

Minutes of the 369 meeting Council

Friday 9 September 2016 09:00-12:30

Venue: Charles Darwin House 2

Attendees:

Neil Gow (President, in the Chair)
Christopher Thomas (Treasurer)
Paul Hoskisson (Chair of Communications Committee)
David Whitworth (Chair of Professional Development Committee)
Karen Robinson (Chair of Scientific Conferences Committee)
Charles Dorman (Chair of Publishing Committee)
Pat Goodwin (Chair of Policy Committee)
Andrew Davison (Elected Member)
Nicola Stonehouse (Elected Member)
Mike Skinner (Elected Member)
Steve Diggle (Elected Member)
David Pearce (Elected Member)

In attendance:

David Bhella (incoming Chair of Communications Committee)
Helen Brown (incoming Chair of the Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee)
Paul Kellam (incoming Elected Member)
George Salmond (incoming Elected Member)
Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)
Sarah Buckman (Director of Scientific Programmes)
Joanne Morley (Chief Operations Officer)
Nicola Wise (Publisher), for item 22.

01. Apologies for absence & welcome to new attendees

The President formally welcomed Council to the 369 meeting and declared the meeting quorate. Apologies were received from Evelyn Doyle, Steve Oliver, Maggie Smith, (the incoming General Secretary), Dariel Burdass and Leighton Chipperfield. Due to a busy meeting requiring important discussion, Item 22 had been moved up the Agenda to follow Item 12.

The President welcomed David Bhella, Paul Kellam, George Salmond and Helen Brown, acting as observers, to the meeting. He reminded Council that incoming members were invited to be in attendance, with no voting rights.

The President provided an update on the Deputy Chief Executive, Dariel Burdass, who was not able to be present for health reasons. He noted that Dariel had announced that she would be moving to take up the role of Chief Executive of the Physiological Society; Council wished her well.

02. Declaration of any new conflicts of interest

None were declared. All members were reminded to notify the Society of any new conflicts of interest that may arise.

03. Minutes of the 368 Meeting of Council

Subject to the following amendments, the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the 368 meeting of Council.

Page 3 – Item 6: “Microbes across boarders” should be “Microbes across borders”.

Page 5 – Item 8: £10K should be £10k.

Page 6 – Item 16: the paragraph beginning “KR requested...” should be amended to “Karen Robinson requested that further consideration be given to the proposals to reduce the Society Conference Grant with regard to postgraduate students. Reducing the number of days’ registration would alter the look and feel of conference if students were only able to attend two days. She suggested that Council consider allowing four days’ registration but no contribution to accommodation and travel. Council agreed to request input from the ECM Forum Executive Committee before making a final decision.”

Page 7 – Item 21: the paragraph beginning “The reforecast currently...” should be reworded to say “The reforecast currently showed an overall expected budget deficit of £451k for 2016. This was a smaller deficit (by £130k) than the original budgeted figure. There were no major concerns arising from the Management Accounts at this stage.

Page 8 – Item 21: “breakeven” should be “break even”

Page 8 – Item 21: RBS should be RSB

Page 8 – Item 21: “Council accepted recommendation to leave as enhances funder” should read “Council accepted the recommendation that the Society should discontinue its enhanced funding”.

Page 8 – Item 21: Delete the second sentence of the Governance update

Throughout: Finance Committee should be referred to as Finance and Operations Committee

04. Matters arising from the minutes and action points

Arising from Item 6, Karen Robinson reported that the idea of the Society holding a meeting in Europe on ‘microbiota’ had been discussed by the Scientific Conferences Committee. There had been a mixed reception by the Divisions to the theme, with a feeling that if the Society were to hold a meeting on the microbiome then there would need to be something that made it different, where the Society could add value. The idea would be discussed further with Divisions during meetings with the Chairs in October 2016. It was noted that Council was flexible as to the theme and that other ideas could be explored. Pat Goodwin reported that the Policy Committee had also discussed this. She suggested that looking at policy issues within Europe concerning the microbiome, as well as their dissemination, could make the meeting unique. Council members were requested to notify Karen Robinson or Sarah Buckman of any relevant organisations that the Society may wish to consider partnering with for such a meeting.

Arising from Item 6, the Chief Executive reported that the Royal Society of Biology had taken the lead in bringing together organisations following the Brexit referendum, and that it made sense for any further policy work undertaken by the Society in this area to be done with the RSB.

Arising from Item 6, the President reported that that British Mycological Society was moving to Charles Darwin House in the autumn, with an intern starting sooner. He noted that the opportunities for collaborative working had been brought together well by the recent joint Focused Meeting on the Dynamic Fungus.

05. Redactions for 368 minutes

Item 5. Remove the redactions cited for the previous set of minutes.

Item 6. Remove the reference to the British Mycological Society moving to Charles Darwin House.

Item 7. Remove reference to the unsuccessful candidate for General Secretary.

Item 10. Remove item related to the changes to the FEMS constitution.

Item 12. Remove item related to a new commercial contract with IJSEM.

Item 13. Remove item on the discussion of launching a new high impact journal.

Item 21. Remove reference to the Royal Society of Biology enhanced funding – Council took the decision but the extra detail should be redacted.

1.1 President / Chief Executive Business

06. General business /Report back from CEO

a) Research Misconduct

The President observed that Council needed to consider having a policy on withdrawing the Society's prizes in cases of research misconduct. The press had reported an instance of a former prize winner being under investigation by his institution, and it would be important to have a policy in place once the outcome was known. The specific case should not, however, be considered in drawing up the policy. Council had a detailed discussion regarding a number of aspects, including (i) the timing of any misconduct and whether it formed the basis upon which a prize was awarded; (ii) potential reputational damage for the Society; (iii) a mechanism for reviewing/implementing such a policy; and (iv) withdrawing membership of the Society.

Council members agreed that they were minded to withdraw a prize if someone was found to be guilty of scientific misconduct in a proper investigation in relation to work which had contributed to the prize, but that they would not make moral statements about something that had nothing to do with the prize. Council noted that each situation would be unique and therefore the focus could not be on generalities, but only on the specifics of the circumstances. Therefore, Council agreed that an *ad hoc* Professional Standards Committee should be convened on a case by case basis to look at the outcome of any investigation into misconduct and to decide whether there were any implications for the Society and to recommend appropriate action.

Council suggested that the Professional Standards Committee should mirror the Prizes Panel, chaired by the General Secretary, with three other members of Council, chosen to reflect its diversity. The Committee would be supplemented by external advice/expertise if necessary, based on the individual case.

In terms of outcomes, various actions were discussed including withdrawing a prize (e.g. crossing the prize winner's name off the website or issuing a press release) and ceasing membership of Society. For instance, there could be circumstances in which a member was guilty of misconduct later in their

career after a prize had been awarded, and it may be appropriate to remove the individual as a member but allow the prize to stand. It was reiterated by Council that it would be for the Professional Standards Committee to recommend the appropriate action.

Council agreed to change the terms and conditions of the Society's prizes to take into account this policy on misconduct in time for the next round of nominations.

b) Richard Elliott Memorial Lecture

The President introduced the proposal that had been received for the Richard M Elliott Lectureship as a mechanism for recognising his life and work, which would have implications for the Society as it suggested a memorial lecture built into the fabric of the Society's Annual Conference. Nicola Stonehouse provided some additional background, noting that a fund had already been established to finance an annual lecture at the Glasgow Virology Workshop. Holding a memorial lecture as part of the Glasgow Virology Workshop would be a great way to do recognise Richard Elliott as it tended to be widely attended. The proposal had not been sent to the Virology Division.

Chris Thomas and Karen Robinson both commented that it should be for the Virology Division to consider and recommend, but if the lecture were to be held as part of the virology sessions and funded then such a memorial lecture could feature at a Society event (e.g. Focused Meeting: International Meeting on Arboviruses and their Vectors which is being held again in 2017), although there would need to be some flexibility.

It was suggested that the proposal be forwarded to the Chair of the Virology Division with comments from Council for review, and the proposers be informed of this.

07. Composition of Council and Committees

Maggie Smith and Ian Roberts as incoming Officers needed to be included in Table 1.

Jodi Lindsay, Tadhg O'Croinin and Ian Roberts as Committee Chairs needed to be included in Table 1.

Helen Brown as Chair of the Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee needed to be included in Table 1.

Paul Duprex needed to be added to Table 1 as the International External Challenge.

The Chief Operations Officer would review this paper to ensure all positions were correct.

08. AGM

The President noted the success of the Society Showcase and AGM the previous day.

Council formally noted that the AGM took the decision to increase the membership subscription fees for 2017 as per the published AGM papers.

09. New Members List

Council members commented on a number of odd addresses (rows 33, 35, 41 and 48), which would be looked at.

Council noted a number of new members in Nepal, which were the result of a very active Champion in that country.

Council accepted the list of incoming members.

10. Prizes Panel nomination recommendations and Prize Medal nominations

The Chief Executive reminded Council of the Prizes Panel procedures, explaining that for all prizes except the Prize Medal, recommendations would be made to Council made by the Prizes Panel; Council members would then vote on the winner of the Prize Medal.

Andrew Davison introduced the Prizes Panel as Chaired by Evelyn Doyle and including himself, Steve Diggle and Karen Robinson.

George Salmond declared an interest as he had nominated one of the candidates but it was noted by Council that as an observer at this meeting he was not eligible to vote.

It was reported that there were fewer nominations this year, with significant issues for equality & diversity despite efforts made by the Society. The Prizes Panel suggested that the new General Secretary review the prizes, particularly in respect to the following: (i) is it appropriate to award the Peter Wildy and Colworth prizes every year, given the low number of nominations? (ii) the Prize Medal is decided at the same time as the other prizes but should it be decided ahead in order to trickle down suitable eligible candidates for the other prizes? (iii) do the nomination forms need to include information on the contribution candidates have made to the Society? (iv) should the awards be offered to UK and Ireland nominees only and /or should there be rules around the inclusion of international nominees?

This year's recommendations for the prizes were:

Peter Wildy – not awarded this year due to the insufficient number of nominees

Colworth – one nominee, recommending Professor Martin Ryan

Fleming – five nominees, all men, recommending Dr Stephen Baker

Marjory Stephenson – three nominees, all men, recommending Professor Steve Busby

Council approved all recommendations and thanked the Prizes Panel for the work done.

Prize Medal 2018 – three nominees were submitted: Pascale Cossart, Julian Parkhill, and Jillian Banfield

Council members were invited to comment on the nominees and a number of points were raised, including the extent to which recent papers are part of a large team, the proportion of papers in which the nominee was the corresponding author, and one of the nominees being from the same institution as a recent Prize Medallist. It was noted that it was pleasing to see a better gender balance among the Prize Medal nominees.

Council voted for Jillian Banfield to be awarded the Prize Medal for 2018.

Council agreed for the Chief Executive to contact Pascale Cossart if Jillian Banfield did not wish to accept the Prize Medal. If the issue of a clash of dates occurred, Council would decide whether to hold over the Medal to the following year or award it to someone else.

11. Critical Risk Register

The Chief Executive reported to Council that, as decided by Council at its July meeting, the Critical Risk Register would be reviewed and revised once new auditors have been appointed, but for now there had been no changes to the register since the last Council meeting.

12. FEMS Update

The Director of Scientific Programmes updated Council on communications with FEMS regarding the 2019 Congress and in particular any potential complications for the Society as a result of FEMS holding the Congress in Glasgow in July 2019, including the risk of low attendance at the Society's Annual Conference.

Pat Goodwin commented on the political aspects of not being involved in FEMS post-Brexit and that it would be advantageous to go in as a strong partner, although it was noted that at this time it was not clear the extent to which the Society would have control over the scientific programme, registration or the award of associated grants for example.

Council agreed to preserve the Society's Annual Conference to be held in the spring of 2019 and authorised the Director of Scientific Programmes to confirm a venue for the meeting. The Chief Executive would speak to the Managing Director of FEMS for further information regarding the Society's involvement in the Congress 2019.

22 New Journal

Charles Dorman summarised the discussion that had taken place at the last meeting regarding the exploration of launching a new high impact journal.

He confirmed that Council already knew the competition out there but one of the main purposes of carrying out this research was to find out if we could we compete effectively.

It was clear that there were new opportunities around the topic of Antimicrobial Resistance but Professor Dorman suggested that Council and the Publishing Committee would still need to assess the potential competition and look at the options for a journal that covered the whole spectrum of microbiology. Pat Goodwin commented on the potential value of a truly interdisciplinary journal in the field, including social sciences as well as science.

He observed that the Publishing Committee and the Society's Publishing team would need more time to make a specific recommendation and would like to ask Council to agree that staff conduct further research.

Council agreed to this request, on the understanding that this research would also identify the potential costs of launching a new journal with financial predictions made under different scenarios, e.g. what it will take to make it profitable and over what timespan. This further research would be brought to December's meeting for further discussion.

1.2 Finance and Operations

Council received a detailed presentation from the Chief Executive, setting out the current budgetary situation, progress in implementing the three-year financial plan agreed by Council in 2014, and three potential scenarios for the finances over the next two years. These scenarios were (i) the budget scenario that had been presented to Finance and Operations Committee and Council in July; (ii) a scenario that included a reduction in costs, put forward by the Directors; and (iii) a scenario that would balance the budget by 2018, without impacting on the core strategic activities of the Society and allowing room for potential growth and investment in other activities in the future.

Council was provided with the full background for each of these scenarios in the papers related to this item. A full discussion ensued, including questions from Council members about: (i) how the

Society compared to other organisations; (ii) the current trend in publishing and whether our income could be maintained and; (iii) whether the costs of printing and distributing *Microbiology Today* were still justifiable. Council approved the Finance and Operations Committee recommendation to have the objective of reaching a balanced budget within two years (subject to regular review) and that this should be worked into a final budget proposal for 2017 to be brought to December's meeting.

The main immediate effect of the proposal would be to reduce the number of smaller, disparate activities the Society undertook in the area of education and outreach, focusing on the higher impact ones.

13. Finance and Operations Committee Key points

Council noted the points on the paper for discussion under the next agenda item.

Following a request for funding made to the President by CARA, Council agreed that while everyone supported the remit of the organisation, the Society could not afford to resource it. Council recommended that 'at risk academics' could access Society member benefits even if they were not members.

14. Report from Finance and Operations Committee

No further items were raised by the Treasurer that had not already been discussed as part of Budget 2017. *[Post meeting note: The Treasurer sent a message to Council via email on 20 September to summarise matters that, in view of time, he had not been able to raise at the meeting].*

15. Collated Finance Papers (2017 Budgets)

Discussed above under Item 1.2.

1.3 ECM Forum

16. Introduction from Chair

Helen Brown updated Council on the first meeting of the Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee which had taken place two days previously. Nearly all members of the ECM Forum Executive Committee had met with their respective committees or committee members and had collectively been generating ideas and trying to collate ideas initially. There were plans to hold an interim meeting of the ECM Forum Executive Committee around Christmas with a view to formally collating ideas by the 2017 Annual Conference. The Committee had taken the decision to co-opt an undergraduate member to the ECM Forum Executive.

1.4 Scientific Conferences

17. Scientific Conferences key points and update

Following the last Scientific Conferences Committee meeting, all Focused Meetings for 2017 had been agreed. A complete view of all meeting dates for 2017 would be circulated to Council in due course.

Karen Robinson reported that the upcoming one-to-one meetings with Division Chairs would be really important and it was likely that SCC would come back to Council with ideas to shape the whole conferences programme as well as ideas to reduce costs for Annual Conference 2018.

Nicola Stonehouse supported this review of conferences but raised some concern over the proposal to charge for social events as part of the Annual Conference. The ECM Forum Chair would discuss with the Forum what early career delegates at conference might be willing to pay for to inform the review. In addition, Nicola Stonehouse offered to share the contact details of a colleague running conferences to provide further information for the review of the conferences budget.

18. Scientific Conferences Minutes

These were taken as read.

1.5 Professional Development

19. Professional Development Committee key points and update

The Director of Scientific Programmes provided a brief overview of the Member Research Project activities to date. The interim results from the member survey were provided and it was reported that a series of workshops in the coming weeks would further explore four key themes: networking, professional development, localness, and 'voice for microbiology'. An interim report following up these workshops would be submitted to Council in December, with a view to providing a renewed membership model to the AGM in 2017.

David Whitworth reported increased membership numbers in early career categories and that the member research project survey indicated that different types of members were valuing different things at the Society.

Following the Grants Review, the Professional Development Committee made a specific proposal to Council to rename the Inclusion Grant. The detailed suggestion was not accepted by Council, although there was support for the idea of making the name more transparent; Council tasked PDC with identifying alternative suggestions.

20. Membership Research Project Survey results

These were taken as read.

1.6 Publishing

21. Publishing Committee key points and update

These were taken as read.

Yin Li, an important Chinese microbiologist, would be attending the next Publishing Committee meeting and was willing to assist the Society to find out more about the Chinese market and publishing in China.

22. New Journal

Discussions on the New Journal had taken place following Item 12.

1.7 Communications

23. Communications Committee key points and update

Paul Hoskisson reported that there has been one application and one further enquiry for the post of Editor-in-Chief of *Microbiology Today*. As the closing date had not yet passed, these would be reviewed in due course.

1.8 Policy

24. Policy Committee key points and update

Pat Goodwin noted that an email had been circulated to Council with dates for the upcoming Microbiome workshops and encouraged members to attend. Policy Committee was considering the session at Annual Conference and what it would be used for as part of the Microbiome policy project.

1.9 AOB

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 12.25pm