

Council Meeting

**9 June 2021
12:30-14:30**

Via videoconference

Web Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

Present:	Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow (President)	JG
	Professor Richard Reece (Hon Secretary)	RR
	Dr Paul Brooker (Hon Treasurer)	PB
	Professor Yvonne Barnett, College of Organisational Members	YB
	Professor Stefan Przyborski, College of Organisational Members	SP
	Professor Patricia Kuwabara, College of Organisational Members	PK
	Dr Suzy Moody, College of Member Organisations*	SM
	Professor Sara Louise Cosby, College of Individual Members*	SLC
	Dr Jacqui Piner, College of Individual Members	JP
	Mrs Louise Hudson, College of Individual Members*	LH
	Professor Hilary MacQueen	HMcQ
	Professor Nigel Brown, College of Individual Members	NB
	Professor Claire Wathes	CW
	Dr Louise Leong	LL
	Mr Terry Gould	TG
Observers:	Professor Sir Ian Boyd, President Elect*	IB
	Professor Jonathan Scott, ESP Committee Chair*	JS
	Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive	MD
	Dr Laura Bellingan, Director of Policy & Public Affairs	LB
	Mr Mark Leach, Associate Director (Membership, Regions & Facilities)	ML
	Mr Paul Trimmer, Associate Director (Accreditation & Professional Affairs)	PT
	Ms Jen Crosk, PA to Chief Executive (Minutes)	JC
	Dr Jade Hall, Senior Science Policy Officer (for Paper 5)	JH

1.1 Introductions and welcome for new Council members

The Chair welcomed the President Elect, three new Trustees and ESP Committee Chair (* above) to their first meeting of Council.

1.2 Declaration of interests

None reported.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2021

2.1 Review of action points

All of the actions had been completed or appeared within the agenda.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

None reported.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

Council **APPROVED** the Minutes and Web minutes of 10 March 2021.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

None reported.

Section A: Governance and Risk Management

3. Chief Executive's Report

The Society had been working jointly with RSC and IoP to co-ordinate our thoughts and messaging on issues such as science funding - this collaboration will increase over coming months.

MD encouraged Council to promote, via personal networks, the range of competitions currently underway. There are plans to hold a physical exhibition at the Whitworth Gallery for previous entries of the Nancy Rothwell specimen drawing competition during Biology Week 2021 subject to any social distancing guidance at the time.

The line-up is being formalised for Links Day on 22 June for which the theme will be climate change. LB sent a link to Council for registration.

MD confirmed that CaSE will be desk sharing at the Society from the summer.

4. Health & Safety

ML gave an oral update on Health & Safety. No significant staff concerns had been raised in relation to home working and COVID and this continues to be closely monitored by Managers and SMT. The office is now open and requires staff to pre-book, although numbers doing so remains low. H&S procedures are in place, the landlord has carried out a legionella test and masks must be worn when moving around the office.

All staff have been asked to clear their desks ahead of our move to a bookable hot-desking system, with 4 staff retaining permanent desks. Once we return, there will regularly be a member of SMT in

the office and a Facilities Officer should be in post following Ana's departure, ensuring that there is someone on site to deal with any issues.

Council asked ML to look into whether the Society should provide lateral flow tests or ask staff to arrange their own.

Action: ML to look into availability of lateral flow test kits for staff

5. Membership & Professional Affairs Governance

RR introduced this item and reported a request from the MPA Committee asking Council to ratify the criteria for Honorary Fellowship. Council asked the MPA Committee to report back to a future meeting once they have gone through the first round of review and had identified potential new invitees. Once the process is established it can be fully devolved.

Action: MPA Committee to seek Council ratification for the first round of new nominations

Council also received and **AGREED** the Fellowship Committee Terms of Reference recommended by the MPA Committee.

RR noted that, as Paul Hoskisson's term on Council has ended, a new Chair will need to be elected for the College of Organisational Members. PK had volunteered for this role which Council welcomed and **AGREED**.

Council did not express any concerns regarding the proposed Plant Health Register post-nominals recommended by the advisory board

6. RSB Events – returning to face to face

Council reviewed the proposals set out in the paper presented by ML and discussed how the Society can, where appropriate, return to physical events.

Partly in response to concerns raised by some staff, SMT had recommended that staff and volunteers should not be required to attend physical events until fully vaccinated. Council **AGREED** but considered a range of potential complications which needed to be appropriately considered, including non-vaccination on the recommendation of professional health advisors due to an increased individual risk profile.

Council agreed to go very slowly on the reintroduction of physical events and **AGREED** to postpone the "pilot" Accreditation event until November/December.

PB suggested that the vaccination topic should remain a standing item on the RemCom & HR committee so that they can keep track of developments and seek our HR Consultant's advice in the sector and feed back to Council.

Action: RemCom & HR Committee to have COVID vaccinations as a standing agenda item

MD sought Council's view on large scale networking events such as the Parliamentary event during Biology Week and the Christmas Parliamentary reception. Council agreed that, whilst we wouldn't want to encourage large crowds, we should keep a watching brief as things progress.

Physical branch events are currently on hold until 1 October and MD sought Council's view on tentatively resuming outdoor events, subject to guidance and bearing in mind differing guidance for devolved administrations. Council **AGREED** that we should continue to follow Government advice but in the meantime a small task group should be created, consisting of RR, PB, NB and SMT, who will make decisions on behalf of Council. Meetings will be virtual and on an "as needed basis". Decisions on physical events should also go through this group.

Many Committees have found that hosting meetings virtually has increased attendance and engagement, as well as reducing travel costs. Council considered and supported a blended approach to future Committee meetings, with 1-2 per annum in person and the remainder virtually and keep under review.

Council were asked their views on badging to events being held by other organisations (for example during Biology Week), Council again **AGREED** that this should be kept under review by the task group.

Section B: Strategy and Finance

7. Strategy framework

The current three-year cycle of business planning ends in December and initial discussions have taken place with staff, Council, committees, MOs and SMT as a starting point. A paper will be brought to Council in September, with final sign off in December.

Action: Council to receive a strategy paper in September

8. Report on ED&I within the Society

JH provided a paper on the progression framework exercise, which includes a continuous benchmarking tool. The launch of the ED&I network will allow us to better recognise and implement best practice. The D&I questions in the membership survey are now fully benchmarked and standardised to ensure better and more comparable data looking ahead.

We are currently awaiting the report which will contain key recommendations and compare us with other participating organisations. Recommendations will go to the D&I network (a rep on each RSB Committee group). Council **AGREED** to consider further the recommendations once received.

9. Financial Planning

9.1 Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of 1 June 2021

PB gave an overview of the reporting process for incoming Council members. Council received the draft minutes of 1 June for information as no decisions were required. He noted that after some years of uncertainty RSB was in calmer financial waters, helped by a move into surplus for the closed defined benefit pension scheme and some generous legacies. The CCLA medium risk investment fund continued to perform well.

9.2 Q2 management accounts and year-end forecast

MD reported that finances are on track, with income down slightly and expenditure more so, leading to a small forecast surplus for year end, some £40k better than budget. Cash flow was strong.

Section C: Reports to Council

10. Progress Reports

10.1 ESP meeting held on 18 May 2021

Council received the minutes of the last meeting.

10.2 Policy and Public Affairs Directorate

Council received the update from the Policy & Public Affairs directorate. LB reported that extensive work is being done across teams and that the coming months will be extremely busy due to the Environment Bill and discussions with other societies in the lead up to the spending review.

10.3 MPA Committee Report/Minutes of 15 April 2021

Council received the paper.

10.4 Membership, Registers & Training

ML reported that membership numbers and income had held up well, showing only a slight decrease in new member applications, with renewals stable. The ED&I Committee are reviewing the criteria for female fellowship and hoping to see increased uptake especially for Fellows. JG suggested a detailed future Council discussion on how we can increase nominations for particular groups.

HMQ confirmed that HUBS will continue to encourage and help with nominations.

Action: A paper on increasing specific group nominations to be brought to a future Council meeting

PT reported that the CBIol review is on track and progressing well. MPA have been looking at the entire application process and approved new competencies.

Areas of improvement for the online training system have been identified and the new system should be in place in September.

11. Any other Business

CW highlighted current issues in getting scientific publications peer reviewed and the implications for grant payments. There has been a large increase in papers from China and India, who would have previously published in their own journals. Council agreed that MD should explore how this is affecting other societies, alongside LB seeking views from the publishing coalition.

**Action: MD to seek feedback from the strategic partner group
LB to seek views from the publishing coalition**



Signed electronically 15 September 2021