

Council Meeting

**13 September 2012
12:30-15:30**

**Charles 2, Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street,
London WC1N 2JU**

Web Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed Council and introduced new member Prof Chris Garland.

Present: Prof Dame Nancy Rothwell (Chair)
Prof Chris Kirk (Honorary Secretary)
Dr William Marshall
Prof Julia Buckingham
Dr Paul Brooker
Prof Chris Garland
Prof Rosie Hails
Prof John Coggins
Prof Martin Humphries
Dr Kim Hardie
Dr Pat Goodwin
Dr Aileen Allsop

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Ms Sue Thorn, MMC
Mr John Kudlick, MMC
Dr Laura Bellingan, Science Policy
Dr Jeremy Pritchard, ETP
Jen Crook (Minutes)

Apologies: Dr Liz Lakin
Mr Leon Heward-Mills
Dr Philip Wright
Mr Tim Brigstocke
Prof Pete Downes

1.1 Declaration of interests

No declarations of interest were reported.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2012

The Minutes and redacted (web) Minutes were agreed and signed.

2.1 Review of action points

All items had been actioned.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

No items reported.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and redacted (web) Minutes

Council approved the Minutes and Redacted (web) Minutes for 14 June 2012

2.4 Conflicts of interest

No Conflicts of interest were reported.

Section A: Policy & Strategy

3. Report from ETP

Jeremy Pritchard (JP) updated Council from the recent ETP Agenda. JP reported that HUBS was gaining strength and the next meeting in November would be attended by the Chair of the Research Excellence Framework steering group. HUBS are creating a database of external examiners. There had been discussion around developing UKPSF (UK Plant Science Federation) and engaging with the community to see where issues and stakeholders were. Educational resources had been developed for higher education around valuing teaching in research. The Animal Sciences Special Interest Group (ASG) and the "Coalition" continued to provide a joint voice for animal sciences but there were now initial discussions planned for ASG to widen its remit including a more proactive agenda.

There had been an important proposal for biomaths resources to support teaching. ETP agreed the area need more attention but felt the current proposal needed to be more focussed. Council discussed schools' membership and the role of general biological education including whether branches might be able to play an even greater role with schools. JP reported that ETP had outgrown itself and during the Away Day in November, would discuss format and strategy, as well as the Committee's function, with a view to ensuring the Committee was best placed to support the Society following its significant growth over the last three years.

Nancy Rothwell (NR) added her reluctance to set up new committees to cover sub-sections of the current ETP but recognised it may be necessary to discuss the possibility at the ETP Away Day. NR suggested that Chris Kirk (CK) attend the next ETP Meeting.

Action: JP asked for any opinions to be emailed to him.

3.1 Science Policy report

It was noted that there had been considerable communication on the topic of animal science and the ASG Animal Science paper which was due to be discussed at the next meeting on 21 Sept. Since the paper was put together, Understanding Animal Research had organised a drop-in briefing session in Parliament, providing the opportunity for scientists to explain animal research and the debate in Parliament. Around six MPs had attended.

3.2 Government reshuffle

Council noted that new Ministers were coming into the Home Office at an important time for transposition of the EU Directive on the Use of Animals in Research in to UK law.

3.3 CSR (Comprehensive Spending Review)

The Society was engaged in considering a joint piece of work led by CASE to help pull together the evidence base for the value on investment in research.

3.4 Immigration & HEI recruitment

Council noted that London Metropolitan University has launched a judicial challenge to UKBA.

3.5 Support for Teachers

Council discussed options for improving the schools & colleges membership scheme and teacher benefits including the possibility of a different membership package for teachers noting that the JBE was not a teaching resource primarily aimed at UK school teachers. A teacher focussed Special Interest Group was also suggested, with access via a teacher part of the website or via branches for regional teacher groups.

Action: RLF and JK to prepare options and take forward, reporting back to Council.

4. Report from MMC

Sue Thorn (ST) highlighted that the five year recruitment for BioNet and Student Affiliate membership was looking very positive. There had been a meeting with 30 university reps, resulting in many good ideas including bulk membership. Council discussed Fellowship and whether it should expand much beyond the current figure of 2,200 (20%) noting the need not to build the Fellowship at the expense of quality. Council discussed the issue and concluded that this should be monitored but that there should not be a specific limit on numbers or a percentage. All felt the quality of new Fellows remained very high and the growing percentage of Fellows was

more a reflection of the (relatively) modest numbers at MSB where recruitment remained a challenge.

ST reported that recent web and media work has been very successful. There had been considerable media coverage around the flying ants project, with over 6,000 people responding to the survey. Much work had been done on Biology Week, with a memory game scheduled for Friday 19 Oct at 2.30pm, so far 160 schools had expressed interest.

4.1 Society newsletters

Council noted the considerable number and range of newsletters now available.

5. Branch and Regional strategy

Council noted the considerable work within branches. Council considered ways in which governance burdens might be alleviated for branches and options for regional grants. Caroline Wallace currently supported Scotland but help with regional activity was also required for Wales, NI and England.

6. Three year strategy

MD had produced a first draft which had built on discussions from the Council Away Day and asked Council if they agreed to the general direction of the Strategy. Council felt that the document should be publishable and compact. There could be limited reporting back on the last three years as headlines with more available on the web. Council felt there could now be international as well as national objectives. However, it was important to describe the Society with a clear UK focus.

MD added that the Society had been approached by Hong Kong, US and the Australian Institute of Biology as well as European societies regarding collaboration and international activity. MD was due to attend a conference in the US in December organised by the Society's US equivalent.

All felt that an A4/A5 pamphlet size document would work best with the desired outcomes shown in one or two sentences. The document could be kept quite short. Accreditation should be given some prominence given its size. It should also include what we do on a professional and amateur level.

Section B: Operational Issues

7. Chief Executive's report

MD highlighted the volume of current activity at the Society. The turnover was set to over £2.5 million in the new financial year, with staff increasing to 30. As invitations to events were escalating, the Society would need a revised management structure if it continued to expand. He felt that an Executive Officer position would help in tackling key partner management, governance and income diversification. Council agreed.

Work was underway with the Royal Society of Chemistry, British Pharmacological Society, Biochemical Society and Academy of Medical Sciences on Drug Discovery Pathways and was

generating considerable senior level and media interest. A meeting was scheduled for 15 October with Sir John Bell to discuss next steps. Mark Downs just written an article for Drug Discovery World on this issue which had been accepted for publication. GSK had withdrawn membership due changing external engagement policies.

MD would be speaking at fringe events for all three Party Conferences with Ministers or Shadow Ministers under a Science Council umbrella.

The President congratulated the Society on obtaining funding of over £1m for the Accreditation of Bioscience degrees from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (Growth and Innovation fund) and Council confirmed support for the project plan developed with the Accreditation Working Group.

8. Report from the Finance Committee

William Marshall (WM) reported that the Finance Committee had met earlier that day. The former loB defined pension scheme deficit had reduced considerably and it looked likely that the deficit would be paid in full within four years.

WM reported that the next meeting of the Finance Committee in February would be his last as Honorary Treasurer and recommended that Council appoint someone soon in order for there to be a handover period. NR agreed to expressions of interest via The Biologist and other routes as needed.

8.1 Management accounts – year end forecast

The Honorary Treasurer confirmed that the Finance committee had considered the year end forecasts and supported the paper under review. The CEO reported a likely small year end surplus of against a budgeted deficit of £2k. He noted that some of this surplus would be in designated funds associated with projects and special interest groups. It had been a positive year and Council agreed the report.

8.2 Budget for 2012-2013

The Finance Committee were happy to recommend the budget for 2012-13. The budget for 2012-13 was an overall surplus of £211k of which £89k would be in the General Fund. This may be slightly amended in light of the final Accreditation grant details. Cash flow was considered on the recommendation of the Finance Committee. **Council approved the budget and agreed the Society was a going concern for the next financial year.**

As the cash flow forecast showed an increased cash balance, the Finance Committee sought Council's agreement for some of this surplus to be invested in short and longer term investment.

Decision: Council AGREED to 50% to be invested in short-term investment and 50% in long-term as required.

9. Health & Safety Report

MD reported only stated one incident relating to the Society during 2011, of which Council were already aware. He added that the Audit Committee had recommended that Council review the CDH accident report on an annual basis. **Council agreed.**

10. AOB

MD reported that the STEM Disability Committee and the Institute of Physics had been driving a pan-science disability group, which held a launch of 100 new British Sign Language signs for Physics & Chemistry. More broadly, they were also looking at policies used by disability support officers and others for helping disabled students on STEM courses and trying to encourage people with disabilities into science.

The CEO informed Council that a members' reception had been arranged for the evening of 13 September.

Sue Thorn reported that the Research Dissemination Committee was under way and meeting twice a year. She felt that something should be written for members as soon as possible. She felt the Society should consider holding seminars on strategic planning in the current publishing environment.

The CEO reported that open access and the risk to some journals had been very topical and the Society had engaged with Member Organisations on this. He was keen to give more time and effort to this. **Council agreed.**

The CEO had met with Doug Kell to discuss working jointly with BBSRC on placing blue plaques in places of famous scientists. **Council supported this.**

Council were asked to complete Related Party Transaction Forms by 30 September 2012.

The next Council Meeting will be on Thursday 13 December 2012.