

Minutes of the 370 meeting Council

Friday 2 December 2016 09:00-12:30

Venue: Charles Darwin House 2

Attendees:

Neil Gow (President, in the Chair)
Christopher Thomas (Treasurer)
Evelyn Doyle (General Secretary)
Charles Dorman (Chair of Publishing Committee)
Pat Goodwin (Chair of Policy Committee)
Paul Hoskisson (Chair of Communications Committee)
Karen Robinson (Chair of Scientific Conferences Committee)
David Whitworth (Chair of Professional Development Committee)
Andrew Davison (Elected Member)
Steve Oliver (Elected Member)
Mike Skinner (Elected Member)
Nicola Stonehouse (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)
Maggie Smith (incoming General Secretary)
Peter Cotgreave (Chief Executive)
Sarah Buckman (Director of Scientific Programmes)
Leighton Chipperfield (Director of Publishing and Income Diversification)
Joanne Morley (Chief Operations Officer)

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 Steve Diggle and David Pearce. The President had written to Prof Diggle, whose last meeting this would have been, to thank him for his contribution as a member of Council.

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 369 Meeting of Council

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the 369 meeting of Council.

04. Matters arising from the minutes and action points

Arising from Item 4, the President noted that the Scientific Conferences Committee (SCC) had recommended that: the organisation invest more in its relationship in FEMS; that European members be encouraged to be more actively involved in the Society's activities; that an increased focus on European meetings be given to Society-supported conference grants; and that efforts were made to build relationships with other European microbiology societies. Karen Robinson also noted SCC's support for building personal relationships through appointing or electing microbiologists from mainland Europe as members of Divisions.

Arising from Item 6, the Chief Executive reported that the Virology Division and SCC had expressed support for the principle of honouring the late Richard Elliott. Virology Division and SCC had both expressed the view that an annual Richard Elliott Memorial Lecturer should not necessarily be confined to Annual Conference and that it would need to fit into the existing framework of programming.

Arising from Item 10, it was confirmed that all the prize winners for 2017 and the Prize Medal winner for 2018 had accepted the awards.

Arising from Item 12, the Chief Executive reported that he and the Director of Scientific Programmes had spoken to the Chief Executive of FEMS to report that Council would not be cancelling the 2019 Annual Conference, but that Council and SCC were both keen to take an active part in the 2019 FEMS Congress. FEMS was still working out the details of how it would organise the congress with a new professional conference organising company and was not in a position to outline the costs of holding a session. It expected to be in a position to give more information in time for the Society to advertise to its members in the second half of 2017 the opportunity to bid for a session in 2019, with a decision by SCC in July 2018.

Arising from Item 23, the role of Editor-in-Chief of *Microbiology Today* had been offered to Rowena Jenkins, Cardiff Metropolitan University. The President confirmed he would write to Laura Bowater, the outgoing Editor-in-Chief, to thank her for her years of service.

05. Redactions for 369 minutes

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

Item 10. Remove the names of the nominees/runners-up of the prizes.

Item 22. Remove the reference to the potential new journal, which was commercially sensitive.

1.1 President / Chief Executive Business

06. General business /Report back from CEO

a) Staffing

The changes agreed by Council at the previous meeting had been implemented and those staff affected had now left. The Chief Executive reported that interviewing would take place shortly for the vacant posts, including the new member of staff responsible for governance, who would be Council members' first point of contact on administrative matters.

b) FIS

The Society's session at FIS had been a success and Council agreed that the President should write to Sheila Patrick to thank her for her hard work as the Society's representative to FIS.

07. Composition of Council and Committees

Council noted the paper circulated in advance.

Pat Goodwin observed that the names of John McGrath and Jim Prosser needed to be added to the list of Policy Committee.

Charles Dorman noted that Tadhg Ó Cróinín's name was given incorrectly.

Pat Goodwin requested that it be made clear who was the Equality and Diversity ambassador and the International ambassador for each Committee.

08. AGM

The draft minutes from the 2016 Annual General Meeting were noted. Council requested a minor change to make it clear that the report of activities at the AGM related to the calendar year 2015.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the amended minutes would be submitted for approval at the 2017 AGM.

09. New Members List

Council accepted the list of incoming members.

The President noted that it was encouraging to see a number of new early career members on the list.

organisations11. Council appointed positions

The Chief Executive reported to Council that there were two vacancies to be filled during 2017: Chair-elect of Scientific Conferences Committee and Chair-elect of Policy Committee, both of whom would automatically become trustees in due course. The General Secretary would chair a nomination panel of three other members to bring forward recommendations by July 2017 at the latest. The membership would be asked for expressions of interest early in the new year.

The Chief Executive reminded Council of its statement on Equality and Diversity, and about taking into account appropriate representation from the UK and Ireland, and subject expertise.

Maggie Smith proposed David Bhella, Karen Robinson and Paul Kellam for the panel, and all agreed. Tadhg Ó Cróinín, who would be coming on to Council in 2018, was identified as a further consultant if needed, given that the panel did not include anyone from Ireland.

12. Equality and Diversity Statistics 2016

Paul Hoskisson noted that the working group now had three years of data. There had been significant progress over the period. Paul Hoskisson drew attention to the fact that a small number of Committees and Editorial Boards were not yet reaching the target of one-third female representation, but noted that members served multi-year terms and that the changes would take time.

The next phase would be to start collating data on other protected characteristics. Paul Hoskisson thanked the staff for compiling the data.

Council approved the recommendations in the paper :(a) that the group bring forward proposals on a shadowing scheme for Committees and ;(b) that the General Secretary review the wording concerning prizes.

The President thanked Paul Hoskisson for leading the assessment. The President would write to Hilary Lappin-Scott to thank her for providing external input.

13. Conferences update

The Director of Scientific Programmes summarised the paper. The poster session feedback from 2016 Conference had been considered. Council had already agreed that there would be no other meetings that clashed with posters at the lunchtime and evening sessions. It would be possible to hold other meetings from 7.30pm. Karen Robinson said that the aim was to ensure that those people attending Conference at the Society's expense did more to engage with the delegates.

Those attending for free would be expected to judge posters. Nicola Stonehouse noted how busy the conference programme was and was supportive of Editorial Boards being given more work to do. Charles Dorman reported that the general reaction from the Editorial Boards had been positive. Paul Hoskisson asked whether Council members could receive journal-branded Post-it notes to place on relevant posters. Nicola Stonehouse asked whether the 'rules' for conference should be renamed 'Strong Guidance'. The Chief Executive pointed out that 'strong guidance' is easier to disregard than 'rules' and that given the scale of the financial challenge that Council had set, it was important that the decision was put into effect wholeheartedly. Provision had been built in for genuinely deserving exceptions to be considered by the Chair of SCC and Chief Executive.

14. Outcomes from Officers away day

The Chief Executive summarised the outcomes of the away day held on 24 November, and provided a timetable for updating the Society's strategy. The Chief Executive would offer to visit each Council member to seek their individual input. The timetable allowed for the new strategy to be launched at the Annual General Meeting in September 2017.

15. Outcomes from Thursday session

The President noted the wealth of ideas generated from the session, and the valuable contribution of journal representatives. These ideas would be fed into the process of updating the Society's strategy. (add something in here about what these sessions were)

17. Staff survey update

The Chief Executive provided a summary of the latest staff survey. It was noted that the 2016 results presented a further improvement on 2015.

1.2 Finance and Operations

18. Finance and Operations Committee Key points

a) 2017 budget

Council approved the 2017 budget as presented.

b) Appointment of new auditors

The Treasurer summarised the tender process that had culminated in presentations by prospective auditors in November 2016. Council approved the recommendation to appoint Kingston Smith as the Society's new auditors.

c) Income diversification

The Treasurer summarised the income diversification work ongoing. Finance & Operations Committee had observed that care needed to be maintained on the perceived relationships with potential corporate supporters.

Council agreed to the recommendation that a feasibility study for a fundraising campaign should be conducted, subject to the outcome of consultancy from the new auditors, which they had offered gratis as part of their tender.

d) Contingency

The Treasurer reported that there were no costed items on the contingency budget statement, but that if the feasibility study went ahead it would be funded from the contingency.

e) Cost savings

The Treasurer reported that the Chief Operations Officer continued to make good progress on cost-saving initiatives.

f) Reserves policy

Council agreed to the recommendation from Finance & Operations Committee that a new form of wording be developed for the reserves policy, and that this be taken forward in discussion with Kingston Smith.

g) Investments

The Treasurer summarised the presentations from Waverton and ARC on the Society's investments, which had been attended by a number of Council members.

h) Annual conference

Sarah Buckman summarised the presentation provided to Finance and Operations Committee on the proposed measures to reduce costs for the annual conference. The Treasurer noted that the Committee recommended these measures to Council, and further recommended that SCC should investigate the possibility of reducing the main conference to a three-day annual meeting with a series of satellite events on the fourth day, to reduce costs without reducing the attractiveness of the event.

Council approved the recommendations.

The Chief Executive reported that the Divisions had responded positively to the challenges of reducing costs.

g) European Federation of Biotechnology

The Treasurer asked Council to consider whether in principle it wished to support the request from the European Federation of Biotechnology (EFB) for an interest free loan of 40,000 euros. If Council did support the principle, further work would be required to investigate how such a loan could be made available. The Treasurer reported that Finance & Operations Committee had concerns about

the reputational risk of such a loan, as well as the financial security. The Chief Executive had consulted the new auditors, and his personal judgment was that whilst it would be permissible to provide a loan or donation, it would be essential to take legal guidance on the practicalities.

The Chief Executive said that the situation had arisen because of EFB's poor financial controls in the past. The Chief Executive had asked about the actions that had been taken to address this, and the EFB's response was included in the Appendix to the papers.

The President summarised that Council expressed sympathy with EFB's current situation, but that it did not feel able to meet the request.

19. Collated Finance papers

These had been considered under item 18.

1.3 ECM Forum

20. Update from Chair

Helen Brown updated Council that two Executive Committee meetings had taken place, and a further meeting would be held in January 2017. The Executive Committee had co-opted an undergraduate representative, who would need to be replaced in the election cycle 2017. The current focus of the Forum's work was on the Annual Conference. The Forum felt that the planned changes would be beneficial to early career microbiologists.

1.4 Professional Development

21. Membership Research Project update

The Director of Scientific Programmes noted that the work of external experts, for example from the Royal Society of Chemistry, had been very beneficial. The importance of 'local' engagement had been reinforced through the research. The research had also helped identify aspects of the administration of membership that needed to be improved.

A final report would be presented to Council in course.

22. Professional Development progress report – one year on

This was taken as read.

23. Professional Development Committee key points and update

These were taken as read.

1.5 Policy

24. Policy Committee key points and update

Pat Goodwin reported that Stephen Metcalfe, the Chair of the House of Commons Science & Technology Committee, had issued a consultation on genome and genome editing, and recommended that the Society should contribute to the Royal Society of Biology's response.

1.6 Publishing

21. Publishing Committee key points and update

Council approved the recommendations to appoint Norman Fry and Kalai Mathee as co-Editors-in-Chief for *Journal of Medical Microbiology* with effect from 1 April 2017, and to appoint Paul Duprex as Deputy Editor for *Journal of General Virology* with effect from 1 January 2017.

1.7 Communications

23. Communications Committee key points and update

These were taken as read.

1.8 Scientific conferences

24. Scientific Conferences Committee key points and update

These were taken as read.

1.9 Equality and diversity minutes

These were taken as read.

1.10 AOB

The President thanked Dariel Burdass for her major contribution to the Society during almost 18 years of service.

The President thanked Evelyn Doyle as she completed her term as General Secretary.

The President further thanked Andrew Davison, Paul Hoskisson and Steve Diggle as they completed their terms on Council.

The meeting closed at 12.31pm.