

MINUTES OF AEJ UK SECTION AGM, 17 January 2018

Chaired by William Horsley. Attended: W Horsley, M Hughes, M Springate, D Lennon, P Norman, F Robinson, N Hughes, D Barker, R Thompson, R Vinjamuri, D Worsfold, J Preston, A Robinson (13 members)

Apologies: I Oppong Kwarteng

Chairman's Report: William recalled the death of Roger Broad, a founder member of the UK Section, last year. Acceptances for the memorial event for Roger at the Reform Club in Pall Mall on 2 February from 3-5 pm should be sent very soon to Sarah Broad, as advised by email to members. In 2017 our membership was close to a record high with 42 paid-up members. Lunchtime meetings were particularly well attended. The attendance of City University journalism students at AEJ meetings as guests is welcomed by all sides. It is still unclear whether the meeting rooms in Europe House will continue to be available for AEJ meetings after the UK leaves the EU. Finding another cost-free or affordable meeting place will be tough. Pressures on the space at Europe House is already intense so bookings need to be made several months in advance. Members were encouraged to widen the circle of journalists attending our meetings and when possible persuade younger members to join. David Barker keeps our website with a wealth of topical content on Brexit related issues. Firdevs Robinson has also kept up the AEJ profile on Twitter and Facebook.

International: William circulated his latest report to the international AEJ on media freedom activities last year and reported that our international profile has continued to grow. Seven UK members participated in the Vilnius Congress last November.

Treasurer's Report: Mike told members the Section's finances remain in a healthy state. There was a manageable loss last year and the past catering overspend is coming under control. International fees have gone up £100 due to the weaker pound, and costs for website hosting fees in 2017 were higher than before. To reduce catering it was agreed that event notices should include a line asking those who find they cannot attend to notify their cancellation at least one day before the meeting date.

To keep down cost the options of serving no wine or charging the entry fee to no-shows were discussed but for practical reasons it was decided to continue with present arrangements. Last year members voted overwhelmingly for stricter discipline concerning the opening of several wine bottles at the same time, to cut back on the number of bottles left half-drunk. Members asked how much of the catering costs were accounted for by wine. From recent invoices William estimated that wine accounts for up to 20 percent of lunch costs. Mike recommended keeping the lunch fee at £25 and the meeting agreed.

Secretary's Report: Margaret's report was circulated, listing last year's events last year. David Barker and others commended the high quality of speakers in 2017. Some possible speakers for 2018 were discussed.

UK Section's 50th Anniversary in 2018: William briefed members on the intense work done by him and others to make preparations for the UK Section to host an international AEJ Congress in 2018 or soon afterwards. But the planning group's research found that fund-raising in the current Brexit climate and uncertainties about the political calendar in autumn 2018 presented unexpectedly serious obstacles, and the requests of London hotels for major down-payments a year in advance persuaded the planning group to call off the idea for 2018. However members approved planning for a mixed professional and social event in late 2018 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of founding of the UK Section. A working group of active members would be invited to cooperate and make a plan with some participation by a limited number of colleagues from other AEJ sections.

Election of Officers: The existing officers were willing to serve again and no other nominations were received. Rick Thompson proposed and Nevsal Hughes seconded the re-election of William Horsley (Chairman), Margaret Hughes (Secretary) and Michael Springate (Treasurer). David Lennon has also agreed to continue as Events Director. Finally Section ex-chairman Rick Thompson praised William, Margaret and Mike for their hard work and good results on behalf of the UK Section. Others present showed their agreement.

NH: London, 19/1/2018