

Annual General Meeting

Tiara Park Atlantic Hotel, Lisbon, Portugal

Wednesday 12 May 2010



Minutes

Attendees	
Helen Baldwin, Chair - items 1-10	Laurence Auffret , Chair - items 11-12
Executive Committee Members (Apologies received from the Journal Editor)	54 voting members (including 6 EC members)
Additional attendees	
Head Office (minutes and vote counting)	

ITEM

1 President opens the meeting

- 1.1 The President welcomed 54 members to the 2010 AGM of the European Medical Writers Association Ltd. Apologies were received from the Journal Editor. Head Office had received 15 proxy votes, which were carried by the Hon Sec and incorporated into the voting figures detailed below.

2 Approval of the minutes of 2009 AGM

- 2.1 The Hon Sec asked members to approve the minutes of the 2009 AGM held in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
65	2	2

3 President's report

- 3.1 The President gave a synopsis of her report on the EC activities since the last AGM. The Hon Sec asked the members to approve the President's report.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
68	0	0

4 Treasurer's report

- 4.1 The Treasurer gave a synopsis of her report on the finances of EMWA and presented the 2009 accounts as prepared by the auditors KBT, Switzerland.

5 Approval of the Treasurer's report and annual accounts

- 5.1 The Hon Sec asked the members to approve the Treasurer's report and 2009 accounts.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
66	0	2

6 Re-forecast 2010 Budget

- 6.1 Following approval of a budget for 2010 at the 2009 AGM, the Treasurer talked about the challenges of developing a realistic budget 18 months in advance and before the prior year financial management had materialized. The Treasurer then presented a revised budget for 2010, which reflects decisions taken by the EC since the 2009 AGM and proposed EMWA development activity.

- 6.2 A member asked the Treasurer what provision the EC had made to cover the proposed deficit. The Treasurer referred to the EMWA reserves of approx €400,000, which had been prudently accrued to cover years such as 2010 where, because of the financial climate, spending would exceed income.

6.3 Another member asked whether the proposed new budget reflects the actual income for the 2010 spring conference. The Treasurer confirmed that the proposed new budget had been prepared in the early part of 2010 in time for circulation to all members as a part of the AGM pack. Consequently, the actual income achieved for the spring conference (registration for which opened in mid-January and closed in early May) was not reflected in the budget.

6.4 A further question was received from a member about the tax implications for 2010 should EMWA make a profit. The Treasurer confirmed that EMWA would be subject to tax on any non-membership activity, e.g. sponsorship or advertising.

6.5 A fourth member asked whether about current financial performance against the revised budget and the Treasurer reported that the finances are being managed effectively and that the EC would look to better the year-end position wherever possible.

6.6 The Hon Sec asked the members to approve the re-forecast budget for 2010.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
65	1	2

7 Proposed 2011 Budget

7.1 The Hon Sec asked the members to approve the proposed budget for 2011.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
67	1	6

8 Proposals from the EC

a. Proposal to increase the membership fee from 1st January 2011

8(a).1 The Treasurer presented the proposal to increase the membership fees from January 2011 as follows:

Membership new (UK / Europe) - E120 -> E130

Membership renewal (UK / Europe) - E100 -> E110

Membership new (outside Europe) - E140 -> E150

Membership renewal (outside Europe) - E120 -> E130

8(a).2 Following a question from a member, the Treasurer confirmed that all members pay fees – there are currently no subsidized members and the fees are comparable with AMWA (\$120) and with TOPRA (£120).

8(a).3 A third member noted that the proposal did not increase the fees in percentile terms and suggested that the proposal be amended to increase the fees by 10% per category. The Hon Sec noted that this proposal would be unconstitutional since members not at the meeting would be unable to comment or vote on the proposal, however the EC would consider a further proposal to balance the increase be put to the members by electronic vote later in 2010.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
62	5	2

b. Proposal to adopt a new Constitution for the European Medical Writers Association Ltd

8(b).1 The Hon Sec précised the proposal for a complete re-drafting of the Constitution for the European Medical Writers Association Ltd, full details of which had been circulated with the AGM pack. A member asked whether the EC had intentionally removed the requirement for an annual meeting of the members. The Hon Sec confirmed that consistent with the new UK Companies Act, EMWA had removed the requirement for an Annual General Meeting of the members, however the EC fully intend to hold an annual meeting for discussion of general EMWA matters during each spring conference. The Hon Sec further confirmed that EMWA could use electronic voting where appropriate to avoid the requirement for all votes to be conducted at the annual meeting.

8(b).2 Another member asked for clarity on the clause allowing for remuneration of the Directors. The President confirmed that this clause allowed for extraordinary payments where a Director had made a larger contribution to the work of EMWA than would reasonably be expected of the normally non-remunerated Director post.

8(b).3 A third member asked how the order of voting will manifest if officers could be elected by electronic vote instead of at the annual meeting. The consensus from the room was that there are distinct advantages for candidates to present themselves in front of the members prior to elections being held. The Hon Sec confirmed that this level of detail would be considered by the EC and clarified in the proposed new Rules of the Association, which will be circulated to the members during the second half of 2010.

8(b).4 Former member and Hon Sec Julia Cooper remarked on a good job of re-drafting the Constitution and asked for clarification on the difference between a poll and a show of hands.

8(b).5 The current Hon Sec proposed that the Constitution be approved subject to more detailed clarity on the difference between a poll and a show of hands.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
66	0	3

c. Proposal to allow the EC to finalise the annual budget in September of the prior year and to gain approval of the proposed budget from the members by electronic vote

8(c).1 The Hon Sec proposed that the EC be authorised to finalise the annual budget in September of the prior year and to gain approval of the proposed budget from the members by electronic vote

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
66	0	3

9 Release of President

9.1 The Hon Sec proposed that the President (HB) be released from her role.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
66	1	1

10 Handover to New President

10.1 Laurence Auffret thanked Helen Baldwin for her time in EMWA's Executive Committee and acknowledged the changes implemented and the new strategic plan developed during her tenure. The Hon Sec asked Laurence Auffret to take the chair and assume her role as President of the Association.

11 Election of New EC Members

11.1 The President (LA) confirmed the two candidates standing for Executive Committee (EC) positions.

a. Conference Director

11(a).1 The candidate for the new role of Conference Director presented her thoughts on the role and her personal contribution to EMWA. The Hon Sec then asked the candidate (member Sunethra Wimalasundera) to leave the room so that the members could vote.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
66	1	1

b. Vice-President

11(b).1 The candidate for the role of Vice President presented her thoughts on the role and her proposed contribution to EMWA. The Hon Sec then asked the candidate (member Rita Wellens) to leave the room so that the members could vote.

Votes for	Votes Against	Abstained
67	0	1

12 Any Other Business

Note: Items of discussion which were not detailed on the agenda are listed here under any other business. The discussion of these items did not necessarily take place at the end of the meeting so the chair of the meeting at the time of discussion is identified by President (HB) or President (LA).

12.1 Website

Member Sam Hamilton asked for an update on plans to develop the EMWA website and interactive platforms for learning. The Website Manager confirmed that the EC have considered ways of using webinar for EMWA learning. The largest consideration for the EC when discussing website enhancements is the significant development costs – each decision must be considered in the round.

Following investment in development of the Freelance Forum, the take up has been small despite work by the EC and volunteer members to promote it.

The recent priority has been the development of a new platform for accessing TWS online, which will be rolled out by mid-year 2010. Despite its significant development costs, the EC consider that this will be a considerable PR opportunity for EMWA.

The President (HB) asked for a show of hands on those members in the room that have accessed the EMWA Twitter or Facebook profiles, which are moderated by EMWA volunteers. The show of hands was comparatively small.

There was a consensus in the room of the importance of reaching out and communicating with members in new ways that reflect developments in electronic communications. This needs to include information on the web for new or potential members.

12.2 TWS

A member asked the EC to consider circulating TWS by email only to save printing and postage costs.

12.3 EPDP Structure

A member asked the EC to consider offering workshops and presentations in local chapters to allow more regular attendance by members. It was noted that this model has been successful for the American Medical Writers Association, where the conference space has been offered free of charge by corporate sponsors.

Another member proposed that assignments and workshops could be offered electronically opening up EMWA to members outside of Europe (e.g. Australia). The Education Officer clarified that the workshops are the property of the workshop leaders not EMWA and that therefore it would be difficult to gain agreement for workshops to be delivered or EPDP credits to be awarded in any format other than face-to-face workshops.

The President (HB) confirmed that the new EMWA Business Plan includes actions to consider other formats for delivery of learning to EMWA members. The Vice President (LA) confirmed that she is keen to progress other workshop and training formats during her Presidency. It was noted that whilst the current workshops are very interactive, given time and suitable technology the content could be adapted to online formats.

12.4 EMWA Collaborations

A member asked whether the collaborative events (e.g. EMWA/ICR symposium) had made a worthwhile financial return for EMWA. The President (HB) confirmed that EMWA had received income of approx £5,000 for the 2009 EMWA/ICR symposium and that EMWA would continue to pursue collaborations with ICR and TOPRA in 2010.

12.5 Contingency Plans

It was noted that in the week before the start of the conference, the EC had considered contingency plans in case the volcanic ash cloud disrupted flights into Lisbon. The President (HB) thanked Head Office for implementing the plans at short notice. Member Barbara Grossman asked whether EMWA had incurred any costs as a result of implementing the plans. The President (HB) confirmed that the non-refundable cost to EMWA was approx £20,000.

A member asked whether it would be feasible to insure future conferences against cancellation.

12.6 Salary Survey

A member asked about the historical data collected on memberships and salaries in the field of medical writing. The Website Manager confirmed that Thomas Schindler has collated recent information and will publish an up-to-date article in the next issue of TWS.

12.7 Amazon Voucher Prize

The Amazon voucher prize for attending the AGM was won by new member Samaila Jawaid.

12.8 Close of Meeting

The President (LA) thanked everyone for attending the AGM and the meeting was closed.

Signed: Laurence Auffret

Date: