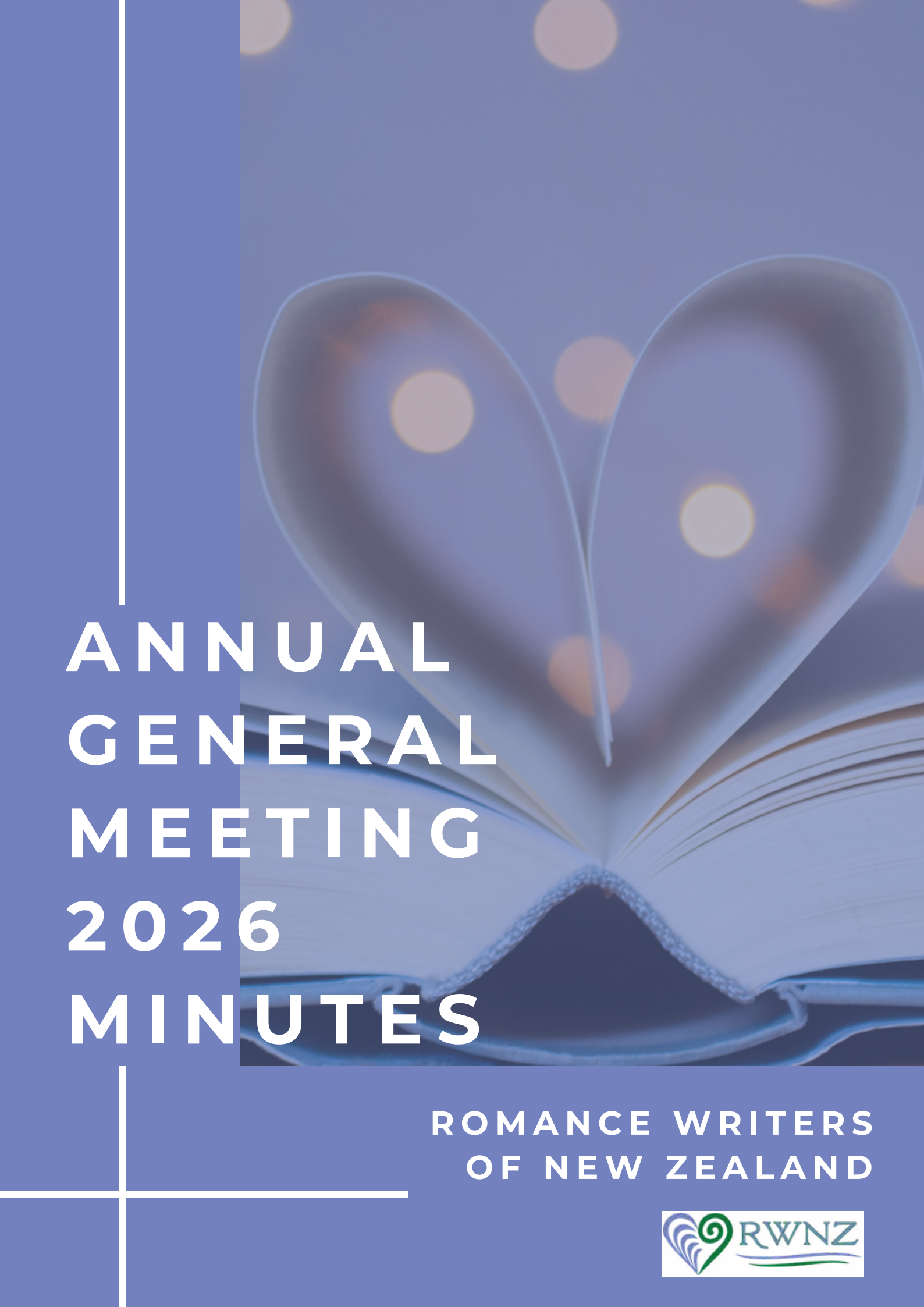




ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2026 MINUTES

ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND





**The twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting of
Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc. (RWNZ)
held on Saturday 15th August 2026
Holiday Inn Auckland Airport: 2 Ascot Road, Māngere, Auckland**

Chaired by: Kelly Lyndon, President.

Executive team present: Marija Greenhill - Vice President, Shelagh Merlin – Membership Secretary, Priti Garude – Publicity Officer,

Apologies: Shannon Frances James - Secretary and Rajat Chawla -Treasurer.

Members present: Miriam (Misty) Robertson, Amy Paulussen (Blythe), Catherine Robertson, Jackie Rutherford, Kate O’Keeffe, Gavin Ralph, Linda Shaw, Vicki Brewer, Anna Klein, Catherine Sneyd, Alice Lewis-Sneyd, Amber Carter (AS Lancaster), Dan Hurley (Nat Connors), John McCormick, John Wiltshire, John Harris, Sarah Malin, Kelly Buchanan-Johns, Ruth James, Bronwen Evans, Ruth Zapasnik, Morgan Cathro, Jennifer Raines, Cara Neil, Rachel Collins, Jennifer Morris, Justine Baddeley, Florence Leota, Donna Blaber, Caroline Keen, Michelle Kelly, Joanne Graves, Mary Jones, Annalise Silan, Sue Glamuzina, Shannon/Sharron Curtis, Lucille Henry, Melissa Guyan, Caroline Bagshaw, Stacey Broadbent, Lynda Tomalin, Sharon Fergusson, Darian Smith, Maree Anderson, Nalini Singh, Wendy Vella, Sharyn Barratt, Cheryl Phipps, Tania Sparks, Peta Mobberley, Trudi Caffell.

Proxy voters: Natalie King, Joanne Harris, Sue Kingham, Stephanie Ruth, Janet Kortlever, Carmen Aim, Melissa Climo, Esme Brett, Emily Gee, Shannon Frances James, Courtney Ieremia, Kendra Delugar, Enni Tuomisalo.

Minutes: Lisa Page

Meeting opened at 4.20 pm.

Ngā Take | Business

1. President’s address

K Lyndon welcomed everyone and introduced the present Exec committee members. K Lyndon acknowledged the hard work that S Frances James put into the Annual report and R Chawla for his hard work on the Financial Report when he is currently working through the busiest time of the Australian financial year.

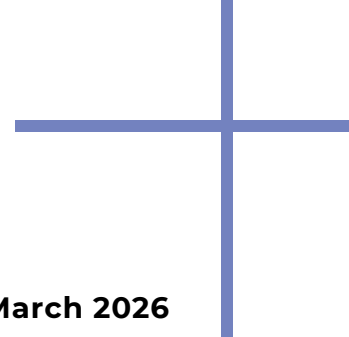
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the Twenty-Fifth Annual General Meeting of Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc., held on Saturday 16th August 2025

That the 2025 AGM minutes be accepted:

Moved by: Shannon Curtis

Seconded by: John McCormick

CARRIED.



3. **Confirmation of the Special General Meeting minutes held on 11th March 2026 via ZOOM**

That the 2026 SGM minutes be accepted:

Moved by: Catherine Robertson

Seconded by: Shelagh Merlin

CARRIED.

4. **Notice of any disclosures, or types of disclosures, made under Rule 20.1 (Officer's duty to disclose interests) during the most recently completed accounting period.**

Nothing to disclose.

5. **President's Report 2026**

K Lyndon invited attendees to refer to the President's report on page 6 of the Annual Report but spoke to several points including the new Constitution which is now updated to reflect the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and the Woo Commerce payment and member renewal issues that have caused significant problems for some members. We were told upgrading the website would improve this which unfortunately did not happen. After working with several different IT consultants K Lyndon advised that after talking direct with Woo Commerce we were then referred to an expert in California. S Merlin and M Greenhill are currently working with these consultants to fix the issues.

Highlights of the year include:

- Upgrading the website to a modern and refreshed new look
- Welcoming HQ (formerly Harlequin) as a conference sponsor after an 8-year absence
- Bringing in-person pitching back to conference
- Acquiring three new online learning courses by Stephanie Holmes which will be available from September
- Forming a new partnership with the NZ Society of Authors to give RWNZ members a 50% discount from 1 September
- Welcoming Priti Garude to the Exec team as Publicity Officer, who brings a wealth of experience in content creation, public relations and comms.

No questions were raised regarding the President's Report.

That the 2026 president's report be accepted:

Moved by: Lucille Henry

Seconded by: Sue Glamuzina

CARRIED.

6. Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31st March 2026

In the absence of R Chawla, K Lyndon presented the Finance Report.

K Lyndon said she would do her best to explain the report and answer any questions and advised she had been provided some notes from R Chawla to read out in conjunction with his PowerPoint presentation.

- RWNZ finished the year with a surplus of \$12,452. Net assets stand at \$159,422. The society is in a financially stronger position.

- Aside from conference, our operating costs remained almost the same as the previous year - \$24,635 against \$25,800

- The website was an \$18,693 investment, capitalised as an asset because it will serve members for up to ten years — \$16,948 of it remains on our balance sheet

- The legal and compliance work was a one-off. Every incorporated society in the country had to rewrite its constitution to re-register under the 2022 Act

- Interest on our term deposits more than tripled — \$6,686, up from \$2,071. K Lyndon acknowledged R Chawla's financial shrewdness in identifying well-performing term deposits which has resulted in further income earned for our members

- About \$5,724 of unauthorised transactions came through the website's payment gateway. This is on the balance sheet but has never been treated as our income. It sits as a liability. Cardholders we've identified have been refunded, and we're working through the remainder. Excluding this entirely, free cash is \$134,313.

- All fees will increase in September. None of our fees have increased in ten years. In that time every cost the society pays has risen. We have absorbed that, and this year membership income fell \$1,906, some of which is due to the Woo Commerce issues.

- From 1 September, renewals move from \$59 to \$65 — an increase of \$6 a year, or 50 cents a month. The joining and (re-joining) fee is unchanged at \$15, so a new member (or rejoining member) pays \$80.

- Contest entries rise by \$5.

- We are also introducing a Buy Now, Pay Later option, such as AfterPay.

- We are in surplus, our reserves are intact, and we've invested in a website and a Constitution that will carry the society into the next decade

CHANGES active as 1 September 2026

Member subscriptions to go up from \$59 to \$65

New members subscriptions from \$74 to \$80

Each contest will go up by \$5 per entry

Questions:

- A Paulsson and J Rutherford asked why there was a profit margin of \$12,452 compared to a loss the previous year and why this was connected to the conference. K Lyndon advised that the 2025 conference was deliberately 'fiscal' compared to 2024, and that the Exec had received feedback from attendees that the 2025 conference was not at the expected standard. The conference is generally done on a breakeven model, yet despite the cost cuts we only gained a surplus of \$791 in 2025. This is one of the reasons for the announced price increases for 2027 as conference fees need to rise to deliver at the expected standard.

6. Treasurer's Report for the year ended 31st March 2026 (cont.)

-S Barratt suggested spending extra money on 'big names' to boost conference ticket sales. K Lyndon advised that we have big names at this conference and it has still been very difficult to sell tickets in the current economic climate when discretionary spend is low, and that the conference committee considered cancelling in May. This was not actioned as tickets continued to sell slowly but steadily throughout July and August, but we will still make a loss this year. K Lyndon said we might have money in the reserves but that is only up to three years' worth of reserves and it would spend very quickly without careful management. K Lyndon said she remained unconvinced that spending large amounts on 'big names' would generate the needed rate of ticket sales to keep conference at breakeven in the current economic climate.

-K Lyndon also said that the current fees to join RWNZ are very reasonable compared to many other organisations even with the price increase, some of which are double the cost of RWNZ.

That the Treasurer's Report be accepted:

Moved by: Bronwen Evans

Seconded by: John McCormick

CARRIED.

7. Membership Report 2026

Membership Secretary S Merlin presented the membership report and spoke to it briefly.

-We have had a 19% overall increase in membership compared to the previous year across all regions.

-In the past 12 months we have had four different Membership Secretaries, currently S Merlin. It has been a difficult role to maintain an incumbent due to the Woo Commerce issues and S Merlin is currently working through inactive and expired memberships and will notify members identified next week via email.

-L Tomalin asked what the current membership secretary is doing to boost membership numbers and publicity of RWNZ? S Merlin said most find us through word of mouth and the website, which since the upgrade is a great new marketing tool. P Garude added that we have been more proactive on our social media accounts along with inviting Mrs Moa and Carwen Reads to our event, both of whom have large reader Instagram accounts and who have been posting about our event over the weekend. K Lyndon added that we have also been proactive in going to events such as *Ages of Pages* and *A Romantic Adventure* and wearing our RWNZ branded t-shirts, which has resulted in approaches and discussions from both active and prospective members.

That the Membership Report be accepted:

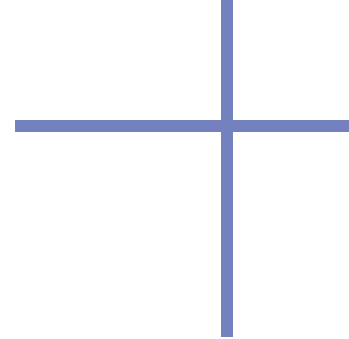
Moved by: Bronwen Evans

Seconded by: Kelly Buchanan-Johns

CARRIED.

POST-PUBLICATION AMENDMENT:

L Tomalin emailed Secretary on 30/8/26 to advise that she didn't ask the above question. As of 31/8/26, unable to confirm who asked the question.



8. Pātai | Questions

-B Evans questioned the removal of the Patricia Kay Courses which have been taken off the website. B Evans pointed out that a past committee paid a lifetime fee when they were purchased in 2016. She sees no harm in keeping them available and has been given various excuses from different people regarding the removal, none of which make sense.

-K Lyndon replied that the courses were removed by the 2022/23 Executive. K Lyndon also addressed the fact that previous conversations around the Patricia Kay courses had been taking place with B Evans prior to today, including meetings this week before conference. K Lyndon said the current Exec had reached out to the previous Exec for their explanation for the course removal and were advised that the removal was due to lack of use by members (as noted in website backend activity), taking up too much space on the website and that the material was out of date.

-K Lyndon acknowledged that the previous Exec were generous with their time on this matter, given none of them have been on the Exec for a long time. The current Exec was then able to review some of the material, and decided they were in agreement with the previous Executive and supports the reasoning for the removal.

-B Evans said she did not agree with this reasoning and that the courses were just as relevant today. K Lyndon said the current Exec remains in agreement with the 2022/23 Exec and there are no plans to reinstate the courses. K Lyndon also advised that new courses have been purchased by Steffanie Holmes which the Exec feels are more up to date and relevant to RWNZ members who wish to undertake online courses.

-R Collins and J Rutherford asked why the Patricia Kay courses could not exist on the website along with other courses? K Lyndon advised that it takes up a lot of space on the website and after reviewing the material the Exec felt it was also not in the best interest to members as it was from the 1990's and out of date. B Evans refuted this and said the material had been updated in 2010 or 2011. K Lyndon said that is still too old to be distributing in 2026. B Evans said she will be requesting all records regarding this decision and submitting a remit for a resolution at the 2027 AGM to have this decision re-considered by the membership.

-K Buchanan-Jones asked what the 50% discount offered to RWNZ members from the New Zealand Society of Authors means for current NZSA members who have memberships with both organisations. K Lyndon advised that the discount will apply when your next NZSA membership renews.

9. Special Resolutions

Special resolution 1: That the Rules of RWNZ section 15.3.6 regarding chapter responsibilities be amended from:

Take sole responsibility to pay their chapter costs if any. Where relevant, the chapter's bank account would be held by the chapter. The chapter's treasurer should forward details of the account to the chapter's members once a year. (A copy should also be sent to the RWNZ Treasurer.)

to:

Take sole responsibility to pay their chapter costs if any. RWNZ Executive will approve up to NZD\$400 per annum per chapter to be used for venue costs. Each chapter must apply to the Executive Committee in writing for this expense each year. Where relevant, the chapter's bank account would be held by the chapter. The chapter's treasurer should forward details of the account to the chapter's members once a year. (A copy should also be sent to the RWNZ Treasurer.)

Moved: K Lyndon

Seconded: S Merlin

VOTES: 62 votes received out of 68 members present. This included members at the AGM as well as proxy votes which were brought to the meeting.

In favour: 56 (90.3%)

Against: 6 (9.7%)

CARRIED.

Special resolution 2: That the Rules of RWNZ section 11.3.3 be amended from:

any Officers or Executive Officers and up to three members of the Conference Committee shall, in recognition of their voluntary services to RWNZ, be entitled as of right to attend the Annual National Conference without paying an admission fee including the Awards dinner and one associated cocktail function at the Annual National Conference.

to:

any Officers or Executive Officers, Webmaster, Regional Convenors, Contest Coordinator, Heart2Heart Editor and up to three members of the Conference Committee shall, in recognition of their voluntary services to RWNZ, be entitled as of right to attend the Annual National Conference without paying an admission fee including the Awards dinner and one associated cocktail function at the Annual National Conference. If any of the aforementioned roles are shared, the value of the above admission fee will be split evenly among those volunteers.

Moved: K Lyndon

Seconded: P Gerude

VOTES: 64 votes received out of 68 members present. This included members at the AGM as well as proxy votes which were brought to the meeting.

In favour: 47 (73.5%)

Against: 17 (26.5%)

LOST.

9. **Special Resolutions** (cont.)

Post meeting amendment: At the AGM, the Chair incorrectly calculated the votes in favour of Resolution 2. For a resolution to be carried, the votes in favour must be a minimum of 75% of all votes as per Section 13.2 of the Constitution. Following a post meeting review and recount by S Frances James, the votes were correctly recalculated as requiring 48 in favour. There were also six members present plus one proxy voter identified who did not have current memberships at the time of voting so their votes have also been discounted from Resolution 2.

Resolution 1 is still carried due to the high number of votes received in favour, which, unlike Resolution 2, can sustain the margin of error of seven nullified votes.

Resolution 2 is lost as the votes in favour did not reach the required 75%.

10. **Volunteer of the Year** was awarded to Shelagh Merlin after being selected by members for the fifth consecutive year in a row.

Meeting closed at 6:18pm.