

# Annual General Meeting minutes

Thursday 26 November 2020 14:45 – 15:45 GMT

Virtual meeting

**Present:**

Judith Armitage (President, in the Chair)

Mark Harris (General Secretary)

Ian Roberts (Treasurer)

22 Members of the Society

**In attendance:**

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)

## 1. Introduction by the Chair

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

She observed that the papers had been posted to all eligible members on request and made available on the Society's website. She 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.

She 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 also 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

- The Annual Conference 2019 in Belfast had been excellent and was one of the largest and most successful conferences that the Society had ever organised.
- *Access Microbiology*, a new journal had been launched, to publish research in different formats; for example, in 2020 when it was not possible to run Annual Conference, it published many of the posters that would have been presented at the Conference.
- The Federation of Infections Societies (FIS) meeting was organised by the Society in 2019 as part of the wider work to support clinical and health related members led by Council member Deirdre Devine.

- A new relationship with institutions that publish with the Society and use the Society's content had been launched in 2019, called Publish & Read, as a response to the move towards Open Access publishing and had been a very successful addition to the Society's portfolio of options for access to our content.
- There had been a wide variety of Focused Meetings held in 2019; on anaerobes, yeast; protists, anti-microbials in traditional medicine, microbes in medicine and arboviruses.
- In 2019, we had been building towards the Society's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2020 and had planned a wide variety of digital and in-person activities. Many activities were still able to happen despite the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the 'Why Microbiology Matters' digital hubs and the Fleming Showcase which has been re-organised to take place digitally.

## **1.2 Impact and Influence**

- A position statement on Science and Funding in Ireland had been developed based on the views of 200 members in Ireland. By bringing these together we were able to amplify the voice of our members and this encouraged other scientists in Ireland to come together and express their views, demonstrating reach beyond microbiology.
- 2019 was the first year that there had been over one million hits on the website and there were many other statistics to show a significant increase in digital engagement throughout the year.

## **1.3 Sustainability**

- The Society had the largest number of members in its history in 2019.
- The President's Roadshow's were launched, and the President had been to Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow, Plymouth amongst other places to engage with members in their local area.
- The annual Sir Howard Dalton Young Microbiologist of the Year competition took place in support of our early career members in 2019 and again, but digitally, in 2020.
- The Society moved to new offices which provided staff with a great place to work and enables them to do more on behalf of the members.

## **1.4 Forward look to 2020**

- Whilst 2020 was a highly unusual year, the Society listened to its members, showed resilience and adapted to the situation, and worked hard to convert many activities to be available online, for example the ECM Forum Online event held in July 2020.
- Specifically, in response to the pandemic, the Society helped to source microbiologists to work in testing laboratories, supported members in a variety of ways to directly communicate with the public about the virus, and produced content via the journals, much of which has been the most read across the year. We brought together a community of people working on SARS-Cov-2 for a digital workshop, the only one of its kind in the UK and Ireland and the Society's video on 'What is herd immunity' which was produced long before the pandemic had received 250,000 views alone this year.

## 1. Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved *nem con*.

## 2. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

## 3. Financial report

The Chair invited the Treasurer to comment on the financial report for 2019 and he went on to inform the membership of the following:

- The operating budget was balanced again in 2019 and the Society ended the year with a small surplus of £20,000.
- Council reviewed the Society's reserves policy in 2018 and agreed a plan to use reserves to invest in the following activities spanning the 5 years of the strategy (2018-2022); 75th Anniversary activities; investments in technology to support the publishing process; investment in physical infrastructure such as IT; and investment in people, both our members, through engagement activities, and staff – and this continued over the course of 2019.
- The sale of both Charles Darwin House 1 and Charles Darwin House 2 and the purchase of our new headquarters in Meredith St, made it an unusual year financially.
- The overall outcome put us in a strong position going into what turned out to be a challenging year.

### 3.1 Receiving of the annual accounts

On the recommendation of the Treasurer, the annual accounts for 2019 were received by the membership by a digital show of hands.

### 3.2 Appointment of auditor

The Chair informed the membership that Council had taken the decision to retender the Society's auditors earlier in the year and confirmed that the tender process was underway. She asked the membership to delegate authority to Council to appoint a suitable firm of auditors and to fix their remuneration.

This was approved *nem con* by a digital show of hands.

### 3.3 Approval of membership subscription rates

The Chair presented a paper detailing the membership subscription rates proposed for January 2021. The subscription rates were approved *nem con* by a digital show of hands.

## 4. New Members of Council, Committees and Divisions

The Chair announced the incoming members of Council for 2021:

- Robin May would become the Treasurer
- Jose Bengoechea would become co-Chair of the Sustainability Committee
- Paul Hoskisson would become co-Chair of the Building Communities Committee
- Colman O’Cathail would become Chair of the Early Career Microbiologists’ Forum Executive Committee
- Laura Bowater would become an Elected Member of Council
- Sharon Brookes would become an Elected Member of Council
- Andrew Edwards would become an Elected Member of Council

The Chair further confirmed that the names of all other incoming Committee and Division members were available on the Society’s website in the papers for this meeting.

The Chair thanked the outgoing members of Council who would step down at the end of 2020: Ian Roberts as Treasurer, Jodi Lindsay as Chair of the Publishing Committee, Amy Pickering as Chair of the Early Career Microbiologists’ Forum Executive Committee, George Salmond as an Elected Member, Tracy Palmer as an Elected Member, and John Morrissey as an Elected Member.

## **5. AOB**

The President thanked the Chief Executive and Society staff for all their hard work over the course of the year.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 3:25pm.