

Council Meeting

Wednesday 10 December 2014
12:30-14:30

Charles 2, Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London WC1N 2JU

WEB Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The President welcomed Council and observers, thanked MO observers for attending and gave apologies.

Present: Professor Dame Jean Thomas (President)
Professor Chris Kirk (Hon Secretary)
Dr Pat Goodwin (Hon Treasurer)
Professor John Coggins
Dr Kim Hardie
Dr Jeremy Pritchard
Professor Julia Buckingham
Dr Liz Lakin
Dr Aileen Allsop
Professor Pete Downes
Professor Chris Garland
Professor Richard Reece
Mr Tim Brigstocke

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Ms Rachel Lambert-Forsyth, Director of Education & Training
Mr Jon Kudlick, Director of Membership, Marketing & Communication
Dr Laura Bellingan, Director of Science Policy
Ms Natasha Neill, Executive Officer
Ms Jen Crosk (Minutes)
Dr Peter Cotgreave, Society for General Microbiology
Mr Adam Hughes, Biochemical Society
Dr Paul Hutchinson, Society for Experimental Biology

Apologies: Professor David Blackburn
Dr Paul Brooker
Professor Rosie Hails
Leon Heward-Mills, Society for Endocrinology
Dr Lucy Harper, Society for Applied Microbiology

1.1 Declaration of interests

No declarations were made.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 September 2014

2.1 Review of action points

All items had been completed or appeared within the Agenda.

2.2 Matters arising not elsewhere on the Agenda

The Professional Affairs Committee had met and agreed that Dr Peachey should be removed from membership and he had been duly notified.

The President had met with the incoming President of the Physiological Society (TPS) and reported that they wished to continue working with the Society and to contribute to project funding. The President had informed TPS that it would be important to take into account the views of the current Enhanced Funders Group, in reviewing their request to join on a different financial basis. MO observers made clear that they did not think it would be appropriate to move ahead based on the current proposal from TPS. Council **AGREED** whilst recognising the importance of maintaining a good relationship and working on projects where possible.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

Council **AGREED** the Minutes and Web Minutes.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

None reported.

3. Chief Executive's Report

Mark Downs (MD) reported that the Nutrition Society had expressed an interest in joining the Enhanced Funders Group at a contribution of and would formally consider this around during the Spring.

Further letters of support for the Royal title had been received, including one from David Willetts. The supporting document for the application had been written and Stephen Benn had spoken to Ministers, Clerks and the Privy Council.

The audit was currently in process, with a clearance meeting scheduled for January and final report to the Finance Committee and Council in March.

MD added that Sir David Attenborough had agreed to do a fundraising event for the Society in 2015. The Brian Cox event had raised £7.5k net in 2014 and the expectation was that this would raise more.

MD noted that there was much ongoing work around animals and the Society was heavily engaged in work on GM through evidence to the Select committee inquiry. He highlighted that there were a huge number of events taking place, with 20 in November either direct, or through Special Interest Groups (SIGs) / Branches. There had been a successful NCI Conference at the British Library, attended by 250 delegates.

On CDH II, the building work had been further delayed as a result of errors by the contractor. CDH Directors had agreed to proceed, with a target completion date of March 2015.

Section A: Policy & Strategy

4. Report from ETP

Jeremy Pritchard (JP) reported that Professor Ottoline Leyser had left the ETP Committee after completion of a full and successful four year term, and that the focus on refreshing membership was working well. Council recorded their thanks for her support and help. An away-day had been held, with attendance from all SIGs and some enhanced MO reps. The information provided at the away-day had generated positive interactions and an outline roadmap for the next three years of their work.

5. Education & Training

5.1 IBO 2017 update on finances

Rachel Lambert-Forsyth (RLF) reported that Jon Day had been recruited to work two days per week on fundraising for the project. £72k of the £100k December target had been raised, with further meetings scheduled with potential funders. Warwick had agreed to hold the contract, without any financial risk to the Society, until the end of February. RLF asked Council to agree continuation of fundraising for IBO 2017 until the end of February. Council congratulated RLF on securing funding of £72k and **AGREED** to continuation of fundraising until the end of February.

5.2 Chartered Biologist update

RLF provided detailed background on the Chartered Biologist register. To date, the Society had received positive feedback from the Science Council for its online system and audit process. Council **AGREED** that the Society should maintain the current system and continue to move forward with training programmes and an auditing system for all registers.

5.3 Training Strategy

Following previous Council discussions on member support, Council was asked to approve a plan to form a training “centre”. This would be linked to Chartered status and the CPD programme and deliver a comprehensive menu of training to individual members and MOs. Council was in favour but felt that a market comparison on training fees should be undertaken to ensure pricing was pitched appropriately. The staff team were asked to take this forward.

Action: RLF to develop the business plan.

5.4 Approval of SIG Chairs

Council **AGREED** the re-election of Dr Andrew Treharne as UKBC Chair and the election of Professor Marcus Grace as Chair of the Biology Education Research Group.

6. Report from Accreditation

Council received a paper for information on the cost scenarios for Accreditation. The three Accreditation members of staff had now had the workloads rationalised allowing them to focus on this area and better support assessors. The outcome of the pilot would be available in January. Council noted the positive progress.

7. Report from Science Policy

Laura Bellingan (LB) updated Council on consultation responses and evidence requests. The Society had held a Post-doc Workshop in partnership with BBSRC, a Policy Late (Dodging a biological bullet – what we can learn from the US and Europe about biosecurity?) and will contribute to the forthcoming training workshop on laboratory management. There had been much parliamentary engagement and the co-Chairs of the Animal Science Group had met with George Freeman to discuss issues around animal science activity. The NCI summit meeting, held at the British Library, had been very well attended, with new relationships built for the initiative.

Council agreed that more should be done to support career development for post-doctoral scientists, possibly with support from BBSRC. There was potential to work with the Society for Endocrinology, who had run weekend sessions on this area. RLF added that the Careers Committee had been looking at working with Nature Jobs on a post graduate careers festival. Council felt the Committee should explore running a workshop on returners to science.

7.1 UK Plant Sciences Federation

The UKPSF had initially been funded by Gatsby and SEB as a three year project to develop the Federation. The group is Chaired by Jim Beynon, with Mimi Tanimoto as Executive Officer. The Jan 2014 report produced by the UKPSF looked at the whole of plant science and disease and had been well received. Four active working groups had looked at training and skills, regulation, translation and funding, with the output summarised at the recent AGM. There was sufficient funding to run the group for six months from the end of the grant in June 2015 but further funding was required to continue beyond the end of 2015.

Council was extremely supportive of the work the UKPSF had been undertaking but felt the Society was not in a position to offer significant financial support. Nonetheless they did feel that overhead costs to the value of £10k could be waived. The Biochemical Society were supportive of the group and Paul Hutchinson added that the Society for Experimental Biology would be willing to consider funding proposals.

8. Membership Marketing & Communication

Jon Kudlick reported that membership figures continued to be positive, but noted that in the January election there may be a slight fall in overall numbers given the high numbers of students recruited two years ago who were not renewing.

A positive all-branches meeting had been held and the 'Biology Now' Conference, in partnership with the BBSRC, both had gone well.

The Society had received its highest ever amount of media coverage in 2014. Work for 2015 included refreshing the design of *The Biologist* and rotating Board members for *The Biologist* and *JBE*.

8.1 Biology Week

The Biology Week evaluation document was well received by Council. The 2014 competition winners were shown to Council, including video clips produced by two schools for the BioArtAttack competition. Biology Week had received positive press coverage, including over 200 articles on the starling survey and a lot of international press covering the photo competition. To date, over 500 schools requested Biology Week resources and half of the schools that responded to the feedback survey were from the state sector.

Action: Jen Crosk to inform Council of key Biology Week event dates for 2015.

9. Biology – Changing the World presentation

NN updated Council on the project. Ten sites had been given approval for plaque installation, with one pending. Installation was expected by the end of December.

Section B:

10. Financial Report

MD reported that the Society was only two months into the new financial year but looked on budget with sound cash flow.

10.1 Future Pension Contributions

The pension deficit at the formation of the Society had stood at £2.1m and following the sale of Red Lion Court, £750k had been paid into the scheme alongside regular annual payments totalling around £1.8m. The assumption had been that full repayment of the

deficit was on course. However, following re-evaluation in early December, the deficit figure was shown to be £400k, with the addition of annual professional costs at £20k. Following re-evaluation of the assumptions the deficit amount was reduced to £250k. MD added that due to changes in the SORP financial accounting standard the deficit balance would have to be shown as a debt on the Society's Balance Sheet from next year.

The Pension Trustees had suggested a 4-5 year repayment period. Council discussed a range of alternatives.

Council **AGREED** that MD should negotiate further with Pension Trustees on behalf of Council. A decision would be required by Council in March, ahead of the new payment schedule in April.

11. Risk Register

Council **APPROVED** the risk register, requesting addition of the pension fund deficit.

Action: NN to add the Pension fund deficit to the risk register.

12. Audit Committee Chair

Daniel Ross had completed his term as Chair of the Audit Committee. Recommendations had been requested from Council, Finance Committee and Audit Committee and the post had been externally advertised.

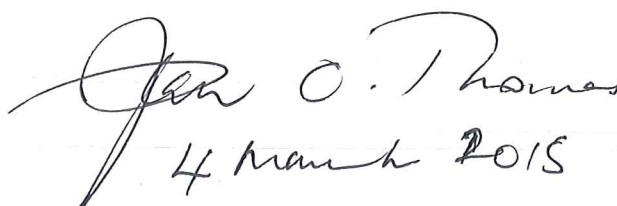
MD asked if Council wished to continue with Honorary Officers considering applications or change to a Nominations Committee process. Council **AGREED** with the continuation of applicant consideration by Honorary Officers.

Action: ALL to email nominations for Audit Committee Chair to MD before Christmas.

13. AoB

Aileen Allsop (AA) provided feedback from the Employers' Group where there was concern that communication was not strong enough: it was difficult to follow all that the Society was doing. A monthly newsletter was suggested as it was felt some Groups and Committees were not benefiting from potential synergies. Council **AGREED** and recommended, for example, sending the Enhanced Funders Newsletter to all Groups and Committees.

Next Council meeting date: 4 March 2015


4 March 2015