

Institution of Fire Engineers

Next Steps - Advancing the Institution

Introduction

The Our Future initiative set in motion the actions needed to secure the Institution's future and relevance by continuing to meet the needs of its members, stakeholders and the profession.

The direction has been set by the vision that the Institution would:

"Establish an international platform that:

- *is inclusive of all fire professionals*
The Institution will seek and embrace into its membership professionals from all fire-related disciplines. It is the diversity of membership that adds value and opportunity to the fulfilment of the aims of the Institution.
- *sets and maintains professional standards*
Through published codes of standards and ethics, and continuing professional development, the Institution and its individual members can demonstrate competence and application of underpinning knowledge.
- *provides personal value and opportunity for members*
Membership of the Institution will add value to individuals who will be able to demonstrate their professional standing in the fire community. Membership is synonymous with practicing professionals. Members will have access to a global fire community that will provide opportunities for the exchange of information and best practice.
- *facilitates a global learning network*
Through the distribution of a monthly Journal and the Internet, the Institution will provide a range of services to members and the opportunity to debate and learn about quality fire engineer topics.

- *has technical, regulatory and social influence*
The Institution through its Branches and individual members will have the professionalism and organisational credibility to develop and advise on global codes, standards and other fire engineering related treatise.

- *is recognised as an independent professional voice on fire engineering issues*

A distinct advantage of the constitutional set up of the Institution is that is not subject to political or governmental influence. The Board is directly accountable to its members and it functions through its membership for the well being of communities worldwide.

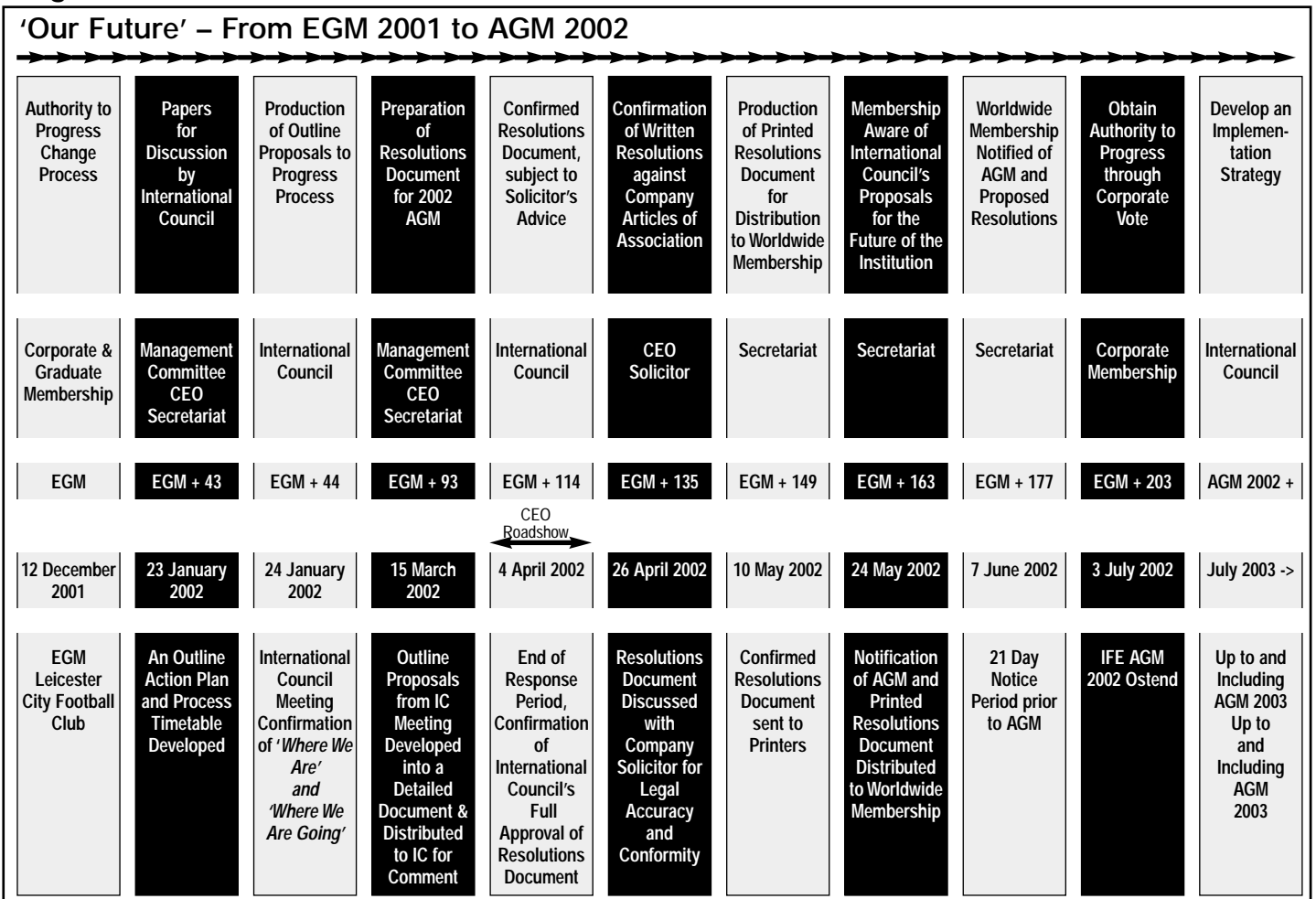
All future activity must be aligned with these principles and all progress will be measured against them. A detailed business plan must be developed to determine how each principle will be delivered.

The January 2002 meeting of Council determined that in taking the process forward, all activities and outcomes would be tested against the criteria of democracy, transparency, proportionality and viability.

Next steps - advancing the Institution

In January 2002, International Council resolved that further action would take place to move the agenda forward towards final implementation. The first step resulting from that work will be presented to the AGM in July 2002, with the final deadline for completion of the essential governance arrangements being completed at the AGM in July 2003. The timetable for this work, agreed by Council in January, is reproduced in diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1



The issues contained in this paper are divided into a number of distinct areas, namely:

- Governance
- Role of the Secretariat
- Financial Viability
- Member support and development
- Communications
- Technical
- Branches and Networks
- Transitional arrangements

Governance

International Council and the Management Committee will be replaced by a two-tier structure comprising a Board of Directors and a General Assembly.

The Board will replace International Council as the Institution's sovereign policy and decision-making body thus fulfilling the statutory obligations of the Companies Act and ensuring the Institution can act in a dynamic way to meet future challenges. The Board will also deal with the business of the Institution, agree objectives and monitor performance of the Secretariat.

The General Assembly will be the representative body of the International Membership and provide a forum for high-level policy discussion, development and debate. The General Assembly will also agree the corporate plan developed by the Board and monitor the Board's performance.

The Board

The twelve-person Board of Directors will comprise:

- The Chairman of the Board
- The Chairman of ECD
- The International President
- The Immediate Past President
- The President Elect
- The Chief Executive Officer
- Six Directors

Five of the executive Directors will be appointed or elected by the General Assembly and five by direct election by the worldwide membership (the latter being similar to the existing election process). The ECD nomination is the only one not subject to election by either the Assembly or the wider membership. This is to comply with the current requirements of the Engineering Council in the UK. The CEO is non-executive and has no vote.

The Board will meet at least six times per year as the Directors of the Company both for general business management and for the purposes of the Companies Act etc. Board members will serve a term of three years and will be able to stand for re-election. The detailed process for the election of Directors will be published in the period between this paper and the AGM in July 2002.

Chairman of the Board

The Board of Directors will elect a Chairman from among its number who will serve for a period of three years and will be eligible for re-election.

Business Portfolios

Individuals from the Board, referred to as Executive Vice Presidents, excluding the Board and ECD Chairmen, and

International President will be responsible for portfolios covering the key areas of Membership, Communications and Services and Technical. Each portfolio holder will be responsible for bringing together Task Groups to deal with the business plan areas/action items assigned to their portfolio. Additionally, other Board members may be assigned *ad hoc* projects to deliver the business plan. Those assignments in turn may require the establishment of additional task groups. This approach will free up valuable member resource and enable the faster discharge of workloads.

Standing Committees

Currently, there are a number of Standing Committees discharging the work of the Institution. The new structure and focus of the Institution will bring about changes to both the way in which the Institution does business and the reliance upon Committees to do the work. With the move towards task groups, committees will only be sustained where there is an executive role ie those constituted for the direct purpose of exercising management or financial decisions and undertaking Engineering Council Division nomination and licensing activities.

International President

The International President will be elected by a combined vote of the Board Directors and the General Assembly and will occupy one place on the Board itself. In order for the International President to be able to lead and represent the Institution, the demands of management of the Institution will be the responsibility of the Chairman of the Board. The International President will preside over meetings of the General Assembly and will report the outcome of Assembly meetings back to the Board.

An important feature of the presidential year is the time spent visiting the regions, nationally and internationally. This is a vital part of the International President's work. In future, the schedule of visits should be structured to support the Institution's strategic objectives and take account of recommendations from the General Assembly.

General Assembly

The General Assembly provides a forum for member representatives to engage in policy development and debate in order to inform the Board of Directors on matters of policy, direction and any other relevant issues. It will meet twice each year, once at the AGM and at one other time to be determined by the Board, but most likely early in each year.

Whilst the Board will be the Institution's policy and decision-making body, it must engage with the membership to obtain information and advice on an ongoing basis in order to assist in its deliberations. The General Assembly will provide a mechanism for bringing together the views of the wider membership and communicating those views to the Board. The General Assembly will also agree the corporate plan proposed by the Board and monitor the Board's performance.

The General Assembly will require feedback from the Board to confirm that due attention has been given to the outcomes arising from General Assembly debate and, should the need arise, the General Assembly is empowered to call the Board to account for its actions.

Individual members representing every constituted Branch in the world will populate the General Assembly. General Assembly members will be selected by their Branches and will serve for a period of three years. Assembly members will

have proportional voting rights determined by the number of paid up members in their Branch on the basis of one representative per 50 Branch members or part thereof. The entitlement to vote is subject to a Branch having a minimum of 25 members. The General Assembly will elect its own Leader from within its number, who will not necessarily be the International President. The interrelationship between the Board of Directors, the General Assembly and the wider membership is displayed in the diagram 2 below.

It was acknowledged at the International Council meeting held in January (at which a great deal of this work was undertaken) that there must be transparency in the dealings of the Board, Assembly and other constituted groups operating under the auspices of the Institution. Decision making processes must be clear and open to scrutiny by the General Assembly and membership as a whole. The Institution must streamline business processes to ensure that there is the minimum of bureaucracy and the maximum of transparency. It is intended that there be greater use of the Secretariat operating out of Head Office in Leicester, utilising professional staff, rather than Committees as at present.

Decision Making

At present voting rights are restricted to Corporate members and Graduates are entitled to vote on matters other than those of a constitutional nature.

Changes in governance and voting rights are currently being drafted in the form of Special Resolutions to be put to the Institution's membership at the AGM on 4 July 2002. Corporate members will be the only members eligible to vote on these Special Resolutions as they do relate to constitutional issues.

However, International Council believes that voting rights should be extended as far as possible; and one Special Resolution will extend the right to vote on all matters to Honorary Fellows, Graduates, Licentiates and Technicians. International Council hopes Corporate members will support this view.

Role of the Secretariat

The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible to the Board for actioning all decisions required to achieve the policy and performance objectives agreed by the Board. This includes preparation of budgets in support of the business plan and the implementation and maintenance of appropriate financial controls.

The Secretariat will be responsible for the project management of all activities and initiatives, ensuring that they are in line with the agreed business plan and have been subjected to an appropriate cost benefit analysis prior to implementation. The Secretariat also needs to ensure that all of processes are documented and auditable.

The Secretariat will liaise with the Board to identify members (and non-members where appropriate) to participate in Task Groups and Standing Committees. The Secretariat will establish a system to better identify members who wish to participate in such activities and ensure that representation is more inclusive of members and other constituencies currently under represented on International Council.

Greater use will be made of e-working to remove barriers to participation for groups such as the young or non-UK members and those who are not inspired by the idea of Committee meetings.

A member of the Secretariat will be assigned to service all Board, Committee and Task Group meetings and a senior staff member will normally be present at to advise on policy.

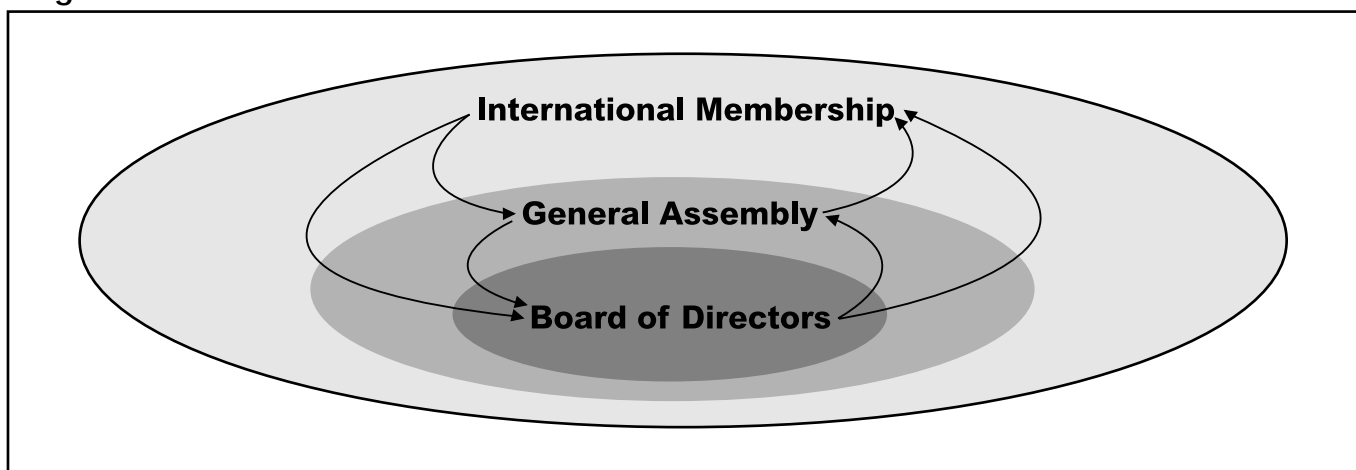
The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for maintaining a satisfactory level of staff resource to deliver the Institutions objectives. It will therefore be necessary to review the skill match at Head Office in relation to the new structure. Where appropriate out-sourced solutions may be adopted for particular projects. It is likely that there will be a need to increase resources over time to meet the new challenges.

Financial

The Institution is too heavily dependent on subscription income for its finances. This is not a situation that can be perpetuated if the Institution is to grow to meet the future demands of its members and to develop new services. It is clear from recent balance sheets presented at Annual General Meetings that the Institution is not currently covering its operating costs. There are two distinct areas of finance opportunity that can be used to address these issues: increasing subscriptions and alternative income generation. The International Council and subsequently the new Board will be required to produce a business plan to maximise the potential for income generation and control expenditure. In setting the budget, the Board will consider how the budget is spent in terms of a strategy that would identify clear targets and priorities.

In addition, there are two further issues to be addressed: the need to ensure that subscription equity exists between members and that financial support to Branches is fair and based on identifiable need.

Diagram 2



These issues have been subjected to close scrutiny with many options being considered to both achieve equity between UK Branches and all others worldwide and to effectively 'balance the books' between income and expenditure. Simply put, the Institution is living beyond its means especially if it wishes to expand the quantity and quality of its member services. To achieve this essential balance and modest growth a series of principles are envisaged which:

- Ensure every member worldwide contributes sufficient funds, through subscription, to provide the basic service
- Consolidates subscriptions into meaningful bands or groups
- Allows for modest year on year growth
- Permits "special case" arguments for lower subscriptions to meet difficult economic circumstances or local development needs
- Would allow central collection, and return to Branch of a Branch levy in the UK.

Translated into cash terms this process may involve five steps. The actual number and level of increase in any of the latter three being determined by the economic performance of the Institution. If, for example, other income routes were to be successful then subscription increases would not increase as proposed. This situation would also arise if the operating costs of the Institution were not to increase as budgeted in the proposal. The five steps are:

- Set a basic subscription rate for all members of 33 GBP @ 1st January 2003
- Consolidate subscriptions into 5 groups
 - (a) Fellow and Licentiate = Fellow
 - (b) Members and Associate = Member
 - (c) Graduate, Affiliate and Technician = Graduate
 - (d) Student (The basic fee) = Student
 - (e) Organisations = Associates
- Increase UK subscriptions by 10% and Non UK to 75% of UK rates
- Increase UK subscriptions by 10% and Non UK to 85% of UK rates
- Increase UK subscriptions by 10% and Non UK to equity with UK rate

Table 1 shows the performance envisaged in this proposal.

The option also exists for UK Branches, if they can mutually agree a single rate, to have Head Office collect on their behalf a Branch levy or subscription so easing collection difficulties to provide viable funds for local use. All UK members, whether in Branch membership or not, would be affected by this proposal with the individual's home location being the recognised registered Branch, which would receive the levy.

Operating in this way the overall operating costs of the central organisation would be suitably financed with sufficient confidence to sustain the Institution. Income beyond subscriptions will enable the development of services.

Member Support and Development

It has been agreed that there are underpinning components that contribute to the professional standing of individual members, which in turn determine why professionals would seek membership of the Institution. The professional standing of individual members will also determine the credibility of the Institution as a professional body. The individual is at the heart of the Institution (regardless of

Table 1

All GBP	Existing	Consolidation	01.04.03	01.01.04	01.01.05
Fellow	92	} 92	100	110	120
Licentiate	92				
Non UK	46		75	93	120
Member	60	} 60	66	73	80
Associate	50				
Non UK	25		50	62	80
Graduate	41	} 41	45	50	55
Affiliate	50				
Technician	37				
Non UK	20		33	42	55
Student	28	28	33	37	41
Non UK	18		33	37	41

grade) and all it seeks to achieve, and it is through the development of the individual that the Institution itself will grow. The Institution must constantly ask members "why would fire professionals seek membership?" and "how is the Institution adding value to their professional lives?". The answers to these questions will help us to keep the Institution vibrant and relevant to current and future professionals.

The underpinning components, previously identified and published, are:

- Professional standards
- Professional competence
- Member engagement

Professional Standards

In order to safeguard the individual member and the Institution, and to demonstrate to the external professional world the credentials of both, there must be a 'gold standard' approach applied to membership grade processes and determination. The standards in terms of achievement and competence will be reflected in the member's grades and underpinned by formal continuing professional development. Individuals will be able to develop using both internal and external means, all equally assessed and validated. Examinations will provide an internal 'pathway' to membership grade and personal development from anywhere in the world. This is particularly relevant in those countries where no recognisable or equivalent qualifications (or other form of competence determination) currently exist.

The Institution must develop its own recognition as well as being an accreditation body in order to link the external market into the Institution's gold standards. In time it is likely that the reliance upon and popularity of examinations will diminish as more transferable means of demonstrating equivalence develop worldwide. The Institution must position itself to meet this changing environment.

There will need to be a clear method and process for determining relevancy of educational attainment, examinations and other qualifications. There must be a clearly identifiable way of ensuring that the Institution keeps

up with developments in the wider professional and Institutional world. This is a role for the Secretariat working with the portfolio holder.

There will need to be further work on continuing professional development (CPD) within the Institution. In addition there must be a way of recognising externally validated CPD within the Institution's own process. There will be published guidelines to show existing and potential members clearly how this works. CPD credits will be linked to the retention of Grade and it is likely that there will be a role for Branch officials to monitor and audit records. Whilst the current CPD system is input based there will be a requirement to move towards an outcomes based method.

In order to ensure that the Institution develops, and maintains its credibility, individual members must work on their own professional development. This in turn will support the principle of the 'gold standard'. There will be a requirement therefore to examine the ability for student members to retain for that grade for life without attempting to develop professionally.

Professional Competence

The Institution will need to produce and monitor a set of ethical and professional standards and a code of conduct. The Institution will continue to produce the professional register and expanded it to be an international register. This will demonstrate the worldwide professional network that exists within the Institution and the competence of those professionals who practice within it and wish to provide professional consultative services.

Membership application processes and grade assessment must be streamlined and refined to ensure that, whilst ensuring the maintenance of standards, potential members are not deterred by either time or bureaucracy. Greater reliance upon the host Branch and the professional staff at Head Office should ensure both standards and process are maintained. Guidelines will need to be produced to enable this to take place.

Defining what exactly being a member of the Institution actually means both for members and those who would wish to assess their competence such as clients or employers is important. Other Institutions and professions have registration schemes that might be mirrored within the Institution. This information should be reflected in Institution marketing material.

Communications (facilitated awareness and contribution)

There is an urgent need to develop the means by which the Institution will engage with members in a two-way communications process. This will ensure that:

- individuals can be supported in their professional undertakings
- the Institution develops individual understanding
- individuals can contribute to fire engineering debate
- individuals can share best practice
- individuals will receive feedback on the products and services of the Institution
- the Institution explores the potential for virtual conferencing

The Institution must ensure that all modern means are employed to achieve this end. There will be a communications strategy developed and an action plan

produced to implement this much-needed technical development, particularly the Internet. The opportunities to share information with other Institutions and professional bodies will not be overlooked.

The future of a joint Institution and Fire Protection Association Journal will be determined at the end of 2002 so that a plan to develop and expand any future service can be agreed. The method of supporting this venture from Head Office and the gathering of articles from members for publication therefore still needs to be developed.

Networking opportunities through electronic means will be developed through the expanded use of the existing website. There is the potential for members to access technical data and publications either directly by means of a remote search facility or by posting questions for other members or the Secretariat.

Technical

The Institution should seek to influence standards in all countries in which it operates. This means it should be in position to influence, contribute and endorse existing or new standards. There is a real need to ensure that the credibility of the Institution and the competence of the individual member are robust before doing so.

The Institution will service member needs for technical support by providing a help desk. It will also act as a 'clearing house' or broker for technical queries. Sub groups will need to be established in individual countries, operating within an umbrella framework to ensure continuity.

There needs to be a process to determine what exists at present and how best to achieve the influencing role. It is clear that a structure needs to be put in place to service the myriad of national committees. It is also clear that a mechanism is urgently needed to provide feedback to the body corporate on actions etc. taken at such committee meetings.

There is a distinct role for those Chartered Engineers within the Institution's membership. Through work in recent months, the number of Chartered Engineers is increasing and in a number of Branches around the world. The ECD structure enables registration at a number of different levels and members should be encouraged to consider the Division and what it has to offer as part of their professional development.

Branches and Networks

Branches are traditionally the primary means for the wider membership to participate in Institution activities. It is anticipated that the Institution's objectives for membership growth, particularly overseas, will result in and be enhanced by a growth in the number of Branches. Branches offer a varied range of activities of a technical, professional and social nature and have an important role in promoting membership. The Institution will continue to encourage participation in Branch activities by ensuring that all new members are advised of their local Branch where appropriate. The development of a "Virtual Branch" will be explored with a view to meeting the needs of members who do not have access to a local Branch. It is also planned to provide every Branch and Network Group with a web site within ife.org.uk.

In addition to Branches, the Institution already has Special Interest Groups that facilitate the development of networks. Expanding these networks to help encourage students and new members are examples. These networks have no geographic boundaries and will seek to foster inter-disciplinarity and provide the benefit of exposure to

international influences at the early stage of professional development. New members are the future and have an important role to play in raising standards and in particular supporting the development of fire engineering and sharing best practice worldwide.

Transitioning

Provided that the Special Resolutions are adopted at the AGM on 4 July 2002, transitioning towards the new governance model will begin immediately after the meeting.

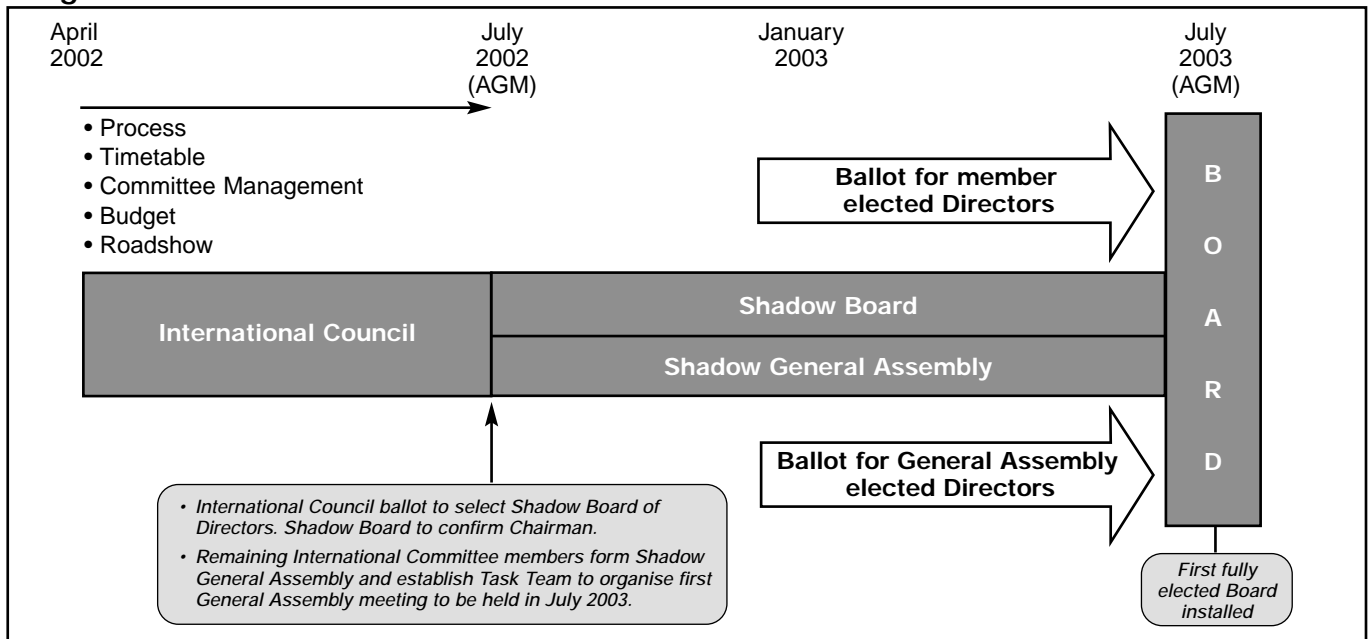
It is proposed that the International Council members in place after the AGM will conduct a ballot to identify which Directors who with the Presidential team (International President, Immediate Past President and President Elect) and existing Committee Chairmen, Chairman of ECD and CEO will form the Shadow Board.

International Council members not elected to the Shadow Board will form the General Assembly Task Team and will undertake responsibility for organising the first General Assembly to take place in July 2003. The General Assembly will comprise elected Branch representatives and the Task Team will oversee the election of the Leader of the General Assembly.

Ballots for member-elected Directors and General Assembly-elected Directors will take place in the first part of 2003 with the first fully elected Board installed at the 2003 AGM. The Chairman of the Management Committee is to be appointed as the first Board Chairman in order to oversee a smooth transition. The timetable for transitioning is shown in diagram 3 below:

9.4.02

Diagram 3





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