# DISTRICT 91 ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

SATURDAY 2 MAY 2026 | 9.30AM- 1PM | HYBRID - ZOOM & DE VERE LATIMER ESTATE, HP5 1UG

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 2ND MAY 2026

<table>
<tr><th>Item</th><th>Notes</th></tr>
<tr><td>Welcome and Introduction</td><td>
DD Debbie opened the meeting and welcomed District Council Members to the Annual Business Meeting of the 2024-2025 Toastmasters' year. DD Debbie 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.
DD Debbie introduced the members of the District Leadership Team:
<ul>
<li>Program Quality Director - Seema Menon DTM</li>
<li>Club Growth Director – Lynne Gayer DTM</li>
<li>Public Relations Manager – Allen Paul Pulikkal DTM</li>
<li>Finance Manager – Guler Cortis</li>
<li>Administration Manager – Deborah Stevens</li>
<li>Immediate Past District Director – Steve Vear, MBE DTM</li>
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DD Debbie also acknowledged International Director for Region 10 Francesco Fedele DTM who was attending as a guest.
The District Leadership Team, together with all Division and Area Directors, plus Club Presidents and Vice Presidents Education of clubs in good standing make up the District Council.
DD Debbie 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 Helyn Ashford and Olga Galaiko.
A moment of reflection
DD Debbie asked the meeting to take a moment to reflect on members of D91 who had passed away since our previous Council meeting:
<ul>
<li>Jenny Chalmers - Bicester Speakers</li>
<li>Bill Dempster - Burnham Speakers</li>
<li>Ben Jackson - Bicester Speakers</li>
<li>Christine Morrell – Bromley Speakers</li>
<li>Samantha Richmond - Salisbury Speakers</li>
<li>Chetan Sanghavi - Experience French</li>
<li>Allan Thurbon - Spinnaker Speakers</li>
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| | John Christie, A19 Area Director also notified the council about Michael Wheatle from Voice of Wales Toastmasters.<br><br>**Recognition of District Service**<br><br>DD Debbie recognised previous District Directors who may be present at Council and thanked them for their service to the District:<br>● Past District Governor 2014-2015, Hillary Briggs DTM<br>● Past District Director 2015-2016, 2nd VP Jean Gamester DTM, PC<br>● Past District Director 2016-2017, Vanessa King DTM<br>● Past District Director 2017-2018, Pedro Casillas DTM<br>● Past District Director 2018-2019, Andy Hammond DTM, PC<br>● Past District Director 2019-2020, Florian Bay DTM<br>● Past District Director 2020-2021 Arnaud Sartre DTM<br>● Pas District Director 2021-2022, Regional Advisor for Region 11, Helen Bowden-Brewer DTM<br>● Past District Director 2022-2023, Rupa Datta DTM<br>● Past District Director 2023-2024, Diane Richardson DTM<br>● And Immediate Past District Director Steve Vear MBE DTM<br><br>DD Debbie also announced that Former District Governor for District 71 Freddie Daniels DTM had joined the meeting. |
| **District Mission** | DD Debbie called upon Immediate Past District Director Steve Vear MBE DTM to read the district mission -<br>*"We build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence."* |
| **Adoption of the Agenda** | DD Debbie 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. |
| **Credentials Committee Report & Apologies** | DD Debbie called upon our 2025/26 Credentials Chair, Olga Galaiko, to confirm the roll call and the extent to which the meeting was quorate.<br>● 158 Clubs in good standing (one vote per President and one vote per VP Education).<br>● 47 District Executive Committee members (one vote each).<br>● Based on two votes per Club, one-third of the Member Clubs in good standing in the district shall constitute a quorum (53 member Clubs, 106 votes from Clubs).<br>● 105 Presidents and VPEs registered and/or gave us a specific instruction.<br>● 167 votes from the registered Presidents and VPs Education from 83 clubs.<br>● We are quorate (minimum required to meet Quorum is 106).<br>● 40 votes from the registered DEC members<br>● Total votes that can be cast: 207<br><br>CC Olga confirmed the meeting was quorate<br><br>DD Debbie called upon Administration Manager Deborah to read out any apologies received by 6pm Wednesday 29th April: |

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| Hazel Glennie | Nusrath Hussain | Eleanor Hodgson | Arman Naeini |
| Glyn Holme | Tom Price | James Barrass-Banks | Vanessa Gray-Hernandez |
| Arun Sudhakar Vairavel | Laura Fauvel | Fern Kerr | Adam Paldyna |
| Samantha Mcgregor | Thisan Thiagarajah | Melissa Solomons | Suzanne Lam-Pasipanodya |
| Amanda Maguire | Rachel Stott | Christopher Nye | Tomasz Kanigowski |
| Michael Nafack | Denisa Hrivnakova | Caterina Bernardini | Sushant Sharma |
| Susie Shaw | Marie Mulet | Sara Rodriguez | Rachel Norris |
| Malcolm Braganza | Kerstin Kubanek | Amreet Notta | Charlie Warshawski |
| Tom Hostetler | Judith Fugmann | Emma Clark | Christopher Robertson |
| Paula Marmolejo Morazo | Donal Coughlan | Mary Robson | Lorraine Knight |
| Tim Collard | On Ki Choi | Rachel Hurst | Alison Morris |
| Carl Bridge | Matthew Aldridge | Marilena Hough | Richard Watts |
| Norma Powell | Rona Leigh Mitchell | Aija Kozlovska | Emily Hopkinson |

**Acceptance of Minutes of 3rd May 2025 Council Meeting**

The minutes from the Council meeting held on 21st September, which had been circulated ahead of the District Council meeting were adopted by unanimous consent of the Council.

**Confirmation of appointed District Officers**

DD Debbie 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.

Accordingly, the following appointments have been made:

- A1 Area Director George Weller
- A46 Area Director Suhas Kumar DTM
- J10 Area Director Ryan Olden

There were no objections to these appointments, and they were agreed by unanimous consent.

**End-Year Audit and Finance Update**

Guler Cortis (Finance Manager) presented her report:

- All financial reporting and expenditure remained compliant with Toastmasters International requirements, with strong financial controls in place. The mid-year audit was completed and confirmed that District 91 finances are in good order.
- Income was in line with expectations, with membership payments generating **£47,288** and additional income from district events and other activities.
- Expenditure totalled **£41,047** (43% of budget), with spending focused on recognition and incentives, membership growth initiatives, education and training, and district administration.
- Strong membership revenue continues to support cash flow. Marketing activity is expected to increase in the remainder of the year, while accommodation costs have risen due to increased venue rates and in-person training.
- Clubs were reminded to submit any outstanding incentive claims before the 30 June deadline.
- The Finance Manager concluded that District 91 remains in a sound financial position, with stable income, controlled expenditure and healthy reserves.

Marta Gocek (Audit Committee Chair) presented the mid-year audit report:

- Marta reported that the mid-year audit had been completed by the Audit Committee. The committee reviewed all financial records, claims and supporting documentation and found them to be in good order. Audit files were complete, supporting evidence was provided for claims, and any audit queries were resolved promptly.

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| | ● The Committee recommended that pre-approval forms are signed before purchases are made and that all supporting receipts are submitted with expense claims. Marta concluded that the finances of District 91 were in good order and thanked the Finance Manager for her cooperation throughout the audit process.<br><br>DD Debbie yielded control of the meeting to PQD Seema to allow her to support FM Guler in answering questions.<br><br>● Mary-Anne Ledger (Division B Director) asked why Area Contest venue costs cannot be claimed when Toastmasters International permits contest expenditure at area level. Guler explained that District 91 policy requires clubs to fund Area Contests, while the district funds Division Contests, allowing district resources to be prioritised for education, growth and member incentives<br><br>● Sylvia Lobo (President, Toasted Sandwich) asked why only around £2,000 of the £6,000 education and training budget had been spent. Guler explained that much of the budget was allocated for in-person Club Officer Training, which was not delivered as extensively as planned in the first half of the year, although uptake improved later in the year<br><br>● Eddie McGuire (President, Experience French) sought further justification for not funding Area Contest expenses, noting apparent underspend in the budget. Guler clarified that the policy is based on budget priorities and ensuring funds are available for membership growth, education and incentives, rather than historical practice.<br><br>● Helena Bowden-Brewer (President, Ascot and Bracknell Speakers) asked whether funding Area Contests could exceed Toastmasters International limits on contest expenditure. Guler confirmed this was a factor in the district's approach.<br><br>● Rajan Jesuraj (Area Director, L23) asked whether the district could provide funding in exceptional cases where clubs are unable to meet Area Contest venue costs.<br>The question was noted, but it was confirmed that the current approved budget and district policy do not provide for such funding<br><br>● Arnaud Sarge (VPE, Experience French) suggested that Area Contest funding should be reviewed as a priority in the next programme year. The suggestion was acknowledged by the Chair |
| **District Alignment Report** | DD Debbie invited District Alignment Chair Barbara Saph DTM to give her report.<br><br>Barbara presented the proposed club alignment for the 2026–2027 programme year. She explained that the annual review is required under Toastmasters International policy to ensure all areas and divisions comply with alignment requirements, including minimum club numbers within areas and minimum area numbers within divisions. The committee also considered geographical proximity, club sustainability, leadership support and overall district resilience when developing the proposal.<br><br>Key alignment changes included:<br><br>● Division A: Area A19 to be dissolved, with its clubs redistributed between Areas A42 and A62.<br>● Division B: Club movements reflecting venue changes, including King's Cross Speakers, Society Speakers and Data Science Toastmasters. Two pre-charter clubs are expected to join the division.<br>● Division C: Several clubs reassigned between areas to strengthen area viability, with additional pre-charter clubs anticipated. |

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| | ● Division D: Closure of BMS and FM Global clubs noted; Global Online Toastmasters transferred into the division to maintain area viability.<br>● Division H: No alignment changes proposed.<br>● Division J: Minimal changes, primarily reflecting movement of pre-charter and online clubs.<br>● Division L: Area L27 to be dissolved following club closures, with remaining clubs redistributed to maintain compliance and sustainability.<br><br>Barbara thanked the Division Directors and committee members for their contribution to the review process and noted that affected clubs had been informed of proposed changes in advance of the meeting.<br><br>No questions were raised by the Council. The proposed alignment for 2026–2027 was approved by unanimous consent. |
| **District Leadership Team Reports** | DD Debbie called upon the Division Directors and  members of the District Leadership Team to give their reports. As Finance Manager Guler Cortis had already delivered an update, she would not be called upon for a report. Reports were presented by:<br><br>● Immediate Past District Director (IPDD) - Steve Vear DTM<br>● Public Relations Manager (PRM) - Allen Paul DTM<br>● Club Growth Director (CGD) – Lynne Gayer DTM<br>● Programme Quality Director (PQD) – Seema Menon DTM<br>● District Director (DD) – Debbie Williams DTM<br><br>DD Debbie then called a 10 minute recess ahead of the District Leadership Committee report and voting. |
| **District Leadership Committee Report Elections for Program Year 2026-27** | DD Debbie called upon the Chair of the District Leadership Committee (DLC), Steve Vear DTM, to deliver his report. Steve explained the nomination process for the elected roles of District Director, Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director and the Division Directors. The full report was published on the district website and had been circulated to all members of the District Council prior to the meeting.<br><br>The nominated candidates are:<br><br>● District Director Seema Menon DTM<br>● Program Quality Director Lynne Gayer DTM<br>● Club Growth Director Nadya Abdi DTM and Alison Morris DTM<br>● Division A Director Rob Dewing<br>● Division B Director Beverley Daniel Blugh<br>● Division C Director Muriel Teisseire<br>● Division D Director Kanti Doshi<br>● Division H Director Celia Edwards DTM<br>● Division L Director Sarah Ndebele<br><br>DD Debbie thanked Steve for his report and for the work of the Committee. She then explained the voting procedure, which would start with test voting to ensure all members were able to receive their ballot and vote. For the uncontested roles, DD Debbie would dispense with a secret ballot and would instruct the District Administration Manager to cast a single vote for the candidate. She 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.<br><br>DD Debbie then ran two test votes. Questions were raised regarding voter eligibility, allocation of votes, ballot delivery to members' registered Toastmasters email addresses, and how multiple club votes would be handled. |

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| | The voting for roles commenced.<br><br>**District Director** was uncontested: Seema Menon DTM<br>**Program Quality Director** was uncontested: Lynne Gayer DTM<br><br>**Club Growth Director:** Nadya Abdi DTM and Alison Morris DTM were nominated via the DLC process and Smita Narayan DTM had given her intention to run from the floor ahead of the deadline of 26th April. Each candidate was invited to give a two minute speech in alphabetical order by surname. Once all three candidates had spoken, a vote was launched.<br><br>The results of the vote were as follows –<br>● Nadya Abdi DTM 60 votes (34%),<br>● Alison Morris DTM 61 votes (34%)<br>● Smita Narayan DTM 56 votes (32%).<br><br>As no majority was reached, DD Debbie advised the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is removed from the process, and a second vote would be launched for the remaining candidates for the Office of Club Growth Director.<br><br>The results of the second vote were as follows -<br>● Nadya Abdi 87 votes (49%)<br>● Alison Morris 91 votes (51%) - **elected**<br><br>**Division A** was uncontested: Rob Dewing<br>**Division B** was uncontested: Beverley Daniel-Blugh<br>**Division C** was uncontested: Muriel Teisseire<br>**Division D** was uncontested: Kanti Doshi<br>**Division H** was uncontested: Celia Edwards DTM<br>**Division L** was uncontested: Sarah Ndebele<br><br>As the District Leadership Committee were unable to nominate any suitable candidates for the office of Division J Director this position was open to members to run from the floor. Two candidates gave their intention to run from the floor: John Christie and Dominic Heany. Once each candidate had spoken for two minutes, a vote was launched.<br><br>The results of the vote were as follows -<br>● John Christie 76 votes (46%)<br>● Dominic Heany 90 votes (54%) – **elected**<br><br>DD Debbie thanked all new leaders for their service to District 91 and looked forward to working with them for the coming Program Year. |
| **Advance Motions** | DD Debbie explained that one advanced motion was received ahead of the deadline, however the motion was deemed out of order as it was not something that the district council could vote on, and the member had been advised to raise this as part of any other business. |
| **Any Other Business** | Martin Doe (President, HOD Speakers Club) raised concerns that his club had been unable to cast its two allocated votes during the elections due to technical difficulties with the Election Runner voting system. He proposed that future District Council meetings include advance testing of voting systems, clearer communication of voting procedures, follow-up on members who do not receive ballots, and provision of an alternative voting method where technical failures prevent participation. The District Director noted the concerns and confirmed that the District Executive Committee would review the matter.<br><br>Martin Doe also proposed that the District Director engage with Toastmasters International regarding the introduction of an annual certification scheme for contest judges. The proposal aimed to reduce repeated briefings and paperwork, improve administrative efficiency, and create a pool of pre-qualified judges available for speech contests. DD Debbie confirmed this was |

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| | outside of the scope of the District Council (as advised when raised as an advanced motion), but confirmed that she had already emailed our International Director, who will contact the education team at Toastmasters International for their review.<br><br>A motion relating to the reimbursement of Area Contest venue costs was then raised by Mary-Anne Ledger, Division B Director and discussed. Following debate on the challenges faced by some Areas in funding contest venues and the need to balance this against district budget constraints and Toastmasters International financial guidelines, the Council considered a motion instructing the District Director to review the District's policy on Area Speech Contest reimbursement.<br><br>An amendment seeking immediate reimbursement of Area Director contest shortfalls was ruled out of order.<br><br>The substantive motion was approved by the Council with 126 votes (92%) in favour. As a result, the office of the District Director will establish a committee to review the reimbursement policy and report its findings and recommendations to the next District Council meeting in September 2026. |
| **Meeting Adjourned** | **Meeting Adjourned**<br><br>DD Debbie adjourned the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. She confirmed that election results were final and binding and reannounced the newly elected District Leadership Team.<br><br>The date of the next district council meeting will be shared by the incoming team. |