

## Minutes of the 390 Meeting of Council

**Friday 17 September 9:00-14:30 GMT**

**Venue: Virtual meeting held via Zoom**

**Present:**

Judith Armitage (President, in the Chair)

Robin May (Treasurer)

Mark Harris (General Secretary) from item 3.7

Paul Hoskisson (co-Chair of Building Communities Committee)

Paul Kellam (co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee)

Chloe James (co-Chair of Impact and Influence Committee)

Tadhg Ó Cróinín (co-Chair of Sustainability Committee)

Jose Bengoechea (co-Chair of Sustainability Committee)

Colman O’Cathail (Chair of Early Career Microbiologists’ Forum Executive Committee)

Laura Bowater (Elected Member)

Sharon Brookes (Elected Member)

Andrew Edwards (Elected Member)

John Morrissey (Elected Member)

**In attendance:**

Gurdyal Besra (President-elect)

Gill Elliot (Incoming co-Chair of Building Communities Committee)

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

Kim Hardie (Incoming Elected Member and Building Communities Committee Representative)

David Clarke (Incoming Elected Member and Impact and Influence Communities Committee Representative)

Nigel Brown (Incoming Elected Member and Finance Committee Representative)

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)

Joanne Manning (Chief Operations Officer)

Sarah Buckman (Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy)

Charlotte Mitchell (Associate Director of Marketing, Brand and Communications)

Curtis Asante (Associate Director of Members Programmes)

Vicky McCulloch (Head of Promotions and Marketing)

Rosie Waterton (Executive Secretary)

Peter Collins for item 3.5 only.

Gavin Thomas (Editor-in-Chief *Microbiology*) for item 3.5 only.

### **1.1 Apologies for absence and welcome to new attendees**

Apologies were received from Stephen Smith (co-Chair of Building Communities Committee), Deirdre Devine (Elected Member) and Sarah Maddocks (Incoming co-Chair of Sustainability Committee). Mark Harris (General Secretary) was to join from 11:30.

## **1.2 Declaration of any new conflicts of interest**

No new conflicts of interest were declared. The President thanked Council members for undertaking an annual review of their interest statements since the last meeting.

## **1.3 Minutes of the 389 meeting of Council**

Council received paper 390-01. The minutes of the 389 meeting of Council were accepted as a true and accurate record.

## **1.4 Matters arising from the minutes and action points**

All actions noted in the minutes and on the action grid had been completed or were in progress.

# **2. Finance Committee**

## **2.1 Finance Committee key points**

Council received paper 390-02, report from the 173 meeting of Finance Committee, which had been circulated the previous evening.

### **2.1.1 Investments update**

Council noted reports from ARC and Tilney which provided an update on investment performance to the end August 2021 and noted the continued excellent performance by Tilney and that the ARC traffic light rating remained green with the portfolio awarded a three-diamond rating (out of a maximum of four), which was 'significantly ahead of reasonable expectation'. It was reported that there had been a continued and sustained period of good performance which had resulted in a 16.9% return over the previous 12 months and the portfolio was now worth just under £12M.

Tilney had reassured the Committee that one year since the merger with Smith and Williamson there were no changes to their investment philosophy.

Tilney had recently signed up to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment and would provide relevant reports for the Committee and Council on this as well as specific information on each fund and how it manages Environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) factors.

### **2.1.2 Management Accounts – to the end August 2021**

Council noted the management accounts to the end of August 2021 and that the Society's cash position on the balance sheet was strong due to the drawdown from the investment portfolio to cover the expected deficit that had not been needed. The reforecast indicated that the Society was on course for the small surplus position by the year end as had been discussed at the July meeting.

### **2.1.3 Final budget proposal 2022**

The Chief Operations Officer reported that the initial budget proposal for 2022 received at the 389 meeting of Council in July had been worked up into a final budget proposal, which reflected the continued uncertainty brought about by the pandemic. It included a deficit that was £60k greater than the original proposal and therefore an overall deficit of -£462k. She noted that this was largely down to the Annual Conference delegate fee proposal which had budgeted according to a "worst case scenario".

The paper also noted other changes made to the proposal since July, including a more accurate estimate of the running costs for the Open Research Platform which had reduced expected expenditure slightly, increased income projections for Annual Conference exhibition and sponsorship income following some positive conversations with potential exhibitors about returning to a physical meeting and provision for increased employer National Insurance contributions from April 2022 following the recent government announcement.

Council approved the 2022 budget, and delegated to the Treasurer authority to approve the final version, taking into account further decisions including those reported under item 2.1.4.

**Action 02.** Chief Operations Officer to prepare final version for sign off by the Treasurer.

#### **2.1.4 Annual Conference delegate fees**

The Treasurer reported that the Finance Committee had discussed a range of options for Annual Conference 2022 delegate fees. The pandemic had created some uncertainty around delegate numbers and delegates' willingness to travel to attend the meeting and so the proposal considered whether a significant discount would make a more attractive proposition. However, it was considered that willingness to attend was more likely to be affected by personal circumstances and individual levels of comfort relating to the pandemic rather than cost. It was noted that increased support to attend, particularly for early career members, would no doubt be welcome and would be a more targeted intervention than reduced fees for everyone. The Committee also considered the longer-term perception of delegate fee value if 2023 rates were increased, compared to a reduced 2022 rate. The Committee recommended the Society publish 2022 rates at 10% higher than in 2020 but apply a 10% Covid-related discount back down to 2020 levels to make the reduction clear to delegates and prevent such a large jump in rates from 2023 onwards. It was also recommended to review the grants offering to support more early career members to attend events in 2022.

Council approved the 2022 Annual Conference delegate fees to be published at 2022 rates at 10% higher than in 2020 but apply a 10% discount back down to 2020.

The Treasurer reported that the Committee also considered the potential proposed fees and additional implications of selling recorded content from Annual Conference. It was agreed that in principle this would be a good idea, but complexities regarding tax implications and operational delivery meant that further research would be needed before a final decision. It was also cautioned that the perception of a seemingly commercial activity by a not-for-profit organisation was a reputational consideration and communication that this would be primarily for inclusivity and professional development purposes and would not generate a surplus would be important. Council was also assured that all data protection and intellectual property considerations would be undertaken thoroughly and permission would be sought from all speakers involved.

**Action 03:** The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy to implement the approved delegate rates for 2020 and review the grant offering for Annual Conference 2022, particularly those available for early career microbiologists.

**Action 04:** The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy and Chief Operations Officer to seek further information on the operational feasibility of selling recorded content at Annual Conference 2022 and report back to Finance Committee and Council with additional information.

### **2.1.5 Fundraising update**

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

The Unlocking Potential Fund had received over twelve donations and raised over £5000. It was now able to move into phase 2 which aimed to encourage more donations by sharing stories from those who had already donated. The Fundraising Working Group was due to meet in late September and would discuss ways to increase the profile of the fund, how to engage members and external stakeholders, and would be invited to review some of the books left to the Society by Bernard Dixon to further raise the profile of the fund. It was reported that the Society had been notified by a member since the last meeting that they intended to amend their will to leave a legacy to the Society.

### **2.1.6 Update on significant operational matters**

Council noted the progress of the finance services tender process that following the invitation to tender in August, three organisations (including the current provider, JS2) had been invited to present to a panel. The panel composition was Finance Committee members Sharon Brookes and Rebecca Hall, plus Kathryn Kerle, the external Chair of the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee, as well as key staff with some responsibility for finance or who were regularly in contact with JS2, Gaynor Redvers-Mutton and Laura Crick with the Treasurer overseeing the process. It was acknowledged that this was an all-female panel but it was agreed that it was important for this process to be managed by those with direct experience or responsibility in this area. Following the presentation stage of the process a recommendation would be made to the Committee and Council in December.

The update paper confirmed that the Society was able to proceed with installing an accessible entrance at 14-16 Meredith Street following clearance of the planning condition by Islington Council before its deadline in July. Installation plans were scheduled for the beginning of November.

### **2.1.7 Contingency budget statement**

Council acknowledged the contingency budget statement of commitments as of September 2021 and that there were no items for consideration this quarter but were reminded that an additional item would appear on the contingency budget statement presented in December which related to a claim made by a CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics) fellow that was previously approved by Council and was now in the process of being claimed.

### **2.1.8 Amendment to the bank mandate**

Council passed a resolution to make a change to the NatWest bank mandate; to add Charlotte Mitchell, Associate Director of Communications, Brand and Marketing and Curtis Asante, Associate Director of Members' Programmes.

**Action 05:** The Chief Operations Officer to make a change to the NatWest bank mandate as described above.

## **2.2 Collated finance papers**

These were taken as read.

## 2.3 Critical Risk Register

The Chief Operations Officer reported that the September Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee meeting would focus on the Society's biggest risk, namely the transformation of the journals to open access, and it would then hold a series of separate workshops throughout the rest of the year to review the remainder of the risk register.

She further reported changes to the progress column of the risk register since its last review at the March 2021 Council meeting, including updates to reflect that journal income, which had previously been identified as at risk due to the pandemic, had actually exceeded projections and thus the risk had been lowered.

She noted that the implemented changes to staff and governance structure had successfully brought journal development closer to other activities within the Society and was seeing results.

She reported a continued increase in spam and phishing emails and confirmed ongoing improvements to cyber security would be a focus.

## 2.4 Charles Darwin House Ltd liquidation update

The Chief Executive reported that HMRC had given tax clearance on two of the three areas that they were required to and that the liquidators had been informed orally that written confirmation of the third would be issued within ten days. There had been a small overpayment of corporation tax and that this had been returned by HMRC. Following the final tax clearance, the liquidators would be in a position to distribute the remaining funds between the previous owners and finally inform Companies House that the company could be removed from the register.

# 3. President/Chief Executive Business

## 3.1 General business/report back from the CEO

The Chief Executive reported that following consultation with all departments, the Officers had agreed to shut the Society's office between 17 December and 10 January. This period of three weeks was intended to ensure all staff, who had successfully continued to deliver the Society's strategy throughout the pandemic, would have an opportunity to recharge. He noted that some leave would be staggered to ensure business continuity where necessary and that the Society would publicise the closure to its members and stakeholders to manage expectations over this period. He reported the high staff appreciation for the opportunity and emphasised that the period of leave would enable staff to return in the new year, energised to deliver all the planned projects in the pipeline.

The Chief Executive reported ongoing negotiations with the International Committee on Systematic Prokaryotes (ICSP) to renew the contract to publish the *International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology (IJSEM)*. He noted the Society's excellent relationship with ICSP but reminded Council that as ICSP was a committee of the International Union for Microbiological Societies (IUMS), it required the agreement of IUMS to negotiate and resign the contract. He reminded Council that IUMS was solely run by volunteers and that a lack of clarity over the detail and history of the arrangement and the lack of employed staff able to dedicate time to drive it forward was affecting the timescales for decision making.

He went on to report that the International Committee for the Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV), who exclusively published profiles of virus families in the *Journal of General Virology (JGV)*, had held discussions with the General Secretary, the Editor in Chief of JGV and senior staff, with a view to requesting a sizeable grant from the Society to enable the ICTV to continue to operate for a period of approximately 18 months – 2 years, at which stage they credibly believed their finances could be stable enough to enable them to continue independently once more. He assured Council that a fully detailed proposal and a recommendation would be submitted to Finance Committee and Council in December. He observed that in its considerations, Council would need to weigh up the financial cost of the funding against the potential loss of content from *JGV*. He highlighted that the contribution of ICTV placed the Journal as a globally leading outlet for the taxonomy of viruses and that *JGV* was a successful asset for the Society. The General Secretary had informed the ICTV that it would not be possible for him to present the request to Council unless it was robust and convincing.

The Chief Executive informed Council that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) survey would be circulated in several weeks and encouraged all Council members to complete it as it helped inform the Society's EDI activities and recommendations.

### **3.2 Composition of Council and Committees**

This was taken as read.

### **3.3 2022-2024 Council dates**

The Chief Executive reported that the 2022-2024 Council meeting dates had been proposed in conjunction with the availability of the incoming President and the Officers for the remainder of their relative terms. However, he noted that although they were proposed well in advance so as to maximise trustee availability, they could be subject to change if necessary. He urged any trustee with a diary conflict to inform the Executive Secretary, so alternatives could be identified in advance where necessary.

The dates were:

#### 2022

3-4 March 2022

30 June-1 July 2022

1-2 September 2022

1-2 December 2022

#### 2023

2-3 March 2023

6-7 July 2023

7-8 September 2023

7-8 December 2023

#### 2024

7-8 March 2024

4-5 July 2024

5-6 September 2024

5-6 December 2024

**Action 06:** The Executive Secretary to send Council invitations to the 2022-2024 Council meeting dates as placeholders.

### **3.4 Timescales for flipping Journals to Open Access**

Council received paper 390-06 to note the decision-making timescale for the next phase of transitioning the Society journals to open access (OA). The Chief Executive reminded Council that the Society had already set out a considered course to transition its journal portfolio to OA and that not moving to OA would result in the Society's journal portfolio being unable to publish anything from Plan S funders, including almost all European funders. He acknowledged that there would certainly be a number of financial, reputational and operational risks involved in the transition but that ultimately not "flipping" was not an option. He believed that the greatest risk to the Society was confusion or criticism of the route taken once inevitable challenges materialised and emphasised the importance of Council being in a position to take a well-informed and transparent decision.

He informed Council that implementing a flip from hybrid to full OA properly required a full year's preparation and therefore if Council was minded to recommend that a journal flipped from the start of 2023, this would require action in January 2022, and therefore a paper would be brought to the 391 meeting of Council in December for discussion and decision. To inform this paper and by way of consultation, both the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee and the Business Transformation Working Group would consider different aspects of the transition in the coming weeks. Editors of all the Society's journals would meet and it would feature on the agenda for all Committees in October. In addition Council members would be invited to a consultation to gather questions and concerns.

The co-Chair of Building Communities Committee and Chair of the Publishing Panel emphasised that the Society risked losing content if it did not transition by 2025 and commented that although the Society had successfully founded OA journals, transitioning from subscription to OA was a different challenge but that giving due consideration presented an opportunity to do it in stages rather than one transactional movement.

### **3.5 Microbiology 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Project update**

Peter Collins and Gavin Thomas joined the meeting.

The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy reminded Council that in March 2021 Council received a paper outlining plans for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations for *Microbiology* and approved Finance Committee's recommendation to allocate £5k from the contingency to support a project looking at the history of the journal and plans for the future. Council received an update from Peter Collins, a historian of science who was hired to research the journal and inform the project.

The data-gathering phase of the research had concentrated on archival boxes of Society material held by the Wellcome Trust and additional files lodged both with the Ministry of Agriculture papers

and with MRC papers at the National Archives in Kew. Council noted the key themes about the journal which had emerged through these findings such as:

- How the journal was conceived and set up.
- Data describing the size (e.g. number of papers, pages, parts/volumes, print run), the disciplinary shape (what *general* microbiology as manifested in the *Journal of General Microbiology* looked like and how that changed over time), and the geographical distribution of authorship of the Journal.
- Debates about the quality of papers published and anxiety about production issues, especially the time taken to publish - which was seen as a key factor in an increasingly competitive market, and still was.
- How *Microbiology* related to other Society publishing initiatives, especially the launching or acquisition of other journals, and major reviews of publishing policy.
- Debates about the move towards electronic publishing from 1993 onwards and open access publishing which Council acknowledged was relevant to the current plans to launch Publish and Read and the transition to Open Access.
- The role of the Journal in generating income for the Society, and how that had changed over time.

Next steps for the project included a timeline of key milestones for the journal and consideration of the outputs. Two articles were due to feature in *Microbiology Today* over 2022 with a focus on the history of the journal as well as what to look forward to in the future.

Council highlighted a potential risk of unearthing anything that would be considered inappropriate to modern culture. It acknowledged that any such anecdote was unlikely to be relevant to the history of the journal itself (more a reflection of human sociological history) and, if such an issue were to arise the Society would use it as an opportunity to communicate its current activities and/or policies which aligned with modern attitudes. Peter Collins noted that consideration of anything that may impact living ancestors of individuals involved was important and would be undertaken if and when such a situation arose.

Council thanked Peter Collins and Gavin Thomas for their dedication to the project.

### **3.6 Membership report**

Council received paper 390-08.

The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy highlighted a few key points including that plans were going ahead for a face-to-face roadshow in Birmingham and the Early Career Microbiologists Forum summer conference was scheduled in September as a virtual event. The champions networking facility Basecamp had launched and was already encouraging cross collaboration at events.

She noted overall membership figures of 6.5K, partly due to an overall high increase in the affiliate category and reminded Council that a paper proposing a nominal fee for that category would be presented as part of the 2022 AGM papers. The Chief Executive also reported that the Management Accounts demonstrated an 8% increase in membership income which suggested a growth in paid membership categories as well.

Council approved the new members list.



The updated terms and conditions of membership were approved.

### **3.7 Prize Award Panel Recommendations**

The General Secretary reminded Council that following the 2020 prizes review, the Prize Award Panel was now drawn from the membership rather than a subset of Council members. He commented that this engagement from the wider membership was working well though due to some conflicts of interests a number of panellists had withdrawn and this had identified a need to encourage higher numbers of applicants to ensure a more representative pool. A light touch review of the changes to the process would be undertaken in January 2022.

He reported a high number of nominations to the Fleming and Marjory Stephenson prize but comparatively low submissions for the Peter Wildy, Unilever Colworth and Prize Medal. He reminded Council that all unsuccessful Prize nominations were automatically reconsidered for the following two years (Fleming Prize nominations for as long as the candidate remained eligible).

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Fleming Prize**

Council approved the recommendation that Dr Christopher Stewart, Newcastle University be awarded the 2022 Fleming Prize.

##### **Marjory Stephenson Prize**

Council approved the recommendation that Professor Geoffrey Gadd, University of Dundee, be awarded the 2022 Marjory Stephenson Prize.

##### **Peter Wildy Prize**

Council approved the recommendation that Dr Diane Ashiru-Oredope, National Infection Service, Public Health England, be awarded the 2022 Peter Wildy Prize.

##### **Unilever Colworth Prize**

Council approved the recommendation that Professor Paul Griffiths, University College London, be awarded the 2022 Unilever Colworth Prize.

**Action 07:** The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy to ensure the awardees were invited to receive the prize and give their prize lectures at Annual Conference 2022.

### **3.8 Recommendation of new Editors-in-Chief for *Access Microbiology***

The co-Chair of Building Communities Committee and Chair of the Publishing Panel reminded Council that in line with the approved process for appointing Editors-in-Chief and Deputy Editors-in-Chief of Society journals, an open call for applications for the role of two Editors-in-Chief of *Access Microbiology* was open from 4-31 May 2021. Two Editors-in-Chief would be appointed to ensure coverage for what was expected to be a higher proportion of queries requiring editorial attention. Three applications had been received and the Appointments Panel had shortlisted the recommendation to two.

Council approved the recommendation of the Appointments Panel to appoint Georgios Efthimiou and Helina Marshall to the two positions of Editor-in-Chief of *Access Microbiology* and noted the quality of their applications to the positions which had demonstrated a true understanding of the ethos of the journal and the open research platform.

Council also accepted the recommendation that the Editor Mentors on the journal were formally recognised and invited to assist on difficult ethical or editorial issues, considering their vast personal experience in editorial positions.

**Action 10:** Associate Director of Members' Programmes to communicate the decision to the candidates and undertake necessary administration to formalise the appointments.

### 3.9 ECR position statement on the impact of Covid pandemic on early careers

The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy reported that the Society had invited Early Career Microbiologists (ECMs) to participate in a survey and several focus groups to find out more about the impact of the pandemic on career progression. The results of the survey had been taken together with the outcomes of the focus groups to inform a position statement, to be launched at the end of October 2021 following sign off from the co-Chairs of the Impact and Influence Committee and the Officers.

She summarised the key messages that had come out of the work so far as detailed in paper 390-12:

- The pandemic had led to pressures on ECMs to complete their research in shorter timeframes as extensions had not been widely available or consistently implemented and funders had been slow to provide solutions for their researchers.
- The pandemic had had a huge impact on the mental health of ECMs, due in part to uncertainty relating to their careers and lives in general.
- The pandemic had not impacted ECMs equally, which had heightened pre-existing disparities for example for parents and carers and people from minoritised ethnic groups.
- The pandemic had magnified issues which were already present in academia and future efforts should encourage a wider academic culture change.
- ECMs were facing an uncertain future with many considering leaving academia, at a time where the importance of microbiology had never been so prominent. If nothing was done, the discipline could lose an entire generation of microbiologists who would tackle the world's biggest challenges.

The Chair of the ECM Forum Executive Committee, who had been heavily involved in the work, echoed that the responses and discussions were uncomfortable to have and difficult to hear but that the ECM community was grateful that the Society was taking a lead in shining light on the issues at hand. He felt it was an important legacy for the Society and an opportunity for it to lead the way to encourage a cultural shift in academia and in institutions across the ECM experience. He emphasised the ECM position of wishing to highlight these concerns to instigate change in collaboration with more senior members of the community and being mindful to ensure the statement did not create a wedge between communities.

The paper detailed the plans for post-launch external engagement activities, including a presentation at the Royal Society policy autumn catch-up and meetings with Vitae and the UK Research Staff Association. Staff would also utilise connections and networks from other work streams to share this work with other societies. The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy reported that options for publication in *Microbiology* were being explored and welcomed

all suggestions to distribute the work widely, acknowledging that the Society was not in a position to enforce adoption by senior management teams within universities but would investigate options to work with other organisations that might have more influence.

Council acknowledged the 2019 Researcher Development Concordat as a complimentary piece of work which aimed to improve the employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education in the UK, and which set out three clear principles of environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. It was suggested that sharing findings with them could maximise influence.

### **3.10 Annual Conference 2022**

At the 389 meeting Council agreed to continue with an in person Annual Conference in Belfast 2022 (AC22) but accepted that delegate numbers might be lower than previous years due to a nervousness around travel. They also agreed to revisit the decision to proceed on the basis of an in-person event as circumstances of the pandemic developed. The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy updated Council on progress on Annual Conference planning, citing a full and vibrant programme and noted detailed feedback from the venue which had been awarded the 'We're Good To Go' mark, an industry standard demonstrating its commitment to implementing relevant government and public health guidance in relation to COVID-19. She also noted that investigations into the protocols of local hotels were equally satisfactory.

The incoming co-Chair of the Building Communities Committee and Chair of Scientific Conferences Panel (SCP) that investigations into the protocols of local hotels were equally satisfactory.

The incoming co-Chair of the Building Communities Committee and Chair of Scientific Conferences Panel (SCP) expressed her personal concern that, as a virologist, she found it difficult to recommend a return to an in-person conference. She conveyed the view of the SCP that, in principle, was keen to return to a face-to-face Annual Conference, and was pleased to see the level of mitigation that would be in place as demonstrated in paper 390-13 but wished to acknowledge the remaining risk that case numbers were rising and uncertainty regarding government guidance. She noted it would be essential to communicate clearly to delegates, at the earliest opportunity, the depth and regularity of consideration that had gone into the decisions taken around planning for AC22.

Council acknowledged that although there were mitigations in place at the venue to manage the spread of COVID-19, protocols required of Northern Ireland's (NI), or resident countries' travel or possible vaccination policies could be subject to change with short notice and may affect the attendance of international delegates and speakers. Although Council acknowledged that the Society's conferences generally attracted relatively low numbers of international delegates anyway, SCP would confirm a back-up plan for any invited speakers unable to attend due to Covid travel restrictions. The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy also undertook to look further into the possible implications of Northern Ireland policy and to ensure the venue kept the Society updated of anything of this nature that might impact the event.

The restrictions of social distancing for the typically highly populated poster sessions was discussed though it was acknowledged that until abstracts were opened, anticipated numbers were currently unknown. There was capacity for online poster viewing which might lessen the density of attendance, though the processes for allocating in person or online presenting would need to be carefully established to ensure no participant was disadvantaged. Advantages and disadvantages of

distributing the posters throughout the venue and utilising outdoor space was also discussed and the Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy agreed that all options would be considered by SCP.

Council considered if a requirement, or expectation for vaccination of attendees was appropriate. However, it acknowledged that this would be impossible to enforce and, due to vaccine inequity, it would create barriers for those attending from counties with lower vaccine supply.

An increase in travel grant offering, particularly for early career members was discussed and approved under 2.1.4.

In the context of the current status of the pandemic Council was in favour of continuing planning for an in-person event with high levels of mitigation in place and acknowledgment that clear communication of the efforts for rigorous mitigations, the intention for reconsideration following any changes to circumstances, and expectations of all participants would be essential.

**Action 11:**

The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy to look further into the possible implications of Northern Ireland policy and to ensure the venue kept the Society updated of anything of this nature than might impact the event.

**Action 12:**

The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy to submit considerations for a back-up plan for any invited speakers unable to attend due to Covid travel restrictions to SCP.

**Action 13:**

The Chief Programmes Officer and Director of Strategy to investigate with SCP, options for mitigating densely populated poster sessions.

### **3.11 Nominations Process for elections**

At its 389 meeting, Council agreed to undertake a light touch review of some aspects of the nominations process following some specific feedback from members. Council emphasised the need to reduce barriers to participation, ensure inclusivity, transparency and democracy and enable Council to perform their duties as trustees by ensuring a composition of a strong board with relevant skills and experience.

Council approved the administrative and process-related recommendations presented in paper 390-14 for implementation in the 2022 elections process and discussed the broader issue of balance and representation of the membership in the board composition. Although subject specialism was not a significant element of the strategic decision making for which Council members were responsible as charity trustees and company directors, it was acknowledged that it could influence decisions such as prize awards, though the Prize Award Panel composition was carefully considered to ensure representation.

Council was not minded to implement ring-fenced positions on the board for groups considered important (for example allowing Irish members to elect a specifically Ireland-based member of Council or instructing the appointments panel that at least one Committee chair must be a

virologist) because with the numbers of spaces to be filled each year, this would leave very little room for manoeuvre, and would risk losing excellent candidates and/or failing to fill spaces.

On balance it was agreed to continue to invite Council nominations from the full breadth of the membership, with the expectation that composition across the governance structure as a whole was more widely representative of the different facets of the discipline. It was noted that co-Chairs of Committees represented the viewpoints of Committee members and that all Council members avoided conflicts of interests and considered all viewpoints in their decision making. This was reflected in the approved Elected Member job description which included a requirement that candidates have an “understanding of the range of different needs and challenges affecting members and the microbiology community” and “an ability to act with impartiality”.

**Action 14:** The Executive Secretary to implement all approved administrative and process recommendations for the 2022 nominations and elections process.

### **3.12 Naming of 14-16 Meredith Street**

In September 2019, the Society’s offices moved to a newly-acquired building at 14-16 Meredith Street, London EC1 0AB. Council agreed that naming the building after a person was potentially problematic in that by definition it was not representative or inclusive and that by bestowing such an accolade upon one individual would automatically fail to acknowledge the numerous other individuals who had contributed arguably equally to the discipline.

Council acknowledged the historical context of the name of Meredith Street and was content that aside from being irrelevant to microbiology, it posed no issue in terms of reputational risk by association.

Council acknowledged that the Society logo was not able to be on the building due to planning permission regulations and agreed the building name and frontage remained as Microbiology Society 14-16 Meredith Street.

### **3.13 Nominations for Honorary Membership**

The Chief Executive reminded Council that nominations for Honorary Membership would be considered at the December meeting and requested that members submit any nominations to the General Secretary by 31 October. He reminded them that Honorary Membership was offered by the Society Council to distinguished microbiologists who had made a significant contribution to the science and/or the Society and that to retain prestige, Council had previously decided to award “normally no more than one” such accolades annually, and in many years none were awarded.

**Action 15:** Executive Secretary to circulate the Honorary Membership nomination form and deadline to Council.

### **3.14 Summary of progress- Strategy 2018-2022**

Council received paper 390-16 outlining progress on implementing the strategy.

The Chief Executive reminded Council that the Society was recruiting a Chair-elect for the Federation of Infection Societies Society Representative role and urged Council to consider appropriate candidates to approach.

The Treasurer highlighted the cross-government project 'Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH-SAFE)' to develop a pilot national surveillance network, using the latest DNA-sequencing technology and environmental sampling to improve the detection and tracking of foodborne and antimicrobial resistant pathogens through the whole agri-food system. A series of workshops was scheduled for October to bring together experts in microbial genomics from academia and industry to help guide the early development and priority setting for the project and he urged Council to notify their relevant networks to encourage participation.

Council noted the progress on all areas of the strategy and thanked staff and the members for all their efforts.

#### **4. AOB**

There was no other business.

The 391 meeting of Council was scheduled for Friday 10 December.

The meeting closed at 12:32.