

Council Meeting

Thursday 13 June 2013
12:30-14:30

Meeting Room 11, Macdonald Hotel, London Road,
Piccadilly, Manchester M1 2PG

WEB Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The President welcomed new Council member, Prof Richard Reece, Council and Observers.

Present: Prof Dame Nancy Rothwell (President)
Prof Chris Kirk (Hon Secretary)
Dr Pat Goodwin (Hon Treasurer)
Prof Julia Buckingham
Dr Paul Brooker
Prof Pete Downes
Dr Liz Lakin
Dr Kim Hardie
Prof Richard Reece
Dr Jeremy Pritchard
Prof Rosie Hails
Prof John Coggins

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Dr Elizabeth Rollinson, Linnean Society
Mr Jon Kudlick, Director of Membership, Marketing & Communication
Ms Jen Crosk (Minutes)
Dr Laura Bellingan, Head of Science Policy (via teleconference)
Ms Natasha Neill, Executive Officer (via teleconference)
Ms Gemma Garrett, Head of Education (via teleconference)
Dr Cliff Collis, Professional Registers and Training Manager (via teleconference)

Apologies: Mr Tim Brigstocke
Prof Chris Garland
Ms Sue Thorn

Ms Elaine Snell, British Neuroscience Association (observer)

1.1 Declaration of interests

No new declarations of interest were reported.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 February 2013

2.1 Review of action points

All action points had been completed or appeared within the Agenda.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

No matters were raised.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

Council approved the Minutes and Web minutes of 28 February 2013.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

The President and Prof Reece reported that the University of Manchester was being accredited by the Society. This was an agenda item. Council noted they should not participate in this discussion.

Section A: Policy & Strategy

3. Report from ETP

Jeremy Pritchard (JP) reported on the paper from ETP.

The ETP Committee had discussed the current lack of financial support for UK Masters programmes. There was concern that students graduating under the current fee arrangements would be reluctant to take on an additional loan (outside the student loan system). There was concern that inflation of the qualifications required for particular roles were already making a Masters Degree essential in many areas, where previously a Bachelors' degree would have sufficed. It was suggested that these pressures could act to decrease the diversity of Masters students and force closure of courses with onward impact on specific skills. Council suggested it might be helpful for the Society to discuss this area with funders and policy makers. Further information could usefully be collected to provide evidence. Statistical reporting in January would provide a platform to raise awareness. Cogent were currently pursuing an industrial bid of some £38m to cover areas such as industrial Degrees and kite-marking.

JP informed Council that he would be sitting on a steering group to discuss how good HEI teaching could be rewarded. This is an area that HUBS had already discussed with the Physiological Society and Academy of Medical Sciences. JP asked Council to forward any feedback on this area before the next steering group meeting on 23 July.

ACTION: Council to provide feedback to Jeremy Pritchard by 23 July on routes to rewarding and recognising HEI teachers for single track careers.

Mark Downs (MD) raised the question of whether the Society should pay for supply teacher cover for teachers taking part in advisory groups as it was currently difficult to get Head Teacher approval for their absence: IoP and RSC had begun to pay approximately £170 per day. Council **AGREED** that supply teachers may be paid for by the Society when attending advisory groups.

Laura Bellingan (LB) added that the team were seeking views for the Finch Group on open access developments. Questionnaires had been sent to learned societies and academics to assist in getting a picture of what things look like a year after changes. A full meeting of the Finch Group was due in September and LB was looking to feed into that meeting. LB invited Council to contact her for more information.

ACTION: Council to feedback views to Laura Bellingan on impact of the new Open Access policies by 31 August.

LB highlighted that following an amendment to the code of practice on consultation responses in July 2012, the minimum consultation period requirement had been removed. Since the amendment, there had been a significant drop in the timescale to produce responses, with 50% below 12 weeks so far this year and she invited Council members to contact her with any comments.

ACTION: Council to feedback any views on the impact of reduced consultation times to LB by 30 June

3.1 Accreditation & Approval of Accredited Courses

Council were asked to approve accreditation of courses for the University of York, University of Manchester and Royal Veterinary College. Council felt it would be helpful to have an annual report noting good practice and any recommended modifications. Council **APPROVED** all the courses listed in the paper for Accreditation. The President and Prof Reece did not participate in the decision on the University of Manchester.

The Accreditation awards ceremony would take place on 4 September at Kew Gardens. The next round of accreditation was set for September and would take the figure over the expected target for this year. 65 assessors had now been trained and a meeting had been arranged for current and new Chairs.

Now that Accreditation was in its second phase, there had been the opportunity to look at expenditure for phase one. LL invited Council to put forward further names for the Accreditation Working Group, which met on a monthly basis. LL felt that there remained a lack of representation from the food sector.

ACTION: Council to propose more members for AWG

LL added that to maintain momentum, a development/strategy day had been arranged for 25 July, to look at possible expansion.

3.2 Approval of International Recognition & Position Statement

LL reported that the Society had been approached for International Recognition by two organisations, Council were asked for views on human rights issues and how to handle this in the context of International Recognition.

Council felt this area needed to be separate from political issues, with clear values and the Society should be allowed to develop its own criteria and be clear about applying them.

Council **AGREED** that the Society would consider the issues further and should carry out a risk analysis. A formal position should be developed.

3.3 Willetts Meeting Report

MD gave an oral report of the recent meeting with Willetts. On the Agenda were CSR and the triennial review, Scotland and the skills agenda. MD had stressed the importance of skills investment.

MD asked Council for their views on suitable responses if we end up with a flat cash settlement. Council felt the response should draw attention to the loss of expenditure in real terms but recognise the difficult economic environment. It might also be appropriate to comment on the capital budget and the MRC position.

3.4 A Level Reform

The ETP Committee had discussed on-going concerns with the A Level reform process. The Russell Group (RG) had yet to convene their subject committees.

An additional concern was the planned changes to GCSEs and that any review of A Level criteria should take into account the new draft GCSE criteria, in order to ensure coherence and progression between the stages. JP asked Council to forward any comments on the proposal or names of anyone interested in being involved in a Society led biology subject committee.

Since the last Council meeting, the Society, along with representatives from IoP and RSC, had attended several meetings with the Department for Education and more recently, a roundtable meeting with the Education Minister, Ofqual and the CEOs of four AOs. This had provided opportunities to re-iterate our concerns, although it was still unclear whether Learned Societies would have a formal role in the process. However, the Minister did appear to recognise that assessment is the main issue to address. The Society, IoP and RSC were due to meet with Ofqual on 14 June.

3.5 Research Council Review

There was concern that the MRC's role may change but, as ever, it was difficult to take a view without knowing the detail. Council agreed to discuss this further at the Strategy Meeting.

3.6 Master Degrees

Laura Bellingan (LB) gave an oral update and invited Council to informally feed in any information, adding that data on the National/International picture would be available in January.

4. MMC Report

Jon Kudlick (JK) reported good membership figures, which now stood at 13,100. Student numbers had increased following Life Sciences Conferences and the increase in work done by on-campus reps. The membership survey had shown promising results, with 14% responding.

Council wished to note their congratulations to the MMC team for their work and the successful launch of the new Society website.

JK reported that a replacement for the public engagement officer position had been recruited, with a start date set for 22 July.

5. Governance

Council **APPROVED** the revised Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee.

There were currently vacancies on the Audit Committee and Finance Committee. Prof Rosie Hails and Prof Richard Reece agreed to sit on the Finance Committee and Dr Paul Brooker agreed to sit on the Audit Committee. Council **AGREED** these appointments.

Section B: Operational Issues

6. Chief Executive's Report

MD had been asked to represent the science community at a Parliamentary Committee on Standards inquiry on 9 July and would ask MOs for any views prior to the meeting.

MD had been involved in a Guardian Education debate to provide recommendations on school education policy, which would be published as a White Paper. He added that the press had been showing increasing interest in the Society's work and were now frequently approaching us.

Although this would be covered during the Strategy session, MD commented that he had increasingly been requested to be involved in International work, with SCI keen to transfer funds to the Society to run an International (EU) Biotechnology Group Secretariat. MOs had supported this and **Council AGREED to take this forward.**

MD reported that the AGM had gone well.

7. CDH II

Following agreement at the last Council meeting, MD reported that the purchase had now completed at £4.2 million. Both buildings are owned by CDH Ltd, with the owner organisations as shareholders.

The ground floor of the new building had a window looking out to Gray's Inn Road, therefore offering the opportunity of a window display. There would be a purpose-built Council meeting room on the ground floor, allowing the Conference facilities at CDH to be marketed in a more proactive way and a Building Manager would be recruited to actively market the centre. Alongside the Council meeting room would be an area where members could work, including wifi and a coffee machine, which Council felt should be flagged up with MOs. Two or three small organisations had already shown interest in moving to CDH, potentially with occupation from January 2014. The Society's rental cost is set to reduce following formalisation of the space used.

Council wished to record their thanks to the Chief Executive and CEOs of the other owner organisations involved in the purchase of CDH II.

8. Finance

8.1 Quarter 2 (mid year) forecast 2012-13

MD reported the overall picture gave a £3k forecast surplus which should ensure the Society ended the year in a positive position. The Honorary Treasurer added that it was important to separate restricted and unrestricted budgets. MD stressed the need to grow membership further and that an additional £100k of stable membership type income would put the Society in a much stronger financial footing in the medium term rather than relying too much on unpredictable grant income.

9. AOB

Council discussed the College of Organisational Members vacancy as no MO nominations had been received and AGREED to approach Professor David Blackburn (who took part in the College of Individual Members election) to ask if he would be interested in joining as a co-opted member until the next AGM, where he could be considered by vote. Council noted he had strong links with SGM.

ACTION: MD to invite David Blackburn to join Council as a co-opted member until the AGM in May 2014.

The next Council Meeting will be held on Thursday 12 September 2013 at Charles Darwin House.