

Council Meeting

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

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

Web Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies

The President welcomed Council and observers.

Present: Prof Dame Nancy Rothwell (President)
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
De Pat Goodwin
Dr Aileen Allsop
Dr Liz Lakin

Observers: Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive
Dr Laura Bellingan, Head of Science Policy
Dr Jeremy Prichard, ETP Committee
Mr Leon Heward-Mills, CEO, Society for Endocrinology
Dr Philip Wright, CEO, The Physiological Society
Ms Jen Crosk (Minutes)
Mrs Rachel Lambert-Forsyth, Head of Education
Dr Stephen Benn, Director of Parliamentary Affairs
Ms Natasha Neill, Executive Officer

Apologies: Mr Tim Brigstocke
Ms Sue Thorn
Mr Jon Kudlick

1.1 Declaration of interests

Martin Humphries (MH) declared that he had become a Vice-President of the Academy of Medical Sciences.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 September 2012

2.1 Review of action points

All actions had been completed.

2.2 Matters arising not on the Agenda

Nothing reported.

2.3 Approval of Minutes and Web Minutes

Council **approved** the Minutes and Web Minutes of 13 September 2012.

2.4 Conflicts of interest

None reported.

Section A: Policy & Strategy

3. Reform of ETP & MMC Committees

Mark Downs (MD) reported that due to the growth of the Society policy activity had greatly increased. It was therefore timely to review the roles of ETP and MMC Committees. Council agreed that it was important that Education, Training and Science Policy stay together but to further segment the workload using task forces where appropriate and triaging work to focus on the key areas where decisions are needed.

Council suggested setting up more focussed working groups within ETP, as this had worked well for Accreditation.

It was agreed that the MMC Committee should proceed with a more virtual model, with one meeting per year but regular focus group meetings as recommended.

Council felt there needed to be consistency across the two Committees and suggested a similar structure for the Terms of Reference. They agreed the Chair would normally be an observer at Council meetings.

4. Report from MMC

MD reported that membership had increased from around 10,500 in 2009 to the current figure of just over 12,000. Fellowship had grown consistently and student figures had increased following

Life Science Fairs. MSB grade continued to be a struggle and was down by 500-600 over the first three years partly due to many organisations ceasing to pay employee fees. The Society had increased member benefits as well as Registers and training for members. Council suggested the Finance Committee should look at fees at their next meeting in February. One medium and three smaller organisational members had been recruited and AstraZeneca had rejoined. Media engagement had been extremely successful during Biology Week, resulting in increased visits to the Society website.

The Society had been successful in a first stage Wellcome Trust Society Award celebrating genetics, generating £180k if approved at the next stage. Parliamentary work had grown over last quarter and the recent Parliamentary Reception had been well attended by both MPs and Peers.

Contact had been made with the Society of Authors and the Book Prizes were due to be launched in March/April 2013.

5. Accreditation

The Society had been successful in its bid to the Growth & Innovation Fund and additional staff had recruited. Tremendous impact had been achieved in recent months, with an increasing number of organisations putting themselves forward. Assessor training days had been held, with 45 currently trained. Work was being undertaken on developing a single year Masters Degree for *in vivo*, this approach could then be adapted for other stand-alone Masters Degrees.

5.1 Terms of Reference

Decision: Council Agreed the revised Terms of Reference.

6. CBiol & CPD – next steps

Around 4,000 emails and 3,000 letters had been sent stating that the Society was moving to an online CPD system and if requested, could assist with the process. To date, around 1,000 members had registered. An offer was in place for current retired members who did not wish to undertake CPD, thus allowing them to retain their CBiol status. Honorary CBiol was suggested for retired members in the future.

Staff made clear that the CPD scheme required a balance of formal and informal activities. The Society had an obligation to the Science Council to audit 2.5% for their licensed registers. Council asked to see a summary of the audits once completed.

7. Teacher benefits – next steps

Rachel Lambert-Forsyth (RLF) gave an update on Teacher benefits. The Big Biology Giveaway had been oversubscribed and there was a plan to run it again in 2013. With the new funding from the Welsh Government, there was potential to do more along these lines in Wales.

8. Three Year Business Plan

MD reported that the 'Three Year Business Plan' was intended to be a publicly available document and following previous feedback, there would be a link to the relevant website page, so that each

past objective could be reported on. The objectives had been made shorter and the values would be discussed at the staff away day on 18 December.

Council fed back on the vision section at the beginning and suggested it should state a vision that embeds biology in Society. A suggestion of 'Biology matters to everyone' could be a good strapline. It was felt that there should be a few boxes to highlight the work that relates to each area, for example: food/environment/medical. It was suggested that a small example box and image could appear on each page, as well as sharpening up what would be delivered. The deliverable 'increasing media impact by 20%' needed to be measurable and this could be done by column inch measurement or media mentions, for example.

Council felt there was not enough included for the general public wanting to know more about biology. The President added that public engagement was an area that needed to be revisited. "Discovery" also needed to be included. It was agreed that two documents should be produced, one more for internal use and one for outreach. However, Council agreed the draft objectives for current planning purposes.

Other Issues

MD noted that there had been a huge amount of work done by the Animal Sciences Group and proposed a vote of thanks to Professor Clive Page, who steps down as Chair at the end of 2012. Council fully agreed. Dominic Wells was due to take the position in January.

MD reported that, following a joint meeting with the Royal Society, Royal Academy, IoP and RSC in late February, the Dissemination Group would be looking at starting a newsletter. Sue Thorn had asked that the profile of RDC's work be made clearer.

MD reminded Council how much work was being undertaken on Education reform. The Baccalaureate was currently under consultation and RLF welcomed any information and views from Council.

The President discussed the letter from Lord Krebs at the House of Lords on possible subjects for new enquiries.

On Science Policy there had been, similarly, large amounts of activity including on consultation guidelines, Plant Science and the REF.

Section B: Operational Issues

9. Chief Executive's report

MD reported that European work was growing and he had also recently met with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, which paralleled the Society in that it had individual members and MOs although worked under contract on peer review for the US Government for significant parts of its income. They shared the same issues as the Society and were very keen to work more closely and share ideas. Open access had become a critical area for the sector and he felt that, as the Society was not a major publisher, we should play an even greater role. The President felt that the Society should particularly focus on stimulating debate.

There had been concern around the take-up of membership from Technicians. More applicants were needed. The new website would be up and running by May 2013.

MD reported that he had written a letter to David Willetts on Kite Marking and would be meeting him to discuss this in January.

10. Final budget for 2012-13

MD reported a predicted £46k surplus against a budgeted £2k loss and added that the audit had taken place the previous week, with a meeting scheduled for 19 December and Audit Committee on 10 January.

The President thanked everyone for the positive outcome.

11. AOB

The President reported that the Honorary Treasurer was due to step down at the next AGM. This appointment was made by Council.

MD reported that an opportunity had arisen in taking forward scientific collaboration with Mongolia, with possible funding (but this was unconfirmed). They had been very keen to have more interaction with scientists in the UK and their Biodiversity agenda included snow leopards and the wolf population. The Ambassador was keen to facilitate a meeting with the Mongolian Prime Minister and President over dinner. Council welcomed the idea.

Council discussed the positive actions and messages on science funding from Government recently, including the recent £600m announcement.

The date of the next Council meeting is 28 February 2013