

Officer decisions etc

Note of decisions taken by the officers and not covered in the reports

Safeguarding

The ODG has a Safeguarding Officer whose role is to liaise with the Diocese, to keep up to date with information relevant to safeguarding in ringing and to ensure that branch and tower officers, and members are aware of their obligations. Safeguarding in the Branch is a collective responsibility and it is a routine agenda item at Branch officers' meetings, though there is normally nothing to discuss.

At the Business Meeting in November 2021 the Training Officer took an action to follow up a safeguarding question with the Guild, and she reported back at the 2022 AGM and that report was listed with the officers' reports. No safeguarding officer has ever been elected by an AGM. It was not listed in 2022 & 2024, and although it was listed in 2023 there were no elections because the meeting was not quorate. I was agreed that existing officers would remain in post.

Despite never having been elected, Jane has been listed as Safeguarding Officer on the website. When we realised this anomaly the officers discussed it and agreed that there is no requirement for the branch to have a Safeguarding Officer, which would duplicate the function of the Guild's Safeguarding Officer, to whom anyone with concerns about Safeguarding in the Branch should report them.

Business meeting date

The Business Meeting (previously called the Branch Committee Meeting) is held a few months ahead of the AGM, and is a forum when the officers and representative of each tower can discuss matters of concern in a smaller less formal meeting than the AGM. It also enables initial discussion of major topics in time for more preparatory work to be done before a motion to the AGM.

Towers normally send the tower captain or correspondent, but if neither can manage the date they have the option of sending any suitable member of the band, but the officers (apart from the Ringing Master) do not have deputies.

For many decades the meeting has been held on the 3rd Saturday in November but the rules merely require it to be held in the last quarter of the year. Several times in recent years a number of key officers have not been able to attend the meeting because of fixed external commitments.

The officers decided that in future years the date may be varied by a few weeks to ensure most officers can be present. The date would be fixed well in advance to enable towers to plan their representation. The date for 2025 has not yet been fixed but will not be 15 November.

Striking competitions

When the 8-bell striking competition was a joint event the date was negotiated with Reading Branch. Now it has reverted to a Branch event the officers decided that in 2025 it will be on Saturday 11 October. The date may be varied. in future years

Saturday practices

Historically we had one practice a month, on the 3rd Saturday. It lasted 2-3 hours and up to 30 people attended.

The Saturday practice is now only 1½ hours long and the attendance isn't much more than a dozen but and often fewer, even before Covid.

Saturday practices are now only 20% of what we offer, in addition to: weekday afternoon practices, elementary practices, targeted (intermediate) practices and advanced practices.

For all practices except Saturdays, we avoid the risk of too few people turning up to make the practice viable, and having to go away disappointed, by checking in advance whether enough people are available, and then confirming or cancelling accordingly. That has worked well for many years.

We haven't so far done that routinely for Saturday practices, despite the fact that there have been a few when too few turned up.

On one occasion last year a lot of people who normally attend were known to be away and the secretary took the precaution of checking how many were available. After waiting as long as possible for replies, and with only 4 known to be available, she cancelled the practice with an email to all members.

Some members felt this was wrong and that Saturday practices should never be cancelled.

The officers discussed this but were split. Some felt Saturday practices should never be cancelled. Some felt they could be on rare occasions when there were too few (but how would we know). Some felt they should use the same system of notification and confirmation as all other practices. Since we were split we agreed to take a straw poll at the AGM.