

**Minutes of Assembly Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 – via VC**

Present: Claire Anderson (CA) - Chair, Martin Astbury (MA), Sibby Buckle (SB), Andrew Carruthers (AC), Kathleen Cowle (CW), Thorrhun Govind (TG), Mike Hannay (MH), Alisdair Jones (AJ), John Marriott (JM), Tase Oputu (TO), Lynne Smith (LS), Cheryl Way (CW), Andre Yeung (AY)

In attendance: Paul Bennett (PB), Karen Baxter (KB), Gail Fleming (GF), Rick Russell (RR), Robbie Turner (RT), Vicky Taylor (VT), Ravi Sharma (RS), Elen Jones (EJ), Clare Morrison (CM), Alison Douglas (AD)

Observers: 19 Members registered to observe the meeting

Apologies: Ruth Mitchel (RM), Mike Hannay (MH)

Item	Paper	Notes and actions	Action by
<b>Item 01 Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>		CA welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Ruth Mitchell. Noted that Mike Hannay would not be joining the meeting until noon.	
<b>Item 02 Code of Conduct &amp; Remit of Assembly</b>	21/11/ASB/02	The Code of Conduct and remit of Assembly were noted.	
<b>Item 03 Declarations of Interest</b>	21/11/ASB/03	Declarations from all members were noted.	



	<p>able to register their votes. He stressed that the team would in no way want to unintentionally disenfranchise or de-value any demographic of the membership who were eligible to vote.</p> <p>AD confirmed that any member requesting a paper ballot would continue to be sent a single A4 paper voting instruction which would contain details of the election, where to access the candidate information, how to vote and would also include both an email and a phone number for the Mi-Voice support team.</p> <p>TG noted the environmental impact of continuing to issue ballot papers, when a very small percent were ever returned.</p> <p>Members then approved the move to paperless ballots.</p> <p>SB noted that the number of nominators currently required for candidates varied between the three Boards and questioned whether this disparity was necessary or desirable. AD noted that the number of nominators required was in the gift of each Board to decide. Boards will therefore be asked to consider this in time for any proposed amendment to be brought to Assembly ahead of the 2023 election.</p> <p>ACTION – RS/EJ/CM</p> <p><b>ii) Reduce the voting period</b></p> <p>The proposal to potentially reduce the voting period from the current 15 days was considered and members noted the daily voter breakdown details provided in the paper.</p> <p>RT informed members that feedback from a small number of both members and candidates was that the overall timeframe for the elections was excessive and if it was possible to reduce the voting period this might be beneficial. He noted that at times a certain level of toxic discourse can arise around the elections, particularly on social media, which can be quite uncomfortable to be part of and/or observe. TO however highlighted that the elections also brought an element of positive engagement and publicity for the Society.</p> <p>Members tended to agree that the entire election period did feel very lengthy but questioned whether it might be better to look at reducing the time between candidates being announced and campaigning starting, and then again between campaigning starting and voting opening. One option might therefore be to state the date that nominations close and then state a date when campaigning would be permitted from.</p>	RS/EJ/CM
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	<p>MA asked that at least two weekends be included in any voting period. He suggested it might be worth considering external assistance to help with the proofing of ballot information. RT noted that this work was currently undertaken by senior staff within the team, as any errors in candidate information would have a significant impact on the entire election process. AD agreed, and noted that Mi-Voice do currently undertake aspects of this work but would also consider whether additional resources might be beneficial.</p> <p>AJ observed that more votes were cast in the final four days of the voting period than the rest of the period overall. He agreed including two weekends in the voting period was sensible but that this would mean voting could only be reduced by about four days overall and questioned if such a change would really make any difference but may unintentionally reduce overall engagement with the voting process.</p> <p>Members then agreed to reduce the voting period down to as short as practical, whilst still including two weekends. AD will incorporate these instructions into the 2022 elections timeline in the most practical way.</p> <p>ACTION AD</p> <p><b>iii) Reduce candidate information</b></p> <p>AD confirmed the CV word template would be incorporated into the main online nomination form in future and would not need to be completed separately.</p> <p>TG felt that candidates should have to undertake some level of work in putting their nomination together as to be elected to the Board was a prestigious thing. She therefore felt all the current information should continue to be requested. If candidates were not prepared to provide any of the information, it would be for the voters to consider and take into account when they were casting their votes.</p> <p>AC felt it should be as simple as possible to stand for election and so suggested none of the additional information/statements etc be deemed to be mandatory. KC similarly felt the role of the Society should be to facilitate the ability for candidates to provide information if they wished to rather than to mandate it.</p> <p>PB felt it was important Assembly considered how attractive it currently is for members to participate in the elections, and noted that the Society was encouraging more people to interact with it, including standing for election and therefore the simpler the process was the better, whilst still mindful that it was an honour to be elected.</p>	AD
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	<p>TG however felt that candidates should need to put some degree of effort into standing and noted that at present individuals were not compelled to have to use the maximum word limit for statements etc.</p> <p>TO felt there was a degree of duplication with the free text statement and the set question responses, particularly when coupled with the letters to PJ etc. She observed that members with neurodiversity issues might find communicating via video more helpful.</p> <p>RT noted that RPS Connect would provide a dedicated platform for individual Board elections groups to be established for the first time in 2022 which would also enable greater interaction between candidates and members should they chose to participate/join the dedicated group.</p> <p>CM felt that reliance on a CV could potentially disadvantage younger candidates and felt the set questions helped counterbalance this.</p> <p>SB suggested that the three areas covering declarations of interest might be combined under a single heading and the word count therefore reduced.</p> <p>RT explained that all the information currently requested had been included by instruction from Assembly at some point previously, and that views on what was required tended to change on a cyclical basis.</p> <p>As there was no clear consensus on whether to reduce the current level of information, members were asked to vote whether to keep at the present level or to remove the three set questions:</p> <p>keep at present level – TG, AJ, CA, JM, LS</p> <p>remove set questions – MA, CW, TO</p> <p>It was therefore agreed that the current level of information would be retained but members agreed that the mandatory nature of the CV, set questions etc would be removed.</p> <p>ACTION - AD</p> <p><b>iv) Remove paper nominations</b></p> <p>Members noted that no paper nominations had been received since on-line nominations were introduced in 2016 and therefore agreed to remove paper nomination forms.</p>	<p>AD</p>
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<p><b>Item 07 National Boards</b></p>	<p>21/11/ASB/07</p>	<p>The latest update was noted.</p>	
<p><b>Item 08 President's Report</b></p>	<p>21/11/ASB/08</p>	<p>The latest report from the President was noted.</p>	

<b>Item 09 Treasurer's Report</b>	21/11/ASB/9	The latest report from the Treasurer was noted.	
<b>Item 10 Chief Executive's Report</b>	21/11/ASB/10	<p>PB observed that it was now 20 months since remote working had been introduced because of the pandemic but that it had been possible to partially re-open the three RPS offices for a limited number of staff to return since September if they wished to and it was in alignment with government policy in each of the three nations.</p> <p>He explained that all three offices would be used in a very different way going forward as the new ways of working for staff were introduced. The Exec team had been undertaking a significant piece of work, with the help of external consultants, on what possible new ways of working might be that would allow teams to best embrace the potential opportunities for doing things differently going forward and ensure the great work done over the last 20 months can continue. At the same time the Exec continue to ensure the Society remains sustainable and viable in the long term by ensuring effective cost controls, increasing income and continuing to return a surplus each year.</p> <p>This will necessitate some material changes to the buildings to make them more welcoming for staff and to better facilitate collaborative working and help facilitate the new ways of working mind-set. The biggest change will be seen at 66ES, where the first and second floors have now been let out to an external organisation. However, PB stressed the Society still retained exclusive use of the ground, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors.</p> <p>He stressed the importance of the Society's new Culture and Values which were also being brought to life and would be central to how teams worked going forward.</p> <p>He noted that there will be a gradual return to holding some face to face events during 2022, including the Science &amp; Research Summit and a GB Conference in November. Teams are currently looking at how best to be able to run these as hybrid/mixed events and ensure all core events remain fully accessible. Work is also being done with RPS Locals around how best any regional programme of events might be progressed.</p> <p>Members were informed that a gas leak had occurred outside 6ES last week but that the facilities team had responded very swiftly to ensure there was no risk to the building or to staff. The issue has now been resolved and the building re-opened for use.</p> <p>The Exec team continue to work hard to progress the implementation of the 2021-2026 Strategy, and Assembly members had chance yesterday to hear more about the operational supporting and enabling strategies that sat below this.</p>	

		The new Salesforce CRM will enable much greater connectivity with members and allow significant insight into how products and services are used, as well as providing the platform for RPS Connect.	
<b>Item 11 Education &amp; Professional Development</b>	21/11/ASB/11	The annual report from the Education & Standards Committee was noted.  Minutes of the meetings held on 6 <sup>th</sup> July & 21 <sup>st</sup> September were noted.	
<b>Item 12 Science &amp; Research</b>	21/11/ASB/12	The annual report from the Science & Research Committee was noted.  Minutes of the meeting held on 15 <sup>th</sup> September were noted.	
<b>Item 13 Inclusion &amp; Diversity</b>	21/11/ASB/13	The latest I&D update was noted.	
<b>Item 14 Climate Change</b>	21/11/ASB/14	<p><b>a) Climate Emergency Declaration</b> The latest update was noted.</p> <p><b>b) Climate Change &amp; ESG</b> Following on from an the-depth discussion at the Working Day RT now gave a brief presentation outlining what responsible or ethical investment options may be open to Assembly with regards to the Society's funds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A responsible investment approach. Using our investments (through our investment managers) to encourage companies to improve their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) risk management and develop more sustainable business practices. A quick summary of what responsible investing is and the main ways it is done can be found here <a href="https://www.unpri.org/download?ac=10223">https://www.unpri.org/download?ac=10223</a> (Principles for Responsible Investment).</li> <li>2) An ethical investment/segreated approach. Exclusionary screening of our investments based on a set of ethical values/principles. We would apply a segregated approach to our invested funds and determine any industry sectors to remove from our portfolio. A reasonable implementation of this approach for RPS would be able to remove producers and miners of coal, oil and gas (termed Scope 1), but not to screen out users of fossil fuels (Scope 2) or the further downstream supply chain use of these raw materials (Scope 3)</li> </ol>	

	<p>He noted that there had been significant contributions to this item submitted by members of the Society in general which had been shared with Assembly at the Working Day. He thanked all those who had contacted the Society on this matter for the way they had done so in such a timely, calm and informative way which he felt was a useful model for future engagement.</p> <p>AY agreed it had been a very positive experience to engage with members in this area and stressed that the Society was on a continual journey with the climate emergency becoming an increasingly important factor taken into account around all financial decisions. He felt the discussion yesterday had been very productive and had given Assembly members significant information to allow them to weigh up all the factors involved.</p> <p>AJ noted that the Society did already take a responsible approach to investments and a number of sectors were already excluded. He felt the discussion today was therefore whether this was considered to be sufficient or whether Assembly now felt the Society could go further, for example by excluding extractors of fossil fuels and work towards going further still at some point in the future given Assembly also had a responsibility to balance environmental considerations with their fiduciary responsibilities but also had an obligation to lead in this area as the professional body.</p> <p>RT then shared the proposed statement on divestment agreed by Assembly at the Working Day:</p> <p><i>The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) has taken the decision to cease all remaining financial investments in fossil fuels as soon as possible and by the end of 2022 at the latest.</i></p> <p><i>Previously RPS has taken the approach of ‘Responsible Investing’ where we use our funds to drive change in the companies we invest in. The environment and human wellbeing have always been a core consideration of our investment approach. However, we now recognise that this influence was not great enough to balance out the negative impacts of climate change. The RPS Assembly today decided to make this amendment to its investment strategy as part of the RPS drive to become an environmentally responsible organisation.</i></p> <p><i>Divestment in fossil fuels is when an organisation sells any direct financial investments, such as stocks, bonds, or investment funds, it has in companies that extract fossil fuels, such as coal, gas, oil and tar sands.</i></p> <p><i>The move builds on RPS <a href="#">action on sustainability</a> and its commitment to tackle the climate and ecological emergency by taking a leading role in encouraging the profession to reduce the environmental impact of medicines.</i></p> <p>SB asked what the financial implications of implementing this course of action would be or if it might impose any restrictions on the Society’s existing portfolios which may have a negative impact on returns.</p>	
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<b>Item 15 Health &amp; Safety</b>	21/11/ASB/15	The annual Health & Safety report was duly noted.	
<b>Item 16 AGM</b>		Members were informed that the 2022 AGM would be held on 25 <sup>th</sup> May 6.30pm – 8.45pm and would once again be fully virtual as hybrid working for this type of meeting remained a challenge at present. RT noted that the Exec team would be present to respond to any proposed motions on the day, before they are	

		voted on, to allow any pertinent information to be presented and help ensure members had the necessary background on items.	
<b>Item 17 Any Other Business</b>		None.	
<b>Item 18 Dates of Next Meeting</b>		The date of the Assembly Working Day 15 <sup>th</sup> March and Assembly Meeting 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2022 were noted.	

DRAFT

**ACTION SHEET – Assembly Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> November OPEN BUSINESS**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who by</b>	<b>When</b>
Item 05(a) Ethnicity data	Ethnicity data for Panel of Fellows and Membership Committee to be circulated to Assembly once available	RT	As soon as possible
	Panel of Fellows to re-consider possibility of removing need for confidentiality of nominations	RT	2022 mtg
Item 06 Elections	Number of nominators required for each Board to be considered	RS/EJ/CM	2022 National Board mtg
	Amendments to 2022 election timeline to be made to incorporate reduction in voting period etc	AD	2022 election
	Mandatory nature of some fields in candidate information to be removed	AD	2022 election
	Process for electing Vice-Chair and Assembly Members to be amended	AD	As soon as possible