

Minutes of the 363 Meeting of Council

9:00am

6 March 2015

Charles Darwin House

Present:

Nigel Brown (President, in the Chair)

Christopher Thomas (Treasurer)

Evelyn Doyle (General Secretary)

Mark Harris (Chair of Scientific Conferences Committee)

David Whitworth (Chair of Professional Development Committee)

Maggie Smith (Chair of Policy Committee)

Charles Dorman (Chair of Publishing Committee)

Paul Hoskisson (Chair of Communications Committee)

Steve Diggle (Elected Member)

Andrew Davison (Elected Member)

Ian Henderson (Elected Member)

Pat Goodwin (Elected Member)

Mike Skinner (Elected Member)

In attendance:

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)

Rosie Waterton (Governance Manager)

Dariel Burdass (Deputy CEO and Director of Strategy and Communications)

Leighton Chipperfield (Director of Publishing)

Sarah Buckman (Director of Scientific Programmes)

01. Apologies for absence & welcome to new attendees

Apologies were received from David Pearce who was unable to attend due to ill health.

The president welcomed the new Chairs of Committees and the new Director of Scientific Programmes to their first Meeting of Council in their formal capacities.

02. Declaration of any new conflicts of interest

No new declarations were made. The President reminded Council to send any changes to their conflicts of interest to the Governance Manager to update the register.

03. Minutes of the 362 Meeting of Council

Council made the following requests for amendments:

p1. One of the duplicated references to Ian Henderson on the list of attendees to be removed.

p4. JG Kusters is noted as the Editor in Chief of "one of the new electronic journals", this should be clarified to read "JMMCR".

p6. The sentence referencing conflicts of interest should be reconstructed to increase clarity.

p7. Microbiologist should be amended to be plural.

Subject to these amendments the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the 362 Meeting of Council.

04. Matters arising from the minutes and action points

The President reported on the following items:

Item 4 – The Society of Biology blue plaque scheme plaque for Marjory Stephenson was unveiled on 22 February and the media coverage of the event mentioned the SGM.

Item 6 – The first wave of Council reviews had been undertaken on the previous day. Members involved were invited to feedback to the Executive Officers to improve the process for the future.

Item 8 – The new Head of Operations, Joanne Morley, had been appointed and would start on 16 March. The panel were very impressed with her experience, skills and character. She had been hoping to attend the Finance Committee meeting on 5 March but in the end had to work because it was the only possible time to do a handover with her successor.

Item 15 - Members of the International working group had been confirmed and will meet for their first formal meeting after the outcomes of the Strategy workshops have been confirmed.

06. Plans for next Council meeting

The Chief Executive confirmed the following items to be brought to the July Meeting of Council:

- AGM papers for approval.
- Accounts approved for inclusion with AGM papers.
- Election results.
- Presidential election vote.
- Appoint 2016 prizes panel.
- Training in Unconscious Bias.
- Committee Terms of Reference.

1.1 President / Chief Executive Business

07. General business /Report back from CEO

Several members of Council had noted that changes in policy and funding mechanisms, such as the concentration of resources in the Crick Institute and the “Northern Powerhouse,” might lead to changes in the biology research landscape, but that at present, nobody was monitoring these changes or their potential consequences. The Chief Executive reported that there had been an appetite among the other enhanced funders of the Society of Biology to investigate whether such a monitoring project was feasible. The British Pharmacological Society was likely to undertake a more limited piece of work on its own if others did not join in. The Chief Executive undertook to keep Council informed, and potentially to request authorisation to use some of the budgetary contingency to support such a project.

08. Composition of Council and Committees

Council noted positions for election this year and the need for clarity on the process for each.

The Treasurer noted there was no real need for the term of office for the Treasurer role to be any longer than other Executive Officers and suggested the term be revised to 1 year as Chair elect and 3 years as the official Treasurer. This would allow the Executive Officers’ turnover to occur in consecutive years rather than simultaneously. Council formally accepted the change to the Treasurer’s term of office to 3 years and thus noted it would need to appoint a Chair-elect for that role in 2016.

The question arose over the cycle of Elected Member representation on Committees and the necessity to ensure they are engaged long enough to participate effectively and to create stability in Committee structure. It was agreed that rather than shuffle automatically each year; Council would review the spread according to skills on an annual basis and maintain flexibility to revise if necessary.

Committee Terms of Reference:

Council was content with the template and the plan to develop Terms of Reference for each committee. These will be brought to the July meeting.

The Chief Executive noted that the Finance Committee deals with many Administrative and Operational issues and gave the recommendation to change the name to Finance and Operations Committee. Some matters previously taken to Council will now be dealt with by this Committee and this will be reflected in its newly developed Terms of Reference.

Memorandum of Understanding:

Council reviewed the template and requested the wording be slightly revised in point 5 to allow flexibility for notice of absence in unforeseen, urgent circumstances. Council also suggested the inclusion of the agreed wording from the Society Articles of Association in reference to Members not attending regularly.

09. President's Dinner

Council considered individuals to invite as the special lecture speaker to the Society Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September.

Council agreed to invite Anne Glover.

10. New Members List

The Chief Executive apologised that the new format had not displayed as Council had requested in that not all the institutions were properly listed and the country of origin was not detailed. He confirmed that staff would investigate a means by which to provide the information needed in order to effectively accept new Members and an improved version would be brought to the next meeting.

11. Honorary Member nomination

Council unanimously agreed to accept the nomination of Colin Harwood as an Honorary Member of the Society in recognition of his service over the past 7 years. The President will formally write to Colin in invitation.

12. Equality and Diversity report

Council noted the report of the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

In presenting the report, Paul Hoskisson highlighted the good progress on the issue since the formation of the group. He noted the view within the Biosciences hub, that SGM was a leader in the area, as a measure of success in developing and implementing our policy and processes.

The issue of monitoring and addressing other areas of diversity was raised and Council requested a proposal for capturing and including ethnicity data to be brought to the next meeting of Council.

Council approved the recommendations of the Working Group.

The Chair of each committee would take the matter back to members and appoint an ambassador.

As a default position, the Elected Member of Council can take on the role; however, the gender balance of those representatives would need to be taken into consideration. Council agreed that Paul Hoskisson should continue as the current Champion on Council.

13. Critical risk register

The Chief Executive introduced the new format and confirmed that each risk had been reviewed by relevant staff members.

Council was broadly content with the format and requested a graphical representation and way to highlight key risks and change of direction. Council thanked staff for their work on this matter.

14. Archives/70 year anniversary

Council have previously been informed about the state of the current archives and had approved the appointment of Gilbert Sharma as the Society Archivist and the Job Description for the role. The Council agreed to the suggestion of inviting Gilbert Sharma to an appropriate Council pre-discussion to report back on his work.

The Chief Executive reported on the location and contents of the archives and confirmed that archiving for the future is a process in discussion with IT consultants.

Council reviewed the list of 70 female microbiologists and noted some concerns with omissions and the lack of stringent criteria. The list is in the context of promoting STEM careers for female however Council agreed it would rather promote stories of people who have contributed to microbiology over the last 70 years and agreed to use the 70 top cited journal papers from the Society's journals as a basis for this. Paul Hoskisson suggested the papers and accompanying stories be collated into a publication for Members. It was agreed that the three department Directors would consider all options available.

The Chief Executive invited Council to consider what longer term objective it may wish to achieve with the 75th Anniversary. A suggestion was raised for applying for themed postage stamps. The Chief Executive noted that the process was highly competitive and the decision is entirely commercial; based on if stamp collectors would buy them. It is therefore unlikely an SGM specific stamp would be accepted. Nevertheless, applying for a stamp to commemorate 75 years since Fleming won a Nobel Prize (and since he became the Society's first President) may be a more likely. Council agreed to this suggestion and requested the Chief Executive to make contact with the appropriate body and obtain further information on the application process. It was agreed that review and further discussion would be brought to Council in September and/or the December Meeting.

15. Strategy

The Director of Strategy and Communications summarised the outcomes of the strategy workshop session held the previous afternoon. There was much agreement about the need to extend and broaden the membership, provide a programme that appealed broadly across microbiology and the potential benefits of a campaigns-based approach, in which a high proportion of activities would be themed around a major challenge.

The detailed results would be used in conjunction with results from a similar workshop with staff, consideration of strategic matters by Committees, the outcomes of various reviews, and consultation with members at the conference. This would form the basis for discussion and agreement at the July meeting of Council.

16. Change of Society name

The President reminded Council of previous discussions on this item and the formal request to instigate the process and bring information and considered options to Council. He noted that suggested conversations with the Society for Applied Microbiology (SfAM) and the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) had been put on hold until a more formal decision was taken by Council, to ensure they were held from a position of strength. However, it was noted by Charles Dorman that ASM were due to welcome a new President this year so it would be timely to utilise the good relationship with the current President, for such a discussion.

Council unanimously agreed to change the name of the Society and reviewed the options presented in the paper. The President opened the discussion.

The argument that the name the "Society for Microbiology" retains the heritage of SGM and that the term "for" gives more gravitas, was accepted. However, equal consideration was given to the suggestion that the name the "Microbiology Society" leads with the name of the discipline and would differentiate us from other, similar Societies such as ASM/SfAM and was therefore less likely to cause contention in those relationships.

The Director of Strategy and Communications was invited to present a perspective of marketing the brand to a range of stakeholders. She reiterated the strength of a name that leads with its discipline and the simplicity of the "Microbiology Society" giving immediate focus and clarity to the objects of

the organisation. She supported the Treasurer's point that the name establishes the organisation as leaders in the field. The Chief Executive reminded Council to consider the URL and Twitter handle options for the "Microbiology Society" and reminded them to consider the meaning of abbreviated terms to those not in the microbiological community.

After extensive discussion, by a show of hands, Council unanimously voted in favour of the name Microbiology Society with the website URL as: microbiosoc.org (and [.com](http://microbiosoc.com) to allow the site to be redirected) and the Twitter handle: @microbiosoc. Council formally agreed to take this resolution, the justifications behind the decision and examples of the new brand and logo forward to the Membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Revised Articles of Association:

Council were reminded that the previously submitted resolution to adopt the revised Articles of Association had not been successful but this had given Council the opportunity to add a clause to enable them to remove Members if deemed appropriate. The Chief Executive reminded Council that they would receive the final Articles with all the final AGM papers at their July meeting so any major amendments must be confirmed in this meeting.

Council reviewed the wording for the inserted article 2.4 and the President invited any comments. Charles Dorman suggested the reference to "days notice" be changed to "clear days" in keeping with the interpretations of the document.

Pat Goodwin queried if Council felt a process for appeal was necessary. However, Council felt the wording of the article, which allowed the removal of a member subject to the member being "allowed to make representations to the meeting", sufficient appeal process. With the minor amendment above, Council formally agreed to submit the Articles of Association as a special resolution to the membership at the AGM.

1.2 Finance and administration

17. Collated Finance Committee Papers

18. Report from Finance Committee

Council had received the report from the Finance Committee the previous evening. The Treasurer noted an amendment of the date of the Figshare budget from 2016 to 2015.

The Treasurer reported to Council on financial reporting, IT and property and the management accounts. He commented on the work, prudence and planning of staff to ensure the 2013 deficit had been irradiated and a surplus generated in 2014.

The Treasurer directed Council to the report from Finance Committee in regards to the presentation and report from ARC and Waverton on the strength of the Society's investment portfolio. The Treasurer noted the level of transparency and clarity in the processes, reasoning and logic in the way our portfolio is managed.

On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, Council resolved that Jaswant Singh Dhesi be removed from the bank mandate and that Sarah Louise Hawkes be added (Signing Group B).

1.3 Scientific Conferences (SCC)

19. Scientific Conferences key points

These were taken as read.

20. Scientific Conferences Committee Minutes

These were taken as read.

21. Update

The Director of Scientific Programmes gave Council an oral update on the 2015 Conference and was confident everything was on track. The Chief Executive commented on the work of Sarah Buckman and other staff to turn the situation around from the problems that had been reported at the December meeting of Council.

22. Issues from SCC

The Chair of SCC summarised the paper and the proposals for ensuring the necessary skills and requirements are present in the composition of Divisions whilst ensuring transparency and democracy in the election process.

Council agreed to the criteria that nominees have at least 2 years membership. It was felt that specifying experience as a PI would alienate categories of membership who would still have other relevant skill (such as industrial members) so Council agreed to the inclusion of the specific skills required and to include a clearer description of expectations. Council was uncomfortable with allowing a Divisional Chair “veto” for nominees but agreed that as part of the nomination process the nominee should have a two-way discussion of their application with the Chair or Chair-elect of the relevant Division. Council agreed that the nomination form should include a check box to confirm this discussion had taken place and the wording of the memorandum of understanding to be signed by the nominee.

Council representatives on Divisions:

Council noted the difficulties of the Council Elected Member representative for SCC in attending all Divisional meetings. The Chief Executive suggested that the process be that Division meeting dates be circulated to all Council with a request for volunteers to attend rather than a formal representative on each Division. Council were content with this but noted that if volunteers were not forthcoming, the process would need revision and formalising.

The President reported that FEMS Congress will not be held in the UK in 2017.

1.4 Professional Development

23. Professional Development Committee key points

These were taken as read.

1.5 Communications

24. Communications Committee key points

These were taken as read.

Paul Hoskisson noted the ineffective Members Area of the website and proposed to make the electronic Microbiology Today free to all stakeholders until a suitable Member benefit was available via the web.

25. Communications Committee Minutes

These are taken as read.

26. Small World update - PHD student

The Director of Communications and Strategy gave a summary and reported on the quality of applicants which had led to the requirement for interviews to make the final decision. Council noted these were due to take place on the Monday following the Council meeting and were content to allow the interview panel to make the final decision.

1.6 Policy

27. Policy Committee key points

The Chair of the Policy Committee drew Council’s attention to the last point on the paper in reference to the new EU Regulation on Compliance Measures for Users of Genetic Resources. She noted the role of the Society of Biology was acting as the unified voice of the biosciences hub in regards to Policy and invited Council to send any comments to Paul Richards, the SGM Policy Officer to pass on.

28. Policy Committee Minutes

These were taken as read.

29. Policy roadmap update

The Chair of Policy confirmed the rationale behind the outcomes and how this might be incorporated into other Society activities and the Conferences Programme.

1.7 Publishing

30. Publishing Committee key points

These were taken as read.

31. Publishing Committee Minutes

These were taken as read.

32. Update

The Director of Publishing gave an oral update of the key points.

33. Publishing Strategy review

The Director of Publishing gave a brief report of the strategy review and noted that the Publishing Strategy had been structured alongside the wider Society mission and strategy and that the objectives had been tweaked in reaction to changes in the industry.

Council accepted the recommendation to adopt the reviewed strategy.

1.8 AOBs

Ian Henderson confirmed the IMI would be hosting the Prize Lecture winner's dinner on behalf of the Society and that all Council members, were invited. The guest list would also include the 5 Prize Lecture winners, John Sinclair (as a previous council member involved in the selection panel of the 2015 winners) and several IMI representatives. The formal invitation would be received from the Governance Manager the following week.

The President reported to council that he regretted that he would be unable to attend the Annual Conference later in the month. He reported plans to pre record a message to address the membership in his absence and plans for the General Secretary to undertake various responsibilities in his absence (such as warding the Prize Lecture Certificates).

There was no other business.

The 363 Meeting of Council was declared closed at 12:45.