



District Council Annual Business Meeting

Conference, Saturday 3rd May 2025, 9am

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 3RD 9 - 2.30PM

No.	Item
1	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>DD Steve opened the meeting and welcomed District Council Members to the Annual Business Meeting of the 2024-2025 Toastmasters' year. DD Steve 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 Steve introduced the members of the District Leadership Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program Quality Director - Debbie Williams DTM• Club Growth Director - Seema Menon DTM• Public Relations Manager - Allen Paul DTM• Finance Manager - Sturt Marshall• Administration Manager - Janet Alkema DTM• Immediate Past District Director - Diane Richardson DTM <p>The District Leadership Team, together with all Division and Area Distrectors, plus Club Presidents and Vice Presidents Education of clubs in good standing make up the District Council.</p> <p>DD Steve explained the general protocol for the meeting and that only members of the District Council are entitled to speak and vote. The lead Zoom Masters for the meeting are Allen Paul and Amy Jones.</p> <p>A moment of reflection</p> <p>DD Steve asked the meeting to take a moment to reflect on members of D91 who had passed away since our previous Council meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robert Brown (November 2024) member of Farnham Speakers since 2018 and• Marlane Heard (March 2025), member of Woking Speakers since 2003 and founding member of Godalming Speakers. <p>Recognition of District Service</p> <p>DD Steve recognised previous District Directors present at Council and thanked them for their service to the District:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Past District Governor 2014-2015, Hillary Briggs DTM• Past District Director 2015-2016, PID Jean Gamester DTM, PC• Past District Director 2016-2017, Vanessa King DTM• Past District Director 2017-2018, Pedro Casillas DTM• Past District Director 2018-2019, Andy Hammond DTM, PC• Past District Director 2019-2020, Florian Bay DTM• Past District Director 2020=2021, Arnaud Sartre DTM• Past District Director 2021-2022, Helena Boden Brewer DTM• Past District Director 2022-2023, Rupa Datta• Past District Director 2024-2025, Diane Richardson DTM

2	<p>District Mission</p> <p>DD Steve explained that this year the trio offered the privilege of reading the District Mission in recognition for the specific efforts of certain members. This year they have called upon Area Director, Pallavi Pawar; Division Director, Olga Galaiko; Area Director, Haarshit Agrawal; Area Director, Andrew Graner and District Administration Manager, Janet Alkema DTM. He then called upon Immediate Past District Director, Diane Richardson DTM, to read the District Mission.</p> <p><i>“We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence.”</i></p>																																												
3	<p>Review of the Agenda</p> <p>DD Steve presented the agenda for the meeting and asked if there were any objections to its adoption. There were none and the agenda was adopted by unanimous consent.</p>																																												
4	<p>Credentials Committee Report</p> <p>DD Steve called upon our 2024-2025 Credentials Chair, Past District Director, Rupa Datta, to confirm the roll call and the extent to which the meeting was quorate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clubs in Good Standing: 166 (1 vote per President and 1 vote per VPE)• Total DEC members: 46 (1 vote each)• One third (1/3) of all Club Presidents & Vice-Presidents Education in the District shall constitute a quorum = 111• 170 Presidents and VPEs and• 37 DEC members registered by 7.15pm 2nd May 2025• Total votes available to be cast: 207 <p>CC Rupa confirmed the meeting was quorate</p> <p>DD Steve called upon Administration Manager Janet Alkema to read out any apologies received by 6pm Friday 13th September:</p> <table><tr><td>Aaron Santana-Smith</td><td>Ben Duffy</td><td>Joanne Tory</td><td>Giles Robinson</td></tr><tr><td>Kieran Mangan</td><td>Marianne Coop</td><td>Kate Fraser-smith</td><td>Clare Searle</td></tr><tr><td>Alistair Marston</td><td>Svitlana Samko</td><td>Matt Aldridge</td><td>Nick Bailey</td></tr><tr><td>Karen Lowen</td><td>Samuel Lloyd</td><td>Ryan Olden</td><td>Silvana Cuomo</td></tr><tr><td>Rosie Barfoot</td><td>Alison Millin</td><td>Afreen Kansal</td><td>Matthew Reubens</td></tr><tr><td>Emma Seton</td><td>Cheuk Ho Lam</td><td>Ivone Sima</td><td>Naveed Sheikh</td></tr><tr><td>Keith Mons</td><td>Craig Forster</td><td>Michael Castle</td><td>Janet Bramwell</td></tr><tr><td>David Evans</td><td>Serena Salvatore</td><td>Lynn Thomasson</td><td>Vanessa Gray-Hernandez</td></tr><tr><td>Sam McCrohan</td><td>Richa Gupta</td><td>Charles Harmer</td><td>Amreet Notta</td></tr><tr><td>Caterina Bernardini</td><td>Britta Siggelkow</td><td>Nadia Bourdouane</td><td>Lu Thomas</td></tr><tr><td>Duncan Hammett</td><td>Caroline Brewer</td><td>Francesco Dionisio</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>Additional apologies had been received from Tom Price, Leonie Mitchell, Abigail Norman and Suzanne Auchterlonie.</p>	Aaron Santana-Smith	Ben Duffy	Joanne Tory	Giles Robinson	Kieran Mangan	Marianne Coop	Kate Fraser-smith	Clare Searle	Alistair Marston	Svitlana Samko	Matt Aldridge	Nick Bailey	Karen Lowen	Samuel Lloyd	Ryan Olden	Silvana Cuomo	Rosie Barfoot	Alison Millin	Afreen Kansal	Matthew Reubens	Emma Seton	Cheuk Ho Lam	Ivone Sima	Naveed Sheikh	Keith Mons	Craig Forster	Michael Castle	Janet Bramwell	David Evans	Serena Salvatore	Lynn Thomasson	Vanessa Gray-Hernandez	Sam McCrohan	Richa Gupta	Charles Harmer	Amreet Notta	Caterina Bernardini	Britta Siggelkow	Nadia Bourdouane	Lu Thomas	Duncan Hammett	Caroline Brewer	Francesco Dionisio	
Aaron Santana-Smith	Ben Duffy	Joanne Tory	Giles Robinson																																										
Kieran Mangan	Marianne Coop	Kate Fraser-smith	Clare Searle																																										
Alistair Marston	Svitlana Samko	Matt Aldridge	Nick Bailey																																										
Karen Lowen	Samuel Lloyd	Ryan Olden	Silvana Cuomo																																										
Rosie Barfoot	Alison Millin	Afreen Kansal	Matthew Reubens																																										
Emma Seton	Cheuk Ho Lam	Ivone Sima	Naveed Sheikh																																										
Keith Mons	Craig Forster	Michael Castle	Janet Bramwell																																										
David Evans	Serena Salvatore	Lynn Thomasson	Vanessa Gray-Hernandez																																										
Sam McCrohan	Richa Gupta	Charles Harmer	Amreet Notta																																										
Caterina Bernardini	Britta Siggelkow	Nadia Bourdouane	Lu Thomas																																										
Duncan Hammett	Caroline Brewer	Francesco Dionisio																																											
5	<p>Acceptance of Minutes of 15th September 2024 Council Meeting</p> <p>The minutes from the Council meeting held on 15th September 2024, which had been circulated on 19th April 2025 were adopted by unanimous consent of the Council.</p>																																												
6	<p>Confirmation of appointed District Officers</p> <p>DD Steve explained that whilst some of the Area Directors are elected by area councils, and Division Directors are elected at our Annual Council meeting, a vacancy in any elective office shall be filled by the District Executive Committee based upon the recommendation of the District Director.</p> <p>Accordingly, the following appointments have been made:</p>																																												

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Area D29 Director, Duncan Hammett ● Area L56 Director, Rishi Gautam <p>There were no objections to these appointments and they were agreed by unanimous consent.</p>
7&8	<p>Mid-Year Audit and Finance Update</p> <p>DD Steve called upon Audit Committee member, Anthony Mackenzie, to deliver the Mid-Year Audit Report. Anthony Mackenzie gave a brief summary of the responsibilities of the Audit Committee in that all areas, divisions and districts are legally considered part of Toastmasters International, therefore all funds regardless of source, are considered to be funds of Toastmasters International. All Finance Managers are responsible for preparing 12 monthly profit and loss statements for the Toastmasters' fiscal year which runs from 1st July to 30th June the following year. The reports show actual performance against budget and form part of the Toastmasters International audited financial statements and federal non-profit tax returns. Any incorrect information may have serious ramifications on Toastmasters' tax exempt status. All transactions are checked so the process is complete and thorough. Generally the accounts were in order with very few transactions needing further investigation.</p> <p>The recommendations of the Audit Committee were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recruit audit team early ● Perform regular bill register checks ● Ensure pre-approval documentation for expenses above £350 ● Ensure explicit nature of claims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clearly state the purpose of expenses in claims. ○ Include club names in incentive vouchers to prevent duplication. <p>DD Steve thanked the Audit Committee for their hard work and then called upon DFM Stuart Marshall to deliver the Finance Update.</p> <p>DFM Stuart explained the key principles of Team 24/25 Finance which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to develop a Budget to support the District Mission & Goals ● to challenge the status quo & be brave - maximise the financial resources available <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ avoid returning D91 funds to WHQ (underspend of £14k in 2021/22, £18k in 2022/23 and £24k in 2023/24) ○ increased maximum allocations for Area Directors (20% increase up to £300) ○ Increased mileage allowance (12.5% increase up to 45p/mile) ● to prioritise face-to-face meetings - to provide more support and deepen relationship building to enable District Officers to serve our members more effectively (initial DOT weekend, F2F DEC #1, extended DEC #3 & #4/Training) ● to utilise the increase in revenue to fuel additional Club Growth activity - Membership Dues increased to £91k (17% increase from £77k in prior year) ● implement new initiatives - allocate funds to 'Speaker to Trainer', 'Corporate Summit' etc. <p>DFM Stuart highlighted the variances in the Q1-Q3 results: D91 currently has a £17.2k 'surplus' compared to Budget due to:</p> <p>Revenue +£8.8k, primarily due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Membership Revenue exceeding the figures provided by WHQ (+£6.8k) ● Conference Revenue generated earlier than budgeted (+£1.8k) <p>Expenses -£8.4k, primarily due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conference expenses incurred earlier than budgeted (+£11.6k) ● Lower than planned expenditure (-£20.0k lower than Budget) <p>DFM Stuart then explained how the surplus of £20k could best be utilised during the remainder of the programme year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Additional Marketing initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ i.e. extending the Tube campaign, Audio campaign with Global Media DAX, Corporate Summit etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incentives, <i>expanding the range available and extending claims deadlines</i> ● Invest in District IT infrastructure/capability to support future program years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Assessing a range of IT purchases to ensure the District is not reliant on clubs or individual officers to supply the equipment</i> ○ <i>Website - Refresh</i> ○ <i>Reviewing IT infrastructure, i.e. Google Workspace</i> <p>DD Steve invited questions from the audience:</p> <p>Arnaud Sartre, Experience French, queried the cause of the administrative issues mentioned in the Audit report. Audit Committee member, Vanessa King, responded explaining that one of the main issues was in the incorrect naming of expense reports making it difficult to reconcile them. The second difficulty was with incentive claims not specifying the club name and attaching the incorrect receipts.</p> <p>DFM Stuart reiterated his request for expense reports and incentive claims to be clearly and correctly submitted. It is all explained in the Finance Guide and members are free to contact him for any help they need.</p> <p>Mary-Anne Ledger, Area B9 Director, asked that if the District is running a surplus this year, and could potentially do so next year as well, could Area Directors expense Area Contests. Venues are expensive and hard to come by, particularly in London. DD Steve reminded members that there are restrictions on what Toastmasters International allows districts to spend money on.. We encourage Areas to be creative and perhaps share club venues for contests on normal club nights. However, this is an issue to be taken up with next year's District Leadership Team to consider in the new budget.</p> <p>There were no further questions and DD Steve thanked DFM Stuart for his hard work on the finances this year.</p>
9	<p>District Alignment Report</p> <p>DD Steve explained that, in accordance with Protocol 7.1 6G, each year we must review the alignment of our clubs to Areas and Divisions and the Proposal is required to be voted on by the District Council. The District Alignment Committee (DAC) comprises the Division Directors and a Chair who is appointed by the District Director. The DAC looks at many variables and puts together a report to align our clubs at the beginning of the next Toastmasters year. The work of the committee and the complexity of the jigsaw puzzle has been particularly challenging this year with some changes to the rules set by Toastmasters International. The report has been circulated to members of the District Council and has been approved by the District Executive Committee (DEC) at its last meeting. It is important to say that when the DEC approved this proposal it did so knowing that for a limited number of clubs the alignment does not offer an ideal solution, but the Committee believed it was the best option for the good of District 91.</p> <p>DD Steve then called upon the DAC Chair, Barbara Saph DTM, to present the DAC Proposal.</p> <p>DAC Chair Barbara presented the Proposal, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, and called for any questions:</p> <p>Andrea Zachtim, President of Bloomsbury Speakers: we were proposed to move to B9, but now we are staying in C2. We are the only Community Club left in the Area which makes running contests even harder because corporate clubs often don't participate. DAC Chair Barbara confirmed that in the latest version (5) of the proposal Bloomsbury were staying in B9, for that very reason.</p> <p>Hazel Glennie, President, Abingdon Speakers: we now have an online club in our Area, am I right in believing that contests are in person only so anyone from the online club will have to come in person? DD Steve confirmed that is the case and is an issue the DAC considered, but it cannot be a primary driver in the alignment decision.</p> <p>Dan Crossley, President, Gatwick Communicators: is there room for further discussion? DD Steve replied that we have to vote on this Proposal today. However, the Area Director specifically raised the concerns of Gatwick Communicators and we recognised that you and one other club are impacted, and that it is not an ideal situation. It was the best solution given the Toastmaster International's new rules but the alignment</p>

	<p>issue is fluid and can change from year to year. DD Steve undertook to make a commitment to find a better solution for Gatwick Communicators next year.</p> <p>There were no further questions and DD Steve proposed the motion that the Council adopt the District Alignment Committee Proposal. There were no objections and DD Steve declared the report from the Alignment Committee accepted by the District Council.</p>
10	<p>District Leadership Team Reports</p> <p>DD Steve called upon the members of the District Leadership Team to give their reports. Full details are included in the District Council pack. Reports were presented by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate Past District Director (IPDD) - Diane Richardson DTM • Administration Manager (DAM) - Janet Alkema DTM • Public Relations Manager (PRM) - Allen Paul DTM • Club Growth Director (CGD) – Seema Menon DTM • Programme Quality Director (PQD) – Debbie Williams DTM • District Director (DD) – Steve Vear DTM
11	<p>Future District Conferences</p> <p>DD Steve explained that prior to the Covid 19 pandemic it was customary for members who wished the opportunity to submit bids for future District conferences to make this known at the Annual Business Meeting of the District Council. This would allow the proposed conference director time to appoint an initial team and work with the incoming Program Quality Director and the District Director to plan and run the next conference. It is worth noting that, for the next Program year, the Board of Directors of Toastmasters International have announced that it is now permitted for Districts to run District contest finals in the Autumn. This could mean that future District conferences do not need to be two and a half days in length, which could greatly reduce costs and ticket prices.</p> <p>DD Steve asked if there are any members of District 91 present who wish to log an interest in providing a bid for the next conference, and to be considered for the appointment of the Conference Director of District 91?</p> <p>DD Steve declared that Pearl Cadogan, current Division H Director, had registered her interest, which will be passed to the incoming Program Quality Director - and thanked Pearl for her commitment to the District.</p>
11	<p>District Leadership Committee Report and Elections for Program Year 2025-26</p> <p>DD Steve called upon the Chair of the District Leadership Committee (DLC), Andy Hammond, to delivery his report.</p> <p>DLC Chair explained the nomination process for the elected roles of District Director, Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director and the Division Directors. The full report is on the District website and had been circulated to all members of the District Council prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The nominated candidates are:</p> <p>District Director: Mo Dawodu and Debbie Williams Program Quality Director: Mo Dawodu and Seema Menon Club Growth Director: Mike Burrows, Lynne Cantor Gayer, Guler Cortis and Ramesh Halai Division A Director: Yogendra Paranjpe Division B Director: Mary-Anne Ledger Division C Director: Richard Jones Division J Director: John Christie and Clare Lawrence Division K Director: Harshit Agrawal Division L Director: Elena Bella</p> <p>DLC Chair Andy explained that although Harshit Agrawal had been nominated for the role of Division K Director, following the District Alignment Proposal, that Division is to be merged with Division L and will no longer exist.</p>

	<p>DD Steve thanked DLC Chair Andy for his report and for the work of the Committee. He then explained the voting procedure, which would start with test voting to ensure all members were able to receive their ballot and to vote. For the uncontested roles, DD Steve would dispense with a secret ballot and would instruct the District Administration Manager to cast a single vote for the candidate. He would then announce and certify that candidate as elected to office. For the contested roles, candidates would be invited to give a 2-minute speech before the voting starts. Candidate elections will be decided by a majority of the votes cast.</p> <p>There were three test votes. There were questions from the floor regarding receipt of the ballots by email and the Credentials Chair confirmed that only those email addresses registered with Toastmasters International were being used and that members who had not registered before the deadline would not receive ballots.</p> <p>DD Steve then declared that non receipt due to non-working emails and links would not be investigated and that any votes missing due to technical problems lying on the voters' end would not be cast.</p> <p>Following the candidate speeches and voting, the results were as follows:</p> <p>District Director: Debbie Williams 123 votes, (Mo Dawodu 46) Program Quality Director: Seema Menon 128 votes, (Mo Dawodu 49) Club Growth Director: Lynne Cantor Gayer 102, (Guler Cortis 27, Mike Burrow 24, Ramesh Halai 11)</p> <p>At that point DD Steve announced a 30 min recess for lunch</p> <p>The election then continued for Division Directors</p> <p>Division A was uncontested: Yogendra Paranjpe Division B was uncontested: Mary-Anne Ledger Division C was uncontested: Richard Jones Division D: Smita Narayan 89 votes, (Steve Catchick 62) Division H was uncontested (as the floor candidate, Smita Narayan, had been elected as Division D Director): Monica Dragnescu Division J: Claire Lawrence 72 votes, (John Christie 52) As Division K was now merged with Division L, DD Steve thanked Harshit Agrawal for putting himself forward, for his support and hard work for the Division as Area K3 Director for this current programme year. Division L was uncontested: Elena Bella</p> <p>DD Steve thanked all new leaders for their service to District 91 and looked forward to working with them for the coming Program Year.</p>
12	<p>AOB and Advance Motions</p> <p>DD Steve announced that there were no advance motions received by the deadline of 19:15 on Friday 2nd May, nor were there any other business matters raised.</p>
13	<p>Meeting Adjourned</p> <p>DD Steve declared the meeting adjourned at 15:50 and thanked all members for their service and attendance. The next District Council meeting would be in September 2025 at a date to be determined by the incoming District Director.</p>