Chief Executive’s Report to the Annual Meeting of Fellows

First of all I would like to say a big thank you to you all for your welcome and support during the past year. And also your feedback and challenge, which has been fundamental in our work to take the RSM further in its development.

The past twelve months have been characterised by the themes of improving services for members and delegates, making better use of our resources, and ensuring the NHS and others in the wider healthcare arena know more about what we do.

As said in my preface to the Annual Report, it has been a year of considering longer term strategy against the backdrop of considerable change and challenge in health services, and also the general economic pressures faced by charities, membership bodies and business in general.

During the past year we have been considering our offering of education. This is our core purpose as a charity and how we deliver public benefit, as required by charity law, and shown in the graphic on page 2 of the Annual Report, by educating medical and healthcare professionals to improve patient outcomes. The Dean has outlined this in more detail, but a major priority for us has been to consider our offering in respect of its scope and range of content (what we offer), and modes of delivery (how we offer it), so that members and delegates have the best possible choice of relevant continuing professional development and an experience that really does support learning. After all, our mission is to improve health through education and innovation.

I also said in the Annual Report our unique strength is our ability to focus on a wide variety of specialties, as well as to offer breadth through cross-cutting health themes to our well-established network of doctors, but also to other members of the healthcare team as well. Our education strategy aims to build on the brilliant work of the specialty Sections, plus add other content into that mix reflecting the real multi-specialty and inter-disciplinary world that our members and delegates work in near to the front line of healthcare and associated settings.

We will need to evolve the way we work internally to be even more successful, balancing quality of content with a more nimble and responsive approach, ensuring that all our education, plus information and Library resources support our core aims coherently. We need to do more online as well as face to face, reflecting that busy health professionals need access to learning opportunities in a variety of ways in amongst busy lives.

The RSM has had a decade of running Innovation Summits to share exciting developments. These popular events continue and have been joined by RSM supporting the NHS England’s Clinical Entrepreneur Scheme, which aims to foster innovation through direct support of cohorts of health professionals. Members of this scheme can also take up membership of the RSM to support them in their course. RSM being a partner to this scheme is not only the right thing to do to spread developments and support innovators in healthcare, but is noticeably helpful in the eyes of the NHS and has raised visibility of the RSM.

Fellows, such as yourselves, are the backbone of the Society and we continue to consider how best to serve you, and also how to attract other, particularly younger, members into the RSM. We will continue to balance the RSM’s traditional values and heritage with modernity, and your feedback on what we do is vital to our considerations.

Much of our response to you and our ability to bring strategy to life going forward, depends on us having smart and efficient infrastructure. We have a number of IT programmes underway
scheduled to deliver through this year, the foundation stones being a new customer relationship management system and a new website. We know that the current website doesn’t meet everyone’s needs, it is ‘clunky’. We need one that is more responsive to you, more personalised, easier to navigate and can adapt over time. We may not be able to deliver all of this on day one of the new systems, and the switchover will bring some short-term challenges, but we will deliver as soon as possible and we will continue to invest into 2019 and beyond to deliver the IT systems vision. So do look out for news about this later in the year. I would like to thank the Executive team and a very large number of staff who are helping with these projects. It is impressive work so far and all going to plan.

More widely, we need to continue to look at how best to use our space. For example, as part of the education strategy we need flat floor space to complement our lecture theatre space. I would like staff to be accommodated in more open office environments that support team working in and between departments. Our ability to be more agile depends on different working practices internally and design of space can help that. We could also use our space more effectively to serve more third party customers, attracting income for the RSM. And of course, we need to ensure that we invest in the members areas, to achieve the standard that you would expect of a professional membership organisation. More news will emerge later in the year about possibilities.

On to the financial position. It is a time of pressure, for all membership organisations, charities, and event and hospitality businesses in general in London. RSM is facing stiff competition, both in providing educational events and event space. We are challenged by a hardening of trends as to how doctors and others use their time and money, given there are multiple demands on both. The general financial position is tough for all. You will see in the annual report at page 16 that we have reported a net deficit in our total funds of £429k and we expect to report a deficit again in the 2017/18 financial year. Our income has remained flat for the past four years whilst our costs, which we manage as tightly as we can without affecting service quality, inevitably rise year on year. We cannot ignore this and must make changes so that we can build resilience and flexibility.

Throughout the year we have been challenging our cost base across the board, and we are looking to ways to grow more income through our educational offering, plus retaining and growing membership, as well as optimising income streams from the Society’s asset base (including the property strategy I’ve already referred to). This accompanies a focussed strategy to sell our space to third party customers who want to run their events in central London.

RSM must become more resilient in this challenging economic climate and ensure a buoyant position with regards to income and expenditure, with more flexibility in surpluses to support further developments for members and delegates. We have yet to move to this more comfortable position that can support developments more easily, but work is underway.

We also continue to work hard to continue to attract donors. A big thank you to our donors from me. A number of our educational programmes are helped by generous gifts, I am truly grateful for these.

The RSM is a charity and we are serious about working to show that we are making an impact, as health professionals learn and improve their practice in some way to the benefit of their patients.

We are serious about putting our values into practice every day. Respecting each other, investing in people, aiming for continuous improvement, carrying out our intentions and, importantly, collaborating. So much of what we do just simply couldn’t happen without the profoundly important partnerships that we have with our members and also other individuals and health
organisations. It’s so important that partnership is a theme in our education strategy. But this is an opportunity for me to say a huge thank you to all members who help us develop and deliver our education programme though the Sections and other channels. As our very special ‘voluntary Faculty’, we respect you greatly. Your views have been fundamental to us in building our education strategy going forward. Thank you.

May I also add my thanks to Council for their challenge and support in equal measure; to the President, Executive team and each and every member of staff. Our collective sense of purpose and optimism will be vital in the year ahead.

Thank you.

Helen Gordon
Chief Executive