

**Minutes of Assembly Meeting Open Business held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023 via VC**

Present: Claire Anderson (CA) - Chair, Martin Astbury (MA), Sibby Buckle (SB), Andrew Carruthers (AC), Ruth Evans (RE), Thorrun Govind (TG), Mike Hannay (MH), Alisdair Jones (AJ), Geraldine McCaffrey (GMC), Lynne Smith (LS), Audrey Thompson (AT), Cheryl Way (CW), Geraldine McCaffrey (GMC)

In attendance: Paul Bennett (PB), Karen Baxter (KB), Neville Carter (NC), Rick Russell (RR), James Davies (JD), Elen Jones (EJ), Laura Wilson (LW), Alison Douglas (AD), Corrinne Burns (CB), Emer Bellis (EB) – Item 03b only, Jon Jarrett (JJ) -Item 07 only

Observers: 7 observer members attended the meeting

Apologies: Mary Evans (ME), Avril Chester (ACh)

Item	Paper	Notes and actions	Action by
<b>Item 01 Welcome &amp; Apologies</b>		CA welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the open business session would be recorded for members to view on the website. The recording would be posted at the same time as the draft minutes were made available, shortly after the Easter break, and would remain on the site until the next meeting.  Apologies were received from Mary Evans. Noted that RE would be attending from 10am.	
<b>Item 02 Items for Noting</b>	23/03/ASB/02	The following items were noted: a) Code of Conduct & Remit of Assembly and COG b) Declarations of interest c) Minutes of the Open Business Assembly Meeting 19 <sup>th</sup> /20 <sup>th</sup> July – noted and approved. d) National Pharmacy Board Reports e) President's Report - CA has been attending FIP meetings and speaking (remotely via Zoom) at a number of international events and noted that the RPS was leading the way with its visions and support for	

		<p>pharmacy services and many overseas organisations are keen to learn from us.</p> <p>f) Treasurer's Report - [Secretary's Note: As the Treasurer had been on annual leave the report was circulated to Assembly members on 28<sup>th</sup> March]</p> <p>g) Education &amp; Standards Committee minutes of Committee 6<sup>th</sup> February and amended Terms of Reference – noted and approved</p> <p>h) Science &amp; Research Committee minutes of the Committee 7<sup>th</sup> February and amended Terms of Reference – noted and approved</p> <p>i) Inclusion &amp; Diversity update</p> <p>j) 2023 Events</p> <p>k) FIP ExCo CPS meeting report</p>	
<p><b>Item 03</b> <b>Matters Arising</b></p>		<p><b>a) Pharmacy Charity Donations</b></p> <p>RR was pleased to report that the option for members to donate to Pharmacy Support had been implemented and individuals were now able to donate as part of their renewal process. The team will be reviewing how effective this is with Pharmacy Support later in the year before considering whether to widen out the process to other pharmacy related charities.</p> <p>ACTION - RR</p> <p><b>b) Diversity Targets</b></p> <p>RR outlined that the RPS is very open and transparent about its I&amp;D data, over and above what is legally required of an organisation of its size. Three years into formally reporting on its programme of work to meet various targets in this area, there have been many improvements in processes across the organisation but these have not always translated into improved figures. The team has therefore been reviewing its processes with external partners to help improve further.</p> <p>EB joined the meeting for this item and ran through some of the main details provided in the paper for this item, including:</p> <p>Current broad strategic aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing staff and potential employees/applicants feel RPS is a fair and inclusive place to work</li> </ul> <p>Members feel RPS reflects them</p>	<p><b>RR</b></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembly and other governance members can be confident that the Society is embedding the same levels of good practise within the Society as it advocates for its members externally</li> </ul> <p>She explained that a number of targets had been set in 2020, which included reducing the then 14.7% gender pay gap to 7% by 2025 and the then 10.7% ethnicity pay gap similarly to 7% by 2025. However she noted that the team had since realised that these targets were very ambitious and unlikely to be realistically achievable.</p> <p>At the same time a target was set of having at least 50% women and 13% ethnic minority staff in the upper pay quartile, figures which were representative of the general population, but noted that the target for ethnic minority staff had recently been raised to 18% to align with the latest 2021 census information.</p> <p>Softer targets were similarly set for high scores within the internal staff Workbuzz surveys by inclusion of I&amp;D related questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe the RPS values the diversity of its employees</li> <li>• I'm treated fairly and with respect</li> <li>• I can be myself at work</li> </ul> <p>with the survey results being able to be broken down by age, gender, department and ethnicity and EB noted that the Society scored above the overall Workbuzz average benchmarks on these.</p> <p>When the pay gaps were last calculated in April 2022, the Society had 66% female and 30% ethnic minority staff overall, however only 46% female and 12% ethnic minority staff were in the top pay quartile. Women were equally represented across the top three grades within the organisation but over-represented in the lower grades and ethnic minorities were particularly under-represented in the top two grades and over represented on the lower grades, with more detail being provided in the paper.</p> <p>EB explained that a lot of the Society's workforce is recruited from both pharmacy and publishing disciplines which, although predominantly female, are both areas where women and ethnic minorities are under-represented at the higher levels. The society also employs a number of staff in the technology area which again was a sector with a high paid but predominantly male workforce generally. She noted that pay gaps in the larger, member facing teams, showed better results, with a negative pay gap for ethnicity and a lower gender pay gap than the rest of the organisation.</p>	
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		<p>look to revisit this by establishing a new Focus Group for ethnic minority women who might want to get involved further.</p> <p>TO thanked EB for providing such a detailed report as she has been seeking to get this level of detail since joining Assembly. She welcomed the review of the strategic goals and encouraged the team to be brave and courageous, particularly when it came to setting targets. She noted that ethnic minorities were not a homogenous group but that disparities within this group also existed. She noted that inclusion as a topic is wide, however racial equality impacts many areas and if that is done right it will benefit many other areas.</p> <p>Whilst the internal I&amp;D group and creation of a wider diversity network were good to have, TO asked where the overall accountability in this area, outside of the Assembly, lay. PB confirmed that, as Chief Executive, he was ultimately accountable and that, as well as producing reports for Assembly, the team also produced regular reports for the Executive team which were discussed on a frequent basis. He felt the internal I&amp;D group was a good sounding board and endeavoured to attend the group meetings personally whenever possible, with at least one Executive team member being present at every meeting.</p> <p>EB acknowledged that the work to bring the pay gaps down had been more challenging than expected but the team were fully committed to finding the most productive actions to tackle this. Overall the team felt that some positive progress had been made but the Society was still not quite where it would want to be and she noted that unfortunately pay gaps were moving in the wrong direction despite the measures taken to address this. Diversity at the most senior levels within the organisation was also still not as high as the would be wanted.</p> <p>PB added that, having been directly involved in the recruitment of all of the Senior staff cited in the paper, he had definitely seen an increase in the diversity of applicants and felt the changes the team had made in this area were beginning to make a difference. He remained, however, dissatisfied with the rate of progress and felt there was clearly still some significant work to do.</p> <p>EB agreed there clearly was more work to do against such aspirational targets which would need to be done in more gradual stages. To best achieve this, the People team will review and refocus the strategic action plan with Exec, and bring a revised strategy, with clear measurable timelines and outcomes, back to Assembly in July.</p> <p>ACTION – RR/EB</p>	RR/EB
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		<p>c) FIP Member Offer</p> <p>Following the decision at the November Assembly meeting, the Society's application to re-join FIP had been considered and approved by FIP Council in December. RPS has therefore now fully re-joined membership and is already increasing its work with FIP in a number of areas including sustainability.</p> <p>PB explained that discussions within FIP are currently on-going as to what their enhanced member offer for all member organisations might look like but that final details would not be approved by FIP Council until September. PB confirmed Assembly members would be given sight of, and be able to comment on, any further information in this area once it was available.</p>	
<b>Item 04 CEO's Report</b>		<p>PB noted that the end of year accounts for 2022 were now finalised and he was very pleased to report a fourth consecutive year of surplus, despite a challenging global financial backdrop. The formal financial statements will be published in advance of the AGM which would be held on 24<sup>th</sup> May and he noted that the process to submit motions for the AGM was being streamlined this year to assist with member participation.</p> <p>Nominations for the National Pharmacy Board elections in England and Wales were now open, although there were no places up for election in Scotland. Full details were available on the website and PB encouraged members to consider standing.</p> <p>2023 had already been a very busy year in terms of media opportunities, most recently with the withdrawal of Pholcodine, which saw CA making a number of statement and TG make an appearance on TV, as well as leading to a large number of enquiries with the support team. TG in particular was thanked for being available at short notice to cover a number of media requests.</p> <p>Noted that prescription prices had again increased in England which the Society had condemned as unacceptable.</p> <p>JD is now leading a piece of work to tackle addictive medicines, and is working in collaboration with GPs on this.</p> <p>PB and EJ met with members of the Welsh Senedd to highlight the role of prescribing pharmacists and Board Members have been promoting the call for every pharmacist to be an IP by 2030.</p> <p>PB confirmed the Society has now fully divested from fossil fuel investments and, as will be seen in Item 07, is now working to make the RPS office at 66ES carbon neutral. RPS attended a roundtable meeting with</p>	

		<p>RCGP Scotland on sustainable prescribing and RPS is increasing advocacy in this area as part of its membership of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change.</p> <p>PB and the Exec team had the pleasure of attending a Fellows' event in Scotland earlier in March to hear their views on the SPB work plan and see Jonathan Burton presented with the 2022 Charter Award.</p> <p>RE joined the meeting.</p>	
<b>Item 05 Constitutional and Governance Review</b>		<p>PB noted the Society had now issued an Invitation to Tender for a full review of its constitution and governance. This would be a significant and very important piece of work and would, ultimately, allow Assembly and members of the Society to decide what the best way forward for the organisation might be in terms of corporate structure and overall governance.</p> <p>PB and KB have also been meeting with a number of similar organisations to get a clearer idea of what potential alternative structures might look like.</p> <p>Questions within the ITT to be answered by the review included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what structures would be needed to welcome other professional groups that might wish to join us</li> <li>• how to make patient insight integral to our governance</li> <li>• clear pathways for delivery of assessment, credentialing and education services</li> <li>• implications of moving to charitable status or some other legal structure</li> </ul> <p>PB stressed that this piece of work was not in response to the recent Co-Chairs' Commission Report and had, in fact, been under consideration since before the pandemic but had been put on hold during that period.</p> <p>The deadline for tender submissions had now been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> March but over 20 providers had been identified across a range of governance and legal organisations. PB envisaged it would be necessary to work with more than one provider but informed members that assessment of responses would be carried out as quickly as possible. He would hope work could commence in May and would like to have something to bring to Assembly in July.</p> <p>More details will be shared with Assembly, Boards and members once the team have had chance to assess the tender submissions and PB confirmed any final decisions on changes to structure etc would be for Assembly and, ultimately, members to agree and approve by Special Resolution vote.</p>	

		<p>MA stressed that any substantive outcomes from the review would need to be driven by the membership and cautioned that elected members would need to remain in the majority under any future governance structure.</p> <p>SB asked how governance members and members of the Society more widely might be able to input into the review and noted that PB hadn't specifically referenced looking at Royal College status when outlining the questions included in the ITT.</p> <p>PB believed it would be very important to hear from the selected provider(s) how best to illicit the views of members and this formed part of the tender process. He noted that whether the Society might ultimately go on to become a Royal College was a matter that could only be determined by the members but confirmed this question would inevitably be part of what was looked at under the review.</p> <p>AJ stressed it would be important to ensure any provider was given sufficient time to meet with Exec, Boards and Assembly etc and felt there would be a need to schedule in additional sessions to do this properly rather than shoehorn into existing meeting agendas. He observed that last time a governance review had been held nothing substantive had changed within the organisation, and he therefore encouraged Assembly to think about potentially establishing a Working Group to help implement any new recommendations.</p> <p>PB agreed that the speed of the review should not prevent it being carried out at an adequate depth but, at the same time, it was important to ensure momentum on this was not lost and felt it was right to set an ambitious time frame for completion.</p>	
<b>Item 06 Co-Chairs' Commission Report</b>		<p>PB reminded members that the Commission Report had been published on 6<sup>th</sup> February, at which point the Society had published its initial response. Since then a webinar had been held by the CPhOs, attended by around 200 people predominantly from a senior NHS background or who had been involved in the work of the Commission. PB observed that there had sadly been a lack of grass roots pharmacists, pharmacy technicians or non-registered pharmacists in attendance.</p> <p>The Society's Science &amp; Research team had been monitoring commentary on the report and Assembly had held an additional session on 20<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the report recommendations. The session had made clear that it would be important to continue to listen to our members on this matter but also to engage</p>	



		<p>with other professional bodies and to seek a meeting with the CPhOs to explore the report further and get a better understanding of the details before it would be possible to give them proper consideration and gain an understanding of what RPS members might think.</p> <p>PB noted that there had been little or no real engagement from members at all with the report and few responses had been received at the dedicated email addresses provided by the Society. Members felt it was understandably proving challenging to get any real grass roots engagement with the report as it is was not immediate for people's day to day roles when they were under significant pressure at work and had little time to spare but stressed it would be vital for the Society to hear what its members, and also non-members, did think of the report.</p> <p>Members did however think that the other PLBs and SPGs were likely to have similarly low levels of engagement from their members and felt it was crucial to see what the Society could do to help increase member engagement.</p> <p>PB acknowledged that change was necessary for the profession, particularly in terms of increasing engagement between the different leadership bodies, the SPGs and other pharmacy profession stakeholders. He saw some similarity with the Society looking to review its own structures, but noted that whilst the RPS review would be a vertical one, the Commission had been a horizontal review.</p> <p>MA observed that there were over 200 organisations involved in pharmacy but, although since its creation in 2010, RPS had always been intended to be <i>the</i> professional leadership body for pharmacy and pharmacists (with PFNI acting as this in Ireland and APTUK acting as this for technicians). He therefore felt that if government had not heard what they wanted from RPS they themselves had chosen to go to other organisations knowing that they couldn't be said to speak for the profession as a whole in the same way as RPS could.</p> <p>He also observed that, historically, CPhOs had sometimes hand-picked members for various bodies (eg Rebalancing Board) specifically because they held the same views as themselves and dismissed what the professional leadership bodies had to say and cautioned that hand-picked groups can not represent or provide a voice for the profession as a whole.</p> <p>Members agreed that any form of government control of the profession, or even government input into composition of any new Council and appointment of its chair, was completely unacceptable.</p>	
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<b>Item 07 Smart Building Technology</b>		<p>JJ attended the meeting for this item and gave a presentation on proposed plans to introduce smart building technology into the RPS office at 66 East Smithfield.</p> <p>AJ asked if, with the increase in automation of many of the functions, any loss of network connectivity might cause potential problems. JJ confirmed this would not be an issue as manual operations for the systems would still be possible in such instances.</p> <p>CW asked if the technology was being used in other offices and what kind of reduction in operating costs they might have seen where it was in use. JJ explained that this exact form of platform technology was unique and hadn't yet been trialled in any other buildings but that 66ES would be the flag ship site. This had enabled the Society to obtain a heavily discounted price from Incentive for installation etc.</p> <p>Although once in operation savings in cleaning and energy costs will begin to be realised the team were not expecting this to be an immediate return on investment. JJ did however highlight that the entire capex element of the project had already been funded by accrued savings within the existing contract with Incentive and the team had worked up projected costs savings going forward once the technology was in place.</p> <p>This was an exciting and pioneering project for the Society as part of its sustainability journey and whilst it might be somewhat of a leap of faith it was definitely the right thing to do set against only a very small element of risk. It demonstrated the Society had the same level of commitment to climate change and the environment as it was advocating for the profession as a whole and represented a very exciting opportunity.</p>	

		<p>SB asked if the new system would offer any increased building security measures. JJ noted it didn't but that, as part of a separate project, new cctv cameras and access controls were being installed.</p> <p>GMC asked if there might be any similar opportunities for the offices in Scotland and Wales. JJ explained that the team would wait and see how successful the pilot was at 66ES before looking to see if it might be possible to roll out to the other offices.</p> <p>TG asked if the system might be a useful selling point when it came to renting out office space. JJ felt it might potentially be but noted that, other than the communal spaces, the system would not be installed on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. Ingeus might want to consider the system being extended to their office spaces but would have to cover the costs for this themselves.</p>	
<b>Item 08 2023 Conference</b>		<p>NC outlined plans to hold the 2023 RPS conference on 10<sup>th</sup> November at the same venue in London as 2022. The team were currently exploring options to have greater space at the site as this would also allow for increased opportunity to have informal meetings, a multi-faith prayer room, breakout workshops etc. The conference would utilise appropriate technology to provide an app and would again be a hybrid face to face and remote event.</p> <p>The team will be liaising with the three National Boards to get Board Member input and will also be considering the agendas for 2024 and 2025, as 2023 is not being run in isolation but rather as part of a 'golden thread' of events across the next few years. TG felt it was vital the Boards were brought into the process in the next 6-8 weeks and suggested a member from each Country could be designated as a champion for this project.</p> <p>NC was conscious of the London-centric nature of the Annual Conference and stressed the team were looking at having a number of events within the overall calendar at other cities around the country. He would be very keen to explore alternative venues, including potentially at universities but was mindful that any venue would need to have easily accessible transport options for members from across the country.</p> <p>CA asked if it might be possible to include oral presentations as well as posters. NC confirmed the team would like to do this but that consideration would need to be given as to whether it was possible logistically and will discuss with CA outside the meeting.</p> <p>ACTION – NC/CA</p>	<b>NC/CA</b>

		<p>TO asked if there would also be a Science &amp; Research Conference in 2023. NC confirmed that this would be confirmed shortly.</p> <p>SB requested that some form of information which highlighted Assembly and Board members, including their names and photos, be prominently available to allow members to know who their elected representatives were and help them be accountable to their constituents. A 'meet the Board' area would also be desirable.</p> <p>It was suggested that inviting a prominent politician or leader of a different pharmacy organisation to be speakers at the event might be beneficial. NC was broadly supportive of this idea but cautioned that inviting politicians can sometimes become problematic.</p> <p>Noted that the conference was a showcase for the benefits of being a member of the Society and it was suggested it might therefore be sensible to include elements that focussed on students and early career pharmacists to highlight what the RPS could do for them, possibly by working with BPSA on this. NC agreed this might be a good option to pursue but reminded members that the event was only over a single day so couldn't focus specifically on too large a number of areas.</p>	
<b>Item 09 Any Other Business</b>		There were no other items of business	
<b>Item 10 Date of Next Meeting</b>		Induction Day 11 <sup>th</sup> July and Assembly Meeting 12 <sup>th</sup> July.	

**ACTION SHEET –Working Day 15<sup>th</sup> November**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who by</b>	<b>When</b>
Item 03a Pharmacy Charity Donation	Review effectiveness of option for donations to Pharmacy Support	RR	July meeting
Item 03b Pay Gaps	Pay gaps data by grade to be provided	EB	July meeting
Item 08 2023 Conference	Oral presentations to be considered	NC/CA	As soon as practical