

UNCONFIRMED Minutes of the ANNUAL MEETING OF FELLOWS of the Royal Society of Medicine held as a hybrid meeting with panellists at 1 Wimpole Street, London W1G OAE, and Fellows attending via Zoom webinar on Monday 26 April 2021

Present: Professor Roger Kirby, President (in the Chair)
Ms Michele Acton, Chief Executive
Professor Humphrey Scott, Dean
Mrs Joanna Rose, Charity Secretary
82 Fellows

The President welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting of Fellows.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Following a poll of Fellows attending, the Minutes of the last Annual Meeting of Fellows held on 9 March 2020 (AMF 20/21/1) were unanimously approved and signed as a correct record.

2. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Professor Kirby started by thanking those Council members who had completed their term of office: Dr Fiona Moss, who had demitted office as Dean in September 2020, and also the outgoing Trustees, namely Reverend Hilary De Lyon, Professor Gillian Leng and Dr Natasha Robinson. He took this opportunity to welcome Professor Scott, who took up post as Dean in October 2020, Mr Hamish Thomas, who had recently been appointed as a Trustee, and Ms Michelle Gordon, the new Director of Communications.

There had been some extremely good meetings during the 2019/20 year. The last 'in-house' meeting had been a public engagement event, which had been delivered by Nobel Laureate, Professor Sir Gregory Winter. This, as it turned out, was our last major event before lockdown hit.

Once this happened, we had to change our way of working overnight and Professor Kirby wished to thank the CEO, Michele Acton, and all the staff at the RSM for adapting so quickly and providing some excellent webinars and meetings online.

Notable meetings included our Covid-19 webinar series. These webinars had been excellent and very well received. Also, the International Covid Conference, which had attracted 10,000 delegates from 106 countries. Thanks were given to the donors who had supported the education programme.

The weekly In Conversation Live series had also proved extremely popular with some very high-profile guests including Sir Michael Palin, Sir Trevor McDonald, Lord Sumption, Professor Dame Sally Davies and Professor Dame Donna Kinnair. He encouraged all members to view this series on the RSM YouTube channel. This series had also resulted in many philanthropic donations, and Professor Kirby thanked everyone who had donated in this way.

He hoped to continue the donations by launching a legacy campaign, to encourage Fellows to remember the RSM in their Will.

Professor Kirby then introduced a short video, which included some clips from some of the events held during the year.

4. DEAN'S REPORT

Professor Scott gave a report on the academic year 2019/2020, stating that there had been 347 online or in person events, with over 130,000 delegates.

In the current financial year, there had been a wide range of meetings, with 53 Sections holding at least one event each, and a total of 259 meetings held so far.

Highlights included the Anaesthesia meeting, which had been held over four evenings and attracting speakers such as Mr David Selu.

The current series on the impact of climate change on health had been launched by HRH The Prince of Wales and was reaching a wide audience.

The Medicine and Me series had been invigorated and continued to engage with specialist charities, which in turn brought new people into the RSM.

Professor Scott had reviewed the CPD process since he took up post, and proposed making changes to improve monitoring, and how it was delivered and accredited.

He had started a new initiative called 'Dean's Door' and was holding one-to-one meetings with Section Presidents to encourage communication and networking. He encouraged anyone who wished to speak to him about any education matters to contact him via email at dean@rsm.ac.uk

He would also continue to work on the education strategy to tie in with the strategic 5-year plan.

Professor Kirby thanked Professor Scott for his report.

5. CEO REPORT

Ms Acton started her report by saying how good it was to be able to be back at 1WS. She endorsed everything previously reported about how well staff had been able to adapt to working both online and from home and thanked them for all they had done over a very difficult year.

Ms Acton gave a presentation on FY 2019/20.

The update of the Charter and By-Laws had been approved by Privy Council and came into effect on 1 October 2020.

Ms Acton reported that there had been an obvious impact on finances caused by the pandemic. The first six months of the year had been as expected compared to previous years. All staff who could do so switched to home working in the first lockdown but many staff, mostly in the Commercial Services area of the business, had been placed on furlough.

Moving on to finances, RSM Commercial Services had taken a significant hit. Costs had had to be controlled and new income streams developed.

FY 19/20 had seen an overall operating loss of £4.4m. This excluded the income from the sale of Chandos House, which completed in June 2020, but this sale had helped unrestricted reserves to reach £8.6m, with cash balances of £10.3m as at 30 September 2020.

It would be sometime before business returned to pre-Covid levels and a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBIL) had been taken out.

Accounts had been prepared on a going concern basis. However, another significant loss was expected in the year ending September 2021. Unfortunately, since the pandemic started we had had to reduce headcount by 82 to 106 members of staff. Many of these staff had worked for the Society for a long time and they would be missed, and Ms Acton thanked them for their service over the years.

Strategic changes were now needed and plans were being developed for education, membership and the use of our property, which would feed into the overall strategy for the Society. A membership survey would be undertaken to feed into this work. New ways of working would continue post-lockdown – agile working would be the ‘new normal’.

Services would re-open on 17 May 2021, in accordance with government restrictions.

Professor Kirby thanked Ms Acton for her report, and the Senior Management Team, for their hard work over the year and their continued support.

6. REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Following a poll of Fellows attending the meeting, the audited accounts for the session 2019/20 (AMF 20/21/2) were unanimously received and adopted.

7. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR THE SESSION 2020/21

The President and Council recommended that BDO be reappointed as Auditors for the 2020/21 session. Following a poll of Fellows at the meeting, this recommendation was unanimously approved.

8. QUESTIONS FROM FELLOWS

Professor Kirby asked for questions from fellows:

How many members do we have and is there any demographic data?

We currently had 19,500 members, of whom approximately 13,000 were Fellows. The membership strategy work was looking at ways of making the RSM more vibrant in order to attract younger healthcare professionals to the Society.

What is the maximum group booking for dinner events from June onwards?

This was not known at present but we would adhere to Government advice.

How have plans to re-configure/re-develop 1WS progressed in light of the pandemic?

We are currently looking at how we utilise the building and make the most of the wonderful asset at 1 Wimpole Street.

How has the geographical distribution of attendees at meetings changed with online meetings and could it be maintained post-pandemic?

Professor Scott advised that meetings would be much broader in future, with hybrid meetings being held, allowing overseas Fellows and members to continue their medical education.

Is it possible to host a cocktail reception in 2022/23?

Yes.

Currently recorded meetings are only available to registered delegates for 30 days after the meeting – could this be extended?

This was already being investigated, with the aim of establishing an archive of material for future reference.

Could the Covid-19 webinars be monetised as a way of driving up income?

A decision had been made at the start of the pandemic that content related to Covid would be made available free of charge. We have however received philanthropic donations towards the provision of the series and are looking at how we develop things perhaps with a hybrid meeting followed by small reception to allow networking. We are looking more broadly at how we monetise content, but this relies on having content that has a long-shelf life.

The pandemic has made it difficult to get sponsorship for Section meetings, a traditional source of income for their meetings.

Professor Scott advised that sponsorship was still being sought to support the Section programme and would continue post-Covid, however we needed to be less inhibited about approaching firms for money.

The Covid-19 series had proved the RSM could provide world-class content. Could collaborations with other institutions be considered, and increase the exposure of the Society?

This was already being looked into, particularly given the level of IT/AV available at the RSM.

Would it be possible to digitise books so that Library content was available to those who were unable to come to London?

Ms Acton said this was a significant project and she would take note for the future.

Are smaller meeting rooms/private dining rooms being advertised?

Ms Acton said they were and also requested that members make friends and colleagues aware of their availability.

Could webinars be retransmitted so those in different time zones could view them?

This would be addressed by having material available in an archive.

A number of courses were available at Harvard Medical School Continuing Education Inside and Professor Kirby thanked the Fellow who had provided these.

The CEO confirmed that she would respond to the following points after the meeting:

Fellows and members are from how many countries?

Will there be draft beer available in the Bar once the Society reopens?

How we can clarify on the website how members can join a Section

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to discuss.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Annual Meeting of Fellows was scheduled to be held on Monday 7 March 2022 but this was subject to change.