

Council Meeting

Wednesday 12 March 2014
12:30-14:30

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

WEB Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The chair welcomed Council and gave apologies.

Present: Prof Dame Nancy Rothwell (President)
Prof Chris Kirk (Hon Secretary)
Dr Pat Goodwin (Hon Treasurer)
Dr Liz Lakin
Dr Kim Hardie
Dr Aileen Allsop
Dr Paul Brooker
Mr Tim Brigstocke
Prof Chris Garland
Prof Pete Downes (by phone)



20 June 2014

Observers: Prof Dame Jean Thomas, President Elect
Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Mr Jono Bruun, Chief Executive, BPS
Mr Phil Wheat, Chief Executive, SfAM
Ms Rachel Lambert-Forsyth, Director of Education & Training
Mr Jon Kudlick, Director of Membership, Marketing & Communication
Dr Laura Bellingan, Director of Science Policy
Dr Stephen Benn, Director of Parliamentary Affairs
Ms Natasha Neill, Executive Officer
Ms Jen Crook (Minutes)

Apologies: Prof Julia Buckingham
Prof Rosie Hails
Dr Jeremy Pritchard
Prof John Coggins
Prof David Blackburn
Prof Richard Reece

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1.1 Declaration of interests

No declarations were made.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 December 2013

2.1 Review of action points

All actions had been completed.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

No matters were raised.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

Decision: Council **AGREED** the Minutes and Web minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2013.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

Liz Lakin and Pete Downes noted their interest in the approval of accredited degrees at the University of Dundee under item 4.1

Section A: Policy & Strategy

3. Education & Training

3.1 Report from ETP

Rachel Lambert-Forsyth (RLF) gave an update on the A Level reform process. Both SCORE and HUBS had submitted a response to the Ofqual Consultation, with SCORE also providing Ofqual with a set of principles for the assessment of practical work. Council felt that the Society should write to Ofqual, making clear that proposed reforms would not be good for the future of biologists, with a copy of the letter going to the Secretary of State for Education.

RLF added that there had been a soft launch of Talk Biology at the ASE Conference in January and ETP Committee members were in the process of proposing suitable groups to test the site.

Council noted that the Curriculum Committee was starting to take up their task. In addition, work supporting teachers in higher education had included a workshop for new lecturers.

RLF reported that the ETP Committee were currently reviewing membership and would be advertising for new members, with a focus on expertise in agriculture and environment. School teacher membership was also being sought and the Committee were offering payment for supply cover in order that teachers could attend meetings.

Council discussed education in Scotland and agreed that any approach needed to be politically neutral and focussed on policy and its impacts. As a charitable organisation, the Society could not take a political position.

RLF noted the Society's growing engagement with EU policy work and highlighted the UK Federation for Biotechnology event scheduled for July this year.

Laura Bellingan (LB) gave out copies of the UKPSF Current Status & Future Challenges Report, asking any Council members or their colleagues wishing to be involved to contact her.

RLF reported that members of ETP had discussed engaging more with Special Interest Groups (SIG) and had agreed to each champion a SIG and meet annually.

3.2 IBO 2017

RLF reported that the UK was due to host the IBO in 2017 and a decision was required on the Society's involvement by September. Should the Society choose not to host the event, the UK would need to pull out, which others had done previously. Council felt this was a major financial undertaking and wanted clarity on the benefits of hosting the event as well as the level of underwriting required, asking whether any potential partners or MOs would agree to underwrite part of the cost.

Mark Downs (MD) felt the event could be held at a reduced cost if universities participated as partners and felt that it should be looked at in more detail.

3.3 Primary Science Statement

Council **APPROVED** the Primary Policy Statement.

3.4 Training Strategy

RLF reported that this area was going well, with fourteen 14 courses organised to date, all of which were fully booked or oversubscribed. The courses had received positive feedback so would be running again next year. Course subject areas had been created partly in response to the membership survey and Fellowship feedback. The next membership survey was due to go out in April and included a training question.

Council felt that the Society could collaborate with other learned societies that run specialist skills courses and asked that this item be discussed again at a future meeting.

3.5 RSci and RSciTech

Council received the paper on RSci and RSciTech for information.

3.6 Safeguarding Policy update

Council **APPROVED** the Safeguarding Policy.

4. Report from Accreditation

Liz Lakin (LL) updated Council on Accreditation, which was now at investment stage six, with the end of funding due in September 2014. To date, 16 HEIs have 83 programmes accredited. Additional applications had been received for the September 2014 round of application. The Degree Accreditation Committee (DAC) had been looking at increasing contacts within industry and asked Council to forward any suggestions. Secondary schools were a new target area being marketed to. The Society would be hosting a nationwide graduate careers fair in Manchester on 26 March. Students from Manchester, Kings and Leeds had confirmed attendance, with a representative from UKCES also attending.

A Stakeholder Meeting was scheduled for 3 April to look at a consultation approach to skills and receive advice on any gaps.

4.1 Ratification of accredited Degree programmes

Leicester and Aston University courses were put forward for ratification by Council.

Council **AGREED** to ratify Accreditation of Degree Programmes for Leicester and Aston Universities.

Council were asked to additionally ratify the University of Dundee's applications: LL and PD were not present for this discussion. Students had not yet graduated so the university would be eligible for interim accreditation, with a further panel visit to be scheduled.

Decision: Council **AGREED** to ratify interim accreditation for the University of Dundee.

A redacted version of all accreditation reports would appear on the website.

LL asked if Council would consider devolving ratification of future accredited Degree programmes to the Degree Accreditation Committee, who would keep Council informed.

Decision: Council **AGREED** to devolve ratification of accredited Degree programmes to the Degree Accreditation Committee

5. MMC Report

Jon Kudlick (JK) reported that, following positive membership recruitment at recent events, the Society was on course for a total membership figure of 15,000 by the end of March.

Biology Week: The Flying Ant survey would be running for a third year and Adam Hart would write a scientific paper in 2015. The spider survey data had not been robust enough for it to run again but Adam Hart would write a citizen science paper. This year there would be a survey on starling murmurations, with plans for a hayfever science project for spring 2015.

The JBE had officially appointed Ian Kinchin as Editor from May and David Slingsby would be receiving the Presidents' medal at the AGM.

Members of the team had recently attended the Science Alive event at the Hong Kong Science Museum, where 2,000 people had visited the Society stand. Future events included two workshops with sixth formers on fingerprinting, the Big Bang fair in Birmingham and a fundraising dinner.

Regionally, David Urry had visited branch and regional events and Jane Magill had been recruited for the role of Regional Co-ordinator for Scotland and Northern England, commencing 14 April.

JK asked Council to approve the Terms of Reference for the new MSB Committee.

Decision: Council **AGREED** the MSB Committee Terms of Reference

5.1 Council discussed potential new Honorary Fellowships for 2014

5.2 Update on Member Organisation funding

MD reported that following one to one discussions with MOs and a dinner hosted by the President, several MOs had agreed to move forward with a fee linked to 1% of turnover. The Biochemical Society had seconded two members of staff to the Society as well as their membership fee.

6. Report from Science Policy

LB reported that the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research was reaching its final drafting stages. The Society had met with the Minister to discuss the work of UKBSC and how it could contribute to development of the new guidance and implementation.

On open access LB reported that she had been involved with a group in development of a framework for the monitoring of the impact of open access policies. Council discussed the possibility of funding and agreed this might be best approached through the MO membership if appropriate.

On intellectual property – Scotland has an exemption in place for information released under FOI requests for pre-publication research. There was concern that adopting this exemption in English Law might not protect planning stages or grant applications. The academic community want the exemption to apply to the planning and grant application stage. An attempt to change the wording of the relevant clause at amendment stage had failed but assurances were being sought at report stage to ensure that the Minister's agreement is recorded in Hansard. The Society was hopeful that this would happen following a useful meeting with the Ministry of Justice and BIS officials.

The Society, as part of a group led by CaSE, had commissioned an independent economic study on the impact of public funding on private sector R&D investment decisions. It is nearly complete and a paper should be published before summer; not peer reviewed but held on relevant institutional repositories for comment and discussion.

6.1 Returners to Biology Group

Correspondence had previously been received by the President highlighting concern about the loss of trained and committed scientists due to difficulties faced when returning to work following a career break. This point had also been raised at the House of Commons' Science & Technology Select Committee in summer 2013. The Society wished to establish a group to address these issues. Pat Goodwin had offered to Chair a core group of around eight members with a wider advisory group involving MOs and others. The group would identify good practice as well as keeping up to date with policy developments and responding to consultations and enquiries. Council were asked to approve establishment and nominate representatives for the core and advisory groups.

Council **APPROVED** the establishment of a working group to address issues around returners to biology.

Council **APPROVED** the initial objectives set out for the group.

6.2 Research Dissemination Committee

LB reported that Committee membership had grown, with a greater spread of expertise. This is helpful for feeding in advice on publication in general.

Section B: Finance

7. Finance Committee update

The Finance Committee had agreed that the Society was a going concern. It had also received an update on Charles Darwin House 2.

7.1 Final accounts for 2011-12 - approval of draft accounts

Council noted the healthy surplus recognising this was partly due to accounting practice and the allocation of UKCES income. Finance Committee recommended approval of the accounts.

Subject to a minor amendment highlighted by CK, **Council Approved** the annual accounts for 2012-13.

Council thanked the Honorary Treasurer and the Finance Committee.

7.2 Review of 15 month cash flow forecast and going concern

The Finance Committee had agreed to a change in accounting practice and advised Council to recommend the Society as a going concern.

Decision: Council **AGREED** that the Society was a going concern.

7.3 Financial year 2013-14 quarter 1 forecast

MD reported that individual budgets were on track. In addition there would be increased MO contributions and grant monies. However there would be an end of year deficit due to accreditation processes around the handling of the UKCES grant.

7.4 Update on external fraud

The Council discussed a credit card fraud against the Society in detail and agreed to make formal complaints to the service providers.

Section C: Operational issues

8. Chief Executive's Report

There had been a good outcome on the celebrating biology bid, for which a new member of staff had been recruited. A new member of staff had also been recruited for Scotland and the North of England.

A UK/Mongolia meeting was scheduled at CDH on biodiversity and MD had given a speech at the College of Applied Biology event in Vancouver during the previous week.

9. Chief Executive continued appointment

NR reported that she met with MD annually and that targets had continually been reached and exceeded.

Council **AGREED** to renew the Chief Executive's contract for a further five year period.

10. AOB

10.1 LL asked if Charles Darwin House (CDH) could look at ways of improving Skype facilities to enable participants to better engage remotely. MD confirmed that this was already being looked at by the CDH Management Team.

10.2 Council asked about more information on parliamentary affairs.

10.2 MD and Council recorded their personal thanks to NR for her support as President and wished her well for the future.

10.3 The President recorded that she was delighted with how the Society had evolved. She had enjoyed her time immensely and wished everyone well for the future.

The next Society Council meeting will be held on Friday 20 June at Charles Darwin House.