

2022 Annual General Meeting minutes

Thursday 1 September 2022 13:15 – 14:00 GMT

Hybrid meeting

Present:

Gurdyal Besra (President, in the Chair)

Mark Harris (General Secretary)

28 members of whom 19 were voting members.

In attendance:

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)

Sarah Buckman (Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy)

Joanne Manning (Chief Operations Officer)

1. Introduction by the Chair

The President, from the Chair, welcomed attendees to the Society's 2022 Virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM). He declared the meeting quorate and open after a show of hands of Full, Full Concessionary, Post Graduate Student and Honorary Members of the Society.

He observed that the papers had been made available on the Society's website. He further confirmed to the meeting that all motions presented at the AGM had been endorsed by Council and any motion submitted by any other person would need to have a proposer and a seconder.

He reminded members who were in attendance that anyone addressing the AGM could do so by digitally raising their hand and should clearly state their name and affiliation and that those eligible to vote at the AGM were Full, Full Concessionary, Post Graduate or Honorary Members of the Society.

The Chief Executive gave a brief summary of the achievements of the Society over the reporting period. He highlighted the main areas below and reported under the Society's three objectives:

1.1 Building Communities

Throughout 2021 the Society continued to bring the microbiology community together virtually, to ensure new collaborations and networks could be formed through a number of digital activities, the biggest of which was the 2022 Annual Conference which took place online for the first time. He reported that 1680 attendees from across 47 countries had enjoyed the event which featured specialist SARS-CoV-2 sessions which was just one example of the ways in which the Society brought together experts to combat the pandemic.

He noted that the full Focused Meeting programme had also gone online and the Society launched a series of online scientific seminars which created a new virtual meeting stream allowing members to meet and share expertise of a single microbiology area.

SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 continued to be a major theme in 2021 and the Society continued to publish important research on the trajectory of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 in its journals. As an example, the *Journal of General Virology* had featured an in-depth look at the SARS-CoV-2 mutations that had taken place during the past year and the review had discussed the findings of over 180 research articles and followed the changes that had taken place in the SARS-CoV-2 genome, and the variants that occurred as a result.

1.2 Impact and Influence

The Society used its position to curate responses from members to oppose the government Official Development Assistance cuts as it recognised the impact to vital work of researchers involved in global challenges.

The Society collaborated with the Food Standards Agency as part of a £19 million cross-Government programme in Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH SAFE). The Society was able to engage the wider microbiology community from the outset to guide early development and priority setting of the project.

The Society continued to work with the Science Media Centre and the wider media directly to feed in accurate science from our experts on the pandemic and to help counter false information, especially around vaccines.

1.3 Sustainability

Following a series of Early Career Researcher focused groups, the Society published *Safeguarding the Future of the Microbiology Research and Innovation Workforce* position statement which called for employers, funders and governments to prioritise and better support early career microbiologists during and post-pandemic.

The publish and read platform saw its first anniversary in 2021, by which time 250 participants serving a range of institutions in 18 countries and five continental regions were involved and ground work towards the Open Research Platform continued throughout 2021 to ensure a 2022 launch of *Access Microbiology* in its unique new format.

For the first time in its history, the Society began fundraising for a new Unlocking Potential grant which aimed to make funds available to early and mid-career members who may require an extra level of support to help them deal with a situation that threatens to hold them back from achieving what they could.

1.4 Forward look to 2022

The Chief Executive noted the impact of the pandemic in creating new opportunities for the Society to utilise remote means to communicate and create communities. However he also enthused the return of in person events and meetings in 2022.

The Society would launch a new four year strategy from January 2023 and work to establish priorities and building the foundations for this would begin throughout 2022.

1. Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved *nem con* via a show of hands by the voting members present.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Financial report

The Chief Operations Officer presented the financial report for 2021 noting that despite the challenges that the pandemic presented the overall bottom line was positive following a good investment performance. She acknowledged that the investment into technologies and member activities in 2021 was timely as the economy now faced a more turbulent financial period, though the Finance Committee and Council were satisfied with the performance of the investment partners and the investment strategy.

Looking forward to 2022, she acknowledged that the flip of the journals portfolio to open access would have significant financial impact on the Society but this had been factored into financial plans and budgets for the next financial year.

3.1 Receiving of the annual accounts

On the recommendation of the Treasurer, the annual accounts for 2021 were received by the membership by a digital show of hands of the voting members present.

3.2 Appointment of auditor

This was approved *nem con* by a digital show of hands by the voting members present.

3.3 Approval of membership subscription rates

The Chair presented a paper detailing the membership subscription rates proposed for January 2023. The subscription rates were approved *nem con* by a digital show of hands of the voting members present.

4. New Members of Council, Committees and Divisions

The Chair announced the incoming members of Council for 2022 as:

Karen Robinson – incoming General Secretary

Catrin Moore – co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee

Joanne Kite - Chair of Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee

Alan McNally – Elected Member

The Chair confirmed that the names of incoming Committee and Division members were available on the Society's website in the papers for the meeting and welcomed them to their roles and thanked them for engaging with the work of the Society.

The Chair thanked the outgoing members of Council who would step down at the end of 2022, expressing his gratitude for the time, expertise, energy and input contributed to the activities of the Society during their term of office.

He specifically noted the contributions of the members of Council due to stand down in December 2022.

He praised Chloe James for her time as the co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee and noted her advice and guidance to support the development of the major three-year AMR project and frequent responses to requests for expert comment on microbiology from the media.

He commended Colman O’Cathail for successfully leading the ECM Forum Executive Committee through a particularly challenging period, ensuring that the needs of early career microbiologists remained at the core of the Society, demonstrated by his close involvement in the launch of the Society positions statement on the impact of the pandemic on career progression.

He extended special thanks to the outgoing General Secretary, Mark Harris. As a long-standing, enthusiastic and committed member of the Society, his dedication to his role had seen the Society through a period of significant change, not only during the pandemic but through the major overhaul of the governance structure.

5. AOB

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 14:13.