

AEJ UK AGM 11th December 2018 11.15-12.30

MINUTES

Welcome.

Chairman William Horsley welcomed everyone to Europe House. The meeting was attended by 20 members. Officers' reports had been distributed (Chairman's and Secretary's Attached). He said that the supposed Brexit date in March 2019 would lead to a different role for Europe House, and new management, and the AEJ was urgently seeking a new, affordable venue. Regent's University was an inviting option. He would explain later.

Chairman's Report.

William summarised his written report, highlighting the main activities. The Colloquium and dinner marking *the 50th anniversary of the British Section* had been a notable success with 20 international colleagues joining the timely event. Full reports with copies of the speeches were posted on the AEJ-UK website. He warmly thanked those who had made it happen.

The section had developed its presence on *social media*. Firdevs was regularly posting news on our Facebook and Twitter accounts, (Facebook: ukaej. Twitter: @aej-uk). News of relevant activities should be sent to firdevs.robinson@btinternet.com and Firdevs suggested members might like to Follow and Like the accounts. William also commended David Barker's regular updates about the countdown to Brexit on the website.

The recent International AEJ Congress in Greece had seen William's nomination for President narrowly defeated in favour of the status quo, but he believed it had opened up a genuine debate about the way the AEJ International should work to deliver value to its members. He was continuing as an International Board member with special responsibilities for representing the AEJ on Media Freedom issue, which was clearly making an impact.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Michael Springate presented his annual summary accounts. He said the bank balance was reasonably healthy. The loss of several hundred pounds over the year was partly due to the 50th anniversary colloquium event – a 'one-off'. But there were uncertainties over the future venue and the officers were proposing an increase in the annual membership fee. It had been £30 per annum for the past 12 years. The Treasurer and other elected officers proposed an increase to £40.

William explained that Regent's University based in Regent's Park (nearest tube: Baker Street) was keen to host our events with no charge for the premises and places reserved for a manageable number of their students to attend our professional meetings there: www.regents.ac.uk He pointed out that the arrangements at Regent's University had yet to be tested, but taking advantage of their in-house catering might in time make possible a reduction in the £25 fee for the lunches. A £40 annual members' fee would provide a 'buffer' while we go into a year of uncertainty and changing arrangements. There was a general discussion, with several members speaking in favour of the £40 annual fee and one voice against. Michael Lake advocated pay-as-you go for the wine individually. And Anthony suggested he and others should moderate or restrict their wine consumption to make it easier to lower the entry fees, out of consideration for members who do not drink wine at lunchtime.

William said the university was proposing a convenient system in which we could order a moderate amount of wine on a sale-or-return basis. The meeting overwhelmingly voted for an increase of the annual membership fee to £40 effective from 2019, on the basis that the officers would use their best endeavours to reduce the £25 meetings fee by making savings to the lunchtime good and drinks order where possible in the common interest. Mike Springate added that he was investigating the option of members paying dues by Direct Debit.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Margaret Hughes presented her written report. The guest speakers through the year had been varied and instructive, especially but not only on the Brexit drama, and attendances had been very high. The meeting thanked Margaret for her tireless work administering the monthly meetings with a warm round of applause.

Election of Officers

William said the three officers were willing to stand for another year and that no other nominations had been received, but that Treasurer Mike Springate wanted to let go of the financial reins. Happily David Worsfold, an experienced financial journalist, had agreed to take over as AEJ Treasurer following a handover period. Rick nominated the 3 officers to continue through 2019 and David Worsfold to take over as Treasurer during the course of the year. The nominations were seconded by Firdevs Robinson and passed unanimously.

Future for UK Section

William said that getting high quality speakers was always complicated work juggling speakers and dates, but Peter Norman had helped to ease the workload by catching a good number of speakers over the past couple of years in addition to those approached by William himself and David Lennon. The chairman explained that after consultations with all concerned the consensus was that it would be sensible for Peter to have the title 'Meetings Secretary' to use when approaching possible speakers, liaising with William himself and Events Director David Lennon; Margaret's role would be unchanged. There were no objections. Members were asked to send any suggestions for speakers, if possible with contact details.

David Barker hoped for more women guests. Nick Hopkinson said he had established with a BBC figure and asked if there might be interest in pursuing the idea of a session with a suitable BBC editor on current issues including Brexit coverage. There were some expressions of interest. Peter Norman and David Worsfold told the meeting that by agreement with William they were jointly exploring the idea of organising a post-Brexit special event on the economic outlook, possibly with outside sponsors, perhaps in May or June. One aim would be to attract new working journalists to the event and potentially as members. David Worsfold said he had made initial contacts and there might be a realistic prospect of the AEJ holding a meeting at Lloyd of London with its Chief Executive as guest speaker. Rick Thompson wondered if members might be interested to have an awayday to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, if so he would make contact to check out the possibilities. The idea was met with enthusiasm and he was asked to pursue the idea and report back on the prospects and modalities.

There was no other business and the Chairman closed the meeting with best wishes to all for good Christmas cheer.

RT