

District 91
District Council Meeting
Agenda & Council Pack May
2024



Engineers' House, Bristol



District Council Meeting Agenda, May 4 2024

Time	Session
10:15	Introduction Call to Order and Welcome District Mission, Introductions, Apologies, Procedure
10:25	Review of the Meeting Agenda
10:27	Credentials Committee Report
10:32	Acceptance of 16 September 2023 Council Meeting Minutes
10:37	Confirmation of Appointed District Officers
10:42	District Leadership Committee Report & Elections
11:52	Mid-Year Audit & Finance Update
12:17	District Leadership Team Reports
12:32	District Alignment Committee Report
12:52	Future District Conferences
12:55	Any Other Business
13:00	Meeting Adjourned

In case of updates please scan the code for the latest agenda or use the link:
https://bit.ly/D91_Agenda





Credentials

The credentials deadline for the District Council Meeting was 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 1st May 2024.

District Council Meeting Minutes, September 16, 2023

Published on the D91 Toastmasters website and available here:

https://bit.ly/16th_Sept_Minutes



Confirmation of Appointed District Officers

The following District appointments have been made since the last District Council meeting:

Administration Manager Janet Alkema DTM	Division Director D - Russell Searle	Area Director D53 - Jeevan George John
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District Leadership Committee Report & Elections

Rupa Datta, Immediate Past District Director and District Leadership Committee Chair

In accordance with Protocol 9:0 District Campaigns and Elections, District Director, Diane Richardson appointed me, IPDD, Rupa Datta, to serve as Chair of the DLC.

The members of the DLC 2023/24 nominations committee

were: **Committee members**

DLC Chair: Rupa Datta	
Division A Representative: Pallavi Pawar	Division H Representative: Serena Gilbert
Division B Representative: Ken Essien, DTM	Division J Representative: Kate Jones, DTM
Division C Representative: Jill Segal, DTM	Division K Representative: Ga Lok Chung, DTM
Division D Representative: Eddy Quah	Division L Representative: Sean Dean

Elections will be held at the D91 Council Meeting on Saturday 4th May as part of the Spring Conference to be held in Bristol.

Nominations

After carefully considering the qualifications of each candidate and based on a majority vote of the DLC, the following candidates are nominated for elective office for the 2024/25 Toastmasters Program Year:

District Leadership Team Candidates

Position	Name	Club
District Director	Steve Vear	Wessex Speakers
Program Quality Director	Mo Dawodu	Kent Speakers
Program Quality Director	Debbie Williams	The Speakers of Croydon
Club Growth Director	Andy Hessey	Berkhamsted Speakers
Club Growth Director	Seema Menon	Harrovian Speakers

Division Director Candidates

Position	Name	Club
Division A Director	Mike Burrows	Northavon Speakers
Division B Director	Lynne Cantor	Excalibur Speakers
Division C Director	Olga Galaiko	City of London Toastmasters Club
Division D Director	Deborah Stevens	Thame Speakers
Division H Director	Pearl Cadogan	Liberty Speakers
Division J Director	Helyn Ashford	Cardiff Toastmasters
Division K Director	Sabrina Aici	Bloomberg London Toastmasters
Division L Director	Jesus Parada-Rivero	Harrovian Speakers
Division L Director	Sushil Shah	Harrovian Speakers

Learn more about the candidates standing for office under the [candidates corner](#) on the District 91 website.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all the DLC members who gave of their time and dedicated significant effort during the candidate evaluation and interview process. All have demonstrated our core values throughout.

As DLC Chair I would like to thank all the members for their diligence, integrity and hard work in serving our members and supporting our District in achieving the goals for the Program Year ahead.

https://bit.ly/DLC_Report https://bit.ly/Candidate_Bios



CANDIDATE
BIOS



DLC
REPORT



District Finance Review Mid-Year Audit

Finance Manager: *Valerija Slavina*

District Finances are there to support the District mission and benefit all the members within District 91.

To ensure that the funds are used appropriately, our District's financial transactions are reviewed twice a year by an independent audit committee composed of at least three Toastmasters members who are not members of the District Executive Committee.

Led by the Audit Chair, Heidi Pocock, and her team of auditors (Sarah Brisley and Mike Burrows), the Audit Committee examined all financial records of District 91 as part of the Mid-Year Audit in accordance with the Audit Committee Guidelines.

The District was assured that the financial accounts and report properly reflect the operation for the term of July–December 2023.

The committee concluded their audit with these observations and recommendations.

Observations

1. Generally claims were in good order.
2. There was clear evidence of claims being checked by approvers - many had
3. Some observations addressed delays between transactions and final submission.
4. Some travel claims were not entered stating the full amount.
5. There were some delays in claiming for Toastmasters awards.

Recommendations

1. Provide a refresher training on how to raise claims and what will be checked in the audit.
2. Review claims and receipt upload after submission to ensure everything is clear to reviewers/auditors
3. Submit claims and respond to queries raised by an approver in a timely manner.

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL
Certification for
31-Dec-2023-2024
DISTRICT 91

INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Complete all sections on the Narrative tab.
2. Fill in the white cells below with the appropriate information and print out this page.
3. Obtain related signatures below. **Typed signatures are not acceptable.**
4. Distribute monthly reports per Toastmasters International protocol 8.4, to the District Director, Program Quality Director and Club Growth Director within 30 days after the end of the month.
5. **Quarter reports due to World Headquarters:**
• September Report: **November 30**
• December (Audit) Report: **February 15**
• March Report: **April 30**
• June (Audit) Report: **August 31**
6. Submit approved narratives and certification (page 6) WHH Headquarters by email or fax:
• Scan and email the PDF to: DistrictFinancialReports@toastmasters.org
• Or fax to: +1 (303) 790-0753
NOTE: The certification form must be complete for the report to be accepted by World Headquarters. Separate funds will not be returned until World Headquarters receives the completed report.

In Base Currency: **GBP**

Year to Date Net Income/(Loss)	(947.34)
Year to Date Net Income/(Loss)	17,219.48
Total Available Funds	77,361.87

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I, **Valerija Slavina**, District Finance Manager for the year audited, certify that all district financial records have been made available to the audit committee for inspection and that any unpaid or other outstanding obligations for the 2023-2024 term have been reported to the audit committee and included in accounts section of this report. We further certify that there are no other outstanding obligations incurred for the 2023-2024 term.

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Mid-Year Profit & Loss

Finance Manager: *Valerija Slavina*

For this Toastmasters year, we decided to implement a conservative approach to our District Finances. With increased membership fees, ongoing inflation in the UK and high energy prices together with continuous lay-offs and redundancies across corporations the year 2023-2024 anticipated facing uncertainty. To be able to control our expenditure some further governance structures were implemented to have better visibility of costs.

Revenue

Membership revenue has fluctuated throughout the first 6 months. From an increase in the month of July, due to a special offer for renewal until March 2024, to a slow decline and further growth and recovery which was seen at the end of Q2.

Our projections and observation of trends give confidence that the revenue will continue to grow. The total District revenue including speech contests and outlook on revenue is forecast to continue to be healthy.

District 91			
Profit & Loss (Actual vs. Budget Summary) (in GBP)			
Reporting Book:	ACCRUAL		
As of Date:	12/31/2023		
Cost Center:	District 91		
	Month Ending		
	12/31/2023		
	Actual	Budget	Variance
District Revenue			
Membership Revenue	48,497.34	37,756.00	5,681.34
Fundraising Revenue	855.61	800.00	55.61
Speech Contest Revenue	668.36	700.00	(31.64)
Total District Revenue	44,961.31	39,256.00	5,705.31
District Expenses			
Conference expenses	570.85	0.00	570.85
Recognition	2,438.46	4,010.00	(1,571.54)
Club Growth	308.84	2,215.00	(1,906.16)
Marketing Outside of Toastmasters Ex	2,119.17	2,980.00	(860.83)
Public Relations Expense	2,979.66	4,245.00	(1,265.34)
Education & Training Expense	2,508.69	3,850.00	(841.31)
Administration Expenses	888.31	2,098.00	(1,209.69)
Food and Meals Expense	1,909.50	2,715.00	(805.50)
Travel Expense	4,439.86	8,128.00	(3,688.14)
Lodging Expense	5,826.90	7,075.00	(1,248.10)
Other Expenses	1,961.34	2,330.00	(368.66)
Allocation Expenses	1,790.25	1,750.00	30.25
Total District Expenses	27,741.83	40,906.00	(13,164.17)
Total Net Income	17,219.48	(1,650.00)	18,869.48

Expenses

Despite numerous challenges we have managed to keep our expenses lower than budget. We started Conference activities earlier this year to spread costs across several months before the event date.

We have dedicated £2.5k to Recognition activities to thank our members for the continuous efforts despite unprecedented uncertainty. Club Growth activities had a slow start in H1 and the expenditure reflects this. However, as a District we tried to be more sustainable and reuse and share resources where possible to minimise unnecessary costs and waste when it came to flyers and other printed promotional materials.

We had a massive revamp of our systems to provide a positive user experience to our members. With the new systems tested and in place we are able to send more targeted messages to our members and give them the option to choose which information to



receive. The budget spent on Marketing Outside of Toastmasters and PR activities was strategically invested to have a long-term impact on the District.

Our Administration expenses were kept to a minimum as we have been updating the inventory list and using the existing resources before deciding to buy something new. Throughout 6 months we hosted a number of educational events including DOT, DEC's, TLIs and COTs to continue enhancing our members' learning journey. The expenses in all 4 categories (Food and Meals, Travel and Lodging and Education & Training) were kept within the allotted budget.

Summary

Overall, District 91's financial outlook for H2 looks extremely positive. To further reward and recognise our members we have developed an extensive incentives programme and will continue investing into activities which help our members have a positive learning environment for the remainder of the year.

Division Directors' Reports

Division A: *Andrea Righi*

As this Toastmasters Year is coming to an end, it has been a deep honour and pleasure to serve the Amazing Division A as a Division Director and I feel blessed for the support I received from our fantastic members and my A-Team.

A special thanks to my 5 Area Directors, who are going out of their way to support Clubs. Without their help, it would not have been possible to achieve the terrific results we achieved this year.

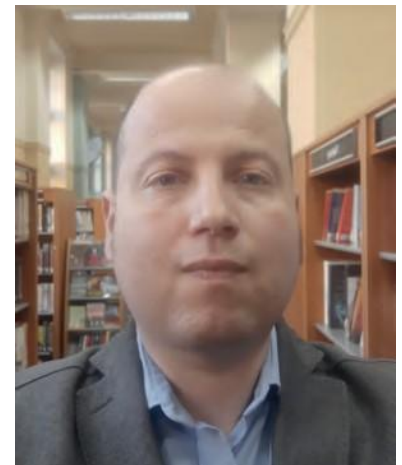
George Weller, Area Director, Area A1

Pallavi Pawar, Area Director, Area A17

Christine Wallach, Area Director, Area

A42 **Courage Bradley**, Area Director, Area A46

Veronika Frydrychova, Area Director, Area A62



Summary

- Improved Educational Achievements
- Club Membership Growth looks stable
- Possible New Club in Reading
- Strong dynamism with several Special Events



Area Director Visits

November: 74% clubs were visited, and we are confident that there will be 100% of the reports completed for active clubs by the end of May.

Division Clubs

Division A started the year with 22 clubs and is likely to get a new Community Club in Thames Valley Business Park in Reading.

Membership

At the start of this year, the Division membership was 521, we recruited 205 new members; and our total, as of writing this report, is 391, with a few clubs still to have their renewal payments processed. This is likely to increase that figure by 50-70. This indicates the level of member loss the division has sustained this year, which is why I am delighted that all the clubs will be in good standing.

Club Officer Training

Division A joined TLIs in July and January, respectively. We had 98 club Officers trained in Round 1 and 95 in Round 2. Hamwic Speakers and Shilling Speakers had all seven club officers trained in both rounds.

Most of our corporate club officers benefitted from attending the district-sponsored corporate lunchtime COTs designed to be more accessible and relevant to them.

Distinguished Club Program

At the time of writing this report, 17 Clubs have achieved 5 or more DCP Goals, and 8 Clubs have achieved the Distinguished Club Status or more. Congratulations to Hamwic Speakers which was the first Presidents Distinguished Club in Division A and also Wessex Speakers, Bath Spa and Shilling Speakers which have already achieved Select Distinguished Status and stand a good chance of achieving President Distinguished.

Education Awards

Members achieved an astonishing 150 Pathway Awards, as of 12th April, and we expect this number to keep growing. 12 members completed their Pathway. This number is particularly positive and highlights the engagement of our members in their Educational Goals and also the great work done by our Clubs to create a learning-friendly environment.



Division Contests Winners

Division contests were held successfully as a hybrid this year in November and March. Our winners are:

Humorous Speech Champion: Philip West
Table Topics Champion: Carol Bausor
Evaluation Champion: Abigail Norman
International Speech Champion: Deepak Caurasia

Very sadly, Philip West passed away in February, therefore Violeta Saladiene, as a Vice-champion, will represent Division A at the D91 Humorous Speech Contest.

Other Activities

In Division A this year we had several great activities, which helped to create good membership engagement and afforded members opportunities to practise their public speaking and leadership skills. Hamwic Speakers led a brilliant Youth Leadership Program at Richard Taunton Sixth Form College in Southampton, and Bristol Central Speakers ran a successful Speechcraft programme. There were also several workshops, Open Houses and other events that helped us to deliver great quality to our Club members.

Conclusion

The Toastmasters Year 2023-24 confirmed Division A as a strong Division with great potential for growth. Positive notes were the new Club in Reading, the commitment of our members to the Education Program and number of initiatives our Clubs launched.

We also believe that the proposed Alignment, by building more manageable Areas, will strengthen even more our Division by creating opportunities for new Clubs.

Division B: *Luca Graziani*

Area Directors

B6: Christopher
Jolly B8: Audrey
Graham B9: Natalie
Kay
B18: Marijana
Bosnjak B52: Rafal
Jablonski



The Toastmasters year 2023-24 has been an eventful one for Division B, which spans a large area of London: as far West as Hammersmith, as far South as Clapham, as far East as Southwark and as far North as Holborn. There are 25 clubs in



the Division, 2 of which have chartered after the year started. There are only 4 corporate clubs in the Division.

In Area B6, led by Director Chris Jolly, following the Spring renewals period, three clubs have over 20 members, including the recently chartered Medidata EMEA (corporate).

London Athenians have recently celebrated their 30th anniversary and are going strong. London Corinthians went from 29 to 9 members as of the time of this writing and needs to be followed closely, having not engaged with Club Officer Training and Area Speech Contests.

In Area B8, lead by Director Audrey Graham, notable is London Toastmasters, which in 2023, has gone from 14 to 30 members. From this club also comes the winner of the Division B International Speech Contest. Legacy Speakers Brixton (LSB) lost 10 members since the beginning of the year, now at 13, and have had a Club Coach since November. More needs to be done to encourage them to rebuild their membership. LSB and Clapham Connectors have scarcely engaged with Club Officer Training and Area Speech Contests.

Unfortunately, the LSBU Business School club is due to shut down as the University has decided not to renew funding for the club and its members.

Area B9, led by Director Natalie Kay, started out with 5 clubs, all around the Holborn Area, very established and long standing. In August, Sustainable Speakers chartered and joined the Area, which has gone from strength to strength throughout the year and has already reached Select Distinguished. We believe at least 3 out of the 6 clubs will reach Presidents Distinguished status, and the remaining will be Distinguished or above. The clubs in this Area are all of an extremely high standard with a very healthy mix of loyal long-standing members, and new members. The Area had great success in the Division Contest where Early Bird Speakers members placed first for the Evaluation Contest and third for the International Speech Contest. The membership numbers of three of the clubs have shrunk after the Spring renewal period so, in the final quarter of the year, we expect that that the clubs will focus on rebuilding their membership and achieving Distinguished status and above, submitting any remaining level completions that may be pending, as well as putting things into place for succession planning.

Area B18, led by Director Marijana Bosnjak, went from a membership base of 241 members to 115 following the Spring renewals. This is largely due to PA Consulting (corporate) having downsized their club from 135 members split across different "teams" to one regular sized club. Despite this, the Area has so far achieved 78 educational awards, including nine Triple Crowns and one Pathfinder. Two clubs are Presidents Distinguished and two are Distinguished, making it the top-performing Area in Division B at the time of this writing. The only club not yet Distinguished is actively working on member recruitment and marketing strategies. The Area will hold a June 2nd picnic event at Battersea Park. All Toastmasters are invited to attend.



In Area B52, led by Director Rafal Jablonski, Excalibur Speakers and Polish Your Polish are doing very well and earned 7 and 10 DCP points respectively. Both clubs also increased their membership, and all their officers were trained. Paddington Toastmasters have lost several members but are still above 20. They also had low COT attendance, training only 1 officer in the second round. Kings Speakers has had a change of leadership due to existing committee members not being able to continue their term. Instead of closing the club, a new President has been found from outside and the Club has now rebranded as SASA (Stammer and Social Anxiety). The club is still struggling with very few members, but it is receiving support from other clubs, both in the Area, and outside, to organise and advertise meetings.

Overall, the Division has gone from 851 members to 549, it has gained 2 clubs but is losing one, and 16 clubs have enough DCP points to be at least Distinguished, provided they have the required number of members. The Division B Spring Contests had over 70 in person attendees and we are encouraged that the Division can rebuild its membership over the last quarter of the year.

Division C: Erika Oteri

Area Directors

C2: Olga Galaiko

C5: Greg Smith

C34: Ranjit Shergill

C58: Ranjitha Justin

Division C comprises four distinct Areas with a total of 18 clubs, 16 of which are currently in good standing. However, it is recommended that "Blackrock Speaks" in Area C5 and "Speakers Corner" in Area C58 submit dissolution papers. Additionally, two new clubs will be introduced: a new club in Area C5 and Linklaters, which is expected to charter soon. Most clubs in the Division are corporate entities. During this Toastmasters year, we also managed to reinstate FTI. Economic challenges in the first half of 2024 have led to increased layoffs, doubling the redundancy rate since October, impacting Toastmasters club members' engagement, and reducing committee participation as the year progresses. The current total membership is 332, indicating a decrease of 72 members since the beginning of the year.

Distinguished Club Program: Currently, there are 3 Clubs at the Selected Distinguished level (Bloomsbury, Bloomberg, Lloyds) and one club at the Distinguished level (City Women Speaker). We are currently one club short, awaiting the addition of Linklaters to the Division.





Awards and Pathways Registration:

7 Triple Crown and 6 Pathfinders awards were achieved, with City Limits in C2 having the most award recipients.

79% of the members are currently enrolled in Pathways. Meanwhile, 11% have successfully completed Level 1, 9% have completed Level 2, 6% have completed Level 3, 3% have completed Level 4, and 8% have completed Level 5. Regrettably, this also implies that 63% of the members are enrolled in pathways but have not yet completed any levels.

Club Officers Training: 75% attendance was achieved in the summer COT training, while only 44% attendance was achieved during the winter COT. The significant decline in participation in COTs during the second round can be attributed to the ongoing re-organization that numerous corporations are currently undergoing. As a result, the composition of the committees was affected, with individuals taking on multiple roles in the committee

Area Visits: Three Areas completed the first round of visits, with Area C34 only completing 25%. For the second round of area director visits, C2 is at 60%, while the other areas are still at 0%.

Division TLI and Contests:

Division C organised two successful TLIs for the Summer and Winter training sessions. The initial TLI was done in partnership with Division K, while the subsequent one involved collaboration with Divisions K, B, and L.

Division C organised two highly successful Division contests, generating a total gross revenue of £234.02. The victors of both rounds of competitions hail from Area C5 and Area C2. The management of both contests was executed flawlessly, ensuring a seamless experience for all participants

Division D: *Russell Searle*

Area Directors

D14: Patrick
Thomas D21:
Tracey Rogers
D29: Russell Searle
(acting) D53: Jeevan
George John,
plus Gillian Prior (Assistant Area Director)





I am pleased to report that Division D has had an excellent year to date. Our Area Directors have worked hard to help our clubs and members achieve their goals, and I appreciate the support they have given me in this endeavour.

Area Visits

100% of the first-round Area Director visits were completed. We are currently on track for 100% completion in the next round of Area Director visits. The Division Director still has to visit 8 of our 19 clubs but aims to do so before the end of June!

Club officer training.

We held training sessions for each area at the end of 2023 (30 Division D officers trained), with 2 training sessions (one for D14 & D21 and one for D29 & D53 with 26 Division D club officers trained) held early in 2024. The 2024 sessions also attracted club officers from other parts of the world – we had attendees from districts 71 (UK North & Ireland), 81 (Caribbean) and 91 on our final session!

Distinguished Club Program

As of April 2024, 9 of our clubs have achieved Distinguished status, with 6 clubs who have also achieved Select Distinguished. Some of those are very close to becoming President's Distinguished clubs, watch this space!

These results demonstrate the hard work and dedication of all members of the Division, and the progress that has been made towards achieving their goals.

Members are still actively pursuing their educational goals, and there is the potential for clubs to improve their status. The challenge for some clubs has been recruiting new members. Some clubs have held Open House events to promote membership and run regular educational events for their communities.

Educational Awards

80 members achieved a minimum of one award, and we have four Triple Crown winners hailing from Burnham Speakers, Epsom Speakers, Guildford Speakers, and Trojan Speakers. Congratulations everyone!

Division Conferences and Contests

We held two very successful Division conferences this year, with thanks to everyone who contributed to these events.

2023 Winter Conference – Epsom.



•The keynote speaker was Glen Savage from Riverside Communicators 2024 Spring Conference – Guildford.

- The keynote speaker was Paul Carroll from 104 London Debaters

A total of 31 speakers competed in the Division D contests this year, with the honours going to our Division level winners who will represent the Division at the 2024 District Conference:

- Humorous Speech: Richard Sharkey, Riverside Communicators
- Table Topics: Elizabeth Queenan, Wokingham Speakers
- International Speech: Elizabeth Queenan, Wokingham Speakers
- Evaluation: Chris Merchant, Wokingham Speakers

Other activities across the Division

This year, Division D clubs have run Lunch and Learns, Open Houses, Pathways drop-in calls, Youth Leadership Programs, voice and body language workshops, evaluation workshops, debating workshops, joint meetings, Christmas socials, summer picnics, community events, and much, much more!

Congratulations to the following clubs who celebrated significant anniversaries during this year. Happy birthday to you all!

Maidenhead Speakers: 40 years Guildford Speakers: 30 years Trojan Speakers: 20 years Camberley Speakers: 15 years	Godalming Speakers: 5 years GSK House: 5 years Sutton Speakeasy: 5 years
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Conclusion

It has been my honour to serve as your Division Director, with credit also to Tom Bailey who led the Division D team at the beginning of this year. There are many items in which our clubs excel, but there is much to learn from our experiences that will make 2024/25 even better for our members.



Thanks to all our members, who have made us the Dynamic Division we are today.

Division H: Guler Cortis

Firstly, thank you to my amazing Area Directors for a brilliant year. I could not have serviced our Happy Division without YOU.

Area Directors

H15: Pearl Cadogan
H32: Rachel Norris
H35: Grant McNeill
H37: Marta Gocek



Currently 23 paid clubs in the Division

Area H15: 4
Area H32: 5
Area H35: 5
Area H37: 4
Area H55: 5

To date, all 23 clubs renewed their members on 1st April 2024 and are in good standing.

- Clubs at risk and in need of a Club Coach by 1st July, if membership stays below 12, are County Communicators, Connected Speakers, and Eastbourne Speakers. Toasted Sandwich remains at risk. Division Director and Area Director to get in touch with the existing coach and the club.
- Currently 13 clubs have Distinguished status, making the Division Select Distinguished.

Membership to date is 499 and I am confident it will increase by 30th June. **DCP Club Goals**

President Distinguished (5 clubs): Speakers of Croydon, Worthing Speakers, Sussex Online, Lewisham and Beckenham

Select Distinguished (4 clubs): Bromley, Kent, Brighton & Hove and Battle

Distinguished (4 clubs): Arun, Croydon Communicators, Meridian and Tunbridge Wells.



All other clubs will either need more members or Pathway-level sign off to reach Distinguished status.

Congratulations to our elected Area Directors for

2024/2025 H15: Jatinder Randhawa

H32: Lucy Brooks

H35: Juli Chapman

H55: Sam Lloyd

In progress for next milestones:

- AD Election for H37
- AD reports for the end of May deadline
- Club officer elections
- June: to notify new officers on TMI to get half a DCP for the clubs for the year 2024/2025.

Let's finish on a high!

Division J: *Andy Hessey, DTM*

Division J – The pride of the Thames Valley and Wales from Sea to shining Er ... M1 motorway.

Area Directors

J4: Deborah

Stevens J 7: Andra

Pirvu

J10: Helyn Ashford

J11: John Christie

J22: Hazel Glennie



The northernmost Division of District 91 has 23 clubs in good standing with 429 members at time of writing this report in mid-April. As Division Director, I have been supported by a 5-person team of Area Directors, all of whom have done an amazing job. They have delivered highly engaging Club Officer Training sessions and thrilling club contests – so thank you to Debs, Andra, Helyn, John and Hazel for being outstanding leaders.

Since June, the Division has welcomed 179 new members with Cheltenham Speakers adding 22 new members alone. It has been really encouraging to see that six of the



Division's clubs are currently on track to finish with more members than it started the year with. I am also delighted that currently, 9 clubs are Distinguished Clubs or higher.

Aylesbury Speakers have managed to be President's Distinguished and Area J4 is currently the only area in the District to have all clubs Distinguished which goes to show the stability of these clubs.

One of my personal highlights as Division Director was the outstanding performance of Club Officer Training in the first half of the year. Division J had the most officers trained

(104) out of all the Divisions and 20 of the 23 clubs had at least four attendees join one of the sessions up to the end of August. There were still 94 officers trained in the second period making it a highly successful result.

Another highlight of this programme year is that despite some clubs struggling, all of our clubs are in good standing and we have not lost any. In the climate where clubs are finding the transition back to in-person meetings tough, we have had a good period of stability.

Our Area 10 Director, Helyn has also made steps to launch a pre-charter club, Virtual Voices, and we will be closely following its progress.

We have had another successful year of Educational awards in the Division. At least 25 awards have been made at Level 4, 5 or DTM which shows people are excited about the more complex and longer projects that the higher levels bring to the members. An increase in Pathways Enrolment to over 88% shows that there is a real commitment to learning across all of our clubs.

Division J has a wonderful history since it was conceived 10 years ago and it has seen three District Directors come through its ranks along with a notable International Director. I will of course be a little sad to pass on the baton to the next Division J Director but I like to think that it has been a successful year in my custody and I will give the incoming Director my full support.

Division K: *Nick Ronald*

Division K is a division that focuses on clubs around the London Bridge area of London as well as corporate clubs in the City and Canary Wharf.

There are four areas in Division K:

Area K3: Apoorva Agarwal (has 5 clubs)

Area K12: Chip Yi (has 4 clubs)

Area K13: Tina Plamadeala (has 4 clubs)

Area K31: Rishabh Kalyani (resigned from Area Director role in March. 5 clubs).



Team

There are four very talented Area Directors on my team. They have worked hard with their clubs to help support and nurture them. They have worked together collaboratively and contributed to the wider division's planning and events, and the successes, we have had.

It was a shame that the Area Director; Rishabh Kalyani resigned very suddenly in March as this did impact the completion of the 2nd round of club visits.

Out of the 18 clubs:

- Community clubs: 7
- Corporate clubs: 11

AD visits:

Overall, 95% of Area Director reports in round one were submitted on time. All the area director community club visits were completed and the reports submitted in time. With the corporate clubs, 4 area director club reports weren't submitted.

The 2nd round of area director club visits are taking place at the moment and I am confident that these will be all done on time.

Membership

Membership growth has been a challenge with some clubs in the division. We have had one club, Speakeasy@Credit Suisse, fail to renew any members in both renewal periods this year, due to a corporate take over of Credit Suisse by UBS, which meant that the company withdrew all support and sponsorship for the club due to a widespread restructuring and redundancies at Credit Suisse.



The division has seen a polarisation of some clubs with high and growing membership and some with very low and struggling membership

To highlight this, below is a list of clubs with 20 or more members and then a list of clubs with less than 20 members. The clubs with the highest numbers are listed first then it goes in descending order.

Clubs with membership above 20 members:

1. London Public Speakers: 72 members
2. City of London Toastmasters: 69 members
3. Romford Speakers: 27
4. Wharf Speakers: 26 members
5. Broadgate Speakers: 21 members
6. Moody's Europe Toastmasters: 25 members
7. Ms Orators: 21 members
8. Db Toastmasters – Canary Wharf: 20 members

Clubs with membership less than 20 members:

1. JPMC London Glasgow Toastmasters club: 19 members
2. Master Speakers: 18 members
3. Barking Toastmasters: 16 members
4. MLP London Bridge Speakers: 13 members
5. Stratford London Toastmasters: 11 members
6. Canary Wharf Communicators club: 10 members
7. KPMG Kommunikators: 10 members
8. Accenture Speakers: 9 members
9. Deutsche Bank Toastmasters: 6 members

Many of the corporate clubs have reported they have struggled to get the same support and sponsorship as previous years from management at the company, with companies wanting to limit how many members' fees it pays for and the process of sponsorship has become harder.

All the clubs that were eligible for club coaches were offered and given them and some progress has been made in running Open House events and some increase in membership. However, there is still a long way to go.

Training

All the Area Directors were involved in delivering a combined Area led COT, which had over 90 people attend. They also supported a Division COT in round one, in November and the TLI in February. In the most recent round of training, 11 clubs had 4 or more officers



trained. London Public Speakers and KPMG Kommunikators both had a full 7 out of 7 club officers trained.

Contests

Successful area and division contests were held in hybrid format for all the contests in the last Toastmasters year.

Humorous Speech Winner: Ga Lok Chung

Evaluation Winner: Ga Lok Chung

Table Topics Winner: Monie Monague

International Speech Winner: Ga Lok Chung

Awards

1. 7/7 Club officers trained:

- a. London Public Speakers
- b. KPMG Kommunikators

2. Level 5 Pathway Awards:

- a. IIP5: Malcolm Nraganza (db Toastmasters)
- b. EC5: Alero Arueyingho (Barking Toastmasters)
- c. IP5: Mary Sarkur (Stratford London Toastmasters)
- d. IP5: Nick Ronald (MLP London Bridge Speakers)
- e. PM5: Monie Monague (Moody's Europe)

Pathway Level 1 awards achieved: 22

Pathway Level 2 awards achieved: 16

Pathway Level 3 awards achieved: 9

Pathway Level 4 awards achieved: 9

3. Triple Crown awards:

- a. Valerija Slavina (Moody's Europe)
- b. Dennis Peck (Romford Speakers)
- c. Alero Arueyingho (Barking Toastmasters)
- d. Mike Weston (London Public Speakers)

4. Phoenix Award for Bank Street Toastmasters

5. Distinguished Club awards (DCP)

President's Distinguished Club

- City of London Toastmasters Club:
- London Public Speakers:
- Romford Speakers
- Moody's Europe

Select Distinguished Club

- Db Toastmasters – Canary Wharf

Distinguished Club

- Barking Toastmasters

And several other clubs are close to becoming Distinguished by the end of this Toastmasters year.

Division K also has one new club, which is: Greater London Authority.

It has been very rewarding, though challenging, to serve as Division Director for Division K this last Toastmasters year. Division K continues to work towards Distinguished status, and we are confident that four or more clubs will have gained the required members or education goals by the end of June, for us to achieve this. Also, hoping our clubs struggling with low membership will build momentum to move from surviving to thriving mode as we start the new Toastmasters year.

Division L: Sean Dean

First, I would like to thank the team who have supported me and their clubs this year,

- Area L16 Director: Mohammed Al Bayati
- Assistant Area L16 Director: Peter Francis
- Area L56 Director: Vanessa Pochette
- Area L61 Director: Jesus Parada-Rivero



The Area L47 Director position has been vacant for most of the year. This role has been covered by the Division Director.

Background

The Division started the year with 435 members in over 20 clubs spread over North, North West and Central London.

We were very pleased to welcome Wembley Stadium Speakers as the 21st club in the Division when they chartered earlier this year. The Division has 365 members at the time of writing this report in mid-April.

Area Visits



100% of reports were submitted on time in the first period and we are on track to achieve 100% for the second period.

All four Area Director elections were held before the deadline.

COT attendance

Two COTs were organised in the first training period and three COTs were organised in the second training period. A joint TLI was held with Division B in July and a London TLI was held in February.

12 clubs out of 20 had four or more club officers trained in the first training period and 13 out of 21 in the second training period.

Division Contest winners

Congratulations to Thibault Grumett (Wembley Stadium Speakers), our International Speech Contest champion, Catalina Rosca (PMI UK Toastmasters Club), our Evaluation Contest champion, Emmet Naughton (Berkeley Square Speakers Toastmasters Club), our Humorous Speech Contest champion, and Ryan Al-Hakim (Berkeley Square Speakers Toastmasters Club), our Table Topics Contest champion! We look forward to cheering them all on at the District Contests.

The Autumn contests were held at NIC Centre, in King's Cross, Society Speakers' home venue. The Spring contests were held at University of Westminster, near Baker Street, PMI UK Toastmasters Club's home venue. Thank you to both clubs for helping to facilitate and organise the Division contests, it is much appreciated.

Current Distinguished Status

The Division's aim is to be Distinguished, as per the Division Success Plan. At the time of writing this report in mid-April, five clubs have already achieved Distinguished status on the grounds of obtaining at least five DCP points and having met their membership number requirements. Four more clubs have obtained at least five DCP goals but need to meet their membership number requirements. There is also plenty of opportunity for other clubs to achieve Distinguished status or better.

The Division could achieve President's Distinguished if there are at least 21 clubs in good standing and 10 or more clubs have achieved Distinguished status by the end of June.

This is credit to all the hard work that has been put in across the Division over the year so far. Well done to all of the clubs striving to obtain more DCP points to reach their own club goals and well done to all members who are working towards their own educational goals.



Education awards

92 Educational awards have been submitted at the time of writing this report. Especially well done to London Business School Public Speaking Club, Woodford Green Speakers and Winchmore Hill Speakers for submitting at least 10 Educational awards.

District Director: *Diane Richardson*

A strong end to the year

Despite seeing many challenges this year, District 91 has continued to grow its membership and continues to raise the quality of its clubs. Every incoming District Director plans to leave the District in a better condition than they inherited. Despite the price increase by Toastmasters International, and also by many venue hire increases, the uncertain economic background which we live here in the UK with high (by recent standards) inflation

rates, high energy prices and greater job insecurity we have continued to grow the District membership base and will leave the District with higher numbers and in a better condition than the excellent position we inherited.

In terms of new member payments, we are fifth in the world for total payments on the day I author this article. We are sixth in the world, only needing another 409 payments to become a Distinguished District, for membership payments with a net increase over last year. We are also sixth in the world for the number of clubs which are Distinguished, currently sixty-five. We need another three clubs to become a Distinguished District in the number of clubs we have Distinguished.

Unfortunately, the number of clubs in the District is behind where we wanted to be. However, we know that several of the clubs that have fallen into low standing, or corporate clubs yet to pay their dues, will return before the end of June. To become a Distinguished District, we need to convert our pre-charter clubs and prospective clubs into chartered clubs before the end of June. Luckily, we have a strong pipeline so we remain optimistic that we will indeed become a Distinguished District for the 2023-2024 programme year.

It was great to see so many members take advantage of the old membership price in July 2023 and we had a record number of payments for July. Since then, despite the price increase by Toastmasters International, membership continues to grow. On a year-by-year comparison the number of payments we received was higher than at the same date last





year despite having a slightly lower than normal number of renewals in April, due to the inescapable price increased to \$60.00. This is testament to the dedicated work of the club growth team under Mo and committee members of every club in the District.

The number of Distinguished clubs is also slightly ahead of where we were this time last year. The eventual prediction is that once again the Programme Quality team will have around 100 to 110 clubs Distinguished this year. Many thanks to Steve and the rest of the PQD team who have run a series of webinars in the past 10 months, which has helped us once again become a Distinguished District for club quality.

To help boost the alliance with Rotary in the UK we have started to run pilot Toastmasters' taster sessions with Rotaract clubs in London, with a view to running Speechcraft courses later this year. This presents us with a wonderful opportunity to strengthen the ties locally and hopefully will see members of both organisations benefit from sharing their knowledge.

Because of the economic uncertainty and the price increase from Toastmasters International, the incentives strategy has been deliberately cautious this year. I am glad to say this means, thanks to the outstanding fiscal management by Val, our District Finance Manager, we are now in a position to offer five new incentives in this last quarter.

New Incentives

In April we ran Spring into Spring and I am delighted to say that we are offering a monetary incentive to the Toastmasters end-of-year membership drive program "Beat the Clock". We have extended the Net 4 and Net 8 club growth incentives which now have a Net 12 and a Net 16 to reward clubs which have grown significantly this year. In addition, we are also running the 10 - 100, Bring a Friend incentive to celebrate 10 years of District 91 and 100 years of Toastmasters International. One of the things that struck me this year talking to members is that many of them said how much membership has benefited them in so many ways. The idea behind this new incentive is that we, as members, invite our friends or work colleagues, along to meetings and encourage them, if they enjoy the experience and can see the benefits of membership, to join in line with the Toastmasters promise where we are encouraged to do this. The first one hundred new-to-Toastmasters members who are sponsored by an existing member will help their new club win £10 each for the club.

Full details of this and the other new incentives can be found on the incentives page on the District 91 website.

To boost membership engagement, our PRM Nikita and I have introduced the Anniversary emails to congratulate all members who have been members for less than 10 years and



then every 5 years after that. The feedback from these emails has been universally popular. I believe it is a wonderful way to help build engagement between members and the District Leadership Team, hopefully boosting membership retention as well. In addition, Nikita developed a membership renewal campaign that helps give the Leadership Team a better understanding of why members leave Toastmasters, and to remind members who have yet to renew to do so. Hopefully starting with the next round of renewals we will have a database of why members have left, to help us to improve our on-boarding of new members. This will ensure we are meeting the needs of all members in the best way we can.

I'd also like to thank Janet our District Administration Manager who stepped up to the role since our first Council Meeting in September and to also thank all of this year's Area and Division Directors for their hard work. Also a big thank you to Rose for her Parliamentary work at DEC and Council meetings, and Arnaud and Emily for being Credentials Chairs.

Finally, I would like to thank all the many wonderful members I have met this year from long standing experienced members to the new members. To all who have listened, commented and made suggestions as to how we can improve our performance as a District as we each strive to make District 91 the best it can be.

Program Quality Director:

Steve Vear, MBE, DTM

Reflections

When I set out to return to District Leadership in March 2023, it did not occur to me that I would become Program Quality Director, assuming responsibility for the educational journey of our circa 4,000 members including training, contests, conferences and all things in-between. I made clear from the outset that I wasn't going to try and 'boil the ocean' and ensure key activity to ensure that for me and everyone involved didn't allow our responsibility to get so big and unmanageable that it was like having a second full time job. We must ensure that our roles look attractive enough to the next generation of leaders and I hope that my successor feels comfortable with the size and shape of the Program Quality Director role as they get ready to assume office.





Training

The first priority of the year was to train our District officers. A minimum of 85% of our Division and Area directors need to receive official training from the District to prepare them for the year. I am pleased to report that we trained 91% of our officers, therefore meeting this qualifying element for the Distinguished District Program.

During two periods in the program year Club Officer training is provided to those members that have been good enough to step up into leadership positions within their club. I am incredibly grateful to all of the Area Directors and Division Directors who helped deliver training to 1,264 officers across the two training periods. As part of the training strategy, we provided a total of 4 weeks of 1 hour lunchtime sessions targeted at our Corporate clubs. Attendance at 3 or more of these sessions awarded the clubs training credit for the distinguished club program. To further support these clubs we ran two early morning 'breakfast sessions', all of the Corporate COT sessions were well attended and I wish to thank all those members across the district who got involved.

Our popular 7x7 incentive program saw a total of 21 clubs receive club officer pins for getting 7 officers trained in the first round and a further 11 clubs who went onto to receive a £60 voucher for doing this again the second round. Well done to these clubs - a fantastic achievement.

Distinguished Club Program

At the time of writing this report 66 clubs in our district have become distinguished or better. We are well on our way of achieving the goal we set at the start of the year to 'Stroll back to Smedley' and reach Smedley Distinguished levels for the number of distinguished clubs. The DCP shows the commitment in our clubs to support educational achievement, attend training, ensure administrative tasks are completed and to encourage the onboarding of new members. The strength of District 91 in this regard is strong and I am really proud of what our clubs have done during this program year.

Contests and Conference

I always say that Toastmasters has something for everyone, and for a section of our members, contests is what it's all about. I know that the District Leadership Team and I were impressed as to the level of organisation that went on and the standard of speakers shown at the various levels of contests this year and I thank all that have been involved to achieve this. I look forward to watching the contests during the Conference weekend, especially to see who could become the next World Champion of Public Speaking!

At the start of the year we had 5 people interested in submitting bids for the 2024 conference but slowly but surely we were left with none. I am so very grateful to Amy Jones DTM, who on top of her responsibility as Training Manager this year, got so inspired with



helping me find a venue to book, that she stepped up to the challenge of becoming Conference Director. What the team have achieved is nothing short of amazing - which most of you are probably experiencing right now as you read this report ahead of the council meeting.

Closing and thank you

This year has been an incredibly challenging one and so I need to thank a few people, without whom it would not have been possible for me to stay on course or indeed for us all to achieve what we have done. There are so many people that I could thank, but I do want to prioritise four people.

- *Amy Jones DTM*, Training Manager and Conference Director - I look forward to the time where you become a District Director in Australia. You are an amazing person and leader, thank you
- *Diane Richardson*, for handing over the office of PQD in state that made it easy to pick up and deliver for our members
- *Vanessa King DTM*, Our Chief Judge - thank you for not running out of the way when I asked you to serve. Contests can be so very complicated and your calmness and leadership has been invaluable
- *Juli Chapman*, our Pathways Champion - the number of events and queries that your team have put on has been nothing short of incredible. You are perhaps an unsung hero of District 91 - a lot of our success this year with educational awards can be attributed to your leadership and drive, thank you.

Being your Program Quality Director has been a privilege and the experiences of this year will stay with me for some time.

And finally - remember, like you - a lot of us have never done the roles we hold before it continues to be a learning experience. Learning by doing is not just the ethos in our club meetings but in District Leadership too.

Toastmasters may not be a life saving organisation, but for so many it can be a life changing one - thank you to everyone who has helped change a life this year.

Club Growth Director: *Mo Dawodu*

Our District Success Plan objective was to achieve Smedley Distinguished Award by end of June 2024. This objective required the District to have a net growth of 9 new clubs and achieve a net growth of 697 membership payments. *(Please note that the following report reflects the progress status as at the 18th April 2024. We are progressing through the April renewals and a lot will change before the end of June 2024)*



PAYMENTS GROWTH

Our objective remains to achieve 9406 payments from a base of 8709 and to date we have achieved 8424 payments. This figure includes 1865 new payments which places our District 5th highest in terms of numbers of payments globally.

To achieve Smedley Distinguished we require an additional 982 payments. This is achievable by focusing on supporting clubs with approximately 200 outstanding renewals; We also expect that Q4's quarterly growth will be 750 payments and new club charter payments projected at 80.

We have appointed six club coaches and will be appointing more club coaches after the April renewals numbers are confirmed to provide continued support to rebuild low member clubs.

We will also be promoting existing and new membership building incentives for all clubs and, recognising the successes of many of our clubs who have won Toastmasters and District Awards.

PAID CLUBS

Our Objective to achieve Smedley Distinguished seems more aspirational based on the current numbers with paid clubs at 157. We currently have 9 low member clubs and 2 ineligible clubs. Many of these clubs have good prospects to become active or to return to good standing after renewal payment challenges are resolved. This will take the paid clubs back up to 168.

We have chartered four new clubs this Toastmasters year and appointed club mentors for all clubs. We are confident that we will be potentially chartering four or more new clubs before the end of June 2024.



We currently have nine prospective clubs at pre-charter stage with four close to charter. Our focus will be to support all current pre-charter clubs navigate the charter process and continue to develop new club leads into prospective clubs. Our objective is to develop 10 new prospective clubs by the end of June 2024.

THANKS TO THE CGD TEAM WE HAVE

Added links to the D91 website for members to register interest as Club Coach, New Club Sponsor and New Club Coach.

Updated the D91 new clubs lead management system, redesigned and updated Promotional Materials for District Marketing and Demo Boxes and promoted increased use of Digital Promotional Marketing Materials. This helped double the number of Prospective clubs.

Developed a detailed spreadsheet outline to help planning and running a Demo meeting outlining the “Why, What & How” (This system will be adapted for Open House Meetings this Toastmasters year).

Supported new clubs and club growth by supplying over 40 Demo or Open House boxes in addition to providing training on Demo meetings to the District Executives Council team.

Systemised the New club charter process to better manage our volunteer members time commitment.

Initiated a process to resolve recurring corporate clubs payments by appointment of a club Liaison officer, a non paid member role.

Expanding our District Incentives program to celebrate and invest more resources in our existing members / clubs

Actively supported 50% of Division contests to encourage and recognise our members and clubs success in the Hall of Fame presentations.

I would like to thank **YOU** and all our members who are responsible for the successful numbers stated above and our District leaders who have devoted considerable time towards supporting the District club growth objectives. I would like to thank you for making my year as Club Growth Director a fulfilling one.



The last quarter of the Toastmasters year still presents unique opportunities for new club sponsors, new club mentors and club coaches. I urge you to explore these opportunities.

This report would not be possible without the collective work of this year's DLT, of Diane Richardson, Steve Vear, Janet Alkema, Valerija Slavina, Nikita Parks and Rupa Datta.

My gratitude and appreciation goes to the Club Growth Team of Ron Mayne, Emmanuel Karamagi, Sadiq Owo, Arnaud Sartre and John Drinkwater for their dedication and support to a sustainable District Mission.

Public Relations Manager: Nikita Parks DTM

"It is better to disappoint people with the truth than to appease them with a lie." - Simon Sinek

Besides our successes, I hope you gain an appreciation of the opportunities and challenges facing our District, so that our successors may avoid repetition and seek improvements.

Internal PR

To improve our capacity for engaging our members and gain insight into and improve on last year's 10% unsubscribe rate, we replaced our Email Service Provider, Constant Contact, used since our District's formation and inherited from District 71, with Customer Relationship Management service, ActiveCampaign. This revealed that one third of all click-throughs recorded from our newsletter emails to our website news articles came from our 10% of members of corporate clubs. These occurred at whatever time our newsletter was published. These robotic clicks were due to interference by corporate email protection services, which also unsubscribed such members from our mailing list without their knowledge or consent.

We overcame these issues by implementing automated email address verification, categorising services as "robotic", "safe", or "unknown" and implementing CAPTCHA on click-throughs for members utilising any "robotic" services. ActiveCampaign collaborated, implementing a two-click unsubscribe process and improved engagement reporting to use heuristics that exclude robotic activity.

For the first time, we now have detailed and accurate analytics through ActiveCampaign, on our website using Google Analytics and on YouTube to identify which content our members engage with, and for how long. Our high newsletter open rate of over 50% and unsubscribe rate of under 1% show us that our members are open to receiving a newsletter with





content that interests them. The articles that gain the most traction are members' personal stories, and Sonia Aste's "The Laughing Toastmaster" feature. The articles that gain the longest engagement are videos and those with high pictorial content.

On the other hand, after excluding the "robotic" services, our click-through rate is under 1%, showing that we are not receiving, and need to earn our members' attention. Our historical focus on articles by district leaders has proven misguided. We want to share more of our members' inspiring stories as well as information on the activities of our clubs, Areas, Divisions, and District. We really appreciate those members who send us short video clips of their successes and celebrations. Thank you. Our newsletter needs to be created by our members, for our members. Please keep sending us your video clips, photographs, and news so that we can post these encouraging stories. (newsletter.editor@d91toastmasters.org.uk)

We created a separate distribution list automatically for those members who engaged with our district conference articles, resulting in incredibly low unsubscribe rates for conference specific emails to this audience, whereas when conference specific emails were sent to all members, our unsubscribe rate from all communications trebled. This shows that "know and respect your audience" is as important in written communication as when delivering a speech. We can build upon this learning and deploy ActiveCampaign more effectively.

"Lessons in life will be repeated until they are learned." – Frank Sonnenberg

Our Internal PR efforts are also focused on supporting clubs in their membership renewal activities. We are delighted to report that our lapsed member campaign in October generated over twice as many lapsed member renewals as we had in the previous year. We hope that our April campaign will achieve comparable results. We also learned that two-thirds of those leaving are taking a break and intend to return, and we encourage you to re-engage your lapsed club members periodically to help make this happen. This year we are also introducing the Anniversary and Award recognition emails where we can personally recognise members' achievements and encourage them on their Toastmasters journeys. These emails are proving popular and often elicit positive responses. This initiative supports the second half of our District mission to 'build new clubs and support all clubs in achieving excellence'.

A key reason for selecting ActiveCampaign is due to its extensive capacity for automation. You will have experienced this when registering for this District Council with the personalised email and pre-filled registration form. To date, we have built 74 automations, covering subscriptions, renewals, registrations, recognition, and engagement.



External PR

Following the successful re-implementation of the “Find a Club” feature on our website, we relaunched the popular 2020 “Thanks, Toastmasters” campaign on social media across LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and X. This was another initiative designed to support our clubs as it generated interest in Toastmasters with referrals to our clubs. Our goal is to replace this campaign with your “Thanks, Toastmasters” video testimonials. Please contact us to participate in producing these testimonials, more benefits-focused than the successful 2018/19 “#MyWhy” campaign.

Our LinkedIn following passed 10,000 in July and, at 11,328 followers, is by far our most active social medium. Thank you for your engagement and please keep up the excellent work. Our Toastmasters clubs provide such enormous benefits to members, not only in the development of confidence and public speaking skills, but also in the value of having regular meetings with fellow members. With so many people now working remotely, Toastmasters provides members with an engaged community which benefits all of us. The re-post you make might be the first time that a potential member hears about Toastmasters International!

As our PR agency and much of our social media are shared with District 71, we recommend that we adopt a more collaborative and coordinated external PR strategy with them.

Information Technology

Our District website and email services have been hosted with IONOS since May 2020. Although we have a managed service contract, the software had not been maintained and IONOS were levying a 50% surcharge to continue to support our obsolete environment. Parts of the website had stopped working, parts of the administration interface were inoperable, including backup and restore, and the software upgrade process was broken. This was found to be because the website had not been deployed into the contract, but into “free” webspace that comes with it.

After extensive trial-and-error testing, a repeatable upgrade process was devised and executed successfully. Backups, Google Analytics and ActiveCampaign were integrated into the revitalised web site, but it could not be redeployed into the managed service contract straightforwardly. Our conference website was built from scratch within the contract.

In November 2023, Google and Yahoo! announced the mandatory adoption of Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance (DMARC), an email authentication protocol, effective from February 2024. As they account for half of our members’ email addresses, and our successful delivery of email into the inbox rather than circulars or spam folders is imperative, we implemented full support for DMARC via ActiveCampaign by December 2023. IONOS botched their extremely late implementation of



Domain Keys Identified Mail (DKIM), a precursor to DMARC, and have still not got it working, resulting in email delivery issues from our website and mail clients using d91toastmasters.org.uk addresses. Email is a core capability of every ISP and ought to be a core competency.

IONOS technical support has varied from extremely poor to unacceptable and their approach is often to attempt to upsell rather than resolve issues. Consequently, we recommend that IONOS be replaced with a competent ISP after our conference.

We inherited a legacy of internal and external PR channels being conflated and work to separate them remains ongoing. There was also a legacy of lax information security that had accumulated piecemeal, with inappropriate access being granted to non-DLT members and third-party applications. Generally, non-confidential content should be delivered through our WordPress website and Content Management System, confidential information should be accessible only to DLT members, and intermediate information subject to GDPR, should be accessible only to designated members who have completed District Leadership Agreements.

The scope of information technology and information security falls between District Administration and Public Relations and we strongly recommend that a District IT Manager reporting to the District Director be appointed in future, as is the case in other Toastmasters districts.

“If I maintain my silence about my secret, it is my prisoner. If I let it slip from my tongue, I am ITS prisoner.” - Arthur Schopenhauer

As we approach the end of our Toastmasters year and I hand over to our incoming District 91 Public Relations Manager, I encourage you to give them your full support, continue to engage with us and amplify our message on social media, and send us inspiring content.

Here are the links and QR codes to our social media. If you do not follow us yet, please take this opportunity to become one. Personal recommendations remain our most effective means of growing our clubs.



FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



LINKEDIN



X formally TWITTER

Finance Manager: *Valerija Slavina*

We are fast approaching the end of yet another Toastmasters year. And what a year it has been for me as your District Finance Manager! In this role, I was responsible for overseeing the financial health of the district, ensuring accurate financial reporting, and implementing sound financial practices.



Here are some of my key accomplishments:

- **Maintained Financial Accuracy in Uncertain Times:** Despite economic fluctuations, I've ensured the District's financial health. Through careful budgeting and strategic planning, we've maintained a strong position. I meticulously managed the District's budget, ensuring all expenditures were aligned with financial policies and procedures. This helped enhance transparency and facilitate efficient record-keeping.
- **Promoted Fiscal Responsibility:** I fostered a culture of fiscal responsibility within the District. I provided regular financial reports and insights, enabling informed decision-making on resource allocation and budget planning.
- **Rebuilding Trust:** I understand the importance of financial transparency. By implementing clear reporting processes and addressing past concerns, I've helped rebuild trust and confidence in our financial management.
- **Achieved Financial Growth:** Through strategic budgeting and cost-saving measures, I contributed to the District's financial growth. This allowed for increased investment in member resources and incentives programme.
- **Enhanced Financial Reporting:** I streamlined financial reporting processes, ensuring timely and accurate information was available to District leaders and members. This transparency strengthened trust and accountability within the district.
- **Streamlined Expense Management:** To simplify expense reporting, I spearheaded Concur training for all relevant personnel. This ensured accurate and efficient claims processing.
- **Empowering Our Members:** I believe in providing hands-on support. This year, I've actively assisted clubs and members with financial queries, ensuring everyone has the resources they need to thrive. I equally helped address VAT queries in a timely manner and supported clubs in getting refunds they were eligible for.

My experience as District Finance Manager has honed my financial management skills, leadership abilities, and commitment to fiscal responsibility. By focusing on fiscal

responsibility and member empowerment, I've equally helped lay a strong foundation for our District's continued success. Let's keep building together!

Immediate Past District Director: *Rupa Datta*

Like many of my predecessors, I write this report rolling off from District Leadership after six consecutive years of service. As we celebrate our District's ten year legacy over this Conference weekend and look to the future, you will have noticed that ALL of our past District Directors are still members of District 91.



A wise Past District Director has said to me a number of times that a District Director never fully retires. This year my main responsibility has been to serve as District Leadership Committee Chair. You will see the full report about that process and the nominations outcome as part of this pack, however I'd like to spend a moment on the parts that most do not see.

Serving on one of our standing committees like the District Leadership Committee, means that members from every Division are brought together for a common purpose which is defined at the time of their appointment - and those called upon to serve and who accept these tasks, do so with the best interests of the future of our District in mind.

I was delighted when this year's committee took up the opportunity to all meet in person for a working meeting during the process. After all, as our founder, Dr, Smedley said:

'We learn best in moments of enjoyment'





In addition to the work itself, members that may not have otherwise met, got the opportunity to do so and expand their Toastmasters network or in some cases, reconnect.

This is just one example of being able to serve our members, and our District in different ways. I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to develop and stretch myself in so many ways over the past six years. The road has had its bumps for sure.

I am looking forward to pulling back and concentrating my energies on other things as we go into the next program year. I will however continue to serve our District 'when called upon to do so.' I invite you to do the same.

In addition to my role as IPDD, I founded a club this year. This is the first part of the District Mission so serving in another way, with this, and the work done with the DLC, I can honestly say that these are the two best things I have done in my Toastmasters career to date. Both help to build the future. Build on our legacy.

My own District Leadership journey has witnessed the pre-pandemic, stepping into that rocky boat myself during the pandemic and now, standing on the brink of the next decade, I know that District 91 has weathered the storm and we go into the future stronger than before. Thank you for the support and trust that you have had in me. I will pay that forward as we bring forth our future leaders.

District Alignment Committee Report

Barbara Saph, District Alignment Chair

An annual review of District alignment is carried out as per Toastmasters International requirements, stated in Protocol 7.0 District Structure. Below is the QR code to scan to access the full District Alignment Committee report.

https://bit.ly/District_Alignment_Report



Notes

