

## Minutes of the 373 meeting Council

**Friday 8 September 2017 09:00-12:30**

**Venue: Charles Darwin House**

**Present:**

Neil Gow (President, in the Chair)  
Christopher Thomas (Treasurer)  
Maggie Smith (General Secretary)  
Charles Dorman (Chair of Publishing Committee)  
David Bhella (Chair of Communications Committee)  
David Whitworth (Chair of Professional Development Committee)  
Helen Brown (Chair of ECM Executive Committee)  
Pat Goodwin (Chair of Policy Committee)  
George Salmond (Elected Member)  
Mike Skinner (Elected Member)  
Nicola Stonehouse (Elected Member)  
Paul Kellam (Elected Member)  
Steve Oliver (Elected Member)

**In attendance:**

Jodi Lindsay (Chair-Elect Publishing Committee)  
Ian Roberts (Treasurer Elect)  
Tracy Palmer (Elected Member from 2018)  
  
Tadhg Ó'Cróinín (Chair-Elect Professional Development Committee)  
  
Mick Tuite (Chair-Elect Scientific Conferences Committee)  
Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)  
Joanne Morley (Chief Operations Officer)  
Sarah Buckman (Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes)  
Tasha Mellins-Cohen (Director of Publishing)

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

The President formally welcomed Council to the 373 meeting and extended a welcome to new attendees. Apologies were received from David Pearce, Karen Robinson and John Morrissey.

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

None were declared. The President reminded members that they had a responsibility for their own conflicts of interest and to notify the Society of any new conflicts that may arise.

## **1.3 Minutes of the 372 Meeting of Council**

On page five, heading 2.9, the President noted that it was the Chief Executive who had been delegated authority to approve changes.

On page six, the President noted that Carol Munro's name had been misspelled.

Barring these exceptions, the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the 372 meeting of Council.

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

All matters were dealt with under main agenda items.

## **2. Finance & Operations Committee**

The Treasurer noted that it was important that finance discussions were not rushed and to that end reported that the Finance and Operations Committee had spent significant time during its meeting discussing the Society's investment portfolio. The Treasurer reminded Council that there were two bodies who worked with the Society on the portfolio: Waverton, the investment managers, and Asset Risk Consultants (ARC), who monitored Waverton performance. On 6 September, Waverton had reported in person, and the Committee subsequently reviewed a written report from ARC on Waverton's performance.

The previous six months had shown an improved portfolio performance, and the Waverton managed part of the portfolio was now performing ahead of benchmark and ahead of the mandate the Society had set of CPI +4%. Nicola Stonehouse asked for confirmation that Waverton would attend Council in December; the Treasurer confirmed that Council members would be invited to the final part of Finance and Operations Committee in December and Waverton and ARC would also be in attendance. ARC would also present a section of the Thursday session of Council in December and provide detailed information on types of investments and types of investment managers.

The Treasurer noted that the improvement in performance was not due to a change in investment strategy on behalf of Waverton. The investment manager had been encouraging the Society to 'hold on' and this was now showing benefit. It was noted that ARC had been impressed with this consistency on the part of Waverton.

well because of its strategy; at the end of the previous year it had been underperforming, due to particularly unusual external political factors. However, the markets were now performing as Waverton had expected.

The Treasurer reported on the Council members' responses to the Waverton questionnaire circulated during August, reporting that many Council members did not feel confident in their knowledge of investment options. Council members were encouraged to take up the opportunity to attend training with bodies such as the Civic Society who provide finance training for trustees. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Society would circulate details of training courses available. Steve Oliver requested that ARC provide industry standard descriptions of investment options.

The second point of note from the questionnaire responses was that the Council had a limited appetite for risk. Waverton was appointed with a mid-range risk mandate; if Council were to maximise returns this would need to be increased and Council would have to accept a larger risk.

The Chief Operations Officer took Council through the final proposed budget, with a very small planned surplus, which the Finance and Operations Committee recommended should be approved. The main changes since the draft in July pertained to a review of the original budget by the Director of Publishing. Council approved the budget.

During the contingency budget discussion, the Chief Operations Officer noted that the new kitchen had been very well received by staff and thanked the President for officially opening it. The Chief Executive expressed gratitude from all staff for the new kitchen.

The Chief Operations Officer provided a brief update on the CRM project, which had been demonstrated to the Finance and Operations Committee during its meeting on 6 September. It was reported that the project was on time and on budget and would include significant functional upgrades for members (e.g. Member Directory) and that this would be due for launch in late November.

### 3. President / Chief Executive Business

#### 3.1 General business /Report back from CEO

The President explained that his president@microbiologysociety.org, account had been hacked and some members of Council had received an email purporting to be from the President. This had been investigated and blocked by the Society's IT provider.

The President provided an update on work to gather support for a microbiology television series. The Wellcome Trust was working with the Society to refine a proposal to the BBC about potentially producing a series to complement its other natural history shows. The Society had subsequently been approached by Lion TV, a commercial producer, which may be a potential alternative to the BBC. The intention was to increase the profile of microbiology among the general public. Steve Oliver questioned whether any footage was being sent to the BBC to whet its appetite; the President replied that only a letter has been sent at this time.

The Chief Executive reminded Council that distinguished scientists who had made substantial contributions to microbiology or to the Society could be considered for honorary membership during the December meeting of Council, under four categories:

- Distinguished microbiologists
- Distinguished microbiologists best known for scientific activities outside of microbiology
- Members who have made significant contributions to the Society
- Other people who have made significant contributions to the Society

All nominees should be supported by a member of Council and would be reviewed by the Officers before being discussed. The only current nominee was John Schollar, who had for a decade provided various educational programmes for the Society. His nomination was supported by a member of Council and would be discussed in December.

It was noted by the Chief Executive that the Head of Communications and Multimedia Producer were both leaving for exciting new roles in other organisations. The Head of Communications role had been advertised and the Multimedia Producer role would be once the new Head of Communications was in post. Council was asked to note that until replacements were recruited, the staff would struggle to produce as much video content as had been possible recently. Paul Kellam questioned whether we should keep note of where staff move on to after leaving the Society to promote this positively; the Chief Executive responded that this would be a good way to address some concerns raised in this year's staff survey. The Treasurer questioned whether this perception was due to a lack of promotion opportunity within the Society. The Chief Executive responded that promotion opportunities were part of the issue, but that the turnover of staff during the course of

2017 had also knocked staff confidence. David Bhella wished to minute his congratulations and thanks to the Head of Communications and the Multimedia Producer and the rest of Council agreed with the sentiment.

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

Helen Brown noted that Early Career Microbiologist Forum representatives for the Divisions were not included on the document.

### **3.3 Annual General Meeting**

The President stated that he had attended all events over the course of the 7 September as part of the AGM and that they were very enjoyable days. The events and others like them helped to develop great links between academia and industry.

Council noted and accepted the outcomes of the AGM and associated events. There would be some items taken forward to the Policy Committee (e.g. Brexit discussion) for further consideration.

George Salmond noted that the Young Microbiologist of the Year Prize was the Sir Howard Dalton prize, and this had not been made sufficiently clear during the AGM. It was agreed that future Young Microbiologist of the Year events should further emphasise Sir Howard Dalton's name and contribution.

### **3.4 New Members List**

Council approved the list of incoming members and noted its pleasure with the continued growth of the Society, particularly the increase in Full members and International members.

### **3.5 Prizes panel recommendations**

The General Secretary informed Council that the Society had far more nominees this year than last.

The Prize Panel made the following recommendations following consideration of the nominees:

- Professor Sharon Peacock (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) was recommended for the *Unilever* Colworth Prize.

- Dr Sarah Coulthurst (University of Dundee) was recommended for the Fleming Prize.
- Professor Geoffrey Smith (University of Cambridge) was recommended for the Marjory Stephenson prize.
- Dr Tansy Hammarton (University of Glasgow) was recommended for the Peter Wildy prize.

Council approved the recommendations.

The General Secretary noted that putting the Prizes Panel together this year had been tricky. The issue around conflicts of interest arose during the course of the year; for example, Panel members making nominations, or finding that they were at the same institution as a nominee. The General Secretary confirmed that she would look at the rules and procedures (e.g. whether the Fleming Prize rules discriminate against PhD programmes in certain countries) and would put together a Prize Panel earlier in the year, with a strict rule that Panel members would not be eligible to nominate Prize recipients. The Chief Executive noted that the reviewed process could potentially include members who were not current or former Council members to reduce conflicts of interest.

The President thanked the General Secretary for bringing this issue to the attention of Council and noted that a formal paper should be brought to Council regarding the changes to Prize Panel processes.

### **3.6 Prize medal nominations**

The Chief Executive informed Council members that it was their responsibility to select the Prize Medal winner for 2019, and reminded the observers that they were not eligible to vote.

There was a discussion regarding whether there was a risk of disadvantaging UK microbiologists in the selection process, given the likely number of conflicts of interest. It was agreed that the public perception of conflicts was important, and that the nine members of Council who were present and able to vote was a sufficient number to vote on the Prize Medal.

The General Secretary talked through the details of the candidates listed in Council paper 373-06. It was suggested that Council may wish to consider having two Prize Medal winners. The Chief Executive observed that while this was certainly permissible, it was worth bearing in mind that candidates stayed on the list for three years, and the point of the Medal is to highlight truly important issues; by having two winners, there may be a risk of diluting the meaning of the Prize. Steve Oliver noted that where multiple candidates work on the same topic, there was good reason to award multiple medals.

Council voted and returned their forms to the Chief Executive. The votes were tallied and the clear winner was Professor Jennifer Doudna. The Chief Executive asked what Council wished to do if the winner was unable to accept, and whether the second placed candidate would be an acceptable replacement. The General Secretary noted that the Panel only put forward individuals worthy of winning the Medal. It was agreed that Council would adopt a standard procedure of asking the runner-up in instances where the preferred candidate could not or did not wish to attend and receive the award.

### **3.7 Critical risk register**

The Chief Executive referred Council to the Critical risk register (paper 373-07) and explained the different types of risk (operational, financial, and reputational), as well as highlighting the items with highest risk as shown in red in the paper.

Paul Kellam questioned whether anything had changed since the Council last saw this paper six months ago. The Chief Executive noted that the calculations were slightly different due to the processes of the new auditor, but that the only substantial change pertained to the General Data Protection Regulations.

Ian Roberts questioned whether the loss of staff should be listed as a likelihood of 3 when compared with other risks such as subscription agents going bankrupt, given that staff turnover is a regular discussion point in Council.

David Bhella questioned the risk score pertaining to computer viruses, etc. The Chief Operations Officer agreed to reassess these risks, potentially splitting out spam from more problematic and potentially serious hacking incidents so these could be scored independently.

Council agreed that the risk register would be circulated to the Elected Members of Council to review before coming back to Council in March 2018.

### **3.8 Council Shadowing Scheme**

The Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes reminded Council that they had approved a shadowing scheme at their last meeting. The invitation had been sent to Committee and Division members and placed in the Society newsletter. One application had been received and was provided to Council for review. Nicola Stonehouse noted that she had also been contacted by an individual who decided not to proceed with shadowing Council as they were more interested in other committees. The Chief Executive reminded Council that this was a pilot scheme and if successful would be rolled out to other committees. Council members all agreed that the one application was

suitable and Helen Brown, Ian Roberts and Nicola Stonehouse all offered to provide support to the applicant.

#### **4. Early Career Microbiologists' (ECM) Forum Executive Committee**

Helen Brown noted that ECM would start submitting minutes to Council in December 2017. She reported that ECM was almost at full strength but did not yet have a Publishing Committee representative. The summer roadshows had gone well and would be repeated with variation next year. A full report would follow in December.

#### **5. Professional Development**

The Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes noted that EMBL would work with the Society to run a statistics and bioinformatics session at the 2018 Conference and referred Council to the detailed paper provided.

#### **6. Scientific Conferences**

The Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes referred Council to the detailed paper provided. She noted that the team was running multiple Focused Meetings in September 2017.

There was a correction raised to the key points paper regarding the dates listed for the Avian viruses Focused Meeting in 2018.

A question was raised by David Bhella regarding the timing of Focused Meetings, as IMAV conflicted with this Council meeting; the Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes confirmed that the process for timing of meetings had been changed to try to minimise such conflicts in future.

#### **7. Publishing**

The Director of Publishing noted that the JATS project approved by Council at the last meeting was on track. She confirmed she was questioning some pricing provided by Ingenta.

The Director of Publishing noted that this paper was an introduction to a much more complete Plan due to be taken to Publishing Committee in October 2017. Members of Council were invited to send comments to the Director of Publishing.

## 8. Communications Committee

The Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes reported that the last Antibiotics Unearthed public session had now been completed and as it was now being wound up as it was in its final year. The Society's Microbiome colouring book had now been printed and would be available for purchase via the website for £5 in the next few weeks. The Treasurer suggested making information about the microbes in the colouring book available on the Society website as an educational tool.

David Bhella noted a new focus within the Committee on membership and member development, with a potential for overlap with the Professional Development Committee.

Council noted the minutes circulated in advance.

The Chief Operations Officer drew Council member's attention to the launch of journal Twitter accounts, due in mid-September. This had been approved by Council in July.

## 9. Policy

The Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes noted that the team was continuing with the Microbiome policy report despite some staffing changes. The launch was scheduled for the second week of November at the Royal Society.

Pat Goodwin expressed her gratitude to members who contributed to policy work. She also reported back on a dinner she attended, hosted by the Royal Society of Biology, in respect of Brexit. She requested that Council members passed over examples of individuals affected by Brexit, and that the same request should be placed in the Society's newsletter.

## 10. AOB

There were no items to report.

There being no other business, the President closed the meeting at 12.10.

## 11. Summary of actions

No.	Action	Owner
373/01	All members of Council to send through their conflicts of interests to the Chief Operations Officer.	All Council members
373/02	Chief Operations Officer to amend Council minutes 372.	COO
373/03	Chief Operations Officer to redact the Council minutes of the 372 meeting.	COO
373/04	Finance and Operations Committee to investigate portfolio investment options and report back to Council.	Treasurer
373/05	The Chief Executive to circulate details of financial training available to Trustees.	CEO
373/06	Options for a revised reserves policy to be brought to Council in December.	CEO and COO
373/07	Council members to nominate individuals for honorary membership in advance of the December meeting.	All Council members
373/08	Sir Howard Dalton Young Microbiologist of the Year prize to be named in full during the 2018 activities.	Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes
373/09	Publishing Committee to consult on the AMR pop-up journal proposal in detail and a progress update to be brought to the December Council meeting.	Director of Publishing

373/10 Publishing Committee to consult on the sound science journal proposal in detail and a full case to be brought to the December Council meeting. Director of Publishing

373/11 Prize Panel structure and rules to be assessed for 2018. General Secretary

373/12 The Chief Operations Officer agreed to reassess the risk pertaining to computer viruses, etc, potentially splitting spam from more problematic hacking. COO

373/13 Helen Brown, Ian Roberts and Nicola Stonehouse to provide support to Council's shadow in advance of the December meeting. Helen Brown, Ian Roberts and Nicola Stonehouse

373/14 Provide feedback on Publishing activities in light of the introduction to the Publishing Plan provided as paper 373-13. All Council members

373/15 Council members to let Sarah know of any examples of individuals directly affected by Brexit so far, and that the same call to be placed in the next newsletter. All Council members and Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes