

2003
ANNUAL REPORT



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Notice of Annual General Meeting

To all members of the Association of Optometrists

The Annual General Meeting of the Association of Optometrists will be held at the Meridien Hotel, Gatwick on Wednesday 19 May 2004 at 3.15 pm.

Agenda

1. Introduction by the President, Mr Don Grocott
2. To receive and approve the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
3. To receive the Annual Report and Accounts
4. To receive the reports of the Chairman and the Committee Chairmen
 - (a) The Chairman's report
 - (b) The Public Affairs Committee Chairman's report
 - (c) The Professional Services Committee Chairman's report
 - (d) The Member Benefits Committee Chairman's report
5. To receive the Chairman of Finance's report
6. Questions on the Report and Accounts
7. To receive the report on the elections to Council from the Chief Executive
8. To consider the proposal of the Board that Buzzacott be re-appointed as the Association's auditors
9. To consider, and, if thought fit, to pass the Special Resolution set out below:

That the Articles Association of the Company be amended as follows:

- (a) That the phrase 'Chairman of Finance' be substituted for 'Finance Director' where it appears in Articles 33 and 57 of the Articles of Association of the Association of Optometrists.*

And that this amendment shall replace and supersede the wording as indicated with effect from the date on which this Special Resolution is passed.

10. To consider, and, if thought fit, to pass the Ordinary Resolution set out below:

That, pursuant to Article 50 of the Articles of Association, it is determined that rule 1 of the Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2003 shall be amended and that the following fees and/or expenses shall be paid to members of the Council in accordance with the following provisions until such time as it otherwise determined:

1. *The fees or allowances shall be at the rate of:*
 - (a) *£90 for up to one half-day's attendance upon qualifying business; and,*
 - (b) *£180 for attendance upon qualifying business exceeding one half-day but not exceeding one complete day.*

Such fees shall be exclusive of VAT, which shall be paid in addition where it is properly chargeable or shall be subject to the appropriate deductions for Income Tax (PAYE) and National Insurance Contributions where appropriate.

And that this amendment shall replace and supersede rule 1 of The Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2003 with effect from the date on which this Resolution is passed.

11. To consider, and, if thought fit, to pass the Ordinary resolution set out below:

That, pursuant to Article 5 of the Articles of Association, it is determined that rule 6 of the Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2003 shall be amended in accordance with the following provisions until such time as it otherwise determined:

(a) Rule 6 (1) (b): substitute 'Chairman of Finance' for 'Director of Finance'

(b) In Rule 6 (5):

(i) The words in brackets in the first paragraph '(not being earlier than 6 months prior to the beginning of the relevant year)', shall be deleted, and

(ii) in paragraph 6 (5) (a) the words 'Chairman of Finance' shall be substituted for 'Chairman of the Finance Sub-committee of the Board of Directors' so that these paragraphs shall read:

'(5) The fees to which any of the said office-holders are entitled may be increased from year to year as from such date or dates as shall be

(a) decided in writing from time to time by the Chairman of Finance after such consultation with such of the Association's financial advisers as he shall consider appropriate and;'

(c) The final paragraph of Rule 6 (5) shall read:

'These provisions shall be known as The Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2004 and shall replace and supersede The Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2003 with effect from the date on which they shall come into force.'

Close of Annual General Meeting

Note: Following the close of the AGM there will be a short period for informal questions from the Association's members. The meeting will conclude by 16.30.

By Order of the Directors



Ian Hunter OBE
Chief Executive

ANNUAL REPORT 2003



Chairman's Report

The major function of a Board of Directors is to determine the strategic direction of the organisation they represent. The AOP Board has spent some considerable time this year developing a forward planning process including medium and long term strategic goals for the organisation and a business plan for implementing that strategy.

That strategy says that the AOP must:

- ensure that AOP policy is supported by the wider membership
- take every opportunity to expand the role and remit of the AOP into appropriate areas consistent with the role of a professional body
- develop strategic alliances with other organisations to deliver any of the AOP's objectives

- deliver value for money and communicate effectively the value created by the AOP for its membership to its members and potential members
- strive to exceed levels of performance with respect to all current initiatives (continuous improvement)

The role of the Board with the management team is to implement these strategic objectives for the benefit of the membership and profession as a whole.

To be effective an organisation needs to work to be better tomorrow than it was yesterday and the quality management system (QMS), which is now a well established part of the culture within the AOP, ensures that everything we do is subject to checks and balances and encourages continuous improvement.

Part of the QMS is regularly to ask the membership about the services that we offer. These surveys cover all aspects of the AOP work and it is gratifying that the majority of our members are happy with the services they obtain from the organisation. It is also a measure of satisfaction that so many of our members do take the time to complete the surveys; if you are one of these, thank you!

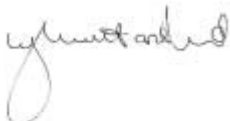
One area of activity in which the AOP is very active is expanding the role of the optometrist. Our *Sight Test Resource Pack* is a help to practitioners in defining where GOS responsibilities end and private care begins. Also the excellent work of the Professional Services Committee in developing the primary care

role of optometry through co-management schemes has pushed forward the optometric frontiers at a rapid rate. It is inevitable with the lengthening ophthalmology waiting lists, primary care organisations (PCOs) will turn more and more frequently to optometry for help and the AOP is ready and waiting with help, advice and support when the situation arises.

No organisation can work in isolation within a sector and the AOP is no exception. Realising this we regularly work with others, as appropriate, to help promote our members' interests and that of the wider profession. It is fair to say that there is a great deal of goodwill and co-operation between the optometric and optical bodies and this is beginning to reap benefits in achieving shared goals. This is most apparent in Wales and Scotland where the optical bodies have formed alliances in 'Optometry Wales' (OW) and 'Optometry Scotland' (OS). These bodies provide the forum for discussion and debate on all optometric and optical issues. OW and OS can then present a united front to external bodies such as government and the NHS thus giving more weight to our arguments.

Delivering value for money is essential for any membership organisation because without it members don't pay their subscriptions. As the AOP continues to increase its membership year on year it would seem that we have got this bit right. However we are never complacent and are always striving to improve the services that we provide.

The future for optometry is exciting and full of new opportunities and the AOP is there to provide leadership and assistance to the membership both as individuals, in whatever mode of employment they may choose, and the profession as a whole.



Lynn Hansford
Chairman

AOP Staff



Chief Executive's Report

The AOP has produced a new business plan which defines its vision for the future. The document analyses the Association's current position and sets strategies and goals for the future. The AOP's membership has been increasing year on year, both in terms of the numbers of members and the proportion of the GOC register in membership. This growth confirms the confidence which the profession has in its representative body. The business plan sets targets for continued growth over the coming years.

The AOP is an exemplar professional representative body. The business plan shows that, by adopting a culture of continuous improvement in a blame-free environment, management and staff have delivered a strong organisation, meeting the policy and strategy objectives of the Board and often anticipating the direction of travel.

Our confidence in that position was justified by the stunningly good results from the third annual survey of members' attitudes to the AOP which is reported on page 8. These results show that the AOP's hard work in keeping in touch with its members' needs and aspirations has been repaid by increasingly committed and loyal members.

Among the key strengths of the AOP noted in the plan are that it represents nearly all the practising profession; it is well established, financially sound, organisationally strong and offers a unique combination of services to its members. The Association's communications with its members and the profession as a whole, are considered very effective – particularly its journal OT, its handbook and other publications. The jewel in its crown – and the one most appreciated by its members – is its capability to defend its members successfully against action by third parties particularly in respect of GOC cases and clinical malpractice claims.

In that context it's disappointing to have to report a deficit of about 8% of total income this year. The principal reason for this is that we were £175,000 under-estimated for our malpractice insurance premiums which rose again very significantly at the last moment (literally a few days before the end of December 2002) even above the increase which had been forecast.



We managed to avoid that happening again at the end of 2003 and came in on budget. We very much hope that the huge increases in malpractice insurance costs may level out but that remains to be seen. It is very reassuring, nevertheless, to see that the members' survey showed that the overwhelming majority regard the AOP membership package as good value for money.

On the bright side, all the extra expenditure was on member services of one sort or another and forms part of our increased – and well appreciated – offer to all optometrists. Direct professional services to members increased from 46% of income in 2002 to 54% of income this year – an increase of 25% year on year. Our reserves remain in good shape and entirely adequate for our purposes. Indeed they are in a much healthier state than many other organisations which have been through the financial turmoil of the last two and a half years since the September 11th tragedy in New York.

Underpinning the AOP's excellent performance has been our quality system of good management practice, accredited by the British Standards Institution. The system requires the Association to have and to demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement. The Association maintains the kite-mark through regular auditing by an external consultant and directly by the BSI. The system ensures that the AOP cannot rest on its laurels, but must always look to improve in everything that it does.

Many thanks to all of our members for their continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ian Hunter'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ian Hunter OBE
Chief Executive

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

For the AOP, 2003 has been another year of hard work and high achievement. Just how high that achievement has been was confirmed by the results of the surveys it has been conducting among its members.

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

The AOP has introduced, as part of its Quality Management System, a number of regular surveys in order to measure how well it is doing. The membership survey is conducted annually; every year a sample of the membership is asked to rank the AOP's performance on a number of different issues. The AOP then tracks the results so that it can spot trends in its performance over time. This survey is key to the Association's ability to benchmark its achievements and judge where best to concentrate its efforts as it implements its policy of continuous improvement.

This was the third year that this survey has been conducted; the questionnaire was sent to 1,000 members, chosen at random, who were asked to judge the AOP's performance on a scale of 1 to 10. The answer came back loud and clear. In every single classification, the number of respondents rating the AOP 10 out of 10 has risen; in ten out of twelve classifications, the number rating the AOP 9 out of 10 has risen (with no change in one classification). The results reflect an outstanding year's work by the AOP, with perceived and measured improvements in performance in every area of operation.

It was significant that, even after the subscription levels were raised for 2004, members still felt that the AOP was providing better value for money than at any time since the surveys were initiated.

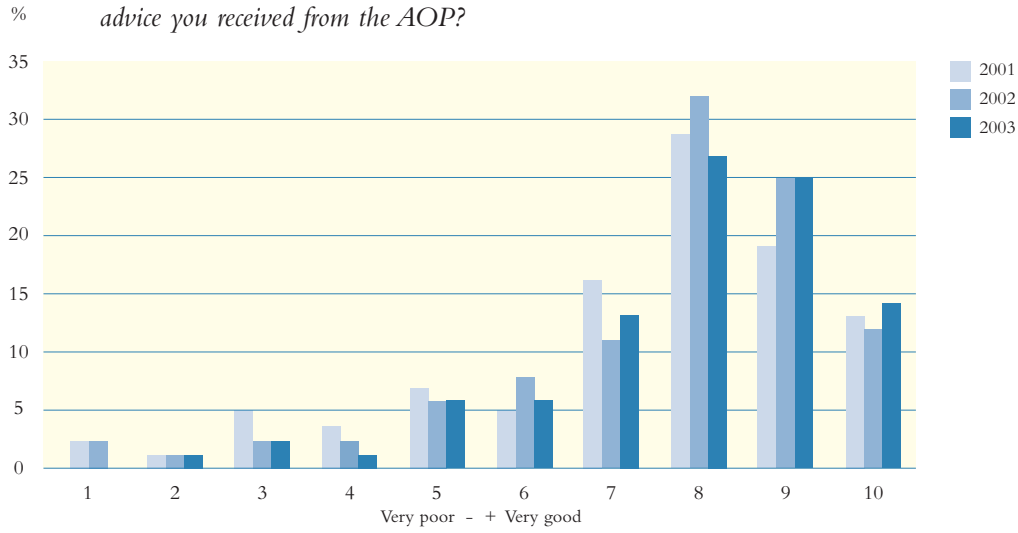
It is also noteworthy that members appear to be in closer contact with their Association. Over 50% of members have been directly in touch with the AOP in the last 6 months. This contrasts with only 42% in 2001 and 44% in 2002, showing a welcome trend. The AOP is becoming more relevant to its members' needs and this augurs well for the future.

The AOP staff are hugely encouraged to see that their efforts are appreciated. Furthermore, it is not just the numbers of members who recognise their efforts that motivate the office. It is the trend that shows that every year their work is more and more valued.

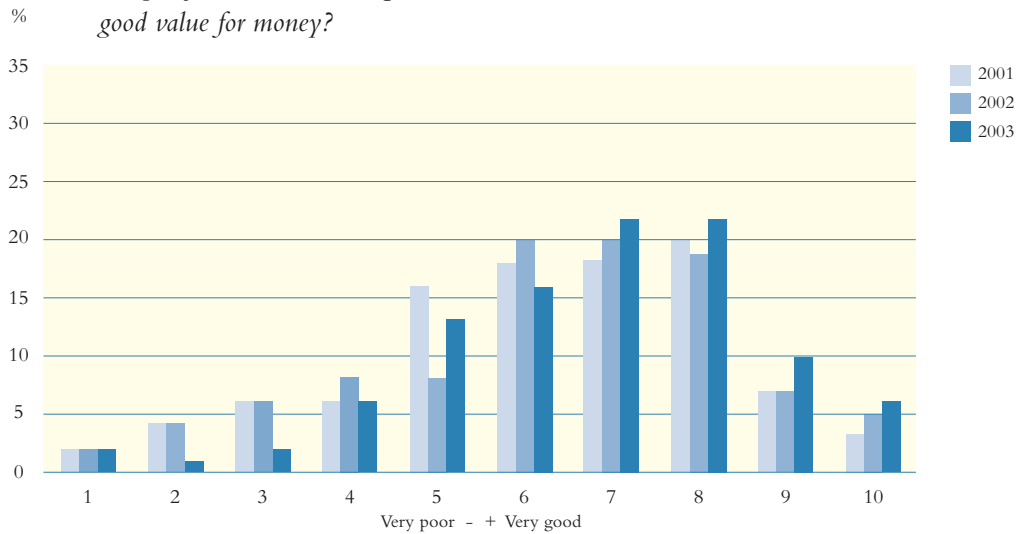
DEFENCE

The defence department tells a story of increases across the board. The number of members who approach the AOP for advice rises inexorably year by year. Complaints this year have been more complicated and the time and care spent on each individual case have increased. The number of cases heard before the Disciplinary Committee of the GOC has grown. Members are approaching the department for advice on an ever wider range of subjects. There has been a particular rise in the number of members who have queries about their relations with their employers. These members represent all age groups and degrees of experience.

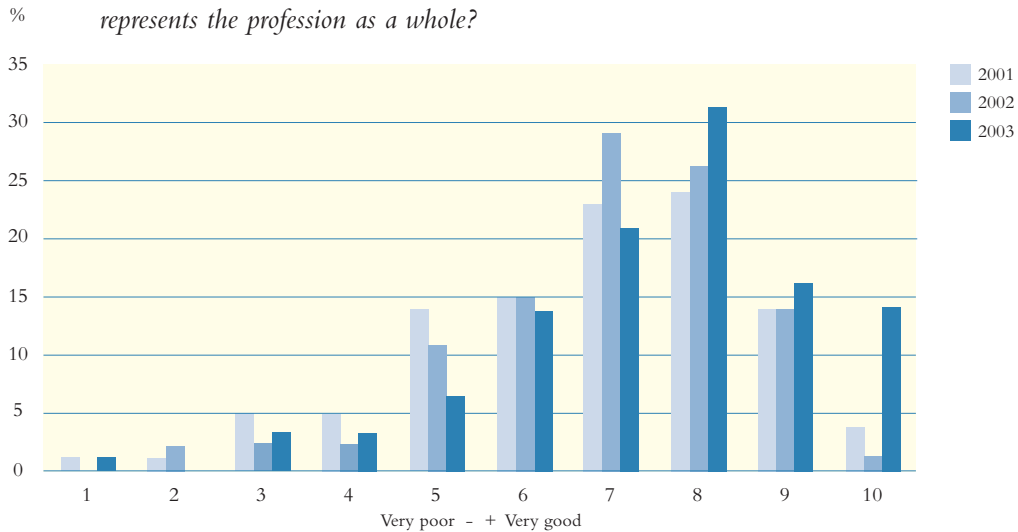
How would you rate the quality of the advice you received from the AOP?



Do you feel that the AOP provides good value for money?



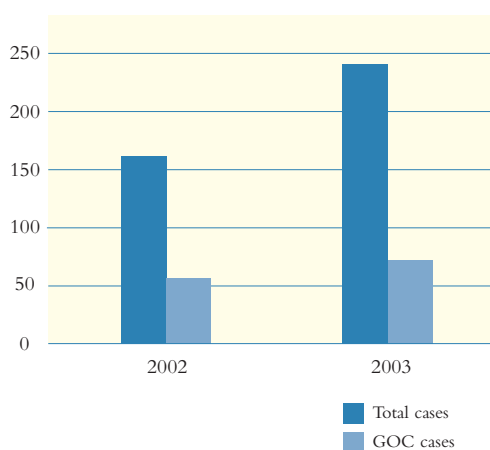
How successfully do you think the AOP represents the profession as a whole?



As members will be aware, the cost of clinical malpractice insurance has increased sharply over the last few years. Optometry is not alone in this respect and the reasons for increases are both global and local. The AOP works hard to keep costs down and to generate other sources of income to offset the increases in insurance premiums. What the Association will not do is to compromise on the level of cover or the quality of service. Members need to insure with established, well-funded insurers who understand the clinical world.

The AOP constantly reviews the environment in which practitioners operate in order to make any necessary improvements in the policy coverage. This year it has increased the product liability policy coverage to a ceiling of £2 million for claims made in any one year to match the financial coverage members have under the clinical malpractice policy. It has also added to the clinical malpractice policy cover for defamation, breach of confidentiality and loss of patient records and also cover for the activities of members who are optometric advisers.

Defence Department 2002–3



PRIMARY CARE

Therapeutics



This was the year when progress on achieving prescribing rights for the profession gathered momentum. The AOP, FODO and the College jointly wrote to the Minister of State for Health, setting out their case for independent prescribing rights. As part of the government's commitment to completing the programme of supplementary prescribing in 2004, the Minister has instructed officials, as a first step, to take action to enable optometrists to act as supplementary prescribers and to look at expanding the current exemptions from supply and administration under the Medicines Act. Following this, the move to independent prescribing ought to be achieved within a relatively short period. Clinical management guidelines supported by a detailed formulary of therapeutic agents, have been developed for consideration, and proposals for training and accreditation, contained within a detailed series of syllabi, protocols, guidelines and competencies, are with the GOC for final approval. The GOC will be leading the rest of the process towards prescribing rights, and arrangements are already under way with the National Prescribing Centre to determine the core competencies required.

Department of Health Eye Care Services Steering Group

Much has been achieved during the year by the sub-groups of the Department's Eye Care Services Steering Group in establishing care pathways for cataract, AMD, low vision and glaucoma – a process which has involved representation from the AOP, FODO and the College. While the pathways, all of which require the participation of optometrists, have been completed, their publication and therefore their implementation have unfortunately been delayed. Work still remains to be done on workforce modelling and remuneration issues. The public launch is not now expected until March or April 2004. The Department will be recommending that Primary Care Trusts consider the adoption of these pathways in order to improve the availability and quality of eye care services.



This is a great leap forward in that the pathways emphasise the expertise and skills of community optometrists and are formally recognised by the Department of Health as being instrumental in improving patient eye care.

Diabetic Retinopathy Screening

The National Service Framework's proposals regarding the future of retinopathy screening in England have given rise during the year to many questions from optometrists already involved in



successful, co-managed screening schemes. Every effort has been made by AOP representatives to ensure that optometric-based schemes are not abandoned in favour of mobile digital systems which do not take account of the large number of non-attenders although it is now accepted that for quality assurance purposes, a minimum number of patients must be seen within each scheme. The AOP was successful in helping to convince the National Screening Committee (NSC) to lower the annual minimum number of patient episodes to be handled by each optometrist from 1000 to 500. Discussions are ongoing, and it is hoped that following the invitation for the AOP's representative to participate on the NSC's Quality Assurance Sub-Committee and main Project Advisory Board, the Association will continue to be able to influence developments.

Clinical Governance

The AOP has been in regular contact with the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) this year, helping them to develop their baseline assessment for clinical governance in relation to optometry and updating their limited information on optometric skills and practice. During the year, they sent questionnaires to optometrists, asking them to get involved in their reviews of Primary Care Trusts. The AOP encouraged LOCs to participate on the basis that CHI's inspections were a good way for optometrists to have their say and to influence how



the profession was treated. It enabled practitioners to report on the kind of support they were getting from their PCTs for their clinical governance initiatives and to indicate how the quality of patient care could be improved. The AOP developed a baseline assessment for clinical governance which has been adopted and adapted by many LOCs in discussion with their PCTs. This has been instrumental in helping practitioners include the concept of clinical governance in every aspect of their professional work. It would seem that once rare, clinical governance and baseline assessments are now becoming commonplace.

National Optometric Conference

The National Optometric Conference was held at the Belfry Hotel near Birmingham this year. It is clear that the event is growing in stature, with 175 delegates attending – a greater number than ever before.

The conference continues to attract the highest quality speakers and tackles the issues facing those optometrists wishing to expand the role of optometry in primary care, providing useful information and a forum in which to exchange ideas and experiences.

Jack Sharp, Head of Operations at Salford PCT, and Anthony Moriarty, Consultant Ophthalmologist at Stepping Hill Hospital, provided an insight into how

the other parties to any co-management scheme view optometry and how best to manage those views. Peter Coe, Registrar of the GOC, spoke about the GOC's legislative programme and Daljit Athwal, of CHI's Policy and Development Unit, talked about the requirements of clinical governance.

The conference ended with a debate about charging additional fees for supplementary procedures, with a show of hands demonstrating the delegates' support for such charges.



THE 'SIGHT TEST'

The GOS sight test fee

Early in the year, the Department of Health indicated that it wished to negotiate a three year settlement of the GOS sight test fee in line with pay deals which were being proposed for other health professions. The Optometric Fees Review Committee (representing AOP and FODO) held several meetings with the DH during the year and urged the DH to include a fee for optometrists carrying out mandatory continuing education when that came on stream in 2005.

By the end of the year no deal had been reached but early in 2004 consultations were concluded. A ten per cent increase of the sight test fee will be

introduced over three years backdated to April 1st 2003 increasing the current fee of £16.72 in three equal annual steps to £18.40 by the year 2005/6. Similar percentage increases will be made to the domiciliary fee.

A per capita payment of £270 for 2004/5 and one of £425 for 2005/6 will be made in respect of the introduction of mandatory CET. The deal is dependent on inflation not exceeding set limits and there being no changes in categories of patients entitled to GOS or the duties required of optometrists.

The AOP Sight Test Protocol

Against a background in which an increasing number of practitioners are now charging additional fees for supplementary procedures, the AOP published a practical aid for practitioners wishing to implement a system for charging. The *Sight Test Resource Pack* contains a step-by-step guide, together with sample patient letters, leaflets and a draft survey.

Despite the large number of practices which now charge supplementary fees, there have been very few patient complaints recorded and take-up rates have been high. Ian Hunter, AOP Chief Executive, says that supplementary fees open up new possibilities for optometry. 'These fees will enable optometrists to fund the purchase of new modern equipment, such as retinal imaging systems, which offer patients



better treatment. That is the key to this system: it is about offering patients more services, not fewer. We want to improve what we can do for patients and not remain with a sight test rooted in the 1950s.'

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL



Administrative considerations within the Department of Health in 2003 have so far delayed the conversion of the GOC's legislative package into the necessary new regulations and rules. The package – containing various provisions from compulsory CET to a remodelling of the disciplinary process (to be called the fitness to practise process) – is well known to the AOP and has been shaped not only by the GOC but also by all the relevant stakeholders. As the supposed date for the introduction of compulsory CET (1 January 2005) draws near, the jury is still debating whether the legal framework will be in place on time. On the mechanics of implementing the package, the AOP is confident that it will be consulted by the GOC, since its recent track record on consultation in general has been good.

The GOC is now under the 'protective' umbrella of the Council for the Regulation of Healthcare Professions (CRHP). This new body, which has also established the habit of consultation, is empowered

to review the penalties imposed by the GOC on optometrists. CRHP anticipates that it will seek tougher penalties in only a handful of cases.

EDUCATION

Optical Continuing Education Consortium (OCEC)

The General Optical Council held a tender process for managing its mandatory continuing education programme in 2003. The Association, ABDO and FODO worked together in OCEC to bid to run the scheme. The College of Optometrists was invited to join with the other organisations but, for its own good reasons, declined to do so.

Personnel from each of the three bodies, under the chairmanship of Ian Hunter from AOP, worked hard for several months to plan the project, design a workable user-friendly scheme (based on ABDO's model) and deliver an economically viable tender.

OCEC's bid was not successful and the winning firm *act e-learning* is currently developing the project. AOP, like all the bodies in the sector, is committed to working with the GOC and its preferred provider in the interests of its members. Representations for a fairer financing basis have recently been successfully made.



Optometry 03

Optometry 03, the third in the Optometry series of education congresses, was held alongside *Optrafair* at the Birmingham NEC in April. The AOP, in partnership with the Southern Council of Optometry from the US, has worked hard to ensure that these congresses provide the profession with the highest quality CE in an affordable and accessible format. *Optometry 03* provided more lectures, covering more topics and given by more internationally-renowned speakers than any other event held this year in the UK.

The event moved into solid profit this year thanks to the standard of the speakers, a good turn-out from delegates and the whole-hearted support of industry. The manufacturers of equipment, contact lenses and solutions in particular were enthusiastic and generous with their time, their money and their ideas. For the first time an entire programme dedicated to support staff was run, making the congress the only event in the UK which offers education and training for everybody in the practice.

As we go to press with this report, planning is under way for the next event, which will be called *VEP 05* and will, once again, run alongside *Optrafair*.

Pre-Registration period (PRP)

The GOC has taken significant steps over the last twelve months to initiate changes in its requirements for the pre-registration period. These steps include changing the final professional qualifying examination from a more or less onerous academic test to a more appropriate test of safety to practice with the accent on clinical skills and abilities to work and communicate effectively with patients. As a consequence, the College of Optometrists has embarked on a revision of its own processes for the PRP and its assessment.



As part of the revision carried out by the College, a Joint Steering Group has been set up on which the AOP is represented, together with FODO and others. The Joint Steering Group meets regularly to advise the College on its proposals as they affect pre-registration students and the employers who will supervise them during the PRP.

During 2004/5, a pilot of the new process will be carried out which will assist all stakeholders to assess whether the College proposals will meet the specified outcomes expected by the GOC. The AOP supports the College and the GOC in their objectives and is working with them to ensure a positive outcome to the process.

AOP NEWS

AOP's Strategic Plan 2003-7

For the first time in its history, the AOP has produced a strategic five year plan. Written by the Management Team and approved by the Board of Directors, the plan expounds the Association's principal short-term, medium-term and long-term goals and the strategy for achieving them. It does so against the background of the Association's statement of purpose and long-term overall objectives, which are to represent and promote the individual and

collective interests of optometrists and to expand and improve the services provided to the Association's members.

The plan considers the AOP's strengths and weaknesses as an organisation and identifies the threats and opportunities facing it. According to the plan, the AOP will expand its membership to 90% of the profession registered in the United Kingdom; and expand its income derived from external suppliers of services to members. The Association's marketing plan will be developed accordingly. The strategic plan lists twenty actions to be carried out in the next two years. The underlying theme of the plan is the improvement of the AOP as an organisation and the improvement of services to its members.

Quality Management

In September 2003, the Association was re-audited by the British Standards Institution, to verify that it still complies with the internationally recognised standard of good management practice, ISO EN BSI 9001:2000. Once again, the AOP passed the audit, having been visited by two of the BSI's inspectors. They spent the day at the AOP's offices, examining the procedures of our quality management system, and identified no 'non-conformances'.

In improving the quality management system – and bearing in mind the AOP's primary task of serving its members – the AOP has been advised to focus more systematically on measuring and evaluating its activities, from its members' point of view in particular. It has therefore undertaken, and will continue to undertake, surveys of its members relating to specific issues, such as defence, as well as to the general benefits of membership of the Association, in order to ensure that its activities fulfil members' expectations and needs.



Services for Members

In the last quarter of 2003 the AOP undertook its three-yearly review of the services it provides for members through third parties.

The purpose of the review is for the AOP to look at the market to see whether the services it provides for members might be provided better by alternative service providers. It looks at a minimum of two alternatives to the existing service provider for each service.

Where the AOP wishes to provide services for members through third parties, service providers are appointed on the basis of the manner in which they provide the services and the cost of the service to members.

A service providers' survey is carried out as part of the review. Service providers and AOP members who use the services are asked for their opinions of the quality of service. This year's survey showed a high level of satisfaction.

Following the review the existing service providers were retained, which is a tribute to the service they have offered to members in recent years. Details of the range of services the AOP provides to members is available on the website and in the *Members Handbook*.

COMMUNICATIONS

Web Site

The AOP's web site continues to provide the profession with an invaluable and unique range of support materials. The primary care section alone holds a vast amount of information, much of it downloadable in a format which makes it instantly useful for practitioners who wish to adapt it to make it suit their own particular circumstances. So practitioners will find model presentation, letters to PCTs making the case for optometric involvement in co-management schemes and a wealth of other topical data.

Although the web site is updated on a daily basis, there are plans to further upgrade the software in 2004, in order to improve the service yet further.



Work with Students

Each year the AOP

- invites optometry student representatives to London to tell them about its work and hear how they would like it to help students
- gives presentations to student optometry societies about the AOP and how it can assist students



- has a pre-registration student on the Member Benefits Committee representing the interests of all students
- gives formal lectures on record-keeping to optometry students at their universities.

In 2003 the AOP

- spoke to university lecturers about the assistance it can give them and their students
- appointed Professor Nizar Hirji to advise pre-registration students on questions they have regarding their pre-registration year.

All optometry students are AOP members gratis. For information on the work it does with undergraduate and pre-registration students visit the website or speak to your student representatives.

REGIONAL NEWS

Regional and European Developments

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health and Social Services modified the local protocol on the intervals between GOS sight tests. The protocol is now closer to those in force in the rest of the UK.

In Scotland, the Labour-Liberal Democratic coalition was returned to office to form the new

Scottish Executive, on a promise of introducing 'free eye checks for all' during the current Parliament. The Association has taken the lead (under the umbrella of Optometry Scotland) in formulating alternative proposals to a universal GOS sight test as the making good of 'free eye checks for all'. With the help of the AOP's new Public Affairs Manager for Scotland, Stuart Crawford, the professional bodies have been invited by the Scottish Executive Health Department to consider the future of eye care in Scotland. They draw some of their inspiration for alternatives to the GOS from the Welsh Eye Care Initiative.

The principality's progressive government has won over the profession by its Welsh Eye Care Examination and the putting of 'PEARS' (Primary Eyecare Acute Referral Scheme) onto an all-Wales footing. Under the combined chairmanship of Michael Charlton, Optometry Wales and the AOP's Welsh Council are contributing to a veritable revolution in primary eye care in Wales. Whether a similar path will be trodden in Scotland is the question for 2004.

The European scene was dominated last year by the slow (and continuing) passage of the draft directive on the recognition of professional qualifications. (It may reach final adoption in 2005 or 2006). The directive will maintain the current 'general system', by which a migrant professional must apply individually for recognition by the competent authority of the other EU state where he or she



wishes to practise. Two further features of the draft directive have caused much debate. The first is whether a migrant should be allowed to practise temporarily in another state without full registration (The likelihood is remote in the health sector). The second is the concept of 'common platforms', in effect private harmonisation of professional qualifications, offered by a profession for recognition by the European Commission and all the member states. This concept accords very much with ECOO's European Diploma of Optometry.

OT

Optometry Today/Optics Today

OT achieved an increase in revenue in 2003 and maintained pole position in the UK optical and optometric publications field, despite a difficult market place. Turnover for the year was £903,954 with 86% more display advertising and 31% more classified advertising on average per issue than its closest competitor.

The *OT* average net circulation figure audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulations was 16,351 for the period from July 1, 2002 until June 30, 2003. *OT* circulation is now 60% more than its nearest competitor.



The *OT* Bookshop had record sales with 2.15% more than in the previous year. The bookshop continued to provide the highest levels of service to its clients. Using *OT* and the Internet to promote the service, the bookshop fulfilled orders worldwide. It was also available at all the main exhibitions and conferences in the UK including *Eyecare 3000*, the *British Contact Lens Association Clinical Conference and Exhibition*, the *Hospital Optometrists' Conference* and *Specsavers' Professional Advancement Committee Day*. *OT*'s range of eight CPD books also continued to be popular with practitioners and students.

The eighth CPD initiative between *OT* and City University started on January 10, 2003 with 12 modules on 'The ageing eye' sponsored by Alcon UK. This has now become one of the most popular ways for practitioners to undertake CPD and gain CE credits from the College of Optometrists and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians.

As the only CE for practitioners in the UK monitored by examination, the *OT* programme was extended earlier in the year to enable participants not only to use the CE credits towards a Certificate or a Diploma in Optometric Education by Distance Learning, but also towards a Masters in Optometric Education by Distance Learning, or to gain credits towards a MSc in Clinical Optometry.

Other CPD projects in *OT* during the year included a series on occupational optometry and modules on AMD and therapeutics. An online CPD submission service was launched at the start of the year with a special helpline to guide participants through the instructions and also deal with day to day logging-in and other difficulties. *OT* received approximately 25,000 CPD entries during the year.

The *OT* editorial team worked closely with the Chairman of the Clinical Advisory Board, Nigel Burnett Hodd, to attract first-class clinical articles by

internationally recognised authors to the journal. The Board consisted of Ron Loveridge, Professional Services manager for CIBA Vision, UK optometrist David Ruston and Dr Kirk Smick, who is also involved in educational matters with the American Optometric Association.

During 2003, quality management standard, ISO 9001:2000 approval from Lloyds Register of Quality was retained by Words & Images, which produces *OT* on behalf of the Association of Optometrists.

HOSPITAL OPTOMETRISTS

Hospital Optometrists Committee

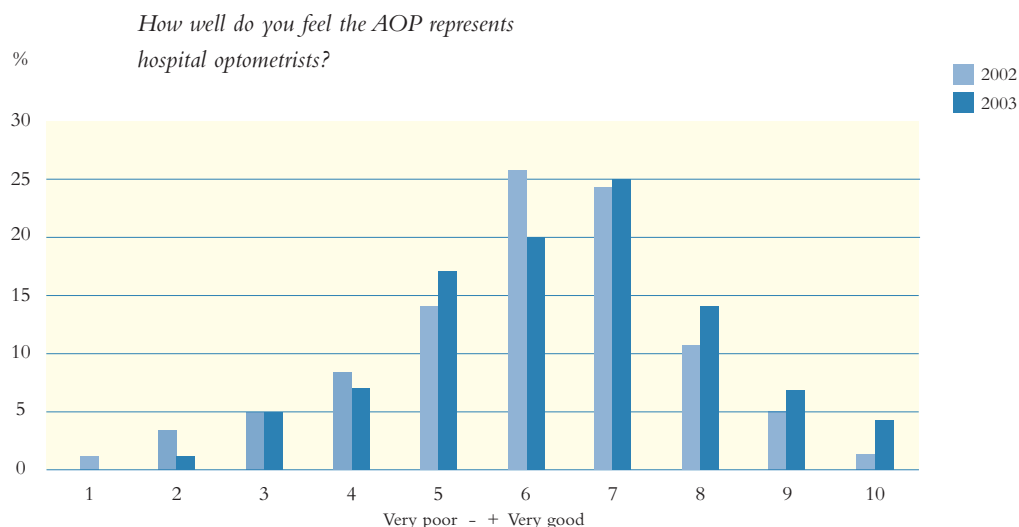
The Hospital Optometrists Committee (HOC) continues to represent the interests of hospital optometrists. During 2003 the HOC have focussed their attentions on the introduction of *Agenda for Change*, which will involve the implementation of a new pay scheme for all NHS employees. Implementation is intended from 1st Oct 2004 and is already underway in pilot sites. Whilst this

process is ongoing, the HOC expect to play active role in supporting members through this period of change.

The *Hospital Optometrists Annual Conference* continues to be a success with almost 200 delegates at the conference this year held at Tortworth Court Hotel in South Gloucestershire. Next year's conference in Chester will be the 30th such event organised by the HOC and this event achieves one of our main objectives to produce quality continuing education and professional development for hospital optometrists.

We are continuing to develop communications between hospital optometrists and other professional organisations, including the College of Optometrists, and also of importance is our continuing work with the Department of Health to develop a comprehensive but workable framework of regulations in the hospital service.

During 2003 we have developed the Hospital Optometry web page on the AOP website and this has given us a vehicle to promote hospital optometry and to share information with the wider optometric community.



MINUTES OF THE 57TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 57th Annual General Meeting of the Association of Optometrists was held at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel on Wednesday 21 May 2003. The meeting was chaired by Mr Don Grocott, President of the Association, who shared the platform with the AOP Chairman, Mrs Elizabeth Frost, and other officers.

Present

Messrs M Avern, R Banks, K Bardolia, Ms D Barnett, C Bennett, E Bickerstaffe, JB Bristow, NF Burnett Hodd, VG Bush, Mrs K Chappell, MN Charlton, BJ Curran, BM Drummond, Mrs E Frost (AOP Chairman), Ms RN Gavzey, M George, J Giltrow-Tyler, DJ Grocott (President) (in the chair), Mrs LS Hansford (Chairman Elect), N Hirji, T Hunter, S Kett Hodson, AG Hughes, K Kalsi, JD Kay, Mrs P Leaning, Mrs S Leighter, JBDC Lewis, I Lucas, G McLeish, E McVey, A Merry, Ms M Packman, F Petticrew, SH Reily, PG Rope, Mrs M Russell, JH Scott, H Seymour, D Shannon, IW Shaw, R Skidmore, Ms R Souten, Mrs G Stewart, LR Taylor, AP Tompkin, B Toye, Dr C Tromans, TJ Warburton, PJ Warren, C Wass, RD Wilkes. In attendance were Ian Hunter (Chief Executive), Mark Farmar (Buzzacott).

Introduction by the President

In welcoming everyone to the AGM, the President said that this meeting was taking place at a critical stage in the development of the optometric and optical scene. The Association's purpose was to serve its members' interests. This involved a wide range of issues some of which were progressed by forming

strategic alliances with other bodies. The AOP had a quality system reliant upon continuous improvement to help it, which informed the Association's every action.

This meeting offered an opportunity for members to influence the AOP's effort to push forward the profession. It was important that the membership and the newly-constituted Council ensured that the views of the membership were fully reflected in the Council and the Board. It was a matter of pride that the Association had been able to develop and implement the recent restructuring effectively. The results had been recognised as excellent and had attracted enquiries from others, which was a quality outcome.



Mrs Elizabeth Frost had just completed two years as Chairman; this had enabled her to build on a single year's experience. The President congratulated her on her successful term of office and thanked her for her valuable contribution to the affairs of the Association.

Roll of Deceased Members

The President then read the roll of members who had died since the last meeting, during which those present stood in silence.

In 2002: Mr Richard Ren Cockell from Exmouth; Mr David Richard Jones from Cardigan; Mr George Quinn from New Maldon; Mr Richard Rawes from Frinton; Mr Arthur Turbefield from Chorley; Mr Leon Raymond Underwood from Brighton.

In 2003: Mr Alan Peter Boynton from Pewsey; Mr Geoffrey Rhodes Evans from Morpeth; Mr Colin Ferguson from Cardiff; Mr Anthony William Gill from Dewsbury; Mr Winston Jones from Bristol; Mr Charles Moss from Hull; Mr Norman Haxby Sanders from Saltash; Mr Steven Tatlow from Rotherham; Mr James Edwin Thomas from Shipston-on-Stour; Mr Roger Henry Wallis from Kendal.



Minutes of the 56th Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 22 May 2002 were unanimously *adopted* and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Annual Report and Accounts

The annual report and accounts were *received*.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman first commented on the successful restructuring of the organisation which would ensure that the AOP would remain an influential body, well able to represent its members' interests. The Board were now elected by the Council members, and can only sit on one committee, thus giving more people the opportunity to become involved. Representation was now on both a geographical and a mode-of-practice basis.

Among the Association's activities was continued support for Area and Local Optometric Committees and the production of the widely-acclaimed *Primary Care Resource Pack*. Presentations had been given to primary care commissioners and others about co-management schemes, and to optometrists and dispensing opticians about the sight test. At *Optrafair* the *Sight Test Resource Pack* was released.

The changing role of optometrists and dispensing opticians had been recognised by the Department of Health by the setting up of an eye care services steering group to examine how to deliver eye healthcare. Good working relationships with other organisations were vital.

Other activities included work on IPF generally and the careers ladder document, the bid to manage the GOC's new CE scheme, efforts to overcome problems with delivery of GOS services, and work on the new legislative power of the GOC in Wales and Scotland resulting from the devolved governments.

In conclusion, Mrs Frost thanked the Chief Executive and all the staff for their contribution to the Association's success, together with the Board and all Councillors.

Committee Chairmen's Reports

Public Affairs Committee

The Public Affairs Committee Chairman said that his committee covered all aspects of legislation, both in the UK and increasingly in the EU. As well as more local initiatives relating to optometry, relations with the recently devolved legislators in Scotland and Wales had become more significant. This had led to the establishment of a political presence in both Edinburgh and Cardiff. Stuart Crawford had been



appointed Public Affairs Manager for Scotland, and John Pockett for Wales, and they were effectively working as political lobbyists.

Mr Charlton gave details of the new Wales Eye Care Examination – WECE – and the formation of Optometry Wales in 2002. This was an umbrella body including ABDO, the AOP, FODO and the College, and the five Wales LOCs. Optometry Scotland had also since been formed. Mr Charlton went on to list the appointments which his committee made to outside bodies, and expressed his appreciation of the effort these representatives put into political lobbying. He also mentioned the generous support of the Central (LOC) Fund in this connection.

The National Optometric Conference held in the autumn had been a success. Civil servants and LOC delegates were among those who had attended, and it provided invaluable inspiration for LOC office holders. The *Red Book* was recognised as a key source of reference, and regional versions covering Scotland and Northern Ireland had been published.

Among other activities, the Public Affairs Committee had adopted the Southern Derbyshire Protocol for the GOS sight test. They had also influenced the post-payment verification protocol, and had held roadshows to introduce the concept of supplementary charges for additional procedures, culminating in publication of the *Sight Care Resource Pack*.

The members of the committee, the Central Fund observers, and the Deputy Chief Executive were thanked for their help during the year.

Professional Services Committee

The Professional Services Committee Chairman said that the remit of his committee had been defined. The *Primary Care Resource Pack*, an invaluable resource for practitioners, had been published earlier in the year. It contained a large amount of printed material and a CD-Rom and was in great demand. He congratulated the staff responsible for producing it. *Primary Eye Care in the Community* had been revised and reprinted and formed a useful guide to optometric services, specifically aimed at healthcare commissioners.

A new primary care database prepared by the Clinical Adviser containing information about co-management schemes was to be published on the website, which contained an enormous amount of material. He was also working on a clinical reference database, on the website now. The committee continued to provide advice on clinical and primary care matters, and took some credit for pressurising for the clarification of the guidelines on children's eye care recently issued by the College.

Mr Warburton thanked the committee members and the management team for their hard work and help during the year.



Member Benefits Committee

Ms Rena Souten, Chairman of the Member Benefits Committee, said that the core activities of the committee during the year had been training, conferences and seminars; communication and publications; advice and guidance; member benefits and support for local associations.

A range of training courses and conferences had been run during the year. Ms Souten particularly mentioned the learning scheme for pre-reg students devised by Mr Tim Hunter. It had been a valuable resource for students who could use the website to access questions and answers which would help with their PQEs. The website was valuable, particularly with regard to the clinical database and documents for LOCs and AOCs.



Starting an Optometric Practice was invaluable for those wanting to have their own practice and was being updated. The *Handbook*, a major member benefit, was being continually updated too. During the year, special attention had been given to attracting undergraduates to AOP membership. At most universities lectures by Mrs Fiona Mitchell were included as part of the course. The Head of Member Benefits had also talked to university lecturers from each of the universities and the AOP had been invited to attend an Essilor conference later in the year.

There was an increasing demand for advice and guidance resulting from the Data Protection Act and the need to disclose criminal records. The AOP

counselling service was a growing area. An extra effort had been made to work with the Sight Care group, especially in regard to the timing of training courses and conferences. Legal defence was a major asset for members and a complaints handling procedure would soon be available.

The ten-thousandth member had recently been enrolled. The Member Benefits Committee would continue to work hard to find out what members wanted.

Director of Finance's Report

In presenting the audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 2002 the Director of Finance said that income during the year had increased from £2.66m to £3.1m. This included an increase of 14% in membership income and 40% from services rendered. Overall, the AOP's portfolio was holding up well. Losses had been limited to 1.4% compared with a loss of the FTSE of 22.7%. This reflected the careful management strategy adopted which it was intended to maintain for the foreseeable future.

A deficit on operating and committee costs compared to a surplus the previous year was mainly due to increased expenditure on direct professional services to members. This, with the cost of providing the excellent *Primary Care Resource Pack*, had contributed to the small deficit of £808. There had been a huge increase in professional malpractice insurance premiums, another 30% having been required to provide the necessary cover. The work of the legal team was invaluable and helped to keep renewal rates down. It had attracted much praise from



members who had turned to the team for help, and thanks were due to the Head of Legal Services and his team for the excellent job they did. The valuable contribution from the Central (LOC) Fund was also acknowledged.

The Director of Finance expressed his appreciation of the support he had received from the Chief Executive and from the Head of Finance, who deserved full credit for the fact that once again the post-audit review revealed no points requiring attention.



In conclusion, the Director of Finance said that the annual turnover of the AOP had risen from about £1 million when he was appointed to nearly £4m today. He had resolved to go from moving into overdraft in early September to finishing the year having only spent the current year's income. This had been achieved, and the AOP also now had a substantial portfolio. He thanked the Board and Council for their support during his time in office, and was confident that the same would be enjoyed by Mr Robin Banks, who was taking over as Chairman of Finance.

The President at this point welcomed Mr Mark Farmer of Buzzacott and thanked him for attending the meeting.

Elections to Council

The Chief Executive read the names of the successful candidates followed by their constituency number where appropriate.

Geographic constituencies:

1 Brian Toye	16 Vivian Bush
2 Kristeen Chappell	17 Stephen Reily
3 Elizabeth Frost	18 Ian Shaw
4 Robin Banks	20 Donald Cameron
7 Andrew Merry	21 Eddie McVey
8 David Shannon	22 Hugh Campbell
11 Ian Lucas	24 Lyn Hansford
12 Peter Warren	25 Michael Charlton
13 Lyndon Taylor	26 Adrian Hughes
14 Charles Wass	27 Eavan Kennedy
15 Rena Souten	28 Barry Curran

Constituencies by function:

Ed Bickerstaffe, Michael George, Kamal Kalsi, Jonathan Kay – employed optometrists; Hamish Barbour, Kishor Bardolia, Daska Barnett, Nigel Burnett Hodd, Pat Leaning, Sue Leighter, Frank Petticrew, Trevor Warburton, Bob Wilkes – self-employed optometrists; Cindy Tromans, hospital optometrist; and Gill Stewart, dispensing optician.

Geographic seats (returned by the Council):

Rosie Gavzey – Essex and North East London; Dick Manns – Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire and West Midlands South; Alison McClune – Dumfries and Galloway, Ayrshire and Arran and Lanarkshire; Bruce Drummond – Tayside, Grampian, Orkney and Shetland.

Casual vacancies, employed optometrists:

Ted Cadman and Mary Russell.

Attempts would be made to fill the only two seats remaining. The Chief Executive congratulated the Head of Member Benefits for the way in which he had run the new election arrangements, during which some 10% of votes had been cast on the

internet. He was able to conclude his report on the elections by saying that this was the end of the reorganisation process and the new Council was now in place.

Appointment of Auditors

The reappointment of Buzzacott as auditors to the Association was unanimously agreed.

Councillors' fees and expenses

Mr Robin Banks introduced an ordinary resolution designed to update the rules governing the payment of fees and expenses to councillors, directors and officers of the Association which read as follows:

That pursuant to Article 50 of the Articles of Association, it is determined that the following fees and/or expenses shall be paid to members of the Council in accordance with the following provisions until such time as it is otherwise determined:

1. *The fees or allowances shall be at the rate of:*
 - (a) *£75 for up to one half-day's attendance upon qualifying business; and,*
 - (b) *£150 for attendance upon qualifying business exceeding one half-day, but not exceeding one complete day.*

Such fees shall be exclusive of VAT, which shall be paid in addition where it is properly chargeable or shall be subject to the appropriate deduction for Income Tax (PAYE) and National Insurance contributions where appropriate.

2. *In measuring the duration of an attendance upon qualifying business, travelling time shall be counted in accordance with the following circumstances:*
 - (a) *if the member is in practice, normal travelling time to and from the member's usual place of practice shall be counted;*
 - (b) *if the member is not in practice, but has a place of work, then normal travelling time to and from his usual*

place of work shall be counted;

(c) if the member is not in practice, or does not have a place of work, then travelling time to and from his residence at the time shall be counted.

No more than one return trip shall be taken into account in one day.

3. *'Qualifying business' shall mean:*
 - (a) *attendance at meetings of the Council of the Association;*
 - (b) *attendance at general meetings of the Association;*
 - (c) *attendance at meetings of committees or sub-committees of the Council; and*
 - (d) *attendance at meetings of other bodies or groups or with another person or persons in the capacity of an authorised representative of the Council.*
4. *The first meeting to which these provisions shall apply shall be the first meeting to which they can apply next following the Annual General Meeting.*
5. *The Chief Executive of the Association shall have power to determine any matters relating to the calculation of the fees and allowances and (without limitation) the counting of travelling time and the apportionment of 'days' for the purpose of these rules and his decision shall be final and binding.*
6. *(1) Fees shall be paid to members of the Board who are elected to any of the following offices under and in accordance with the Articles of Association of the Association or the provisions of The Establishment and Elections of Committees and Officers Bye-Laws for the time being in force:*
 - (a) *Chairman of the Association;*
 - (b) *Director of Finance;*
 - (c) *Chairman of the Member Benefits Committee;*
 - (d) *Chairman of the Professional Services Committee;*
 - (e) *Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee;*
 - (f) *Chairman of the Scottish Council;*
 - (g) *Chairman of the Welsh Council.*

(2) Such fees shall be payable in addition to the payment of any fees and allowances to which such members of the Council may be entitled under paragraphs 1 to 5 above. Any one member shall not be entitled to receive more than one fee for so doing in the event that, at one and the same time, he holds more than one of the offices referred to in sub-paragraph 6(1) above.

(3) Fees shall be paid at the annual rate of £3,500 to the Chairman of the Association, £1,750 to the Director of Finance of the Association, and at the rate of £875 to each of the Chairmen of the Committees and Councils referred to in sub-paragraph 6(1) above, subject to any increases which may arise in accordance with any increases from time to time awarded under sub-paragraph 6(5) hereof.

Such fees shall be exclusive of VAT, which shall be paid in addition where it is properly chargeable or shall be subject to the appropriate deductions for Income Tax (PAYE) and National Insurance Contributions.

(4) Fees shall be payable from the date of the member's election to office until the date of his resignation or vacation of that office, at the foregoing annual rates, and pro rata for periods of less than one year. For ease of administration the said annual fee for the prospective period of office (be it one year or less) shall be paid on account of the amount due in the month following the month in which he was elected, and any part thereof found not to be due shall be returned upon request together with all due adjustments for VAT or any other appropriate item.

(5) The fees to which any of the said office-holders are entitled may be increased from year to year as from such date or dates (not being earlier than 6 months prior to the beginning of the relevant year) as shall be:

- (a) decided in writing from time to time by the Director of Finance of the Association, after such consultation with such of the Association's financial advisers as he shall consider appropriate; and
- (b) approved by Resolution of the Council.

The Council are hereby authorised to apply the provisions of paragraphs 1-5 inclusive to members of the Association who are not members of the Council but who are co-opted members of a committee or sub-committee of the Council in relation to their attendance upon qualifying business falling within:

- Paragraph 3(a) above if specifically invited to attend;
- Paragraph 3(c); or
- Paragraph 3(d) provided they do so solely as an authorised representative of the Council alone and, particularly, not representing some other organisation or group.

And that these provisions determined and authorised by this Resolution may be known as 'The Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2003'

And that *The Councillors Fees and Expenses Rules 2003* shall replace and supersede *The Allowances to General Councillors Rules 1999* with effect from the date on which this Resolution is passed.

Mr Banks explained that this resolution, which required a vote at a general meeting, was designed to update the rules governing the payment of fees and expenses. Currently Councillors gave the first five days of service to the AOP each year without payment. This new resolution would abolish the five waiting days and make some minor adjustments to fees and allowances. Having looked carefully at the implications of the changes, Mr Banks recommended them and moved the adoption of the resolution.

The resolution was agreed by a large majority, there being three abstentions.

In declaring the Annual General Meeting closed, the President said that he had been asked by Past President Sir Richard Meyjes to convey his congratulations to the Association on a splendid year.

Awards of Honorary Membership

Before moving to the presentation of awards, Mrs Elizabeth Frost acknowledged how much the time given to the Council by those retiring was valued by the Association. She went on to name those who were leaving, and expressed the hope that some of them would return to serve on the Council at some time in the future. Then followed awards of honorary membership.

Mr Hugh Seymour

Details of Mr Seymour's long and distinguished career in optometry were given by Mrs Frost. He had always been active in local affairs and had played a full part during his twenty years of service on the Council. He had worked hard on the Occupational Visual Welfare and Clinical and Technical Committees and had helped to produce the AOP guidelines on VDU usage. Mrs Frost wished Mr and Mrs Seymour every happiness in their retirement.

Mr Seymour added that he had been a chairman of a Local Optical Committee since 1969 except for one brief break. In thanking the Association for the award, he wished the new Council well.

Mr John Scott

The Head of Member Benefits provided details of Mr John Scott's career. He had been a delegate to the Joint Council of Ophthalmic Opticians and NOC conferences for two LOCs continuously since

1956, with only a three-year break. He had been an independent practitioner since 1965, retiring only recently, and had also served on numerous committees as well as on the Council since 1981.

Mr Scott said that he would miss his involvement with the Council, which had been part of his life for a very long time. He intended to continue in optics until finally retiring, and would now devote more time to the Captain Cook Museum in Whitby. He was surprised to be awarded this honour and thanked everyone for their friendship and guidance, while also expressing his good wishes for the future.

Mr Paddy Rope

Ms Rena Souten said that she had been privileged to work with Mr Paddy Rope over a long period. He had been deeply involved in the local administration of the profession as well as serving on many AOP committees and the Council. Not least, he was a past AOP Chairman.

Mr Rope said that his 24 years on the Council had in no way been a hardship. In thanking the Association for the award, he also thanked past and present members of the Council and the staff of the AOP for making his years of service so enjoyable.

Miss Margaret Packman

Mr Nigel Burnett Hodd said how proud Miss Packman's father would have been to see his daughter following in his footsteps – he had also been a life member. Mr Burnett Hodd highlighted Miss Packman's expertise in paediatric optics. She had been AOP Chairman 1993/4, had served on various committees and had contributed to the GOC. She was also a past Rotary President and was an expert vegetable gardener.

Miss Packman said how much she had enjoyed the last twelve years. She was not retiring, but she wished to spend more time working with PCTs. She would also need more time when she became



Vice Chairman of the disciplinary committee of the British Psychological Society, which would again involve working with children. Miss Packman felt very honoured, and wished the new councillors particularly good luck for the future.

Grant McLeish

Following a family trend, Mr Grant McLeish qualified in 1964 and on the death of his father went into a partnership which incorporated his father's business. He had only just retired from the Fife Area Optical Committee with which he had been involved since the early seventies. He also worked with the Central Scotland branch of the AOP over the same period. Mrs Frost enumerated the many positions held by Mr McLeish during his career, including chairmanship of the AOP for 1989/90 and responsibility for the management of its financial affairs.

Mr McLeish recalled many years of friendships and companionship of Councillors and felt privileged to have been able to serve the AOP in many capacities. He had enjoyed his time with the Association, which he saw going from strength to strength with the introduction of new blood. In thanking everyone, he concluded that there was a good team to take the organisation forward.

Mr Ben Lewis

The Chief Executive told of the dedicated service that Mr Ben Lewis had given to the Association at local and national level as well as a councillor for more than 33 years. He had been Chairman of the Association twice and a long serving Treasurer. He was well known, admired and respected both nationally and internationally. Mr Lewis had been awarded the OBE for his services to the profession, and was also the first living recipient of the Peter Yeo medal for his exceptional service to the Association and the profession.

In offering his thanks for the award, Mr Lewis referred to the friendship, comradeship and companionship he had derived from his career with the AOP.



Award for the Advancement of Optometry

The AOP Chairman said that this award was being made to Mr Tim Hunter in recognition of the work that he had done in meeting the training needs of pre-registration students. Throughout his career, Mr Hunter had shown interest in education and training, having been a DOCET course provider, having worked as a part-time supervisor, and having supervised nine pre-registration students. He was also a PQ examiner in four subjects. Mrs Frost listed the many positions he had held in his area and he had also served on the Hospital Optometrists Committee from 1996 to 2000. He had introduced the distance learning package to help those entering the profession to prepare for the PQEs, which had involved a great deal of work. This led to the introduction of the distance learning scheme which had proved valuable to students.

Mr Hunter accepted his award with gratitude and pleasure.

The meeting closed at 4.50 p.m.

OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Mr Don Grocott TD MA FRSA FInstD retains the presidency of the Association. The Association has two Vice Presidents; Lady Knight of Collingtree DBE maintains her long-standing connection with the Association and Dr Ewan Page also continues in office. The Association is much the richer for the wider perspective which its President and Vice Presidents bring to its work.

The Board of Directors elected Mrs Lynn Hansford BSc FCOptom as Chairman and elected Mr Robin Banks FCOptom as Chairman of Finance. The Board resolved that Mr Donald Cameron BSc FCOptom DCLP should continue in office as Deputy Chairman.

COUNCILLORS' ATTENDANCE

Name	Days attended	Committees attended
Mike Averns	4	Council, Member Benefits
Robin Banks	19	Council, Finance, Board, Remuneration
Hamish Barbour	3	Council, Public Affairs
Kishor Bardolia	7	Council, Member Benefits, Professional Services
Daska Barnett	6.5	Council, Member Benefits
Ed Bickerstaffe	4	Council, Member Benefits
Nigel B Hodd	5.5	Council, Board, Publishers, Finance
John Bristow	2	Council
Vivian Bush	7	Council, OFRC, Public Affairs
Ted J Cadman	1.5	Council
Donald Cameron	16	Council, Board
Hugh Campbell	9	Council, Scottish Council, Public Affairs
Kristeen Chappell	3.5	Council
Michael Charlton	31	Council, Publishers, Public Affairs, Board, Remuneration
Lisa Collins	1	Hospital Optometrists
Barry Curran	5	Council, Professional Services
Bruce Drummond	4	Council, Public Affairs
Elizabeth Frost	40	Council, Board, Publishers
Rosie Gavzey	5	Council, Public Affairs
Susan Glass	1	Council
Mike George	2	Council
Lynn Hansford	27	Council, Board
Nizar Hirji	8.5	Council, Professional Services
Richard Hoare	0	Council
Sam Hodson	4	Council, Public Affairs
David Howarth	1	Council
Adrian Hughes	4.5	Council
Kamal Kalsi	3	Council
Jonathan Kay	7	Council, Member Benefits
Eavan Kennedy	1	Council
Pat Leaning	5.5	Council, Public Affairs
Sue Leighter	7	Council, Professional Services
Ben Lewis	2	Council
Ian Lucas	7	Council, Member Benefits

Name	Days attended	Committees attended
Dick Manns	5.5	Council, Member Benefits
Alison McClune	3	Council
Robert McLachlan	2	Council
Grant McLeish	11.5	Council, Board, Publishers
Eddie McVey	22.5	Council, Board
Andrew Merry	14	Council, Board, Publishers
Wendy Newsom	0	Council
Ken Nichols	1	Council, Professional Services
Margaret Packman	2	Council
Frank Petticrew	10	Council, Professional Services
Lyn Price	0	Council
Steve Reily	5	Council, Professional Services
Paddy Rope	4.5	Council, Public Affairs
Martin Rubinstein	1	Hospital Optometrists
Gillian Ruddock	1	Hospital Optometrists
Mary Russell	3	Council
John Scott	5	Council, Member Benefits
David Sculfor	1	Hospital Optometrists
Hugh Seymour	3.5	Council, Professional Services
David Shannon	5	Council, Public Affairs
Ian Shaw	8	Council, Member Benefits
Roger Skidmore	3	Council
Bela Soneji	1	Hospital Optometrists
Rena Souten	18.5	Council, Board, Publishers
Lynne Speedwell	1	Hospital Optometrists
Gill Stewart	5.5	Council, Member Benefits
Lyndon Taylor	40.5	Council, Board
Brian Toye	3.5	Council, Public Affairs
Cindy Tromans	16	Council, Hospital Optometrists
Trevor Warburton	27	Council, Board, Professional Services
Peter Warren	8	Council, Professional Services
Charles Wass	7	Council
Alison Weston	1	Hospital Optometrists
Robert Wilkes	11	Council, Professional Services

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Directors' Report

The Board of Directors present their report with the accounts of the Association for the year ended 31 December 2003.

The Association is a company limited by guarantee, having no share capital. In the event of the Association being wound up, every member has undertaken to contribute to its assets a sum not exceeding £5.

Principal activities

The principal activities of the Association are to:

- represent individual optometrists, whatever their mode of practice. The Association also represents a small number of dispensing opticians;
- promote the professional and clinical independence of its members and the profession;
- encourage and assist in the development and promotion of high standards of practice;
- establish suitable arrangements for the defence, in disciplinary and professional matters, of all members, whether in practice as principals, assistants, employers or employees;
- advise on commercial, economic, legal and administrative aspects of practice;
- represent the interest of all of its members in negotiations for fees, other remuneration, conditions and terms of service, where appropriate;
- represent and promote the interests of all of its members to Parliament, Government and other institutions in the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Review of business

A summary of the year's activities is given on page 38 of the accounts.

The Association reports an operating deficit for the year of £327,745 compared to a deficit in the previous year of £47,389. After adjustments for income from investments and a small charge of corporation tax, the Association incurred a deficit of £264,721 (2002 - deficit £808). The Association has continued its policy of investing in the important area of members' defence. The substantial rise in the cost of clinical malpractice insurance cover and the large unanticipated increase in premium notified towards the end of the year has resulted in a further substantial increase in the proportion of resources that we commit to this area of activity.

The Association's income from members' subscriptions increased by approximately £233,000 during the year. Ordinary members' subscriptions were increased to £420 (from £410), and total membership was increased to just over 10,400.

The Association's investment portfolio comprises unit trust and money market funds and these are managed by Merrill Lynch Investment Managers.

Despite the current market problems the Association is pleased to report that the total value of its investments was £1,007,370 (2002 - £1,049,018) at 31 December 2003, including current asset investments of £450,000 (2002 - £550,000). The investment of £450,000 shown as 'current asset investment' represents units in a money market fund managed by Merrill Lynch. The continuing uncertainty surrounding the equity markets has led us to conclude that despite the lower returns available and the downward pressure on interest rates we should maintain a large proportion of our investments in cash and cash funds.

Interest earned in the year amounted to £29,609 (2002-£29,776) and investment income from the managed portfolio increased from £20,676 to £22,833.

During the year, the Association achieved a satisfactory settlement with Customs and Excise on the matter of costs payable following our successful VAT appeal.

OT (Optometry Today/Optics Today) has increased revenue by over £32,000 from growth in advertising income and strong sales through its successful book shop. An increased investment in its successful CET project and upward pressure on production costs have raised the cost per member to £24.32 (2002 - £12.11). In the opinion of the directors, this journal continues to represent excellent value for our members.

The Directors are once again grateful for the continuing support of the Central (LOC) Fund whose financial assistance with the Association's activities particularly in the field of primary care has benefited the whole profession. Members are once again encouraged to contribute to the Fund's voluntary levy.

Future developments

As a member of the Intra-Professional Forum, the AOP is committed to working cooperatively with all the other organisations in the sector. In particular, its own strategic plan requires it to seek opportunities to further all the items on its own agenda through strategic partnerships with other willing bodies. Because of the nature of the two organisations, AOP and FODO are working increasingly closely on matters of common interest to corporate contractors and individual optometrists. The AOP expects that in the future this cooperation will become even closer and such joint working will be the rule rather than the exception.

The Association's extensive interest in continuing education provision will develop further as demand from members increases with the advent of mandatory CET. Funding the provision of CET through the biennial Optometry congress (via the Vision Education Partnership), increasing the use of the highly successful *OT (Optometry Today/Optics Today)* series, developing lectures for use by branches and moving into new and innovative e-learning initiatives, are all envisaged in the immediate future.

The Directors are committed to managing the change process around the appointment of a new Chief Executive to replace Ian Hunter who will leave the Association in March 2005. Work on the appointment will commence in the latter half of 2004. The Board recognises the importance of maintaining the highly successful management structure of the Association and safeguarding the interests of staff during this time of inevitable change.

The work of the optometric primary care agenda will gain even greater importance as the profession achieves independent prescribing rights. The Association will continue to take a lead in supporting Local Optometric Committees and Area Optometric Committees in implementing primary care schemes for a range of professional services including therapeutics when it is implemented.

The Directors look forward to the launch of the Eye Care Services Steering Group's care pathways in the spring of 2004 and to further development work of pathways designed to facilitate independent therapeutic prescribing and increasing levels of service to the public.

The Association will continue to apply increasing resources to meet the needs of members facing claims of negligence and professional misconduct. It is committed to maintaining an adequate in-house legal staff to meet the demands of members in this vital area of its work. The market place for insurance means that the level of premiums for clinical malpractice insurance has risen dramatically in the last 3 years. Directors believe that these premiums will continue to rise but hope that the rate of increase in the future will level off somewhat.

Councillors

The names of the Councillors, including those who were Directors, during the year appear on page 36 of the annual report.

Directors' responsibilities

Company law requires the Directors to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Association and of the surplus or deficit of the Association for that period. In preparing those accounts, the Directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- follow applicable accounting standards, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts;
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The Directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Association and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 1985. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Association and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Fixed assets

Acquisitions and disposals of fixed assets are recorded in the notes to the accounts.

Corporate governance

The Board of Directors has established two sub-committees with written terms of reference.

The Finance Sub-Committee, which is chaired by the Chairman of Finance, functions as an audit committee and reviews the quarterly management accounts of the Association, reporting on them to the Board. It reviews the annual accounts with the external auditors, reviews their management letter and discusses any issues arising from the audit with them.

The Remuneration Sub-committee, which is chaired by the Vice President, is responsible for reviewing and approving remuneration levels of all staff of the Association and for making recommendations to the Board as to the level of fees paid to Councillors, Directors, Committee Chairmen and the AOP Chairman.

Risk management

The Directors have assessed the major risks to which the Association is exposed, in particular those relating to the specific operational areas of the Association, its investments and its finances.

The Directors believe that by ensuring controls exist over key financial systems, by monitoring reserve levels and by examining the operational and business risks faced by the Association, they have established effective systems to mitigate those risks.

The Benevolent Fund of the College of Optometrists and Association of Optometrists

The Association appoints two trustees to The Benevolent Fund of the College of Optometrists and Association of Optometrists. The Fund exists to provide charitable benefit to members of the profession and their dependants facing financial hardship. The Board of Directors encourages members of the Association to contribute to the Fund to help their less fortunate colleagues and their dependants. The accounts of the Benevolent Fund are consolidated in the accounts of the College of Optometrists and a copy of the accounts of the College of Optometrists can be obtained from the College's Secretary.

Auditors

The auditors, Buzzacott, will be proposed for re-appointment in accordance with Section 385 of the Companies Act 1985.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Directors by:



Ian Hunter OBE

Chief Executive

Date of approval: 10 March 2004

Directors' Report

The Councillors who served in the year ended 31 December 2003 were as follows:

Averns M	Lewis JBDC
Banks R*	Lucas IP
Barbour SJB	Manns RJ
Bardolia K	McLachlan RC
Barnett Ms D	McLeish GE*
Bickerstaffe E	<i>(resigned 21 May 2003)</i>
Bristow JB	McClune Ms A
Burnett Hodd NF*	McVey E*
<i>(appointed 21 May 2003, resigned 2 December 2003)</i>	Merry A*
Bush VG	Newsom Ms W
Cadman EJ	Nichols KA
Cameron D*	Packman Miss MA
Campbell HM	Petticrew FJ
Chappell Mrs K	Price Mrs LF
Charlton MN*	Reily SH
Curran BJ	Rope PG
Drummond BM	Russell Mrs M
Frost Mrs EC*	Scott JH
Gavzey Ms RN	Seymour H
George MR	Shannon DM
Glass Ms S	Shaw IW
Hansford Mrs LS*	Skidmore RM
Hirji NK	Souten Ms HE*
Hoare RJ	Stewart Mrs G
Hodson SK	Taylor LR*
Howarth DS	Toye BJ
Hughes AG	Tromans Dr C
Kalsi K	Warburton TJ*
Kay J	Warren PJ
Kennedy Miss E	Wass CR
Leaning Mrs P	Waugh J
Leighter Mrs SB	Wilkes RD

* Indicates the Directors of the Association who served during the period and, in order to comply with Companies Acts, the appointment and resignation of the directors only are shown above.

Independent Auditor's Report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Association of Optometrists

We have audited the accounts on pages 38 to 51 which have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out on pages 42 and 43.

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with Section 235 of the Companies Act 1985. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of directors and independent auditors

As described on page 34, the company's directors are responsible for the preparation of accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards.

Our responsibility is to audit the accounts in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and United Kingdom Auditing Standards.

We report to you our opinion as to whether the accounts give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the directors' report is not consistent with the accounts, if the company has not kept proper accounting records, if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit, or if information specified by law regarding directors' remuneration and transactions with the company is not disclosed.

We read other information contained in the annual report, and consider whether it is consistent with the audited accounts. This other information comprises only the directors' report. We consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the accounts. Our responsibilities do not extend to any other information.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with United Kingdom Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the accounts. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the directors in the preparation of the accounts, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the accounts are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the accounts.

Opinion

In our opinion the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 December 2003 and of its deficit for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985.

Buzzacott

Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors
12 New Fetter Lane
London
EC4A 1AG

10 March 2004

Income and Expenditure Account

Year to 31 December 2003

	Notes	2003 £	2003 £	2002 £	2002 £
Income					
Members' subscriptions	1		2,994,416		2,760,960
Contributions in respect of services rendered	2		285,368		344,644
			<u>3,279,784</u>		<u>3,105,604</u>
Expenditure					
Direct professional services	3		1,801,674		1,446,918
			<u>1,478,110</u>		<u>1,658,686</u>
Staff costs	4	1,094,608		1,016,675	
Depreciation	5	91,837		86,429	
Other operating charges	6	619,410		602,971	
			<u>1,805,855</u>		<u>1,706,075</u>
Operating deficit for the year			(327,745)		(47,389)
Income from listed investments		22,833		20,676	
Other interest receivable		29,609		29,776	
			<u>52,442</u>		<u>50,452</u>
			(275,303)		3,063
Provision for losses in Joint Venture now written back	11		15,000		-
(Deficit)/surplus on ordinary activities before taxation			(260,303)		3,063
Taxation	7		(4,418)		(3,871)
(Deficit) for the financial year	15		(264,721)		(808)

The Association has no recognised gains or losses other than those shown above and therefore no separate statement of total recognised gains and losses has been presented.

None of the Association's activities were acquired or permanently discontinued during the above two financial periods.

There is no difference between the deficit on ordinary activities before taxation and the deficit for the period stated above, and their historical cost equivalent.

Balance Sheet

31 December 2003

	Notes	2003 £	2003 £	2002 £	2002 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	8		321,471		308,605
Investments	9		497,671		532,705
			<u>819,142</u>		<u>841,310</u>
Current assets					
Stocks		122,448		117,932	
Debtors	12	420,874		442,531	
Current asset investments	9	450,000		550,000	
Cash at bank and in hand		282,199		359,915	
		<u>1,275,521</u>		<u>1,470,378</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	<u>(1,057,505)</u>		<u>(1,095,609)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>218,016</u>		<u>374,769</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>1,037,158</u>		<u>1,216,079</u>
Provisions for liabilities and charges					
	14		<u>(175,000)</u>		<u>(89,200)</u>
Net assets			<u>862,158</u>		<u>1,126,879</u>
Reserves					
Accumulated funds	15		<u>862,158</u>		<u>1,126,879</u>

Approved on behalf of the Board of Directors by:

LS Hansford
R Banks

Directors

Date of approval: 10 March 2004

Cash Flow Statement

Year to 31 December 2003

	Notes	2003 £	2002 £
Cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	A	(180,215)	220,994
Returns on investments and servicing of finance	B	52,442	50,452
Taxation		(3,908)	3,299
Capital expenditure and financing investments	B	(46,035)	(223,940)
(Decrease)/increase in cash	C	(177,716)	50,805

Notes to the cash flow statement for the year to 31 December 2003:

A Reconciliation of operating deficit to net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities

	2003 £	2002 £
Operating deficit	(327,745)	(47,389)
Depreciation charge	91,837	86,429
(Gain)/loss on disposal of fixed assets	(8,634)	3,581
(Increase) in stocks	(4,516)	(2,435)
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	21,657	(109,989)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(38,614)	201,597
Increase in provision	85,800	89,200
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	(180,215)	220,994

B Gross cash flows

	2003 £	2002 £
Returns on investments and servicing of finance		
Income from investments	52,442	50,452
Capital expenditure and financial investment		
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	(113,318)	(50,782)
Receipts from disposals of tangible fixed assets	17,249	-
Payments to acquire investments	-	(149,999)
Investment in joint venture during the year	50,034	(23,159)
	(46,035)	(223,940)

Cash Flow Statement (continued)

Year to 31 December 2003

C Analysis of changes in net funds

	<i>At 1</i>			<i>At 31</i>
	<i>January</i>	<i>Cash</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>December</i>
	<i>2003</i>	<i>flows</i>	<i>changes</i>	<i>2003</i>
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>
Cash at bank and in hand	359,915	(77,716)	-	282,199
Current asset investments	550,000	(100,000)	-	450,000
Total	<u>909,915</u>	<u>(177,716)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>732,199</u>

D Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net funds

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>
(Decrease)/increase in cash in the period	(177,716)	50,805
Net funds at 1 January 2003	<u>909,915</u>	<u>859,110</u>
Net funds at 31 December 2003	<u>732,199</u>	<u>909,915</u>

Principal Accounting Policies

31 December 2003

Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Consolidation

The Association and its subsidiary companies comprise a medium sized group. The Association has therefore taken advantage of the exemption provided by section 248 of the Companies Act 1985 not to prepare group accounts. The accounts present information about the Association as an individual undertaking.

Income

- Members' subscriptions are credited to the income and expenditure account in the year to which they relate. Subscriptions received in advance are carried forward to the following year.
- Contributions in respect of services rendered are credited to the income and expenditure account in the year to which they relate.
- Sundry donations are credited to the income and expenditure account in the year of receipt.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life:

- Leasehold property fittings term of the lease
- Computer equipment and membership database 33% on cost
- Office equipment 25% on cost
- Office furniture and fittings 10% on cost
- Motor vehicles 25% on cost

Investments

Investments are included at cost, less provision for any permanent diminution in value.

Joint venture

The Association's share of the results of the Joint Venture are accounted for using the equity method.

OT (*Optometry Today/Optics Today*)

Publication of the Association's journal, *OT*, is accounted for as a service to members.

The net costs of financing the journal are included in the charge 'Direct professional services', and its turnover is disclosed in note 3.

Stocks

Stocks, which consist of finished goods, are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

Operating leases

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to the income and expenditure account on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Pension costs

The Association operates a defined benefit scheme for one employee. Contributions to the scheme are charged to the income and expenditure account so as to spread the cost of the pension over the employee's anticipated working life with the Association.

FRS 17 requires extensive disclosure in respect of a defined benefit scheme and the Association has disclosed in note 16 to the accounts those items it considers material to a single-member scheme.

The Association operates a defined contribution scheme for other employees where the contributions are charged to the income and expenditure account of the year in which they are payable to the scheme.

Notes to the Accounts

31 December 2003

1 Members' subscriptions

	2003	2002
	£	£
Members' subscriptions earned in the year	<u>2,994,416</u>	<u>2,760,960</u>

2 Contributions in respect of services rendered

	2003	2002
	£	£
Central (Local Optical Committee) Fund	167,470	230,283
Other	<u>117,898</u>	<u>114,361</u>
	<u>285,368</u>	<u>344,644</u>

3 Direct professional services

	2003	2003	2002	2002
	£	£	£	£
Services to members		1,448,752		999,766
Defence of members legal expenses		30,386		68,099
Councils and committees		167,322		169,907
Councillors' allowances/honoraria		84,333		67,292
Members' handbook and red book		18,720		46,839
Primary Care Resource Pack		-		44,000
Conferences and congresses		69,856		66,860
Sales of brochures and leaflets	(27,453)		(24,150)	
Less: Cost of sales	<u>9,758</u>		<u>8,305</u>	
		<u>(17,695)</u>		<u>(15,845)</u>
		<u>1,801,674</u>		<u>1,446,918</u>

Services to members includes the Association's contribution towards the net cost of financing *OT (Optometry Today/Optics Today)*, whose turnover for the year ended 31 December 2003 was £903,954 (2002 - £871,807).

Conferences and congresses include contributions from delegates for meetings and conferences of £88,470 (2002 - £98,493).

4 Staff costs

Staff costs were as follows:

	2003	2002
	£	£
Wages and salaries	834,077	775,852
Social security costs	96,636	83,287
Pension costs	119,529	113,799
Other staff costs	44,366	43,737
	<u>1,094,608</u>	<u>1,016,675</u>

Pension costs represent contributions of £34,755 (2002 - £33,580) and a provision of £50,000 (2002 - £50,000) to the defined benefit scheme and contributions of £34,774 (2002 - £30,219) to the defined contribution scheme.

The average number of employees during the year, excluding Councillors, was as follows:

Office and management	<u>23</u>	<u>22</u>
-----------------------	------------------	------------------

The following Councillors were paid the following amounts for their consultancy services during the year:

	2003	2002
	£	£
NF Burnett Hodd	15,525	12,000
JBDC Lewis (<i>retired from Council on 21 May 2003</i>)	6,469	15,150
Ms HE Souten	-	1,000
NK Hirji (<i>resigned from Council on 21 May 2003</i>)	<u>2,835</u>	<u>-</u>

Professor N K Hirji was also paid £10,065 (2002 - £14,550) by the Vision Education Partnership as a consultant to the Joint Venture.

Members of the Council and the Board of Directors are entitled to an allowance for their services at the rate of £150 per day.

Allowances amounting to £65,325 (2002 - £50,550) have been paid to Councillors during the year.

Certain senior officers of the Council received a total of £19,008 (2002 - £16,742) in honoraria towards expenses incurred in the carrying out of their duties.

A professional indemnity insurance premium of £12,075 (2002 - £8,925) was paid by the Association for Directors and certain staff members in respect of their services to the Association.

A personal accident policy premium of £8,610 (2002 - £8,610) was also paid on behalf of Directors and Councillors of the Association.

5 Depreciation

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
	£	£
Leasehold property fittings	18,770	13,463
Office furniture, fittings and equipment/computer equipment	70,722	58,651
Motor vehicles	2,345	14,315
	<u>91,837</u>	<u>86,429</u>

6 Other operating charges

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
	£	£
Rent, rates, light, heating, cleaning, telephone and general insurance	164,603	138,345
Printing, stationery and postage	152,676	166,084
Professional charges	28,757	16,480
Audit	16,200	15,700
Travelling and sundry expenses	46,488	48,648
Bank charges	12,038	10,944
Donations and subscriptions	28,027	24,777
Computer charges	79,340	71,838
Publicity and exhibitions	9,783	14,894
Staff training and recruitment costs	23,980	53,556
Irrecoverable Value Added Tax	57,518	41,705
	<u>619,410</u>	<u>602,971</u>

Included in rent, rates, light, heating, cleaning, telephone and general insurance is property rent of £72,858 (2002 - £65,540).

Included in printing, stationery and postage is £12,385 in relation to hire of office equipment (2002 - £13,744).

7 Taxation

The tax credit (charge) for the year was as follows:

	2003	2002
	£	£
Corporation tax at 19% (2002: 19.25%)	(5,000)	(4,490)
Adjustment in respect of previous years	582	619
	<u>(4,418)</u>	<u>(3,871)</u>

The Association is a mutual trade association and is accordingly only subject to taxation on its unfranked investment income, its untaxed interest, and any chargeable gains arising from the disposal of listed investments.

8 Tangible fixed assets

	<i>Short Leasehold property fittings</i> £	<i>Office furniture, fittings & equipment & computers</i> £	<i>Motor vehicles</i> £	Total £
<i>Cost</i>				
At 1 January 2003	208,744	285,258	57,260	551,262
Additions	58,385	36,583	18,350	113,318
Disposals	-	(4,605)	(57,260)	(61,865)
At 31 December 2003	<u>267,129</u>	<u>317,236</u>	<u>18,350</u>	<u>602,715</u>
<i>Depreciation</i>				
At 1 January 2003	52,812	140,136	49,709	242,657
On disposals	-	(2,346)	(50,904)	(53,250)
Charge for year	18,770	70,722	2,345	91,837
At 31 December 2003	<u>71,582</u>	<u>208,512</u>	<u>1,150</u>	<u>281,244</u>
<i>Net book values</i>				
At 31 December 2003	<u>195,547</u>	<u>108,724</u>	<u>17,200</u>	<u>321,471</u>
At 31 December 2002	<u>155,932</u>	<u>145,122</u>	<u>7,551</u>	<u>308,605</u>

9 Investments

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
	£	£
Investments in Sight Care Services Limited	2	2
Investments in dormant subsidiary undertakings	8	8
Listed investments (note 10)	478,562	478,562
Investment in Joint Venture (note 11)	19,099	54,133
	<u>497,671</u>	<u>532,705</u>

The Association has a special share of £2 in Sight Care Services Limited, the purpose of which is limited to maintaining the requirement that all Sight Care Services Limited participants should be members of the Association of Optometrists.

Current asset investments of £450,000 (2002 - £550,000) relate to investments in cash instruments.

10 Listed investments

Investments listed in the United Kingdom on a recognised stock exchange:

	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
	£	£
Cost at 1 January	478,562	328,563
Purchases	-	149,999
Cost at 31 December	<u>478,562</u>	<u>478,562</u>
Market value at 31 December	<u>557,370</u>	<u>499,018</u>

11 Investment in Joint Venture

During 1997 the Association entered into a partnership, the Vision Education Partnership, under English law with the Southern Council of Optometrists Inc. The Partnership Agreement was approved by the General Council in September 1997 and the Joint Venture is based at the Association's offices.

The aim of the partnership is to combine the expertise of the two partners in providing a biennial educational congress. The partnership's third conference was held during the year.

The movement on investment during the year was:

	2003
	£
Investment at 1 January 2003	54,133
Repayment of investment during year	(50,034)
Provision for diminution in value written back	15,000
At 31 December 2003	19,099

The Association has an interest of 66.67% in the results of the Joint Venture. The Joint Venture's surplus for the year to 31 December 2003 was £20,735 (2002 –£nil). The total net assets at 31 December 2003 of the Joint Venture available to the partners were £61,526 (2002 – £125,989).

Advantage has been taken of the exemption conferred under Regulation 7 of the Partnerships and Unlimited Companies (Accounts) Regulations 1993.

12 Debtors

	2003	2002
	£	£
Trade debtors	235,209	157,437
Other debtors	76,948	177,736
Prepayments	108,717	107,358
	420,874	442,531

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2003	2002
	£	£
Trade creditors	93,992	233,584
Social security and other taxes	35,796	68,113
Subscriptions prepaid	809,042	687,067
Accruals and deferred income	118,675	106,845
	<u>1,057,505</u>	<u>1,095,609</u>

14 Provisions for liabilities and charges

	<i>Pension</i>	<i>Claims</i>	Total
	£	£	£
Balance at 1 January 2003	50,000	39,200	89,200
Charged to the income and expenditure account	50,000	35,800	85,800
Balance at 31 December 2003	<u>100,000</u>	<u>75,000</u>	<u>175,000</u>

Pension

Provision of £100,000 has been made towards the projected shortfall of £150,000 for the defined benefit scheme (note 16).

Claims excess

The Association provides clinical malpractice insurance to its members. An estimated provision of £75,000 has been made in respect of claims excesses expected to be paid by the Association.

15 Reconciliation of movements on reserves

	2003	2002
	£	£
Opening reserves at 1 January	1,126,879	1,127,687
(Deficit) for the financial year	(264,721)	(808)
Closing reserves at 31 December	<u>862,158</u>	<u>1,126,879</u>

16 Commitments

Operating leases

The Association has annual obligations under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2003	2003	2002	2002
	<i>Property</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>Other</i>
	£	£	£	£
Expiring within two to five years	-	12,385	-	12,385
Greater than five years	70,920	-	65,540	-

Capital commitments

At 31 December 2003, the value of contracts for capital expenditure not yet provided for amounted to £nil (2002 - £85,000).

Pension schemes

During 2000 the Association decided to replace the final salary pension scheme with a deferred benefit scheme based on a minimum targeted fund value. This was to reduce the exposure that the Association had to the increasing financial liability it faced through declining investment returns and annuity rates. The agreed targeted fund value is £775,000 by 2005. The assets of the scheme comprise two with profit policies held with two insurance companies, with a transfer value at 31 December 2003 of approximately £500,000 and are held separately from the assets of the Association. Contributions to the scheme and provision for projected shortfall are charged to the income and expenditure account (note 4) so as to spread the cost of pensions over the employee's working life with the Association and are made on the basis of advice from our financial advisers. The assumptions used which have the most significant effect were that the investment returns would be 4% per annum and that future contributions will be at the rate of 43.2% of salary. The level of future contributions is dependent upon the level of future returns which are uncertain. The projected shortfall of the scheme as at the year end was approximately £150,000 and £100,000 has been provided for in the accounts to 31 December 2003.

17 Related party transactions

Mrs Maureen Hunter, wife of the Chief Executive Mr Ian Hunter, is the proprietor of Words and Images which has a contract to provide editorial, publishing and advertising services to the Association, in respect of its journal, *OT (Optometry Today/Optics Today)*. Words and Images is also on the list of approved suppliers to the Association of other publishing services.

The amount payable to Words and Images, for the year ended 31 December 2003 was £649,505 (2002 - £527,917) for fees as provided for in the contract and for reimbursement of other costs and expenses in connection with the production of *OT* by Words and Images on behalf of the Association. At 31 December 2003 £27,801 was due to Words and Images from the Association (2002 - £6,416).

Payments made to Councillors are disclosed in notes 3 and 4.

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