

Council Meeting

**5 December 2018
12:30-16:00**

**Charles 1 & 2, Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street,
London, WC1N 2JU**

Web Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

Present: Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow (President)
Professor Richard Reece (Hon Secretary)
Dr Paul Brooker (Hon Treasurer)
Professor Nigel Brown
Professor Claire Wathes
Professor Hilary MacQueen
Professor Yvonne Barnett
Professor Caroline Austin
Professor Jackie Hunter
Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore
Professor Patrick Hussey
Professor Paul Hoskisson
Professor Patricia Kuwabara
Dr Kim Hardie

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Dr Laura Bellingan, Director of Policy & Public Affairs
Rachel Lambert-Forsyth, Director of Membership & Professional Affairs
Laura Woodland, Biochemical Society
Ana Ilic
Jen Crosk (Minutes)
Joanne Needham
Emma Sykes
Tom Ireland

Apologies:
Dr Louise Leong
Professor Rebecca Oakey, Genetics Society
Dr Lucy Harper, Society for Applied Microbiology

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Dr Hazel Norman, British Ecological Society
Mark Hollingsworth, Nutrition Society
Pamela Mortimer, Society for Experimental Biology
Jono Bruun, British Pharmacological Society
Dariel Burdass, Physiological Society

The President welcomed everyone and congratulated Paul Hoskisson on his appointment to his first academic chair.

1.1 Declaration of interests

None reported.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 June 2018**

2.1 Review of action points

All actions had been completed or appeared on the Agenda.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

Council APPROVED the Minutes and Web Minutes of 12 September 2018.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

Council cross membership of other MOs within CDH was noted.

3. **Chief Executive's Report**

Mark Downs (MD) reported that a great deal of policy activity continued to be in partnership with the physics, chemistry and maths communities. However, the scheduled meeting for a collective High Level Forum on Brexit and Science, which the President was due to attend, had been postponed following the resignation of the Minister. MD noted that the IoP had now relocated to Caledonian Road.

There had been increasing interest in new registers. MD also noted the DfE had approached the Society regarding a potential bursary scheme for biology teachers. If this progressed it would be a major activity. On a different note, MD went on to highlight the concern of many MOs about publishing policy and the proposals within Plan S. The Society was helping to co-ordinate and develop common views and had been invited to represent the bioscience voice at a key UKRI meeting later in the month.

The ITN partnership had worked out even better than expected, with 16-17 organisations contributing financially. The episodes appeared on the RSB website and the Society was hoping to do more with ITN in 2019.

Action: MD to bring a paper to Council in due course.

4. Health & Safety

No incidents were reported.

Section A: Finance & Governance

5. Finance

5.1 Update from Finance Committee

Paul Brooker (PB) reported that the Finance Committee met, with the first part of the meeting dedicated to investment strategy and moving to liquid assets from bricks and mortar. Two specialists had also attended to give an overview of options. The Committee had agreed on an aggressive timetable, proposing a tender process and presentations by potential advisors in January. This would be followed by a half day strategy meeting, led by the new advisors in February, to which all Council members would be invited. The Committee would seek to answer questions around risk, governance and ethical issues. From this, a policy document on the Society's investment strategy would be written by the Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary and presented to Council at the March meeting for approval.

The Finance Committee had accepted the recommendation of the MPA Committee to use a benchmark for membership fees based on a rolling CPI average in January of each year, which will lead to an increase of approximately 2.4% for this financial year, taking effect in April 2019. Council **AGREED** the recommendation

5.2 Minutes of the last Finance Committee Meeting

Council received the Finance Committee draft Minutes of 12 September 2018

5.3 Q4 forecast

MD provided an update and the Honorary Treasurer reported that Finance Committee had reviewed the position in more detail earlier in the day and were content with the likely year-end position. The audit was currently underway and appeared to be going well. The operational budget had turned out better than expected, currently in deficit but expected to move towards a break-even position.

The Society's CCLA investment had gained a good return and the pension fund deficit, as defined for accounts (FRS 102), had gone from a deficit position to a surplus. This will show as zero in the Statement of Financial Activities, to be in line with current practice. There had been a slight loss on property investment but overall, the operational position stood at around break-even.

6. Governance

6.1 Appointment of Audit Committee Chair

The Audit Committee made a recommendation to reappoint Rodney Eastwood as Chair of the Audit Committee for a second term from May 2019. **Council AGREED.**

Section B: Policy & Strategy

7. Report from ESP Committee

The Chair (SJB) updated Council on discussions of the last ESP Committee meeting. This had covered the Three Year Plan, recruitment and skills audit, Plan S, T Level development, Diversity & Inclusion strategy and development of the curriculum framework. The Society's policy-lates had been successful this year, with the next being held in March. On balance, the committee felt it would be better to hold two substantial events per year.

On a general issue, the President queried whether the Society should provide sponsorship for the BSA Huxley event in the future, noting that she had attended the latest meeting which had covered many biosciences areas. RSB had not been represented and Laura Bellingan (LB) added that a group existed to discuss such events (quarterly) but there had not been the budget to offer any sponsorship this year. It would remain under constant review.

Regarding the ESP committee's education work, the President flagged the feedback she had received around A Level students losing general skills and LB reported that the RSB's Head of Education Policy was currently working with the Royal Society, RSC, ASE and IoP to discuss these issues as part of the so-called "Education Policy Alliance".

8. Policy & Public Affairs

8.1 Policy & Public Affairs update

Council had received an update paper for information and the President expressed her thanks to the Policy team for the volume and quality of work undertaken.

Laura Bellingan reported that the Plant Science Federation Report was at the final stages, ready for launch in the New Year.

8.2 UKBC update

This item was discussed in a closed session.

8.3 Diversity & Inclusion

CA had provided a report containing the recommendations from the task and finish group. The group would be meeting following Council to discuss wording for a short mission statement which would be brought to Council for approval.

Council **AGREED** a recommendation to seek to appoint a D&I ambassador on each committee and special interest group. The process had already begun but will take time to roll-out to completion, fitting in with the meeting cycles of these groups. Many members of Council highlighted the need to ensure these ambassadors have a clear role and understand what is expected. Tokenism needs to be avoided and an annual meeting of E&I ambassadors might be helpful.

Nigel Brown (NB) noted the importance of involving the RSB Branches as the process evolves to ensure they too are engaged with the E&I agenda. He also suggested that having

E&I on every committee agenda at each meeting might reduce focus on this key issue. He suggested, and Council **AGREED**, that a dedicated item at least once per year, coupled with a monitoring brief for the ambassador on each committee might be more effective.

Action: the D&I Task & Finish Group to provide a short mission statement wording for Council approval.

Action: Staff and Trustees to facilitate roll-out of the E&I ambassador proposals to the committees and groups who they work/engage with.

9. Report from MPA Committee

The second meeting of this new Committee focussed on the membership survey. Council received a summary of the results/feedback and were invited to ask further questions and send in suggestions for actions or next steps by email to Richard Reece(RR) or Rachel Lambert-Forsyth (RLF).

Action: ALL: feedback on the membership survey results to be emailed to Richard Reece or Rachel Lambert-Forsyth.

10. Membership & Professional Affairs

10.1 Membership & Professional Affairs update

RLF reported a slight dip in membership but that membership growth had historically plateaued approximately every five years. Patricia Kuwabara (PK) highlighted the gender gap when looking at the Fellowship grade. RLF agreed more needed to be done but noted that the female to male ratio in upper grades had improved following targeted calls over recent years. Work had been undertaken to support returners, along with a membership discount for carers.

PB noted that CBiol re-registration was running in line with expectations following the introduction of fees and stricter CPD. There did not appear to have been a significant detriment to membership retention more widely. In response to questions around the Fellowship approval process, RLF reported that feedback was given to unsuccessful applicants and that all borderline cases were referred to a Fellowship Committee.

RLF updated Council on regional staffing. Jane Magill (regionally based) would be retiring at the end of 2018 and, as her role covered support for half of the UK branches (as did the other London-based post) it had been decided to recruit to the main office for this role. All branches were comfortable with this change.

10.2 Industry Certificate: a new training initiative

Council received a paper from Joanne Needham (JA) with recommended options under the proposed Industry Skills Certificate. She set out the background to the proposal which had been developed by the Employer Advisory Group following their last meeting with Council in 2016. The certificate was primarily aimed at post-docs in academia wishing to transition to an industry role.

Council welcomed the proposal and **AGREED** it should be developed further, including some basic market testing to judge demand, financial forecasting and a detailed time line.

Nigel Brown (NB) recommended engaging with the Research Councils who already saw the transition from academia as an important area in which to focus training.

Hilary MacQueen (HMcQ) recommended including a course on ethics and several Council members supported the need for a module on data (in its broadest sense)

11. Future Planning

11.1 Three Year Plan

Tom Ireland (TI) distributed a draft of the Three Year plan, which would be an interactive document, allowing regular update. It contained four main themes: inspire, influence, support and evolve, including 3-4 measurable goals for each theme. Finance and infrastructure would appear towards the back of the document and there would be a section on the ten year anniversary to reflect on the last decade. TI invited Council to email any comments to him.

Action: Council to email any comments to Tom Ireland by Monday 10 December.

12. AoB

There being no other business the President closed this section of the meeting and the MO observer left.

The next meeting of Council will be held on **Wednesday 6 March 2019**.

