



# District Council Meeting Minutes

Saturday 16th September 2023 Online

No.	Item		
1 & 2	<p><b>Welcome, Introduction and District Mission</b></p> <p>DD Diane opened the meeting and welcomed District Council Members to the first meeting of the 2023-2024 Toastmasters year. DD Diane reminded members that the Council serves as the administrative governing body of District 91 and as such is responsible for conducting and approving the business of the District.</p> <p>DD Diane reminded members that the DC comprises:</p> <p>The District Leadership Team (DLT): (the District Director, Programme Quality Director, Club Growth Director, District Finance Manager, PR Manager, Administration Manager and the Immediate Past District Director), plus</p> <p>Division Directors, Area Directors, Club Presidents and Club Vice Presidents Education</p> <p>DD Diane explained the etiquette of using the Zoom platform and the voting procedure.</p> <p>DD Diane called upon Division H Director, Guler Cortis to repeat the District Mission:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.”</i></p> <p>And the Toastmasters International Mission:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.”</i></p> <p>DD Diane introduced the members of the District Leadership Team, members supporting the meeting, VIPs and Past District Directors (PDD)</p> <p>Immediate Past District Director (IPDD): Rupa Datta</p> <p>District Finance Manager (FM): Valerija Slavina</p> <p>District Administration Manager (AM): DTM Aayushi Jain</p> <p>District Public Relations Manager (PRM): DTM Nikita Parks</p> <p>Club Growth Director (CGD): Mo Dawodu</p> <p>Program Quality Director (PQD): DTM Steve Vear MBE</p> <p>Parliamentarian: Past Division K Director, DTM Rose Nakibirango</p> <p>Credentials Chair: Past District Administration Manager, Emily McQuillen</p> <p>Technical Support: Alistair Driscoll, Patrick Thomas and Grace Neetham</p> <p>We are also joined by Past District Governor, DTM Freddie Daniels, Past District Directors, all of whom are DTMs: Andy Hammond, Florian Bay and Helena Boden-Brewer.</p> <p>Also joining us is Hazel Mascarenhas, the current District 68 Director.</p> <p>AM Aayushi shared the following apologies received prior to the registration deadline.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="199 2011 1509 2092"> <tr> <td data-bbox="199 2011 853 2092">Sarah McGuire   Club VPE</td> <td data-bbox="853 2011 1509 2092">Jacqueline Omoregie   Club President</td> </tr> </table>	Sarah McGuire   Club VPE	Jacqueline Omoregie   Club President
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Antonio Salituro   Club President	Giles Robinson   Club VPE
Heidi-Marie Pocock   Club President	Julia Meister   Club VPE
Ralf Sfeir   Club VPE	Paula Coutts   Club President
Kay Zhang   Club President	Britta Siggelkow   Club VPE
Janet Milnes   Club VPE	Richard Sharkey   Club President
Caroline Arthur   Club President	Urszula Kaczorowska   Club President
Marta Gocek   Club VPE	Michelle Harbord   Club President
Marta Gocek   Area Director, H37	Jo Tory   Club VPE
Jon Collin   Club VPE	Nik Moore   Club President
Janet Bramwell   Club VPE	Janet Alkema   Club VPE
Daniel Burke   Club President	Jilly Moss   Club President

DD Diane called for acknowledgement of members who have passed since the last Council meeting in May 2023:

- DTM Steve Birch, of Worcester Speakers, Malvern Speakers, Wye Knot Speakers and former Division Director, and Speechcraft coordinator.
- Bill Leach, member of Arun Speakers since November 2006 and Past Club President
- Alan Thomas (1928-2023): A Toastmasters Legend

of Alan Thomas on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023, aged 95:

Alan had originally joined Toastmasters whilst working at St. John's University in New York.

Throughout his life, Alan pursued knowledge relentlessly, earning multiple degrees and diplomas. He became a master of storytelling and an Associate Professor in thesaurus construction.

In the mid-2000s, even after retiring, Alan refused to rest on his laurels. He embraced the joy of human interaction and sought to enhance his public speaking skills, becoming a very active member of Grosvenor Square Speakers earning his Advanced Communicator Silver and Gold Awards. With a little encouragement he took on the role of President at the relaunched St Paul's Speakers in 2009. He continued to support Grosvenor Square Speakers, especially during Covid, and even travelled in from Oxford to visit the club in person when we resumed face to face meetings in 2021.

If anyone knows of any other District 91 member who has passed away since May this year, please raise your hand and wait to be recognised.

DD Diane requested a moment of silence to reflect on those people who have crossed our lives and added something special.

### 3 Explanation of the Meeting Protocol and Review of the Agenda

DD Diane explained the general protocol of the meeting. Then, to ensure the smooth running of the voting process DD Diane raised the following motion and called for objections to it:

*I move that complaints during the formal voting related to non-working links will not be investigated and any votes missing due to technical problems lying on the voter's end will not be cast.*

There were no objections and the motion was agreed by unanimous consent.

The meeting agenda was adopted by unanimous consent of the Council.

<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Credentials Committee Report</b></p> <p>CC Emily gave the credentials report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clubs in Good Standing: 169</li> <li>● Total DEC members: 49</li> <li>● One third (1/3) of all Club Presidents &amp; Vice-Presidents Education in the District shall</li> <li>● constitute a quorum = 111</li> <li>● 193 Presidents and VPEs and</li> <li>● 46 DEC members registered by 6pm 14 September 2023</li> <li>● Total votes available to be cast: 228</li> </ul> <p>CC Emily confirmed the meeting was quorate</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Acceptance of Minutes of 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023 Council Meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes from the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were adopted by unanimous consent of the Council.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Confirmation of appointed District Officers</b></p> <p>The following appointments were agreed by the Council by unanimous consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public Relations Manager – DTM Nikita Parks</li> <li>● Finance Manager – Valerija Slavina</li> <li>● Administration Manager – DTM Aayushi Jain</li> <li>● Area Director – A1 George Weller</li> <li>● Area Director – A17 Pawar Pallavi</li> <li>● Area Director – A46 Bradley Courage</li> <li>● Area Director – A62 Veronika Frydrychova</li> <li>● Area Director – B6 Chris Jolly</li> <li>● Area Director – B8 Audrey Graham</li> <li>● Area Director – B9 Natalie Kay</li> <li>● Area Director – B18 Marijana Bosnjak</li> <li>● Area Director – B52 Rafal Jablonski</li> <li>● Area Director - C5 Greg Smith</li> <li>● Area Director – C34 Ranjith Shergill</li> <li>● Area Director – C58 Ranjitha Justin</li> <li>● Area Director - D14 Patrick Thomas</li> <li>● Area Director – D21 Tracey Rogers</li> <li>● Area Director – H15 Pearl Cadogan</li> <li>● Area Director – H32 Rachel Norris</li> <li>● Area Director – J11 John Christie</li> <li>● Area Director – K3 Apoorva Agarwal</li> <li>● Area Director – K13 Tina Plamadeala</li> <li>● Area Director – K31 Kalyani Rishabh</li> <li>● Area Director – L16 Mohammed Al Bayati</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Area Director – L47 Charlotte Malmberg</li> <li>● Area Director – L61 Jesus Parada-Rivero</li> </ul> <p>DD Diane called for the approval of the above appointments. There were no objections and the appointments were approved by unanimous consent.</p>
7	<p><b>Year End Finance Report 2022/23 and Audit Report</b></p> <p>Immediate Past District Finance Manager Eddy provided an update on the 2022/23 Year End Finance and Audit Report. The full reports are published in the District Council pack.</p> <p>Audit Report: District 91 was selected to be externally audited. It went well and there were no follow-up queries from the external auditors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Claims were well organised which represented an improvement over the mid-year audit.</li> <li>● Recommendations of the Audit Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To ensure that the new District officers are sufficiently trained on Concur and the financial systems.</li> <li>○ Concur claims to be submitted in a timely manner and queries responded to promptly by the claimants.</li> <li>○ The auditors to be given access and shown where to retrieve information such as incentive records and invoices.</li> <li>○ More assistance from the outgoing Audit team to the incoming one to shorten the learning curve.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>District Year End Finance Report highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We began the year with a planned revenue of £108.5k against an expected budget of £106.5k</li> <li>● Revenue came in at £97.9k, in part as a result of £18.6k shortfall from the annual conference.</li> <li>● Membership revenue good at £75.5k in total for the year.</li> <li>● Overall spending lower than expected at £82.1k</li> <li>● We had a higher net income of £15.8k compared to £14.2k the previous year.</li> <li>● District reserves continue to be robust and sustainable for another year.</li> </ul>
8	<p><b>2023-24 Presentation of District Success Plan</b></p> <p>The full District Success Plan is published in the District Council Pack</p> <p>Highlights from CGD Mo Dawodu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To achieve 8% net membership payment growth equating to 9,388 payments by end June 2024</li> <li>● Focus is on recognising and copying the excellence of successful clubs.</li> <li>● 55 clubs have 30+ members</li> <li>● To support the efforts of lower member clubs with training, incentives and club coaches.</li> <li>● To achieve minimum 5% net club growth equating to 176 clubs by end June 2024</li> </ul> <p>Following the report there was a question from the floor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What plans do we have for the Channel Islands?</li> <li>● CGD Mo replied that we have received one lead from Gonzi which is being followed up to evaluate the feasibility of a club there, or create an online one.</li> </ul>

	<p>Highlights from PQD Steve Vear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To repeat the success of last year's 'Stroll to Smedley' campaign and calling it 'Stroll BACK to Smedley' by</li> <li>● Ongoing support and promotion of Pathways led by Pathways Lead, Juli Champman</li> <li>● Focusing on recognition and awards for achievements in club officer training and education awards gained.</li> </ul> <p>There were no further questions or objections to the District Success Plan and DD Diane declared its adoption by unanimous consent.</p>
9	<p><b>2023-24 Approval of District Budget</b></p> <p>DD Diane called upon FM Val to present the 2023-24 District Budget. The full report is in the DC pack. The following are highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reminder for any new Presidents and VPEs of revenue and expenses</li> <li>● Increase in membership fees to \$60 per 6 months</li> <li>● Fees go direct to Toastmasters International. We receive 25% back.</li> <li>● We have more expenses than revenue</li> <li>● Other revenue comes from the conference and other fundraising, such as charging for Division contests</li> <li>● We're planning marketing activities to build membership</li> </ul> <p>Questions were raised from the floor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marijana Bosniak B18 Area Director: Will upcoming tax changes affect club operations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FM Val replied that we are seeking clarification on what is exempt. Currently Pathways and membership fees are exempt, yet to be confirmed is whether the new joiners fee will remain the same.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Olga Galaiko C2 Area Director: Could we spend less on tools (PR and Admin costs) and more on marketing and promotion campaigns? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FM Val replied that, yes we are trying to reduce our admin costs in terms of print materials. In addition our new PRM Nikita is working on making our website function correctly and securely in order to have more marketing and promotional campaigns. These will be targeted towards our existing members and the recruitment of new ones.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Mohammed Al Bayati L16 Area Director: How can Area Directors claim expenses while undertaking their role? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FM Val replied that Area Directors have their own budget for the year and the limitations are stated in the Finance Guide. You can claim valid expenses through the Concur system.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Andy Hammond Past DD and VPE Arun Speakers: Could we have a copy of the summary spreadsheet? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ DD Diane replied that it would be sent out. (And later added it in the Chat function.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Simon Toon President of Berkhamstead Speakers: Our external marketing expenses are £5,380 lower than last years £5,965 so how does this align with projected club growth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FM Val replied that we have reduced our interactions with external marketing, but this will not negatively impact the quality of the service, which will be in line with the plan for club growth.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Ranjitha Justin C58 Area Director: Has charging for Division contests been successful?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o DD Diane replied that it had been successful and several divisions had held profitable events. The amounts will be circulated in the briefing pack on contests which will be coming out later in the year.</li> <li>● Rivana Ahmed VPE Hod Speakers: Could FM Val please give examples of external marketing outside of Toastmasters? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o FM Val replied: 1. we are working on rebuilding our website to be able to market information to existing members as well as new ones and, 2. We use an external marketing agency called Pan Pacific to write articles which are distributed into magazines and other websites across UK and Ireland to raise the profile of Toastmasters and to receive enquiries for new members and new clubs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>DD Diane proposed that the District Budget for the 2023-24 Programme Year be adopted. There were no objections and DD Diane declared its approval by unanimous consent.</p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Division Director &amp; District Leadership Team Reports</b></p> <p>There followed reports by the eight Division Directors and the District Leadership Team. Full details are included in the District Council pack.</p> <p>Division A      Andrea Righi  Division B      Luca Graziani  Division C      Erika Oteri  Division D      Tom Bailey  Division H      Guler Cortis  Division J      DTM Andy Hessey  Division K      Nick Ronald  Division L      Sean Dean</p> <p>Immediate Past District Director (IPDD) - Rupa Datta  Public Relations Manager (PRM) - DTM Nikita Parks  Club Growth Director (CGD) – Mo Dawodu  Programme Quality Director (PQD) – Steve Vear  District Director (DD) – Diane Richardson</p>
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>Toastmasters International Update</b></p> <p>DD Diane reported back on key points of the Toastmasters Annual Business Meeting held at the International Convention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduced costs during the pandemic were not sufficient to cover the reduced income from the membership reduction.</li> <li>● Worldwide 60% of clubs are holding hybrid meetings, 20% in-person and 20% online.</li> <li>● Globally in-person clubs recruited an average of 8 new members and online clubs 5 new members.</li> <li>● The number of paid clubs fell by 3.2% last year, however this year 47 districts chartered 68 new clubs in July, compared to 28 clubs in July 2022.</li> <li>● Worldwide, the average club size grew from 17.2 members per club to 21.2.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 129,000 members paid in July to renew in October a rise of 123,000 from last year.</li> <li>● A new customer service team has been recruited to extend the contact hours to as near 24/7 as possible and to improve service levels at TMI HQ. The location will be revealed after the team have been fully trained.</li> <li>● As many of you may know District 91 is part of and will remain part of Region 10 which covers the whole of Europe and parts of North Africa. Currently there are 9 regions based in the North American continent and 5 for the rest of the world. To ensure that each region has less than 15% of paid clubs, following the growth of Toastmasters in India, Africa and other parts of the world from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 the regions will be split 7 in North America and 7 for the rest of the world.</li> </ul>
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>Toastmasters UK &amp; Ireland Joint Reformation Committee Update</b></p> <p>DD Diane explained the background to this committee and the current status:</p> <p>At their respective District Council meetings in May 2023, both Districts agreed that the District Directors (Rupa Datt for D91 and Brenda Lannon for D71) should write to the International Board of Directors to request that a joint reformation committee should be established to examine the possibility of establishing a third district in the UK &amp; Ireland.</p> <p>On the 14<sup>th</sup> August Distinguished Toastmaster Matt Kinsey the international President and Dan Rex CEO of Toastmasters International wrote to the current and Past Trios of both Districts to say that a decision to reform both Districts had been postponed to March 2024 at the earliest as neither had reached its expected club growth target of 200 clubs for D71 and 170 for D91.</p>
<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>Speech Contest DEC Vote</b></p> <p>DD Diane reported on the DEC vote on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023 regarding Area, Division and District contests for the year 2023/24:</p> <p>On the 25th July 2023, the International Board of Directors wrote to District Leaders throughout the world to ask them to take to their District Executive Committees a decision in relation to the format for speech contests in the 2023/24 program year. The choices were –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In Person</li> <li>2. Hybrid</li> <li>3. Fully online</li> </ol> <p>For a reminder to everyone – the membership of the District Executive Committee comprises the District Leadership Team, (the District Director, Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Immediate Past District Director, Finance Manager, Admin Manager and PR Manager) plus the Division and Area Directors.</p> <p>The International board of directors required DEC's to decide what format the speech contests would take for each level – this means the Area, Division and District Level, accepting that clubs are free to decide how their own contests should be run.</p> <p>There was no option to mix and match the formats. This means that each level needs to either be totally face to face, totally online or in hybrid format. A patchwork solution by Area or Division is not allowed.</p> <p>On 5th September the District Director wrote to all council members confirming the decision of the District 91 District Executive Committee which I will repeat for completeness.</p>



	<p>On Saturday 2nd September 2023/24 the District Executive Committee voted unanimously that Division and District Level contests be of hybrid format.</p> <p>The District Executive Committee also passed by majority vote that Area level contests should be totally online.</p> <p>In line with the aforementioned directive from the International Board of Directors, the District Council is now asked to ratify this vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Motion 1: I move that this Council accept the decision of the District Executive Committee that for the 2023/24 program year the Division and District contests will be held in hybrid format</li> </ul> <p>There were no objections and the motion was approved by unanimous consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Motion 2: I move that this Council accept the decision of District Executive Committee that for the 2023/24 program year the Area Contests be fully online.</li> </ul> <p>After considerable debate Motion 2 was amended to read that <i>Area Contests be hybrid</i>. After a vote, the amended motion was carried by 70%.</p>
14	<p><b>District Conference Update</b></p> <p>PQD Steve reported on the 2024 District Conference saying that there were currently no active bids for the 2024 conference. PQD Steve stressed the importance of holding the conference – and celebrating the 10 year anniversary of District 91 as well as the 100 year anniversary of Toastmasters International. To make the process easier, he has already started looking for suitable venues and called for volunteers who wished to serve District 91 by supporting the conference to contact him. There were concerns raised at the cost of previous conferences and PQD Steve assured members that he was taking this into account and has started looking at venues outside London to reduce costs.</p>
15	<p><b>New Business motions</b></p> <p>DD Diane confirmed no advanced motions had been put forward but called upon members to do so now if they wished.</p> <p>Tim Patmore, VPE Didcot Speakers asked that Area Directors be able to decide what format their contest could be instead of one format for the District. PQD Steve replied saying Toastmasters International wanted the format to be consistent across the District and that further debate on this issue was now closed.</p> <p>Luca Graziani, Division B Director asked if a recording of PQD’s recent webinar would be available for all to see and PQD Steve confirmed that it would be.</p> <p>There were no further questions.</p>
16	<p><b>Any Other Business for the District Council</b></p> <p>DD Diane asked if any member wished to raise any other business matters relevant to our District 91 Mission, for the good of Toastmasters within District 91.</p> <p>There were none.</p>
17	<p><b>Meeting Adjourned</b></p> <p>DD Diane declared the meeting adjourned at 13h18. The next District Council meeting will be on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2024.</p>



