

Council Meeting

Wednesday 10 June 2015
12:30-14:30

Ramsden Room, St Catharine's College,
Cambridge CB2 1RL

WEB Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The President welcomed Council and staff, thanked Lucy Harper as the Member Organisation (MO) observer for attending, and gave apologies.

Present: Professor Dame Jean Thomas (President)
Professor Chris Kirk (Hon Secretary)
Dr Pat Goodwin (Hon Treasurer)
Professor John Coggins
Dr Kim Hardie
Professor Julia Buckingham
Dr Liz Lakin
Professor Pete Downes
Dr Paul Brooker
Dr Jeremy Pritchard
Professor Richard Reece

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Ms Rachel Lambert-Forsyth, Director of Education & Training
Mr Jon Kudlick, Director of Membership, Marketing & Communication
Dr Laura Bellingan, Director of Science Policy
Ms Jen Crosk, PA to Chief Executive (Minutes)
Ms Ana Ilic, Executive Assistant
Dr Lucy Harper, Chief Executive, Society for Applied Microbiology

Apologies: Dr Aileen Allsop
Mr Tim Brigstocke
Professor Chris Garland
Professor David Blackburn
Dr Hazel Norman, British Ecological Society

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Ms Helen Gregson, Society for Endocrinology
Ms Jo Revill, British Society for Immunology
Mr Jono Bruun, British Pharmacological Society

1.1 Declaration of interests

No declarations were made.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 March 2015

2.1 Review of action points

All actions had been completed or covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

There were no matters arising.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

The Minutes and Web Minutes were **AGREED** subject to amending the spelling of "Reese" to "Reece".

2.3 Conflicts of interest

None reported.

3. Chief Executive's Report

The chief executive summarised his report. The highlight since the last Council meeting was the Society being granted the Royal title. This had been warmly welcomed by the membership. A separate paper described next steps. The Society had also held its sixth AGM, which was well attended and Dr Paul Brooker gave the charter lecture. Dr Kim Hardie was reappointed after standing for re-election unopposed. Professor Rosie Hails decided to step down at the end of her term, Council recorded their thanks for her contributions during her term. This leaves a vacancy on Council. Mark Downs (MD) noted that the Sir David Attenborough event had been hugely successful, raising nearly £20,000, and receiving very positive feedback.

There had been a number of staff changes, with new staff joining the Executive, Policy and Membership, Marketing and Communications teams.

MD reported that CDH2 was now open and that the Landscape Institute had moved in as tenants. All floors except the top floor had been filled. All remaining tenants from CDH were scheduled to move to CDH2 by mid-August. This would enable the Society to occupy the second floor of CDH. Existing tenants would continue to enjoy discounted rental costs as part of the strategy of building a bioscience hub.

Council were asked if they would be prepared to agree to a non-bioscience organisation occupying the fourth floor. It was clear that there was a preference for a bioscience organisation and this could include commercial tenants. It was recommended that this should be explored further.

Decision: Council AGREED that the vacant fourth floor of CDH2 could be occupied by non-bioscience organisations, however preference should be given to bioscience (including commercial) organisations in the first instance.

Planning permission for patio doors on the back of the building leading to the small courtyard had not originally been granted but there was a plan to resubmit an application. It had also come to light that the party wall to the rear was a single brick wall without foundation and this would need to be underpinned. The December Council meeting would be held in the new building.

Section A: Policy & Strategy

4. Report from ETP

There had been a productive ETP meeting and the new committee members had created a new dynamic that was working well. The Royal Title news had been well received. They had discussed, and made input to, the three-year plan. There was a lively debate on the relevant merits of a single awarding organisation in England versus multiple awarding organisations and the committee felt that this was an area for further exploration and have asked for input into the debate from the Curriculum Committee and Biology Education Research Group (BERG). The Equality and Diversity strategy was being taken forward and was very welcome.

A request had been put forward by the Alliance Mission Group on doctoral training - this was an invitation to the Society to provide a member of their expert review panel and thereby influence the development of a new doctoral training alliance focused on biomedical and health sciences. Council felt that this may not be the best way to champion good practice in developing doctoral training collaborations. ETP had asked whether the Society should consider having a public position on the planned vote in 2016 on staying in, or leaving, the European Union. Council felt we should, because the sector would not be enhanced if we left Europe. Laura Bellingan (LB) noted that, although we had not actively commenced work on this, there was a clear plan to do so. Overall there was agreement that the Society should research and develop the evidence on the value to science, particularly biosciences, of the European Union. This could then be used for public engagement purposes. At the recent Parliamentary Affairs Committee, similar views came from chemistry, physics and others – a subtle response would be required following evidence gathering.

LB noted that the new Science Minister appeared to be very pro Higher Education and MD noted that Andrew Miller was now chairing Scientists for Europe, a new lobby group.

Action: LB to undertake research and create a briefing on EU membership.

5. Education & Training

5.1 IBO 2017 update

RLF had been in continued discussion with the conference team and life science department at Warwick University. A contract was awaited and would be based on 2014 rates. The IBO 2015 was due to be held in Denmark in the summer. The UK had been offered two free places in addition to the 2 jury places and the conference and life science department staff from Warwick would be attending, as well as two members of Society staff during the week.

The Society would be seeking several smaller funding packages from multiple organisations. RLF confirmed that there was sufficient funding to run the Olympiad without further sponsorship but that it would be a smaller and less ambitious event.

6. Accreditation update

Liz Lakin (LL) gave an update. There had been a good turnout at the accreditation degree launch in March, with high levels of interest from universities. Seven HEIs had already submitted applications, with interest from a number of others. Advanced accreditation was still attracting interest from universities and accreditation assessor training had taken place. The "Meet the Universities" event was scheduled for the 18th June, allowing school pupils to meet universities and industry.

Current impact and barriers to further development had been discussed at the Degree Accreditation Committee but it was proving difficult to assess impact until students were in employment. However, AstraZeneca was now highlighting, and seeking graduates from accredited degrees in their recruitment criteria, a move strongly welcomed by Council.

As the UKCES funding had now ended, the scheme was running on a tighter budget and alternative funding was high on the agenda. The UKCES could be approached again for a new project. The team would continue to try and get industry involved. Long term, international accreditation and advanced international accreditation programmes were still being considered.

One progression route might be to link Registered Scientist with placement years undertaken as part of an accredited course; this would help employers and industry and also offer a route to improved tracking of graduates within our membership.

Council felt that accreditation had been enormously successful and on the cusp of making a very significant impact. Liz Lakin wished to note her thanks to the accreditation team for their continued hard work.

7. Report from Science Policy

7.1 New Government

LB provided an update. Despite the move from a coalition Government, huge change was not anticipated. The number of Conservative members with a science background had increased from 45 to 51, however this was a decrease from the coalition figure of 55. It was hoped that science would be saved from any budget cuts, but a flat cash settlement would not be sufficient to sustain the future of UK science in its current form.

A letter to the co-chairs of UK Bioscience Coalition had been received from the Life Sciences Minister George Freeman, saying that he looked forward to working with us on the animal science issue. The Home Office had an ongoing series of meetings arranged, particularly relating to animal science. LB had met with officials from the Commons Science & Technology Committee, who were currently awaiting election of a new chair.

Action: LB to circulate a list of the Lords Science & Technology Committee membership.

RLF reported that there had not been much change at the DfE and that this period of stability would allow the opportunity to continue with the Society's curriculum work. It also implied very little change to current education policy more widely.

7.2 Returners to Bioscience Working Group

LB explained that the working group had been set up to assist all bioscientists returning to work following career breaks, not just high achievers. Over the last 18 months, the working group had successfully gained traction and attention. The group had received a lot of goodwill from individuals and organisations such as the Daphne Jackson Trust and Wellcome Trust. The group requested Council's opinion on the activity undertaken and sought approval to continue to develop their work. Council were very supportive.

The President added that Cambridge ran a returning carers scheme, with grants of up to £10k per annum which could be used for training, conferences, childcare and travel. RLF felt it would be good to add returners in career plans, possibly integrating this into a training session. TalkBiology was suggested as an open forum to help returners exchange views and best practice. It was suggested that the group could link with the Bioindustry Association and seek ways to promote local, place-based initiatives. It was noted that Caroline Wallace (a previous employee) had worked with the Bioindustries Forum in the past.

Pat Goodwin wished to record her thanks to Cat Ball for the fantastic work carried out on the working group.

Decision: Council in favour of the projects being taken forward by the Returners to Bioscience Working Group and AGREED indicators were needed to monitor progress.

Decision: Council AGREED continuation of the group for a further year.

7.3 UKPSF Finances

LB explained that the UKPSF had been financially supported for the past three years by two grants - from Gatsby and the Society for Experimental Biology. The group had been very active launching their state of the nation report, developing working streams and taking forward objectives. Surplus monies were being used to fund one member of staff until the end of this year but further funding was crucial to continue with the road map. LB was awaiting the outcome of a bid to the Society for Experimental Biology's Council to fund half the officer's time, as well as the whole cost of creating and delivering a roadmap over three

years. If successful and there was still a funding shortfall. Grants have been confirmed from the British Society for Plant Pathology and the Biochemical Society, the latter of which has also agreed to provide in-kind support for the UKPSF annual conference.

LB added that although the group wished to stay with charitable funding initially, it might be possible to consider private sector funding.

Council felt that if the SEB funding was unsuccessful, we should seek options for consideration including support from the plant science industry.

Council felt that Professor Sir David Baulcombe and Professor Ottoline Leyser might be consulted.

7.4 Paris COP on Climate Change

LB provided Council with an updated list of organisations that had signed off the communique in preparation for the Paris COP on Climate Change being held in December.

Decision: Council were in favour of signing the communique and AGREED that the Royal Society press office should take the lead.

8. Membership Marketing & Communications

Jon Kudlick reported that membership numbers were on track. *The Biologist* had a new look and Professor Alison Woollard at Oxford University had been approached to Chair the Editorial Board after Sue Nelson completes her term in September.

Decision: Council AGREED the appointment of Alison Woollard as the new Editor-in-Chief of *The Biologist* if she was willing to undertake it.

The David Attenborough event had been filmed and would shortly be available on the website. The team were progressing discussions with on producing a series of educational biology books.

JK also highlighted that the Society was involved with the Glasgow Science Festival for the first time, including running an event called 'Can eating insects save the world?' and that they would be attending the music festival Latitude in July, working in partnership with the British Ecological Society.

8.1 MO Service Provision

As part of our objectives to support the sector, we had offered to provide secretariat services to smaller organisations. The Society had taken part in six tenders, was shortlisted for all and won four. A new member of staff was appointed to lead on this project and it was anticipated that this area of work could be developed over time.

Decision: Council supported ongoing development of the MO service provision work.

9. Royal Title Roll-out Plan

Following the successful application for the Royal title, Council were asked to approve the proposed timeline of week commencing 20th July to begin the roll-out. Council felt that branches should be included or involved in any celebrations. It was agreed that the Biology Week Parliamentary reception could be used to celebrate with guests and to launch the three year plan and there could be something at CDH for members. Ideally, Council felt that sponsorship should be sought for a more significant celebratory event at a large venue. Council also asked for a set date to be agreed for members to amend their post-nominals.

Decision: Council AGREED the week commencing 20th July timeline for the Royal title roll-out.

10. Funding request from Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA)

Council agreed that it would be difficult to fund this from current resources but were supportive of a fundraising activity.

Decision: Council AGREED for the Society to appeal for support from its Fellows.

Section B:

11. Finance Q2

MD reminded Council that they had set a deficit budget for this financial year. The Q2 forecast indicated that the Society was on track to meet this and was probably likely to perform better than budget. Membership income had been down slightly at Q2 but that this was a timing issue and had since picked up. He noted that there was an overspend on project expenditure, which was a timing issue with the accreditation programme.

The Society's investments continued to do well.

Council wished to congratulate the Chief Executive on the positive financial status.

12. AoB

Dr Lucy Harper of SfAM thanked the Society for its work undertaken on behalf of the sector. She felt that SfAM's influence and reach had been considerably enhanced through membership of the Society. Council thanked her for her positive comments.

MD reported that there would be a meeting with pension trustees next week. The Society's own advisers would be present and Chris Kirk and Rodney Eastwood would represent the Society.

The next Council Meeting would be held at Charles Darwin House on 16th September 2015.

Jan Thomas
16/9/15

