

Resolution 6

That in light of her documented behaviour and comments, which are not compatible with the Society's goals of protecting free expression and their policy of dignity and respect, that Joanne Harris stand down as Chair of the Management Committee.

Proposed by

- Julie Bindel
- Amanda Craig
- Jane Harris
- Milli Hill
- Richard Morgan
- Jane Roffe
- Michelle Smart
- Michelle Styles
- Heather Welford
- Julia Williams

Management Committee response

This motion is difficult to respond to because no detail or evidence is given of the allegations and Joanne Harris is not told of the case the proposers believe she must answer.

The SoA Management Committee does not make any recommendation in relation to this resolution because it is for the members to decide if they wish to recommend that the Chair should stand down. This is simply a background paper.

Elections and appointments

Joanne Harris is the unanimously appointed Chair of a democratically elected Management Committee. She was elected by the members to the Management Committee in 2016 and re-elected in 2019. On both occasions she received more votes than any other candidate.

She was appointed Chair by her fellow Management Committee members in a contested vote in 2020 and was unanimously re-elected in 2022. Throughout her three years as Chair, Joanne Harris has turned down the £7,500 annual stipend paid to the Chair of the Management Committee, preferring the money instead go back into the running of the SoA. The SoA did spend £1,500 in relation to defamation advice for the SoA and Joanne relating to an article in Private Eye.

The Management Committee continues to work with the Chair for the betterment of Society of Authors members and ALL authors in general.

Powers of the Chair

The Chair of the SoA Management Committee has no additional powers compared to other Committee members, beyond a deciding vote when votes are tied – a vote that Joanne has never cast. The Chair cannot unilaterally force through policy decisions. Every decision made by the Management Committee must be proposed, seconded and voted on with the majority vote being carried.

Past statements

Some of the complainants above were signatories to an open letter which has been answered in three statements by the SoA:

- <https://societyofauthors.org/News/News/2022/August/Salman-Rushdie>
- <https://societyofauthors.org/News/News/2022/August/The-SoA-view-%E2%80%94-on-hate-and-harassment>
- <https://societyofauthors.org/News/News/2022/August/A-response-and-call-for-unity>