

Minutes of the 387 meeting of Council

Friday 18 December 2020 12:00-13:00 GMT

Venue: By Zoom

Present:

Judith Armitage (President, in the Chair)

Ian Roberts (Treasurer)

Mark Harris (General Secretary)

Chloe James (Chair of Communications Committee)

Paul Kellam (Chair of Policy Committee)

Jodi Lindsay (Chair of Publishing Committee)

Tadhg Ó Cróinín (Chair of Professional Development Committee)

Amy Pickering (Chair of Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee)

Stephen Smith (Chair of Scientific Conferences Committee)

Deirdre Devine (Elected Member)

Charles Dorman (Elected Member)

John Morrissey (Elected Member)

Tracy Palmer (Elected Member)

George Salmond (Elected Member)

In attendance:

Robin May (Incoming Treasurer)

Jose Bengoechea (Incoming Co-Chair of Sustainability Committee)

Paul Hoskisson (Incoming Co-Chair of Building Communities Committee)

Colman Ó Cathail (Incoming Chair of Early Career Microbiologists' Forum Executive Committee)

Andrew Edwards (Incoming Elected Member)

Laura Bowater (Incoming Elected Member)

Sharon Brookes (Incoming Elected Member)

Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)

1. Apologies for absence and welcome to new attendees

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The President formally welcomed Council members to the 386 meeting. There were no apologies for absence.

1.2 Declaration of any new conflicts of interest

The President reminded Council members that they had a responsibility for declaring their own conflicts of interest and should any new conflicts arise they should notify the Society. No new conflicts had been notified since the previous meeting.

2. The Conduct of Council

Council noted the paper circulated in advance, which was introduced by the General Secretary.

Council noted that the restrictions imposed because of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic had made communication more difficult than normal. Council agreed with the General Secretary's observation that because of these problems, some recent communication had been out of character, and had been difficult to reconcile with the Society's stated values of being welcoming to everyone, transparent and professional in everything, and dedicated to our charitable aims.

Council unanimously agreed to draw a line under these issues, re-emphasise the Society's stated values and refresh its approach to communication.

3. Resignations from Council

Council noted the resignation from Council of David Blackburn on 3 December 2020 and the resignation from Council of Charles Dorman on 3 December 2020.

The President reported that she had wished both of them well for the future and thanked them for their valuable years of service to the Society.

Council noted that as things stood, from 1 January 2021, it would be short of two elected members, relative to its nominal strength, and in particular that the Impact and Influence Committee would be without an elected member.

Council noted that the general provisions of charity and company law and the Society's Articles of Association placed no restrictions on its ability in the circumstances to fill the gap by co-option. It further noted the precedent (380 Meeting of Council, item 3.9) that in circumstances where there was a shortage of elected members for the coming year, Council might ask existing elected members whose terms would expire at the end of the current year to serve for an extra year.

On this basis, Council agreed to ask John Morrissey and Tracy Palmer if either of them would be willing to serve an additional year as an elected member of Council during 2021.

4. Dates for Council meetings in 2021

Council noted the paper circulated in advance, and in particular that because of meetings of the REF panel for Biological Sciences, the General Secretary would be unavailable for three of the four scheduled meetings of Council in 2021. Council agreed that this was undesirable, and approved the recommendation that alternative dates be sought. The Chief Executive undertook to ask the Chief Operations Officer to distribute a poll the same day. Council agreed that the deadline for completing the poll should be the end of the day on Monday 21 December, noting that some Council members would only be able to give a tentative indication of their availability at this stage.

5. AOB

There being no other business, the President wished everyone a happy Christmas.

The meeting closed at 13:02.