# Scrutineers' Report, SHA Central Council and Officer Elections 2020
## Vivien Walsh (Manchester) and Alison Scouller (Cardiff)
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## This election

This election has the purpose of selecting the SHA chair, secretary and treasurer, and 20 members of the Central Council of the SHA, who are chosen on a national basis, irrespective of where they live or where the electors live, as long as they are members of the SHA. The SHA also has branches in areas where there are a sufficient number of members who wish to form a branch and campaign locally[1]. Branches may elect delegates to Central Council on the basis of one delegate per 30 members (or part thereof). Branch delegates have already been elected.

This year's national election process was much more straightforward than the last time (March 2018) because, following the 2018 Scrutineers' Report, Central Council took the decision to simplify the process by ruling that local branches elect their delegates a sufficient time before the national election, so that no delegate is elected both from their branch and nationally. This has avoided a further selection as to whether they wish to be a national or branch delegate, and then further elections to replace them on the body they will no longer be representing. However, in the case of the North-East of England, the General Election caused a postponement of the branch election, so that any members elected as both branch and national delegates to Central Council have had to choose which body to represent.

## The election process

We have access to the list of members' email addresses, but not their identities (unless it is obvious from their email addresses, or we know them already). We can also see who has voted (i.e. which email address), courtesy of *electionbuddy.com*, but to see *how* they have voted would be a long and convoluted process, open only to the returning officer and scrutineers who have the necessary codes, and not normally used (see under "Election Results" for the occasion where this was used.)

In 2018, several members had been identified as having had problems in voting as a result of visual impairment or other disabilities. This was a concern raised in the Scrutineers' report for 2018. This year a number of postal votes were sent out where members were unable to vote electronically.

## Election Results

The election began at 12.00 am on February 7th 2020, and was cancelled again at 6.58 pm that day, when the returning officer realised that some errors had been made. These were, first, that the personal statement of one candidate appeared both under that candidate's name and under another. Second, the wrong closing date was listed (14th instead of 21st

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[1] Currently London, Manchester, West Midlands, Yorkshire, the North-East of England, Oxford, Liverpool, Cheshire, and the countries of Scotland and Cymru Wales.

Feb). The returning officer was able to act on day 1 of the election, and re-ran the election with the correct information. By this time 106 voters had responded, but everyone was notified promptly of the mistake. In the end only 10 of the original voters failed to vote a second time. These voters might have decided not to vote again, thus abstaining. But we decided to check whether their original votes, had they been cast a second time, would have made a difference to the outcome of the election. Those votes were in fact divided between the candidates, or were abstentions, such that they would not have made a difference to the outcome of the election.

There were also 19 voters listed as having opened their vote, but not cast it (see next paragraph). We were concerned that this might have indicated some kind of problem with the election process, and contacted a sample of the 19. One member thought they had voted, but was in a hotel abroad at the time and concluded that their Wi-Fi connection had timed out. Three others said they had opened their votes, realised they needed to read a good many personal statements, and either did not have time or forgot to return to the election. We concluded that the election software was not at fault.

By close of poll on 21$^{st}$ February, 379 ballots had been submitted out of 976 eligible voters (39%). One was spoiled and 19 were opened without a vote being cast. Every SHA member had been notified of the election, and reminders to vote were sent out automatically by Election Buddy.

Another concern raised by the Scrutineers in 2018 was the canvassing of support. The view was taken, and upheld by Central Council, that as members of a political organisation, we are used to canvassing support for candidates both officially, as many members of SHA are also members of the Labour Party, and most are members of Trade Unions, and unofficially by offering our opinions to people we know or meet. This is normal and acceptable for members of a political organisation.

However, what we agreed was unacceptable was the circulation of preferred candidates, apparently officially, by the SHA's staff or via the SHA's website, Facebook pages, Twitter feed or other SHA medium, which gives the impression that **the SHA as an organisation** favours some candidates over others. This situation has not arisen in this election.

## Results

Detailed results of the election have been circulated to all members by the Secretary. In summary:

**Brian Fisher** was elected chair

**Jean Hardiman-Smith** was elected secretary

**Irene Leonard** was elected treasurer

The 20 Central Council members elected were as follows:

**Dr Tony Jewell, Dr Joe McManners, Dr Patrick French, Brian Gibbons, Martin Brooks, Rizwan Jalil, Dr Coral Jones, Kathrin Thomas, Stephen Watkins, Punita Goodfellow, Judith**

**Varley, Alex Scott-Samuel, Carol Ackroyd, Terry Day, Dr Sarah Grace Clark, Tanagrajabu Nala-Hartley, Dr Jane Roberts, Dr Jane Jones, Corrie Louise Lowry** and **Mark Ladbrooke.**