

Minutes of the 398 meeting of Council

Friday 02 March 9:00-1:00 GMT

Venue: Remote meeting via Zoom

Present:

Gurdyal Besra (President, in the Chair)

Robin May (Treasurer)

Karen Robinson (General Secretary)

Paul Hoskisson (co-Chair of Building Communities Committee)

Gill Elliott (co-Chair of Building Communities Committee)

Catrin Moore (co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee) (for agenda items 1 and 2 only)

Tina Joshi (co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee)

José Bengochea (co-Chair of Sustainability Committee)

Jo Kite (Chair of Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee)

Nigel Brown (Elected Member)

Andrew Edwards (Elected Member)

Kim Hardie (Elected Member)

Alan McNally (Elected Member)

In attendance:

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)

Joanne Manning (Chief Operations Officer)

Sarah Buckman (Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer)

Curtis Asante (Associate Director of Engagement and Insight)

Eva Scholtus (Associate Director of Global Inclusion and Influence)

Helen Jones (Associate Director of Strategy and Impact)

Rosie Waterton (Executive Secretary)

1.1 Apologies for absence and welcome to new attendees

The President welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged apologies had been received from Sharon Brookes (Elected Member), Laura Bowater (Elected Member), David Clarke (Elected Member), Sarah Maddocks (co-Chair of Sustainability Committee) and Charlotte Mitchell (Associate Director of Communications, Brand and Audiences).

1.2 Declaration of any new conflicts of interest

None had been identified. Council was in the process of updating the annual individual register of interests.

1.3 Minutes of the 397 meeting of Council and the Extraordinary meeting of Council

The Minutes of the 397 Meeting were approved as a true record subject to two corrections:

- (i) Kim Hardie (Elected Member) was missing from the list of attendees though she had been in attendance.
- (ii) Item 3.4 should include the words “should they be willing” in regards to the extension of Editor-in-Chief terms of office.

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on 9 February 2023 had been circulated to Council only by the General Secretary and would remain confidential.

Action 01: The Executive Governance Manager to amend the minutes of the 397 meeting of Council.

1.4 Matters arising from the minutes and action points

The Chief Executive reported that all actions were either completed, were in train or updates were included as substantive items on the Agenda of the current meeting.

He noted further updates on the following:

Agenda item 3.1 of the 397 meeting of Council: Following Council’s approval of the Tony Trinci Award process at its 389 meeting, at the invitation of the General Secretary, two members of the Society; Mick Tuite (a previous Chair of the Scientific Conferences Committee) and Anastasios Tsaousis (current Chair of the Eukaryotic Division) had agreed to represent the Society on the panel to review the planned events programme for the Society and the British Mycological Society and find a suitable mycological talk or element of the programme to be celebrated in Professor Trinci’s name. The panel meeting had been scheduled for late March.

Agenda item 3.9 of the 397 meeting of Council: The Chief Executive reminded Council of its previous discussions regarding the Chinese Social media WeChat in which it had requested that staff perform further diligence in assessing the opportunities and risks. He observed that in a purely business sense the technology would be an obvious tool to utilise but that as it was owned by the Chinese State, which operated in a manner that conflicted with some of the Society’s values of transparency, it was appropriate for Council to consider carefully the extent to which the Society should use it. He reported that that the Society had undertaken in depth research with the Royal Society and the Company of Biologists, organisations with similar audiences and values to the Society, which currently used the platform and that both had cited the following benefits of WeChat that it enabled them to:

- Reach an audience of researchers who were not available by other channels
- Provide tailored content for an important audience giving a stronger presence than could otherwise be achieved
- Network and build relationships and insights, especially from early career microbiologists
- Market intelligence and understanding trends
- Improve inclusivity

He summarised that both organisations felt these positives vastly outweighed any risk, particularly as the risk was strongly mitigated by the use of an agent, which for the Society would be Charlesworth,

and neither had reported any perceived experience of censorship or monitoring by the Chinese State. They had cited curiosity rather than criticism from their members and stakeholders, who had engaged with the decision taken and understood the purposes of utilising the tool and “pleasant surprise and excitement” from Chinese researchers of their engagement with it. The Chief Executive also reported feedback from two Society editors about how they used the technology to find new research (usually through accounts that collate subject specific content), important papers, community news, learning resources and job information and had generally found it helpful to have WeChat presence.

Council considered on balance the opportunities WeChat presented to enable them to fulfil the Society’s strategic objective to gain access to new communities, unlocking the potential for international collaboration and global knowledge exchange was very positive and approved that the Society progress with setting up a Society WeChat account, which would be reviewed for its efficacy after a year. Council also requested the Society further engage with the Royal Society and the Company of Biologists to establish the type of questions and concerns raised by their members to prepare a statement and FAQs alongside the launch of a Society account.

Action 02: The Head of Marketing and Development to progress with setting up a Society WeChat account and develop FAQs and statement ahead of its launch.

2. Finance Committee

2.1 Finance Committee key points

The Treasurer reported on this item.

2.1.1 Investments update

Finance Committee had received a report from Peter Gilliver from ARC followed by Rebecca Davidson and Matthew Dickens from Evelyn Partners which gave an overview of 2022 and a report on the last three months. Both had emphasised that 2022 had been a particularly turbulent period for investments, having been one of only five in the last 150 years, and the first time since 1969, when both equities and bonds had fallen together which had impacted overall performance, however, the asset allocation of the Society’s portfolio (overweight to equities by 80% and underweight to bonds), had been beneficial over the last 12 months with the Society’s portfolio faring comparatively better than many in this period. Council understood that although both had reported a strong start to 2023 with the February performance seeing a 2.9% return and the portfolio worth £10.8M, growth would likely be more modest than it had been over the last 10 years and the Society’s target return of CPI+4% would be hard to consistently achieve.

The Treasurer emphasised that Council had approved a deficit budget of up to £1m for 2023 and whilst this deficit could be met by withdrawing funds from the investment portfolio due to its consistently good performance in prior years, the pace and magnitude of the deficit was not sustainable long term and the Finance Committee recommendation was to fully review all Society activities from a financial perspective to assess if there were more cost effective ways for the Society to achieve its aims whilst simultaneously ensuring its continued support of those disproportionately affected by the economic crisis, such as Early Career Members.

Council acknowledged the work of the Chair of the Scientific Conferences Panel and the Associate Director of Engagement and Insight in mitigating the losses made on Annual Conference which were included in the 2023 budget deficit calculations and discussed plans in place to make this more cost effective in the future. The high demand for Society events was noted and the potential to therefore increase delegate rates was acknowledged though Council was mindful to ensure this did not impact support of ECM Members.

Council approved a formal review of all Society activities with outcomes and proposals to be reported back to Council for discussion.

The Treasurer reminded Council that it had previously delegated authority to the Treasurer to authorise short term withdrawals from the portfolio within a specific limit to handle temporary cashflow issues. However, given the deficit figure, the Committee proposed a mechanism to enable swifter decision making for permanent drawdowns, enabling them to be actioned at the optimal time for the portfolio in order to cover the budget deficit. Council approved the recommendation from the Committee for the Treasurer to authorise drawdowns from the investment portfolio for 2023, in consultation with the Committee, the Chief Executive and Chief Operations Officer with advice from Evelyn Partners concerning timing, and only within the parameters of the budgeted deficit figure and the investment in the future budget. The Chief Executive further noted that the Committee had agreed that, should the advice from Evelyn Partners and ARC differ, then more formal consultation with Finance Committee would be required.

2.1.2 Management Accounts – January-December 2022

Council noted the draft management accounts for 2022 for the full year January – December 2022. These showed an overall above the line deficit -£854k. It was reported that there may be some very minor adjustments to make to the accounts but that the outturn presented was near final at this point.

2.1.3 Annual staff salary award 2023

All staff left the meeting and Council considered the recommendation proposed by the Finance Committee. Council considered a number of external factors, including the wider economy, and the pay awards that other organisations had been awarding their staff. They also considered factors specific to the Society, including for example (a) the very tough financial circumstances because of upheavals in the scientific journals market and (b) their strong desire to recognise the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of the staff team.

In view of these considerations, Council agreed that all staff would get an increase on their basic salary of 5.5 per cent, with effect from 1 April 2023.

2.1.4 Journal pricing recommendation 2024

Finance Committee had received an in depth paper and presentation from the Journal Sales and Opportunities Lead who had noted that 2024 would be the last year for subscriptions for the titles which would flip to OA, and this had been factored in when calculating the recommended price increase, balanced with not drawing attention to it as part of library budget reviews.

Council approved to increase subscription pricing by 4.9% (allowing some flexibility within this figure to enable the Journal Sales and Opportunities Lead to negotiate where necessary); to adjust the

Publish and Read tiered pricing model to use FTE's rather than publishing output and increase prices by 3.5%, and to keep APC pricing as per 2022 levels but introduce a new IOA offering.

2.1.5 Annual review of trustees expenses

Council noted the summary of trustees expenses for the full year 2022.

2.1.6 Fundraising update

Council noted the update on the progress of the philanthropic fundraising campaign, Unlocking Potential.

The Chief Executive reported that some progress to establish the exact detail of a legacy reported on in December had been made following the Society request for a copy of the will. However, no further communication from the executors of the will of the deceased who died in 2014, had been received. Council noted the Finance Committee agreement to seek legal opinion from the Society's lawyers to understand what next steps should be taken, should the lack of communication continue.

2.1.7 Update on significant operational matters

Council noted the operational update covering, HR, Finance, and IT.

2.1.8 Contingency budget

Council noted the Contingency budget statement of commitments as at February 2023.

2.1.9 Pensions review

Council noted the intention to carry out a pensions review following advice from the Society's pension broker who had noted that the Pensions Regulator had been carrying out a small number of inspections of organisations, chosen at random, and their questions included the frequency of review.

Action 03: Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer to oversee the systematic review of Society activities from a financial perspective to assess if there were more cost effective ways for the Society to achieve its aims whilst simultaneously ensuring its continued support of those disproportionately affected by the economic crisis, such as Early Career Members.

Action 04: Chief Executive to notify staff of the annual salary award outcome.

Action 05: The Journal Sales and Opportunities Lead to implement the agreed 2024 journal pricing.

2.2 Collated finance papers.

These were taken as read.

2.3 Critical Risk Register

Council was reminded that it was invited to review the Critical Risk Register every six months at its March and September meetings and that the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee continued to examine risk in detail at its meetings throughout the year.

The Chief Operations Officer reported that the new external Chair of the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee had undertaken a mapping exercise for each of the risks on the Critical Risk Register in order to understand the Society and its risks and to help move towards a fully developed risk appetite statement and framework. This process had not reclassified any risks but more clearly

defined them and reduced the number of overlaps between the risk categories. She explained that the next stage of the development would be to use this to (i) draft a public facing risk appetite statement for Council to agree, (ii) develop the management information for Council, including how known risks were classified and what we did to mitigate these risks, and (iii) consider emerging risks in more detail and what action could be taken to mitigate these. The Committee recommended a public risk statement but all framework and management information would sit underneath it for Society use.

3. President/Chief Executive business

3.1 General business/report back from CEO

The President reported on the recent West Africa Roadshow which saw great attendance and enthusiasm from the community. Feedback demonstrated that participants really valued what the Society did and wanted to participate more and gave insight into perceived barriers and what could be done to remove them.

The Head of Marketing and Development joined the meeting and the Chief Executive provided an update on work to make the Society more relevant to those in industrial microbiology. He reminded Council that throughout 2022 the Society had issued surveys and worked with focus groups to establish what was required in this area. At its December meeting Council had received a report from the working group, Chaired by Andrew Collis, the Biotransformation & Molecular Biology Lead at GSK which presented three areas of focus: 1. Relevant content in Annual Conference and in Journals, 2. Careers support to help link industrial partners and Early Career Microbiologists together and 3. Inclusive communications to ensure we were presenting ourselves as interested and relevant to industrial microbiology.

He reported ongoing explorations with various organisations and partners including Unilever who had previously supported the Colworth prize but had withdrawn that sponsorship due to a policy which distanced it from any form of animal testing and the impact that would have had on recipient selection for the Prize Lecture, which could involve (and in some cases had done so) medical microbiology and thus potentially involve legally required animal testing. This had in fact opened opportunity for different, more expansive collaboration with Unilever and plans were progressing for a workshop to discuss the current research landscape around the assessment of safety of microbiome perturbations by chemicals and probiotics with Proctor and Gamble in which the Society would act as a neutral broker to bring together experts in this area to explore it.

He reported a series of other avenues being explored by the Head of Marketing and Development such as a collaboration with Menarini, an international pharma company, on an AMR infographic showcasing the NHS's subscription style model to help tackle antimicrobial resistance, which was picked up by Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), the trade association which Menarini were part of, who were now keen to engage and explore further collaborative opportunities.

Work on a feature in The Association of Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine's (ACB) monthly magazine on promoting the Society collaboration with HIS and work in the infection science community was underway and would include information on Bridging the Clinical Research Gap, FIS

and the JMM seminar series and was hoped to increase the visibility of JMM with this network and be a good gateway to access ACBs industry partners.

Following the Glasgow Roadshow the Society was working with IBioIC to help us better connect academia to industry and ExhibitionPlus had been implemented with the aim to change the mindset of companies who only engaged through exhibitions, and to get them involved in other aspects of the Society with a key focus to increase submissions to our journals from activity such as industry sponsored sessions or abstract submissions. Conversation and relationship building was also ongoing with companies such as Pro-Lab Diagnostics, Gilead and GAMA Healthcare.

The Head of Marketing and Development confirmed that work was underway to formulate a coherent plan to identify links and overlaps and to maximise opportunities. The Chief Executive noted that all these inroads were dependant on partnerships but one area within Society control was the Annual Conference content and updated Council on plans for a careers fair which would link industrial partners and Early Career Microbiologists together and he shared anecdotes from the recent Society Divisions Day to which several industrial microbiologists were in attendance and cited the value their companies perceived from their engagement with us, and their intentions to continue to submit abstracts for relevant industrial sessions to future conference programmes. The Associate Director of Engagement and Insight also noted the cross-divisional session, organised with the European Federation of Biotechnology titled "A greener future: sustainable and scalable solutions in industrial microbiology and green pharma" which would bring together experts from industry and academia.

The Chief Executive informed Council that Annual Conference 2023 had received more abstracts than ever before and urged them to see the posters presented as feedback every year demonstrated how much that meant to those who came to Society events to share their work. He also reminded them to continue to share the message about getting content into the journals, to interact with the exhibitors as they valued contact with delegates and to thank and congratulate staff who worked hard to make the event a success each year.

The Chief Executive reported that a previous Treasurer of the Society, Sir John Arbuthnott, had died and that Society member, Division Member and Editor Marguerite Clyne who had completed her PhD with him, was writing an obituary.

3.2 Outcomes from the Thursday session

The Chief Executive reported back from the session held the previous afternoon in which Council Members discussed and committed to action to increase content in the journals and noted that applying this approach more widely among the rest of the members of the governance structures would build momentum. He also acknowledged the positive actions already in train including Publish and Read and Front Matter and some big opportunities in terms of international links, the potential of Early Career researchers and the AMR project.

3.3 Statement on content funded by the Russian state

The Chief Executive reminded Council that following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, it took the decision, in consultation with the Editors-in-Chief of the journals, to pause the handling of any manuscript where the research was funded by the Russian state or where an author was based in a Russian institution that had publicly expressed support for the war. Council recognised that scientific

discourse should not be prevented by political disagreements, and thus the Society would continue to receive such manuscripts but would only proceed to review and publish them when it was safe for Ukrainian microbiologists to return to work. Council agreed to review the circumstances of this condition at each meeting unless the situation in the Ukraine altered substantially between meetings, such as in the case of a ceasefire, at which time it would be reviewed via email or at an extraordinary meeting in order to react in a timely manner. At its 397 meeting, Council noted the majority view of members of the ECM Forum Executive Committee that if Council felt that it should be interventionist on global affairs then it should be more encompassing on where to apply this view as atrocities and political aggression were apparent in many other areas of the world. There was a concern that the decision to apply restrictions due to the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine could be construed to be simply because it was “close to home” which might be viewed in conflict with Council’s new strategic aim of internationalism and inclusivity. Council had therefore instructed the Chief Executive and General Secretary to identify a mechanism through which to canvass the opinion of the other committees and subsequently a survey had been circulated which included an open section to invite any additional comments. The Chief Executive reported that out of 55 recipients, 26 had responded with 20 of those (approximately 77%) broadly supportive of Councils statement. Of the six who were not in agreement, five had written detailed responses. Two of the five were firmly against with three providing more nuanced acknowledgements of the myriad of considerations and the complicated emotional and political drivers. He provided Council with the anonymous comments of the recipients and noted that, after a full year of the policy being in place, a total of 23 papers were on hold. Of this figure, 11 had been withdrawn, 11 remained on hold, and one had been published following the claim that the inclusion of the Russian author was an error and the subsequent removal of them from the contributors list.

Jo Kite re-emphasised the opinion of all the members of the ECM Forum Executive Committee and cautioned Council to be mindful of the optics of retaining these sanctions against the publication of work funded by the Russian state alongside the recent agreement to engage with a platform funded by the Chinese state, which also committed human rights atrocities.

Council recognised the nuance in this particular case being the public support for oppressive regimes offered by academic institutions within the Russian State and Council’s action to pause the processing of certain journal content was for the content originating specifically from Russian institutions that had publicly supported the war on Ukraine. Other issues of oppression or aggression in global politics were not explicitly supported by the academic institutions in those areas which was in part why Council had not imposed any such sanctions. However it also acknowledged that individuals within the Russian based institutions may not have the option to voice any dissent to the war but would be none the less impacted by the policy.

Council considered examples of other organisations approaches such as CERN who would publish under just their ORCID numbers rather than the affiliated Russian institutions address and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) allowing individual athletes from Russia and Belarus to take part in international sports competitions as neutral athletes under the IOC flag and if this type of approach could be adopted for the publication of research from, or in some way associated with the Russian state.

Council took the view that the topic remained complex and emotive and recognised the variety of standpoints the issue generated. Council requested a working group be formed to consider this topic

and present options to Council. The group would be Chaired by Elected Member and Editor-in-Chief Alan McNally and would include Jo Kite as the Chair of the ECM Forum Executive Committee. In the meantime, Council approved a line be added to the public statement to assure members that the situation would continue to be monitored carefully and the Council stands ready to take any further decision in the light of developments in Ukraine or feedback from the membership.

Action 06: Alan McNally to set up a working group to identify options for possible changes to the current policy on the publication of work funded by the Russian State.

3.4 Composition of Council and Committees

Council noted this paper and acknowledged the need for continuity on the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee following the end of term for both current Council members on that committee at the end of 2023. Council approved to invite the Treasurer-elect to shadow ARE committee for 2023.

Council noted that the document presented the composition of the Scientific Conferences Panel (SCP) to all retire at the end of 2023 when in fact the four Division Chairs-elect would then automatically take on the Chair-ship and thus remain on SCP for another two years. The Executive Governance Manager undertook to clarify this on the document for future.

Action 07: Chief Operations Officer to invite the Treasurer-elect to shadow ARE committee for 2023.

Action 08: The Executive Governance Manager to clarify Division Chairs-elect terms of office on SCP on the Composition of Council and Committees document and to add Alan Mc Nally and Eva Heinz to the Publishing Panel list.

3.5 Membership report

The Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer presented the membership report and highlighted the Champion scheme review, which was considering how best to utilise the scheme to achieve the Society's strategic aims, particularly regarding international representation. She reported that the review group was being formed and would meet monthly between March and July to report back formally to the July meeting of Council.

Council approved the list of incoming members.

3.6 Chairs-elect of Divisions process

The Chair of SCP reminded Council that the current process for appointed Chairs-elect of Divisions relied on selection by the current Chair and Chair-elect of the relevant Division, which lacked transparency and therefore was not in line with the Society's values. Given the role of these positions in ensuring Council's strategy was reflected across its events programme, and the increasing emphasis on them to work with the Publishing Panel to build synergy across events and content in the journals portfolio, the process had been reviewed. The Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer presented a process which reflected that of the current process for appointing Editors-in-Chief and noted that following approval from Council in principle, relevant job descriptions would be developed.

Council agreed this should include a requirement to have recently served on a Division and encourage editorial experience but that this was desirable rather than essential and that Division Chairs-elect could be given an *ex-officio* role on a relevant Editorial Board to ensure synergy and

communication across groups. Council confirmed that Early Career Members should not be dissuaded from applying, but acknowledged that there was disparity in the inclusivity and therefore experience felt by ECMs serving on different Divisions and that this would be considered as part of the wider Divisions review.

Council approved the process for appointing Chairs-elect of Divisions.

Action 09: Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer to draft a job description for the Chairs-elect of Divisions and launch the call for nominations to the wider membership.

3.7 Council Appointed Positions

The General Secretary reminded Council that the Society opened expressions of interest for five Council appointed positions in late January with the initial deadline of the end of February. Up to the date of the meeting, only one official expression of interest had been received for both the Co-Chair-elect of Impact and Influence Committee and the FIS Chair-elect position, and one for the Sustainability Co-Chair position.

The General Secretary recommended to Council re-opening the call for expressions of interest in March and using Annual Conference as an opportunity to encourage interest and approach potential candidates. This would still give adequate time for an Appointments Panel to be formed to review further expressions of interest in early May and then full nominations (from those invited) to be reviewed in June for final recommendations to be submitted to Council July. She also encouraged Council to communicate the opportunities to their own networks, citing that the Society typically sees higher levels of engagement from members when opportunities are presented via their peers rather than an increase in communications from the office.

She also reminded Council that, as approved at its meeting in December 2022, a search group, led by previous General Secretary Mark Harris was being formed. The group was completely separate from the decision-making process, with the main purpose and remit to source expressions of interest to ensure an inclusive and international pool of candidates.

The Executive Governance Manager also reported the development of a video to engage members with the governance structure as well as a series of social media animations to communicate the opportunities available. Council also suggested ensuring a standing slide was created for use during Annual Conference, and to set up a Q and A with current members on the Society stand or similar.

Council noted that Alain Kohl had informed the Society that he would be stepping down from his role as Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *JGV* following unfortunate changes to the funding of his research team. Recruitment for a suitable Deputy Editor-in-Chief would start imminently and follow the previously agreed process for appointing Editors-in-Chief. Council approved a one year extension to the term of Paul Duprex (current Editor-in-Chief of *JGV*) until the end of 2025, to allow for the new Deputy Editor-in-Chief to be appropriately trained to take over as Editor-in-Chief in 2026.

The Chair of the Publishing Panel had scheduled a meeting with the senior editors of *Microbiology* to discuss the appointment of a new Editor-in-Chief and Deputy when the current incumbents came to the end of their terms.

Council confirmed approval of Victoria Easton as the Deputy Editor of *Microbiology Today* as approved via written resolution in January.

Action 10: The Executive Governance Manager to re-open to the expressions of interest to Council Appointed Positions alongside the elected positions process later in March.

Action 11: The Head of Scientific Programmes to ensure implementation of the extension of term for the Editor-in-Chief of JGV until the end of 2025.

3.8 Review of Divisions and Editorial Boards update

The General Secretary reported a meeting of the core review group, comprised of the President, Chair of the Scientific Programmes Committee, Chair of the Publishing Panel and both co-Chairs of the Impact and Influence Committee was scheduled for later in the month to establish the wider composition to be drawn from the Divisions and Editorial Boards. A report would be presented to Council in July.

Council noted the success of the Editors-in-Chief attending the 2023 Divisions Day at which session proposals for 2024 Annual Conference were discussed. Dialogue between editors and Division members was collaborative and Council agreed they should be included each year.

3.9 Covid-19 Inquiry update

The Chief Executive reported that in January, the Covid-19 Inquiry had served the Society with a Rule 9 Request (the formal mechanism by which Public Inquiries sought input from individuals and organisations) in relation to its Module 1, which was focused primarily on pandemic preparedness. The request had included generic questions sent to a variety of participants and some that were specifically framed for the Society.

A response had been prepared, and in accordance with the legal procedures of a Public Inquiry, signed by the Chief Executive. It had involved a range of members, including input in relation to a Parliamentary inquiry with overlapping interests, and in view of tight timescales, the Officers had signed off the final version after it had been thoroughly refereed by Professor Paul Kellam, who was both a relevant scientific expert and had been a member of Council at the time of the matters referred to in the response.

The response had summarised the UK's scientific preparedness in the following way:

- The country was well prepared in the sense of having a strong and varied science base on which to draw,
- This was, however, largely a result of historic investment and could not be taken for granted if and when another pandemic were to come along, and
- The country was not well prepared in the sense of having the necessary networks, links and collaborations among and between the university sector, public sector research establishments, small and large companies in the private sector, and the NHS.

The Chief Executive reported that he would keep Council informed of any further relevant developments in relation to the Covid-19 Public Inquiry.

The General Secretary thanked the Chief Executive on behalf of Council for a thorough job of a complex matter.

3.10 Communications review update

On behalf of the Associate Director of Communications, Brand and Audiences, the Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer presented an oral update on the project to ensure the Society could effectively target communications via enhanced audience segmentation and crafting direct messaging from the new strategy and its implementation plan. She identified three target groups; Members who were involved (to varying degrees) but do not, or rarely, publish with the Society, Members who were not based in academic settings (including industry and infection science) and Non-UK and Ireland (international) microbiologists who were not members, and reported next steps to design priority campaigns from the strategy implementation plan to help drive actions / affect change.

She highlighted the examples of “Publishing for the Community” to illustrate how members publishing in the Society journals directly funded the other activities of the Society that they also benefited from, and “Get Involved” to expand the reach of the Society’s activities like the review and overhaul of Champions scheme to maximise reach of the Society, and increasing the volume and diversity of applications to the Society’s Governance structures.

3.11 Strategy implementation plan

Further to item 3.7 of the 397 Meeting of Council, the Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer presented the Strategy Implementation Plan with the timelines for delivery and reported that future versions of this would include an updated progress column by way of strategic reporting, though progress was already being made in many areas and explained that delivery plans underpinned all priority areas with core evaluation frameworks woven in.

The Chief Executive noted that this would need to balance with the previously approved financial review and that the prioritisation and implementation plan timelines might need to be altered alongside that.

4. Closed session of Council

The President noted that this would be a new standing item on the Council agenda. Staff left the meeting.

5. AOB

At the request of the co-Chairs of the Building Communities Committee, it was agreed that a light touch review of the new process for agreeing Society Supported Conference Grants should be brought to the next meeting.

Action 12: The Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer to add the matter to the agenda of a regular catch-up with the co-Chairs.

At the request of the Chair of Publishing Panel, on the basis of a conversation with the President of the Australian Microbiology Society, it was agreed that the Society should discuss further collaboration.

Action 13: The Associate Director of Global Inclusion to contact the Chair of the Publishing Panel.

It was agreed that the Society should mark the forthcoming ninetieth birthday of the former President Sir David Hopwood.

Action 14: The Associate Director of Communications, Brand and Audiences to contact Paul Hoskisson.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 12:55pm.

Actions

Actions from the 395 meeting of Council				
No.	Agenda item	Action	Owner	Status
13	3.6	The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy to oversee the implementation of the approved General Secretary's Group recommendations.	The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy	Ongoing
20	3.14	The Head of Strategy and Transformation to progress recruitment of the working group and tender process for an expert sustainability consultant, or consultancy.	The Head of Strategy and Transformation	Ongoing. Update under agenda item 3.16.
Actions from the 397 meeting of Council				

03	2.4	To instigate the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee development of a risk appetite statement and framework for publication.	Chief Operations Officer	Ongoing. Update provided under agenda item 2.3.
09	3.6	to take forward the General Secretary's Group recommendations and the approved introduction of an EDI activities prize.	Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer	Ongoing. The draft prize criteria has been reviewed by the Members Panel and will be submitted to September Council.
10	3.8	The Associate Director of Engagement and Insight, Associate Director of Global Inclusion and Influence and the Head of Scientific Programmes to take this forward with the Chair of the Publishing Panel.	The Associate Director of Engagement and Insight, Associate Director of Global Inclusion and Influence	Ongoing.
Actions from the 398 meeting of Council				
02	1.4	Progress with setting up a Society WeChat account and develop FAQs and statement ahead of its launch.	The Head of Marketing and Development	Full update provided as part of agenda item 4.1.
03	2.1	To oversee the systematic review of Society activities from a financial perspective to assess if there were more cost effective ways for the Society to achieve its aims whilst simultaneously ensuring its continued support of those disproportionately affected by the economic crisis, such as Early Career Members.	Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer	Agenda item 3.4.
04	2.1	Notify staff of the annual salary award outcome.	Chief Executive	Completed.
05	2.1	Implement the agreed 2024 journal pricing.	The Journal Sales and Opportunities Lead	Completed.
06	3.3	Set up a working group to identify options for possible changes to the current policy on the publication of work funded by the Russian State.	Alan McNally	Ongoing. A draft paper about the issue has been shared with the Chair of the ECM

				Exec Committee as a first step.
07	3.4	Invite the Treasurer-elect to shadow ARE committee for 2023	Chief Operations Officer	Completed. JS will attend from September.
08	3.4	Clarify Division Chairs-elect terms of office on SCP on the Composition of Council and Committees document and to add Alan McNally and Eva Heinz to the Publishing Panel list.	Executive Governance Manager	Completed – agenda item 3.5.
09	3.6	To draft a job description for the Chairs-elect of Divisions and launch the call for nominations to the wider membership.	Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer	Completed. Agenda item 3.9.
10	3.7	Re-open to the expressions of interest to Council Appointed Positions alongside the elected positions process later in March.	Executive Governance Manager	Completed. Agenda item 3.9
11	3.7	Ensure implementation of the extension of term for the Editor-in-Chief of JGV until the end of 2025.	The Head of Scientific Programmes	Completed.
12	5	To add a light touch review of the new process for agreeing Society Supported Conference Grants to the agenda of a regular catch-up with the co-Chairs of BCC.	The Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer	Completed. A new simplified process has been agreed with the co-Chairs.
13	5	To contact the Chair of the Publishing Panel. discuss further collaboration with the Australian Microbiology Society.	The Associate Director of Global Inclusion	Ongoing. Initial discussions had and plans to include as part of a wider society affiliations strategy.
14	5	To contact Paul Hoskisson regarding marking the forthcoming ninetieth birthday of the former President Sir David Hopwood.	The Associate Director of Communications, Brand and Audiences	Interview undertaken with former President Sir David Hopwood and a news story planned for August to coincide with his birthday.