. I am a member of a professional body. We will not work under these conditions. You back us, or we will not work for you." If everybody, even qualified experienced verbatim reporters, said to some of these agencies, "We

are professionals, we have standards, we will not work for the money and under the conditions you are paying”, BIVR would be much stronger.

BETTY WILLETT: One of the problems is getting our examinations recognised as a national qualification. This is why we had problems with the NRCPD or whatever it is called now. The fly in the ointment as far as we are concerned is that we have no qualified assessors, which under the regulations we have to have, but we have a lady here today who we have been talking to who might be able to show us the path for some of us to get some assessors, in which case we will be able to get national qualifications recognised and our BIVR qualification will be recognised so that that will be a very good point for us to jump from.

GEORGINA FORD: As Louise said, the people from the big two are always on Facebook asking why there is not a union because they are so badly treated.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: We are the union. Not the union, but we have standards and we expect to be paid as professional people.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Have we replied to the people who are asking?

LOUISE PEPPER: Yes, I did.

LEAH WILLEERSDORF: I think they are well aware of BIVR.

LOUISE PEPPER: Following up from what Wendy said, is there not a carrot that we can dangle for the agencies? One of the agencies I worked for they did a bit of Speech-to-Text Reporting on the side, not very much. I remember when I got my NRCPD qualification I went to them and said, "Look, I am on the register. I am registered, so if any of your clients are interested it might be a plus point we can offer, saying this person is registered." They could not have cared less. I do not think they even knew what it was. They went, "Oh, okay".

THE PRESIDENT: It is part of the apathy that has reduced the number of trainees into the profession.

LOUISE PEPPER: The agencies are not taking on any new trainees either.

FRANCES DOBSON: BIVR does not actually need an assessor within BIVR because any assessor who is qualified can assess another subject.

BETTY WILLETT: That is the point I am making. We cannot get an assessor's course to do. You do not take an assessor's course in shorthand writing; you take an assessor's course, full stop, but we cannot find one in the area that we can do.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is what she means.

BETTY WILLETT: You tell us where we can find the course. They do not exist.

FRANCES DOBSON: There are lots of assessor

courses in colleges of further education.

THE PRESIDENT: We have offers of people willing to undertake these courses, so if you could let us know.

FRANCES DOBSON: You do not actually need an assessor within BIVR to assess the standard.

THE PRESIDENT: It would be better, would it not?

FRANCES DOBSON: Would it? If they are independent and impartial, if you have a curriculum that says this is the standard.

BETTY WILLETT: Frances, we have been through this. We went through this with what was the RNID and they provided the assessors and they had no idea what they were looking for; absolutely no idea.

THE PRESIDENT: Because this area is quite specialised, personally I think it would be better to have someone with that experience perhaps alongside another one. Jean will remember doing that a couple of years ago with someone from the deaf side and herself and Betty doing one.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Can we just have a recap. One or two people are struggling to recap about the assessor point. We are saying that there are no assessors. It is difficult to get assessors because Éilis has said she has found it very difficult to find an assessor to assess at 180 wpm.

NICOLE HARRISON: I would like to put myself forward

as I would like to be an assessor for this. I know you can do the assessor job and go anywhere and be an assessor for any field, but I would like to put myself forward and become an assessor.

BETTY WILLETT: I hope you find it because Brighton College is the one I go to and they stopped doing their assessors courses four years ago and they no longer do them with the cuts.

NICOLE HARRISON: That is one thing I want to look into to do, obviously if I can find it to do.

FRANCES DOBSON: I will send through the details.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. That would be really helpful.

JULIA JACOBIE: I found details of an assessor's course some time ago of about £700.

NICOLE HARRISON: It was expensive. I do remember seeing something, I cannot remember when, but it was expensive.

THE PRESIDENT: We have had everybody's comments. Anything finally to wrap up on this?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I do not know if you remember, but a while ago I did an interview for whatpeopledo.com, but that woman, I cannot even access it now because she was doing that for a reason. It is now a website for I can only go in, it is hard to explain. I could only access the website if I was registered to her as BIVR because she now advertises to students, and so my profile is on

there as a Court Reporter Stenographer. If they were interested in that, I think we could approach them again and just say 'hello'.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

LOUISE PEPPER: One other point, talking about qualifications and trying to get people in from the agencies without having to hark on constantly about the same thing, you know that the agencies, or one in particular that I worked for, they have got their own internal in-house qualifications and they really big those up and I think they have kind of convinced their subcontractors that they are more important than they are. Once they have got their own real-time status qualification that is their in-house one, that is all they need and I think they are institutionalised completely.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: They are in a bubble.

LOUISE PEPPER: They need to get out of that mind set, I think.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Also they need to realise that there is a lot more than the two.

ROBYN NOTT: And that they will get better pay somewhere else, which is why the agencies do not want them to be mixing with us finding out how much we all earn and what jobs there are and then they will all be off somewhere else.

LOUISE PEPPER: I do not think it is the money so much as the conditions. I had no issues usually. Sometimes there were issues with money, but without going into the details I do not

think overall it is how much people are getting paid, it is more the conditions they are expected to work under and the fact that they do not realise there is anything else. For myself personally I think I was becoming a bit institutionalised and I have moved away from that and now I am doing Speech-to-Text as well as some court reporting for different places. It is like a whole new world has opened up. I had no idea there were so many other options available and that is what they need to know, which they do not.

BETTY WILLETT: Could I propose that the Council takes everything that has been said on board and considers it over the next few months and the Chair can write a report back to you and come up with something.

THE PRESIDENT: Perhaps get some questions going on the forum as well as people have more points to raise. Put it on the forum or send it to Mary just so that it can be aired more fully, or to see if a way forward can be found.

IAN ROBERTS: Are we still talking about widening our membership pool? If so, I would like to propose a vote that we look into this properly with a view to putting a detailed proposal for a final decision to the membership in the future.

JOANNE NAUGHTON: I agree, Ian.

VICTORIA DAVIES: I agree, Ian, as well.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is quite a sensible point to put the positives and the not-so-positive points of view forward and

then present it to the membership so that they can look at it side by side, particularly those people who are not here today or online. I think that is perhaps a good way forward and get the discussion going more. Also, perhaps from Richard and Ian, if you could put your point of view across, or ask for help. Ask for help saying, “I want to go out and I want a bit of experience. What can you do for me?” Then at least we could say to the doubting Thomases “This is what BIVR did for me”, because I get that all the time, “What does BIVR do for me?”

KAREN YOUNG: I think a buddy system would be a really good idea.

THE PRESIDENT: We have one already.

LOUISE PEPPER: I think it is a good idea but I also think are we not all like buddies already really?

KAREN YOUNG: We are, but we are all experienced.

LOUISE PEPPER: If we have questions we all know each other and any of us can ring anybody else up.

NICOLE HARRISON: It is for the new people coming in.

THE PRESIDENT: You have just made a new buddy. We have just buddied you two together today. You have gelled very nicely.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Quite a few years ago I suggested a buddy system and I actually emailed out to everybody

and I had one response to say yes, I would not mind becoming a buddy.

THE PRESIDENT: Sometimes it takes a few prompts and a few reminders and eventually the penny will drop. It is getting there now.

NICOLE HARRISON: Maybe call yourself a champion instead of a buddy, or a mentor, so you are 'mentoring' someone because that sounds much more professional than a buddy.

THE SECRETARY: Some months back I did email people that a trainee lawyer approached me to have trainee stenographers go along to their mock trials. Nobody took it up. He did not give us much notice but I will get in touch with him again to see if he is running these.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know how much time you have to go to something like that but I am sure the experience will be invaluable for you.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: Did you let us know, Mary?

THE SECRETARY: It went out on the Forum, if not the Forum, in Facebook and in the newsletter.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: The only way at the moment we are training transcribers is a buddy system and it is mainly experienced shorthand writers training their daughters.

THE PRESIDENT: It is a start.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: It is a start. We have had three

and they are trainees still, but that is the way in which it works. One-to-one training is really the only way at the moment because you cannot go to a hearing, a big group of you, and learn. That is the best way at the moment, a buddy training.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Getting back to people knowing about BIVR, you know the ETC venues in the IDRC, would it be worth putting BIVR pamphlets there?

THE PRESIDENT: We have thought about that before. Is it allowed?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: We could ask. We do not just pop them there.

BETTY WILLETT: Are people still putting their name on the back of their computers?

THE PRESIDENT: We have got the nameplates that go out every year with the membership and people ask you, "What does 'QRR' mean?" You get into a dialogue with people and they say, "How does your machine work?" and "How does that work?" You get into a dialogue with them and you start training them and then you can explain to them what we do, what the standard is and it goes on from there.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: The next question after that is, "Where can I go to learn it?" and what is the answer to that?

THE PRESIDENT: Mary. Mrs BIVR.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: On the whole they have gone.

THE SECRETARY: In this country I am the only one doing any training. There is online training from America, of course.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG: I am often asked, “Where did you learn to do that?”

THE SECRETARY: I get a lot of enquiries.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I get receptionists at depositions asking.

NATALIE BRACKEN: Talking about buddy systems, that is a brilliant idea. I remember going into court at maybe 90 wpm or something and just getting the answers, it was so fast and everything, but that was quite a good way to get your confidence up. Maybe the guys here, because I know one is from Nottingham, I think, maybe you can try and contact people and use the BIVR name and say, “I am a BIVR member and can I come along to your meeting?” rather than there being two people in a meeting that you find your own meetings to go to and get the experience.

THE PRESIDENT: I did get in touch with the University of the Third Age and they put on a lot of talks for people who, because they are early retirees or retired people, some of them have got hearing loss, or are just hard of hearing, and that is actually a good place to go because you can ask the speaker to give you the speech or a list of words and you can go and practise that for nothing. You have to get permission from them, of course, but it is just another venue perhaps that might be more convenient to you in your work

situations.

LOUISE PEPPER: Is there not a Crown Court in Nottingham and you can sit in the public gallery?

THE PRESIDENT: You can but I am not sure you would take it on board in the same way.

ROBYN NOTT: I do not think you would be allowed to take a note.

LOUISE PEPPER: The press are allowed in the public gallery.

VICTORIA DAVIES: Please do not be a cut-price STTR. That is the only warning.

THE PRESIDENT: I quite agree, but I do not think they would pay anyway. You can do it for a certain number of sessions. You would have to narrow it down so you do not undercut other people. It is just a suggestion perhaps, or a Church service or something like that, I do not know. Can we leave that as a proposition that Betty has put forward?

FRANCES DOBSON: Can I bring back about the transcription aspect. I know when I trained I was six months as an apprentice with Jenny Chandler. She looked at every transcript every day, went through it all, told me why something did or did not have a comma. That kind of valuable training, I do not know whether that is there any more.

THE PRESIDENT: I do not know if people have time

any more. I know Miriam tears her hair out.

FRANCES DOBSON: It is one thing learning the machine and it is another thing doing the transcript.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, it is a double skill and each is as important as the other and I think a lot of people forget that. Mary told me that when I joined BIVR years ago. She said that is a skill in its own right.

FRANCES DOBSON: The end product.

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. You can be as fast as you like, but if it does not make sense or it is not easy to read...

FRANCES DOBSON: You need quite a lot of experience transcribing.

RICHARD WARD: Again, that is the kind of training. I am saying how do we get that kind of training as well, transcription format? You are only getting that through a buddy system.

THE PRESIDENT: You need to approach Miriam and I know someone else, another firm who you might be interested in, so I will forward that. I will chat with you about that. I do not think it is set up quite the way Miriam has it now. Let us get you going and get you some experience, whatever it be.

Is there anything else anybody else wants to mention? There is nothing online, is there? Any other business?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I do not know if it is a big thing, it is just the logo. I know I forever go on about the logo on

Council, but it just says 'BIVR'. Only we know what that means, nobody else. The old one actually said 'British Institute of Verbatim Reporters' with 'BIVR' in the middle. I think it needs to have those words in there somewhere, whether it is across the top, or small, that will look rather ugly.

THE PRESIDENT: As you are now the President, why don't you bring that up at Council and throw it out there and maybe come up with a different idea so that it becomes more obvious what it is, Leah?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I actually Googled 'BIVR' and we are not the only thing; there are a few antibiotics that are this long.
(Indicated)

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Perhaps people can email pictures and ideas and that kind of thing, have a debate on Facebook.

ROBYN NOTT: What BIVR stands for on my letterhead, I am 'MBIVR' and underneath 'Member of the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters'.

IAN ROBERTS: Can I re-suggest the vote I mentioned earlier so we can have something concrete that does not go adrift?

VICTORIA DAVIES: I second it.

JOANNE NAUGHTON: I agree.

NICOLE HARRISON: What was his proposal?

SHERYLL HOLLEY: The proposal is to vote that we look into this properly with a view to a putting a detailed proposal for

a final decision to the membership in the future and I think that was the assessors.

NICOLE HARRISON: I think widening the membership pool.

BETTY WILLETT: I think the existing President has already said that that will be done.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Yes, that will be done, Ian.

(Two guests entered the room)

THE PRESIDENT: This is one from the big two and a lady who would like to train, Emma.

(General words of greeting)

THE PRESIDENT: Is there anything anybody else would like to raise?

JEAN LUKINS: I wanted to say finally that I hope next year we can continue to look at the difficulties that might be faced by reporters coming to the UK and qualify, that we can address that on a voluntary basis.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: We will.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I mention one thing really briefly. We have been approached by somebody who is moving to Holland from the US and his partner or wife is Dutch and he wants to join BIVR. He qualified in the US, he has an RPR, but he is going to be living in Holland.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: There are also a number of

other reporters from the US coming here. One woman I know is getting married to a Brit, but there are other US reporters who are coming into England willy-nilly and just taking our work and that is not on.

SANDRA EVANS: If we cannot train anybody, if the colleges do not teach it and we have nobody learning it and there is more work.

THE PRESIDENT: The Council is looking into putting advice on the website saying you need to have this, this and this.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: It is fine if they have a visa, but if they do not have the visas then it is illegal and it is taking our work and I am not happy.

BETTY WILLETT: We did have a ruling from the Home Office on this on one occasion. I think it is about time we renewed it.

THE PRESIDENT: I think it went out in one of the newsletters recently -- certainly this year -- that we did hear that somebody had assisted someone who had come in, "Oh, I am just going to a meeting". It was not just a meeting and they were working as a Court Reporter at a meeting and somebody assisted them with extra iPads or extra computers and stuff like that. They could have really dropped themselves in it.

LOUISE PEPPER: Is it the case that some of the American attorneys are bringing their own reporters over here?

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Not necessarily, but it does

happen.

BETTY WILLETT: This has been going on for years.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Because they think there are no competent deposition reporters here. That might have been the case ten or 15 years ago.

ROBYN NOTT: Initially there were not enough real-time writers.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: I had one woman asking me a question and I went on and on and I said we have proficient deposition reporters. I did go on and on and she did not even thank me for giving her the information and then sends me a friend request on Facebook? No.

THE PRESIDENT: The issue is partly also do we admit that person to membership if they are living in Holland?

FRANCES DOBSON: They would be entitled to work here anyway.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: Would they?

THE PRESIDENT: If they have got the permits and visas, etcetera, they would from that, but how do we admit them into membership of BIVR, if at all?

ROBYN NOTT: Being a member of BIVR is not the same as being able to work. We have got members of BIVR who are not even in England. They could be members of BIVR but not work.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, we have, but they have

originated from here.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: We have to stress to these people that I personally think they cannot become a member of BIVR until they are living wherever they are living and provide us with that document, otherwise they are going to say, "I am a member of BIVR, let me in".

THE PRESIDENT: Then the floodgates will open.

ROBYN NOTT: No, being a member of BIVR does not entitle you to work.

LEAH WILLERSDORF: We know that but they do not. They might think that gives them a gold star.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: I think it all goes back to the qualifications and the training. If they are living in Europe you will probably find the transfer of whatever -- it is one of the EU directives -- the same as doctors/dentists trained in another European country with a qualification recognised by another European country can come here. It goes back to we have no recognised national qualification. I think if we can get that then you might take care of people ---

BETTY WILLETT: We are back to the assessors again.

MIRIAM WEISINGER: It is a circular argument.

VICTORIA DAVIES: Re Sandra's comment, it is not a lack of bodies.

IAN ROBERTS: I agree, Victoria. A returning job we

are doing is going to be sitting in Miami in a couple of months and we would not dream of doing it. I would hope they would extend us the same courtesy.

GEORGINA FORD: The NCRA exams will shortly be available online. I would encourage our members to take them.

NICOLE HARRISON: In the States if you have an RPR -- each State is different, tests differently -- you can then, if you have the RPR, work in another State until you take that State test, but there is a limitation. If the tests are twice a year you have a limit. You have to pass within that year, or you have to stop.

BETTY WILLETT: The same would apply. The qualification that you have from the NCRA still does not give you a visa to work in America and we would not be allowed to do it even if we were members of the American body.

THE PRESIDENT: No, they would still have to have the permits and visas.

NATALIE BRACKEN: With some of the Speech-to-Text agencies that we do work for we have to prove who we are. I have had to do a Skype thing where I have had to show my passport. There are a couple of agencies in particular, big deaf organisations, we had to actually prove who we are. Then it is not really fair that you have other people from other countries, even if they are Europeans, that are allowed to come and do court reporting work.

THE PRESIDENT: The European thing we cannot get

out of.

NATALIE BRACKEN: How does that work with Speech-to-Text? We have all had people recently where we have to prove who we are, that we have the right to live here and that I am who I say I am and with a British passport.

JEAN LUKINS: Just a thought: the notion that you have got an RPR and therefore can work until you have the State test like Florida or New York, maybe we could do a State test and something like that so that we can tinker with it. It is rather like having a baccalaureate instead of three A-levels.

THE PRESIDENT: You are saying basically the Council should review the syllabus and exams and the training.

IAN ROBERTS: The NCRA exams so we can demonstrate to the US attorneys that we are able to do their depositions. Most of our work is in the EU totally legally and there would be nothing to stop EU citizens who are reporters working in the UK.

JEAN GOUGH: What Natalie was saying about several agencies asking us to prove who we are and that we are entitled to work in this country, I think that is probably an HMRC requirement, or that is what they said.

NATALIE BRACKEN: Would that apply to court reporters then as well?

JEAN GOUGH: That is the excuse of the agencies.

BETTY WILLETT: We should be aware of health and safety. Our reporter here doing the note has now been taking for one hour 40 minutes without a break. We have either got to have a break and continue this discussion, or wind it up in the next ten minutes.

FRANCES DOBSON: I can think of one firm and I challenged them about an American reporter coming over and they said they had applied to the Home Office and they had okayed it.

THE PRESIDENT: It needs clarifying and putting on the website.

KAREN YOUNG: Can you clarify the position in relation to registration of Speech-to-Text Reporters?

THE PRESIDENT: I think Julia would have to help you there.

JULIA JACOBIE: At the moment there is no way to register, but they are working on it.

SANDRA EVANS: On the amount of shorthand writers that Victoria said, when I first started shorthand writing I think there were about 850, or maybe more, in the country and, okay, that will be pen writers, and Mary can perhaps say how many pen writers there are now in the country, but there are certainly a lot less than there were.

THE SECRETARY: I think our membership has about 50 or so, I cannot remember. Membership of the Institute was well over 400. Every court was covered by an Institute member and as it

gradually went down we are now at about 130 members.

VICTORIA DAVIES: Can I clarify my point that I was meaning in this context that there is no need for Americans to come over doing depts because there are the bodies here. I did not mean shorthand writers in general; I meant people capable of doing that work.

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is what we understood you meant.

LOUISE PEPPER: I wanted to ask quickly, and I am sorry if we have covered this earlier when Robyn was talking about who we allow in and should we have separate sections, etcetera, what about the editors who work for the writers who work for the agencies? Is that encompassed within that?

THE PRESIDENT: Instead of having different categories we put them all in one because they are editors at the end of the day whether they are live or transcribing.

LOUISE PEPPER: They can be members?

THE PRESIDENT: I think that is what needs to be decided next year.

ROBYN NOTT: Or some separate section.

THE PRESIDENT: I think it needs more discussion.

LOUISE PEPPER: It needs some clarification.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. Get on the Forum or the Facebook site. We have to call a break as Ann has been going for

a long time.

LEAH WILLERESDORF: Well done, Ann. (*Applause*)

(Short break)

THE PRESIDENT: We are just going to finish our meeting. Kath, I did not hear what you said?

KATH SYKES: It was whether you have been receiving my messages throughout the meeting?

THE PRESIDENT: I do not think we have.

KATH SYKES: I have been saying I agree with various people. The messages are all appearing on my screen but nobody has been repeating them. It is all right. I just wanted everyone to be aware that I have been contributing.

SHERYLL HOLLEY: Kath, I think you have been sending messages to yourself. You have done direct messages. You have not gone onto the group message which is why your things have not come up. On the group messages everyone can see everybody else's. I think you have replied on your own one.

THE PRESIDENT: There is just one final matter and it is a proposal I would like to put forward and I am hoping everyone is going to agree with me that it is appropriate that we do this at this stage.

The Council have deemed it appropriate to award Mary this year with the award of Honorary Fellow of the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters. To this end I would like to call upon

Betty Willett, also a Fellow and Honorary Member, and an 'old girl', as she calls herself, to make a presentation to Mary. I am sure you will agree that this is a small token of our appreciation for what Mary has undertaken for the Institute. However, we do have a slight problem in that Mary holds the certificates and to make this a surprise we could not ask her for one.

THE SECRETARY: Yes, it was a surprise.

(Applause)

SHERYLL HOLLEY: The remote guys say "Congratulations Mary", and everyone says "ditto".

THE PRESIDENT: Over to Betty, who will just complete this for us.

BETTY WILLETT: I have a very pleasant task to perform this afternoon and when finally I come to put the proposal that Susan has mentioned and I am going to put to you, I hope you will be able to do it wholeheartedly and accept it.

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I am going to talk to you about Mary, our very hardworking secretary, treasurer, newsletter editor and events' organiser. What we would do without her if she decided to escape to the continent I cannot think. We would be in a right pickle.

I first met Mary many years ago when she worked at the Old Bailey and she became a member in 1977 in an organisation that did not previously encourage people to become members of BIVR --

we were the Institute in those days -- and at a time when competitive tendering was first rearing its head she was persuaded to join the Council.

From the start she showed a propensity to volunteer to do things, something very rare in voluntary organisations. Later, when competitive tendering completely changed the face of our profession, Mary was successful in gaining a contract to supply the reporters in a small court complex in suburban London where she worked alongside a stalwart of the profession at that time, Mabel Bullock, whom some of you may remember. She was old even when I was young.

As Secretary, Mary has changed our AGM from a very boring 45-minute meeting on Monday morning at the High Court in London to what is now a full day's meeting visiting various towns in England where, as well as normal AGM business, we also offer training, examinations in fields that would never have been thought of years ago, and also demonstrations and exhibitions. Outstanding in the field of exhibitions was that of our heritage where Mary, ably supported by her husband, Raymond, put together a wonderful display dating back over a hundred years.

We must not forget Raymond in our tribute to Mary because he was a magnificent back-up to her and his photographic skills have been responsible for our increasing archives of BIVR history. Sadly, Raymond passed away very recently and times are a

little difficult for her, but she has had great support from everybody around this room.

It is fitting that in this 150th year since BIVR was founded -- under a completely different name, but still with the same ethos -- that I put the following proposal to you:

That, with immediate effect, Mary should become an Honorary Member of BIVR, a very small group of people. I cannot call it 'select' because I am one of them, and I am certainly not select. I am going to break with tradition. I am not going to ask for those for, I am going to ask if anyone is against that proposition? *(None)*

Are there any abstentions? *(None)*

If not, I am going to ask you to give me a resounding "Aye" if you agree with the proposal.

May I ask, do you agree?

ALL: *Aye! (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Those online?

ALL ONLINE: *Aye! (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you to everybody online and Betty for that. We will close the meeting at 4:10 pm. Thank you, once again, and we will have cake and bubbly and we send it virtually to you.

THE SECRETARY: May I just say thank you very much. I am overwhelmed. *(Applause)*

(The meeting was concluded at 4:10 pm)