

Minutes of the 377 meeting Council

Friday 7 September 2018 09:00-12:30

Venue: Charles Darwin House 2

Present:

Neil Gow (President, in the Chair)
Ian Roberts (Treasurer)
Maggie Smith (General Secretary)
Jodi Lindsay (Chair of Publishing Committee)
Pat Goodwin (Chair of Policy Committee)
Tadhg Ó Cróinín (Chair of Professional Development Committee)
Helen Brown (Chair of ECM Forum)
Nicola Stonehouse (Chair of Communications Committee)
Paul Kellam (Elected Member)
John Morrissey (Elected Member)
Steve Oliver (Elected Member)
George Salmond (Elected Member)

In attendance:

Judith Armitage (incoming President)
Charles Dorman (incoming Elected Member)
David Blackburn (incoming Elected Member)
Deirdre Devine (incoming Elected Member)
Amy Richards (incoming Chair of Early Career Microbiologists' Forum)
Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)
Tasha Mellins-Cohen (Director of Publishing)
Joanne Morley (Chief Operations Officer)
Gillian Perry-Bland (Governance and Operations Executive)

1.1 Apologies for absence & welcome to new attendees

The President formally welcomed Council members to the 377 meeting. Apologies were received from Mick Tuite (Chair of Scientific Conferences Committee), Tracy Palmer (Elected Member) and Sarah Buckman (Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes).

1.2 Declaration of any new conflicts of interest

None were declared. The President reminded all 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 376 Meeting of Council

Council noted that Steve Oliver (Elected Member) was present at the previous meeting but missing from the attendees list.

The Chair of Communications Committee suggested that the item relating to concerns over fund manager performance should be generalised and not attributed to a specific individual, but should in fact state that "Council had concerns..."

With these amendments, the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the 376 meeting of Council.

1.4 Matters arising from the minutes and action points

There were no matters arising that are not covered elsewhere.

2. Finance and Operations

2.1 Update from Finance and Operations Committee

Council was provided with a report from the Finance & Operations Committee meeting held on 5 September 2018.

2.1.1 Investment introduction

The Chief Executive circulated a document and gave an overview to incoming members of Council of how the Society's investment portfolio is constructed and monitored.

David Blackburn asked if Trustee training courses were still available for Council meetings. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would circulate any information about Trustee training as it arises.

2.1.2 Investment portfolio

The Treasurer explained that the Finance & Operations Committee had held extraordinary meetings with both Waverton and ARC. He noted that the meeting with Waverton was reported on at the 376 meeting of Council. Waverton's report for this quarter demonstrated improved performance, exceeding their mandate and the more significantly benchmark. The incoming President queried the charges levied by Waverton for fund management. The Chief Executive read the charging structure from Waverton's report. The incoming President asked whether the Finance & Operations Committee ask Waverton to justify their performance by, for example, asking them to explain what return would have been through a tracker fund versus realised return. John Morrissey noted that this review had informed Council that communication issues had resulted in a negative impact on the performance of the portfolio and not just the actions of the investment manager.

2.1.3 Management Accounts – to end July 2018

Council noted the accounts.

2.1.4 Final Budget Proposal 2019

Council approved the final budget proposal for 2019.

2.1.5 Journal platform investment spend

Council approved the investment spend for improvements to the journal platform.

2.1.6 Approach to Article Processing Charges

Council approved to recommendations for pricing Article Processing Charges.

2.1.7 Contingency budget

Council noted the contingency budget spend to September 2019.

2.1.8 Update on significant operational matters

The Chief Executive highlighted that the Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes would be going on maternity leave shortly and Tony McBride would be covering her role for 2 days a week, covering two specific areas of her role. He will take on the management of the Professional Development team and the Policy Team. The Chief Operations Officer will take on direct responsibility for the Conferences Team and the Chief Executive will take direct responsibility for the Membership team and the State of Microbiology Project.

3. President / Chief Executive Business

3.1 General business

The President summarised the events of the previous day; the Society Showcase, the Young Microbiologist of the Year competition and the Annual General Meeting and thanked everyone for their involvement.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the UKRI are now seeking advisory board members for its Global Challenges Research Fund. There were several topic areas relevant to our members work, including health, environmental, agriculture and food security.

The Chief Executive proposed that the Society put forward members who would be interested in standing. It was agreed that we would put a call out to the membership in the next newsletter for nominations. The positions on the advisory board are remunerated and that a careful process would be required to manage this, so it was agreed that nominations would be then reviewed by the Executive Officers and a shortlist put forward, in order to meet the 5 November deadline.

Protistology UK have formally agreed to hold their annual meeting at our Annual Conference for the next three years. It was previously agreed by Council that its members would receive the member rate to come to the meeting if they join as members of the Microbiology Society and the Society would provide a grant to Protistology-UK for the £1500 they may potentially lose in membership fees. We would enable Protistology-UK members to identify themselves as such, as they join online.

3.2 Composition of Council and Committees

Council noted the paper circulated in advance.

3.3 Membership report

The Chief Executive summarised the paper for this item and confirmed that the usual new members list is now an appendix to this report. The paper detailed ways we have been able to identify industrial microbiologists' and a plan to develop our engagement with them.

The Chief Executive also confirmed that there is a member survey currently in progress to ensure that the Society is asking members what they would like from the organisation and inform future decision making.

Charles Dorman highlighted an error in the membership implementation plan; under item 1b. it should read UK *and Ireland* institutions.

3.4 Prizes Panel recommendations and Prize Medal nominations

The General Secretary confirmed that the prizes panel met on the 31 July.

There were no suitable nominations for the *Unilever* Colworth Prize.

Council approved the recommendations.

The President expressed disappointment at the lack of an appropriate recipient of the *Unilever* Colworth Prize. The information identified by the membership team through the CRM, about the number of industrial microbiologists in the membership, should permit us to target a greater spread of nominations in future years.

3.5 Critical Risk Register and Audit Risk and Evaluation Committee

The Chief Executive gave some background information on how audit, risk and evaluation had historically been handled separately, but that Council had agreed to bring them under a single umbrella and form the Audit, Risk and Evaluation Committee and to appoint an external Chair. The Treasurer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Operations Officer held interviews with suitable candidates on 6 September. The panel will see two further candidates who could not make the date before recommending a decision to Council.

The Chief Executive referred Council to the Critical Risk Register (paper 377-06) 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. The item relating to co-ownership of Charles Darwin House had been amended in light of the recent decision to sell the buildings.

It was agreed that the Society's Code of Conduct information should now be added to the Risk register and Paul Kellam suggested that the Impact of Brexit should also be added.

3.6 AGM and Society Showcase

The President noted the excellent and very positive Society Showcase event on 6 September 2018, and thanked the staff and members involved. All winners received a certificate at the event and runners up would be sent these by post. The candidate who was unable to complete her presentation due to technical problems would be permitted to repeat the presentation next year. For future years, it was agreed that only candidates who could be present in person would be eligible to apply.

George Salmond requested that at next year's event, runners up should be presented with their certificate by the President.

Council noted and accepted the outcomes of the AGM and associated events.

3.7 Position statement on Open Access

Council approved the revised position statement on Open Access.

The Director of Publishing confirmed that she would be investigating all potential possibilities for the Society following the release of the Open Access Plan S statement on 4 September and would report back to Council as soon as possible.

4. Key points for Council

4.1 Summary of progress – Strategy 2018-2022

The Chief Executive summarised the Society's progress against the strategy document circulated in advance.

Steve Oliver asked about the progress with plans to carry out a potential fundraising campaign. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was nothing new to update Council on yet but that plans were in place to do so at December's meeting.

5. Minutes from Committee Meetings

5.1 ECM Summer Conference Evaluation Report

Amy Richards summarised report on the ECM Summer Conference and stated that there was a positive atmosphere and the feedback was excellent. There were 56 delegates at this year's event, the aim is to grow it for next year and then to reassess after that. It was noted that if the event grew too large, that this could be detrimental to the event overall.

5.2 Publishing Committee

Council noted the minutes circulated in advance.

Steve Oliver suggested that the Director of Publishing may wish to revisit the Open Access targets following the Plan S announcement on 4 September.

5.3 Scientific Conferences Committee

Council noted the minutes circulated in advance.

5.4 Annual Conference 2018 Evaluation Report

Council noted the report circulated in advance.

Paul Kellam commented that the feedback from the Stop, Start and Continue boards at Annual Conference was really helpful and asked how we were going to address these, particularly any that were cause for concern. The Chief Executive confirmed that these were being addressed by the Conferences and Events team working closely with the Scientific Conferences Committee.

Nicola Stonehouse asked if there was any specific feedback about the social events. The Chief Executive confirmed that there had been no negative feedback.

There was some feedback received suggesting there was only virology session on one day. The Chief Executive confirmed that work was underway to ensure the programme was communicated as effectively as possible so that all delegates are aware of all of the sessions.

The Chair of Publishing Committee suggested that more work could be done to bring conferences, communications and journals promotion together at the Annual Conference.

George Salmond asked if there was any further feedback about number of female speakers in 2018 following the comments made. The Chief Executive noted there was one small isolated comment.

Amy Richards asked if the Society checks that grant recipients who receive funds to attend the meeting actually do present their poster. The Chief Executive confirmed that we would follow this up with Maria Fernandes, Head of Professional Development and Evaluation but noted that this may be difficult to identify.

Nicola Stonehouse noted the comments regarding catering costs and food waste and asked about the food waste from our meetings. The Chief Executive confirmed that the venues do have food waste policies, but their ability to do anything with the waste was restricted for health and safety reasons. However, the Conferences and Events team were working with future venues, particularly around the issue of plastic cup waste

5.5 Communications Committee

Council noted the minutes circulated in advance.

6. AOB

The Chair of the Policy Committee confirmed that a date had been agreed for the International Ambassadors Meeting which will be held on 25 October 2018. The Chair and the Director of Strategy and Members' Programmes would be sending information to the international representatives from each Committee in due course.

The meeting closed at 12:26pm