

351st SGM Council Meeting - Minutes

Minutes of the 351st meeting of Council, held on 27 April, 2012 at 9.00 am at Marlborough House, Spencers Wood, Reading RG7 1AG.

Present

Hilary Lappin-Scott, (in the Chair)
Colin Harwood
David Blackburn
Evelyn Doyle
Ian Henderson
John Sinclair
Karen Robinson
Mark Harris
Nigel Brown
Paul Hoskisson

In attendance

Charles Dorman (Treasurer Elect)
Simon Festing (Chief Executive)
Suzanne Beaumont (for Finance & Administration)
Jane Westwell (for Meetings and Membership Services)
Dariel Burdass (for Education & Public Affairs)

1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Jo Verran and Gary Rowley. Council conveyed its best wishes to Gary.

2. Minutes of the 350th Meeting of Council

The minutes of the meetings were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes not on the Agenda

There were none

President/Secretary/Chief Executive Business

4. General business / Marlborough House items

Council agreed that the Dublin meeting had been highly successful, with a wide range of activities. Council noted in particular the benefits of international collaboration, and agreed this needed further consideration, including the development of links at the level of both Council and staff.

5. SGM Strategic Plan 2012-17 – final approval

Council approved the final version of the Strategic Plan, and agreed that this should be posted on the SGM website up to the end of section 6.

6. Proposals on Governance and Working Party on committee remits

Council endorsed the recommendations in the "Background" section of the accompanying paper, in essence for five subcommittees to reflect the agreed Strategic Priorities in the above plan. Council noted that these recommendations had been endorsed by the Strategy Sub-Committee.

Council agreed that the Policy Committee should be set up with immediate effect.

Council agreed to set up a Working Party with the remit proposed in the accompanying paper, with the exception of item 5 (how members of the committee are appointed or elected in future).

7. Recruitment of President for SGM – discussion and vote

Council elected Nigel Brown as the next President of the Society (the position is taken immediately after the September AGM). Nigel Brown accepted.

Council agreed that the Society should "capture" the process used for the election, and review this at some stage in the future, in the light of benchmarking of equivalent practice in other societies.

8. Journals Business Review – discussion with Simon Inger

Council agreed the following, after careful consideration of the report from Simon Inger and the deliberations from the previous day:

1. At the current time Council has decided to maintain SGM's role as a publisher of academic journals rather than outsourcing publication to commercial publishers.
2. Council has endorsed the need for the SGM to refocus its journal production procedures so as to align them with mainstream publication systems and practices.
3. Council has agreed to appoint a new Head of Publishing as soon as reasonably possible
4. Council has agreed on the need for a Sales and Marketing Manager to grow sales (particularly in emerging markets), and to promote the journals to potential subscribers and contributors.
5. Council expects the SGM to act at all time as a responsible employer.

Council thanks Simon Inger for his work on the report which was deemed to be extremely useful in determining a way forward for the Society's publishing activities.

Council noted a number of additional points:

- The Journal Business Sub-Committee will now take the task of working with the Chief Executive to implement the decisions above. This would include determining any matters which should be taken to Council.
- The recruitment of a Sales and Marketing Manager should have the input of a newly appointed Head of Publishing, but the process should not wait until that person is fully in post.
- The staff structure suggested in the report from Simon Inger is a "typical" structure which represents industry typical "best practice". The Society should determine a structure which suits its own needs, taking into account a range of factors, including quality of service (to editors and authors in particular).
- Council agreed on the need for a letter from the President on behalf of Council to go to staff after they have been informed of the decisions taken.

- Council had heard plans in the session the day before from the Chief Executive on how to inform staff, and manage the implications of the decisions taken. Council was satisfied with those plans so far.
- Council supported the proposed job description for the Head of Publishing in principle, leaving the detail to the Chief Executive in liaison with the Journal Business Sub-Committee.
- Colin Harwood should stay as Publications Officer until the end of the current term of that post, namely September 2013.

Finance and Administration

9. Signing of Accounts for 2011

Council approved the accounts, proposed by Mark Harris and seconded by Nigel Brown, and the relevant Officers signed them in the room.

10. Report back from Treasurer's Committee

The Treasurer noted the following items to which the Committee had agreed: (i) the auditor for the Society (Sally-Jane Bonner of Chantrey Vellacott) had given a full report to the Committee. No issues of major concern had been raised. (ii) the 1st quarter figures for 2012 were discussed and considered acceptable; (iii) the contract of the Project Manager working on the CRM and website was extended for another 6 months (in order to see these projects through); (iv) funding was agreed for a trial scheme to run policy internships (similar to the student vacations); (v) the page charges for Microbiology should not be dropped until this had been reviewed by a new Head of Publishing; (vi) SGM should negotiate with ESCV to transfer management of its accounts and membership to an organization which does that more routinely; and (vii) more work is needed by staff and the Scientific Meetings Committee to develop a model for allocating budgets to Divisions for speakers and sessions.

11. SGM to cease administration of historic ReAssure pension scheme

Council endorsed the recommendation of Treasurer's Committee to cease administration of this pension scheme, noting that it was the decision of the Trustees to wind up the scheme.

Membership and Meetings

12. Proposal to commemorate Harry Smith

Council agreed for the vacation studentships to be renamed "Harry Smith Vacation Studentships", with initially a 5 year sunset clause, to be reviewed. Ian Henderson will contact Harry Smith's wife (Jan) via Jeff Cole, and this will be followed by a formal letter from the General Secretary to be drafted by Jane Westwell.

13. 2014 SGM Prize Medal award – call for nominations

Council noted the need to nominate for this award, with a deadline of 22 June. Jane Westwell will circulate a blank nomination form to Council members.

14. Support of Society of Biology degree accreditation – next steps

Council agreed to set up a Working Party to work with the Society of Biology on the inclusion of microbiology in the next phase of their accreditation of bioscience courses. Membership would include Jo Verran, Kim Hardie, Beatrix Fahnert, Alan McNally and Jane Westwell.

15. Elections to Council and Divisions – update

Jane Westwell informed Council that there were 4 candidates for 2 places on Council, so a vote would be needed (single transferable vote is the required process). Council agreed this should be done electronically, and that information from the candidate's nomination forms should be made available for the process. Jane Westwell also reported that there are 40 nominations for the 16 vacancies on Division committees and it will be necessary for some places to be elected (first past the post process). Council agreed that this would also be carried out electronically if possible. Information about scientific interests of nominees will be made available to voters.

16. FYI: Minutes of the meeting of the Scientific Meetings Committee of 25/03/2012.

Noted by Council.

17. FYI: To confirm those listed as new members of the Society

Noted by Council.

Education and Public Affairs

18. FYI: Minutes of *Microbiology Today* Committee of 10/02/2012

Noted by Council.

Journals Publishing

19. FYI: Minutes of the Publications Committee TC of 27/03/2012 (draft)

Noted by Council.

20. Next Meeting of Council:

Date: Friday 6 July 2012, 9.00 a.m.

Venue: Marlborough House, Spencers Wood, Reading, RG7 1AG

AOBs

Council agreed that Paul Hoskinson would remain in post as editor of *Microbiology Today* (MT), including with a post on Council, for a further year (i.e. until September 2013). There had been no self-nominations for the post following the advertisement in MT. Council agreed that the 'Communications Committee' would review the criteria and processes for recruitment of future MT editors and make recommendations to Council. In addition, Council needs to decide whether the Editor of MT should sit on Council.

Council endorsed Paul Hoskinson's recommendation that SGM journal papers, which are being discussed by the newly formed 'Microbiology Twitter Journal Club', should be made open access – for a set period of time.

Council agreed the need for criteria and processes to make decisions on request for funding on ad hoc projects, which may come at short notice, such as the international influenza conference. In addition, contingency funds should be identified as part of the budgeting process.