Resolution 1 – Appendix A – Frequently asked Questions dated 4 June 2021

For the avoidance of doubt, the FAQs below have been created by the Proposer and Seconder of the Resolution, as a result of their consultation with groups of members (Past SIGBI Presidents, current and incoming Region/NA/Network Presidents and Clubs via their Federation Consultative Councillors).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1 Why is the term of office of President and President Elect proposed to be extended to two years?

A1 SIGBI was registered as a Charity in 2018 and consequently, the structure of the Board was reviewed to bring it into line with the recommendations of the Charity Commission, the aim being to create a smaller, skills-based Board that was sustainable and would ensure the viability of the Organisation.

The Charity Commission advocates that the President, the Chairman of the Board, should serve more than one year to allow for continuity in the organisation. In view of this, it is proposed to increase the term of office for both the President and the President Elect from one to two years. The President Elect automatically proceeds to the role of President without further election.

Q2 Isn’t this what was proposed in 2019 so why is it being proposed again?

A2 Prior to 2019, the SIGBI Board structure consisted of twelve Directors. At the 2019 General Meeting a Resolution was proposed to reduce the Board size to six Directors, together with an increase in the President and the President Elect’s Term of Office from one year to two years. Subsequently, an amendment was proposed to create a seventh post, that of Governance Director, which was carried at the 2019 General Meeting.

The two-year terms were introduced as the proposed restructured Board did not include the post of Vice President or Immediate Past President and it was felt that, in line with Charity Commission recommendations, the four-year overall term should be maintained for continuity reasons.

A later amendment from the floor at the 2019 General meeting removed the proposed change in the President and President Elect’s term of office, thus breaking up the whole intention of the restructured Board. This left SIGBI with no Vice President or Immediate Past President, as that was approved, but not the 2-year Presidential term which was an inherent part of the entire proposition.

The result of this decision has left SIGBI in a greatly reduced situation where continuity in the Board has been damaged rather than strengthened, leaving the organisation open to the risk of poor governance. Prior to the AGM in 2019 a four-year presidential journey from VP to IPP was in place ensuring some continuity from one year to the next. Despite a need for greater continuity than was already the case, the outcome of the 2019 AGM was entirely the opposite reducing the 4 years to 2 years (one year each for President and President Elect).

Q3 The role of Chairman has been discussed – has this been reviewed and considered by the Board?

A3 Yes, the role of Chairman was proposed in a Board meeting in 2018. The proposal was that this should be a 3-year term with the opportunity of being re-elected for a further 3-year term. This was rejected by the Board in January 2019 as the time commitment was far too much. In addition, it was felt that, in a small organisation like SIGBI, there wasn’t room for two people (President and Chairman) and there would be confusion in the membership with regard to the differing roles.
Q4  What work has been done prior to submitting this proposal?

A4  Over the two years 2017–2019 a considerable amount of work was done to research the idea of a restructured Board. With the advent of charitable status in 2018 an external facilitator, who had worked in a number of leading UK charities, and most recently as Interim Company Secretary of Parkinson’s UK, worked with the Board on two separate occasions to review the Board structure subsequent to which the 2019 resolution was proposed.

Since 2019, further investigation has been carried out with regard to what other Federations do, what other charities do and how they operate, including discussions with the President of SIE, herself a two year President. This work has supported the view of the 2019 Board that splitting the original 4-year term of Vice President, President Elect, President and Immediate Past President into a 4-year term of President Elect and President is the right thing to do for our size of organisation.

Q5  Would the commitment of two, two-year terms reduce the number of applicants prepared to take on the role, particularly for younger/working members?

A5  Up until the new board structure came into effect in October 2020, the time commitment for the role of President covered a period of four years: as Vice President, President Elect, President and Immediate Past President. Therefore, if the resolution was successful the commitment would stay the same as previously = 4 years.

A two-year term allows the President to spread her commitments over two years rather than cramming them all into one. In addition, technology is playing a significant part in changing the role of the President. Now she has the option of visiting clubs and regions, all over the Federation, without the significant burden of travel time and cost.

Q6  The Board seems to be moving further away from the membership – how is this being addressed?

A6  This year President Johanna, through the wonders of technology, has been able to visit more Clubs, Regions, National Associations and Networks than any other President. She has been able to induct new members, charter new clubs and have the opportunity to talk to more members than ever before. This has taken far less of President Johanna’s time and has had a significant impact on club members. Moving forward, the Board must make increasing use of technology to assist in its work.

In addition, in recent years, the visits to Clubs, Regions, National Associations and Networks, previously always undertaken by the President, have been undertaken by varying members of the Board with the impact that more members are meeting other Directors and, again, the President’s time commitment is reduced.

Q7  In 2019 a number of Past Presidents were against this proposal, often citing time commitment as an issue. What do you think?

A7  The SIGBI Federation is a significantly smaller Federation than, say, 10 years ago. Then we had 10,000 members, 28 countries and over 400 clubs; now we have 5,500 members, 18 countries and 263 clubs. It is felt that the Board should reflect the smaller size of the Federation and the reduced commitment of the President when compared with 10 years ago.

The proposed resolution was discussed with the Past Presidents at a meeting in January 2021, after which a significant number confirmed their support for the two-year term of office.
Q8 Will this proposal result in a reduced number of candidates being eligible to go forward to apply for SI President?

A8 Now that there is a fifth Federation, (SI Africa), SIGBI will be asked to appoint a SI President every ten years. A two-year term of office will therefore allow for up to five candidates from Past Federation Presidents. Programme Directors are also eligible to apply so the total pool of possible candidates is greater.

Q9 Two-year term – what if the President or President Elect isn’t performing satisfactorily for example due to ill health?

A9 There is a formal process to remove a President or President Elect from office. This is contained in SIGBI’s Articles (Clause 21.7), SIGBI Byelaws (Clause 12) and the Directors’ Role Specifications. The relevant policies are the Code of Conduct and the Dispute Resolution procedure.

Q10 Does a two year presidency mean conference is only every two years?

A10 There will be a conference every year; the format of the conference in the intervening year may change subject to consultation.

Q11 Will there be a need to change the board structure if the resolution is not passed?

A11 No, the outcome of the resolution will not affect the current board structure.

Q12 Will the Club/Region/National Association structure change with the proposed two-year term of office?

A12 The proposed resolution will not affect the exiting Club/Regional/National Association structure. However, in practice, there are many Clubs/Regions/National Associations where their Presidents already serve a two-year term.

Q13 Will the suggested two years in office be arranged to be unaligned with the board members’ term of office, if not, then it could happen that all experience is lost at the same time?

A13 If the two-year term of office for the President and the President Elect were to come into force with immediate effect, i.e. November 2021, it will assist with succession planning as their term would carry over until 2023. Currently, there are two Directors who will complete their maximum four years term of office in 2022 and three Directors who complete their initial two year terms of office. All three can re-apply to stand for a further two years.