**UNCONFIRMED Minutes** of the **ANNUAL MEETING OF FELLOWS** of the **Royal Society of Medicine** held at **6.30pm on Wednesday 4 September 2024** in the **Guy Whittle Auditorium, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1G OAE,** and **via Zoom Webinar.**

**Present:** Professor Gillian Leng, President (in the Chair)

Ms Michele Acton, Chief Executive

Professor Julia Manning, Dean of Education

Mr Simon Mills (Director of Finance and Operations – via Zoom)

**57** Fellows present in-person, **25** attended via Zoom

**In attendance:** Ms Natalie Randall (Minute secretary)

**1. WELCOME**

The President welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting of Fellows.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the last Annual Meeting of Fellows held on 27 June 2023 (AMF 23/24/1) were unanimously approved and signed as a correct record.

**3. PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

The President began by thanking Professor Roger Kirby for his valued contribution and hard work during his four year tenure.

The President gave a brief overview of how the Society was governed. The RSM was a registered charity and had a Council of Trustees, with up to ten elected by members and three appointed by Council. In addition, independent chairs oversaw the Audit, Risk and Governance Committee and the RSM Commercial Services Ltd board. Elections for four trustees would take place in early 2025 and interested parties were invited to contact the President for further information.

Professor Paul O’Flynn was introduced as the new Vice-President from 1 October 2024, taking over from Mr Hamish Thomas. Between them, the trustees served on the Society’s four standing committees: Audit, Risk and Governance; Education; Finance and Investment; Remuneration, People and Culture.

The President thanked the membership and the many volunteers who generously gave their time and contributed their invaluable expertise. These included members of the Society’s fifty-five Sections who delivered the core education programmes, trustees, committee co-optees and volunteers who supported the Library. The hard work of staff was also appreciated as well as the generosity of donors and those who partnered with the Society and sponsored events. Finally, the President reminded the meeting of the RSM strategy 2021-2026. The four key pillars were:

* **Education:** delivering multi-disciplinary specialist and general education as well as professional development
* **Learning Resources:** providing excellent healthcare resources
* **Networks:** connecting those involved in and interested in healthcare
* **Innovation Support:** leveraging expertise from across the RSM to help and inspire innovators

**4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT**

Ms Acton gave a presentation regarding the Society’s performance in the year ended 30 September 2023:

* It was the first year since 2018/19 not directly impacted by Covid.
* 290 education events (2021/22: 365) were delivered of which 72 were in-person and 218 were online/hybrid.
* There had been more than 26,000 interactions with the RSM Library.
* Exhibitions held in the Library had included: The Golden Age of Melancholy; Clinicians out-of-hours; William Osler; The NHS at 75; and Edward Jenner.
* Journal Citation Reports ranked JRSM 11/167 of general medical journals (with an impact factor of 17.3).
* Total membership numbers were slightly down at a little over 19k.
* There were 109 countries with RSM members.
* The RSM had forged a number of new partnerships, including with the Datta Meghe Institute of Higher Education and Research in India.
* Usage of Club facilities had returned to pre-pandemic levels despite the impact of industrial action.

Turning to governance and management matters, Professor Gillian Leng CBE was the first President to be elected by the membership and served as President-Elect prior to her inauguration in July 2024.

Thanks were passed on to trustees who had completed their terms of office during 2022/23, namely Dr Melita Irving, Dr Hélène Menagé and Dr Hiten Patel. From 1 October 2023, Dr Sarah Clarke, Professor David Oliver and Dr SiânRees were welcomed onto Council.

Professor Humphrey Scott completed his term of office as Dean in October 2022 and was replaced by Professor Gillian Leng.

There had also been some changes in the Senior Management Team: Janet Alexander (Director of Development) and Simon Mills (Director of Finance and Operations) were appointed. More recently, Cathy Ditchfield (Director of Engagement) and Professor Julia Manning (Dean of Education) had been welcomed.

**5. DEAN OF EDUCATION’S REPORT**

Professor Julia Manning reported on the education programme for the academic year ended 30 September 2023. The following points were highlighted:

* There was a gradual recovery from the pandemic in 2022/23. As in 2021/22, the majority of events took place online or in hybrid format, although there were more in-person events as the year progressed.
* The Society had tapped into the unique breadth of healthcare expertise and knowledge of its highly valued Section members who were fundamental to education at the RSM.
* A training simulation model driven by artificial intelligence and virtual reality, Navigating Angry Conversations, had been launched in partnership with Bodyswaps.
* There had been a number of high-profile specialty events, including:
  + *‘Digital approaches to end-of-life care: Dying in a technology enhanced way’* looked at the future of medicine using new technologies
  + *The Paediatric and Child* Health Section held an in-person event, offering trainees the chance to develop practical leadership skills using face-to-face interaction, and offered the opportunity to connect with leaders in the field
* The Society’s general education programme had delivered 33 events, sometimes in partnership with other organisations and with an international profile, including:
* Tackling Inequalities, the Society’s five-year healthcare inequalities programme, in partnership with NHS England, commenced in January 2023 with the inaugural conference. It was a sell-out event addressing ways to narrow the gap in health outcomes.
* Although the Covid-19 series continued until January 2023, the focus then shifted to ‘Spotlight’ webinars, a series of rapid response events focusing on topical and groundbreaking medical advances and research, including Mpox and Group A Strep.
* The ‘In Conversation Live’ series held 14 events during the year, continuing to attract audiences, both online and in-person, with guests from the worlds of medicine, politics, media and entertainment.
* A range of events for healthcare professionals and the wider public had been delivered, including the Medicine and Me series, in partnership with charities. Programmes during the year included:
* Living with myocarditis
* Participating in dementia research
* Living with a visible difference or disfigurement
* Young sudden cardiac death
* There were a number of Public Engagement lectures delivered:
* *London Clinic Lecture*: ‘Pancreatic cancer: the future’ delivered by Professor Hermant Kocher, Mr Krish Menon and Dr Shivan Sivakumar
* *Jephcott Lecture*: ‘The importance of science for the health, wealth and security of society’ was given by Professor Sir Patrick Vallance
* *Dangoor Lecture*: ‘Critical challenges facing the NHS and what needs to change’; with Dr Axel Heitmuller
  + *Howard Foundation*: ‘Seeing is believing – the transformation of prostate cancer management over the last decade’ delivered by Professor Mark Emberton
  + *Stevens Lecture*: ‘The NHS and the need for a health policy’, given by Mr Matthew Taylor on the 75th anniversary of the NHS

Turning to the Library, more than one in five members accessed digital learning resources during the year and Open Athens provided access to the online platform helping improve member services. In addition:

* Viewings of rare books boosted the number of physical visitors to the Library.
* A specialist archive consultant was engaged to review the Society’s archives, which led to a full conservation review to ensure highest standards of preservation.
* The Library hosted filming for two documentary series: ‘Union’ with David Olusoga, and a five-part documentary series by German broadcaster ZDF on the sexual history of humans, presented by Dr Jessica Borge.

**6. DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS’ REPORT**

Simon Mills, Director of Finance and Operations, reported on the Society’s accounts for the year ended 30 September 2023:

* Total income for the year increased to £12.2m (2021/22: £10.1m). This was driven by the continued return of hospitality and conferencing income which increased to £5.1m (2021/22: £3.2m).
* Income from charitable activities including membership was £6.0m (2021/22: £5.9m).
* Fundraising activities generated £0.7m (2021/22: £0.9m).
* Total expenditure in the year increased to £14.6m (2021/22: £12.5m) reflecting the higher levels of activity in conferencing and hospitality and the higher inflation economic environment.
* The result after revaluation of investments and exceptional items was a loss of £2.3m (2021/22: loss of £1.9m).
* As of 30 September 2023, the Society had general unrestricted reserves of £4.4m (2022: £5.7m) and cash of £10.9m (2022: £12.2m).

Mr Mills moved onto actions taken in the current year:

* The cost reduction recovery plan had been implemented and the target was to break-even over a 2-year period.
* More effective ways of working had been introduced to allow headcount reduction.
* Access to under-utilised e-resources and those freely available elsewhere had been removed.
* Surplus space had been converted to generate revenue.
* The projected result for the current financial year (2023/24) was a reduced deficit of £0.7m.
* In cash terms, the year was estimated to be close to break-even.

Finally, Mr Mills looked ahead to the future:

* The actions taken meant that eradicating the operating deficit was now achievable. However, transformation would not be achieved through cost cuts alone – revenue would need to grow.
* The immediate focus was on maximising the opportunities that existed in partnerships and philanthropy.
* While membership retention remained very strong, a new membership value proposition was being developed to drive growth.
* All of these activities required investment.
* Robust financial management would be critical in managing costs and delivering value.
* This would be delivered through improved reporting and a move to centralised procurement from preferred suppliers.

**7. REPORT AND ACCOUNTS**

The audited accounts for the session 2022/23 were unanimously received and adopted.

**8.** **APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR THE SESSION 2023/24**

The President and Council recommended that BDO be reappointed as Auditors for the 2023/24 session. This recommendation was unanimously approved.

**9. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE PLANS**

Ms Acton brought the meeting up-to-date with recent developments:

* The Library had extended its opening hours (now 7.00am to 11.00pm 7 days a week).
* There were closer links with the Sections following the establishment of the Section Working Group.
* A new Staff Forum had been established and the Society had entered the Mind Staff Wellbeing Index.
* A Clinical Lead for Innovation had been appointed - Miss Nara Orban.
* A Clinical Lead for CPD had been appointed - Mr Ali Juma.
* A Next Gen pilot programme to support trainees had been launched (working with the Palliative Care Section).
* A new section of Aesthetic Medicine and Surgery would be launched on 1 October.
* A new Director of Partnerships had been appointed and would be starting in October 2024.

Professor Leng pledged that the Society would:

* Continue to deliver great education events, learning resources and networking opportunities.
* Develop the fourth pillar of the strategy around innovation.
* Host the first innovation conference in Autumn 2025.
* Carry out a strategic review of membership to ensure RSM membership remained relevant and popular.
* Ensure space met the needs of members.
* Improve diversity across all areas of the RSM’s work.
* Develop new digital tools to support interaction with members.
* Focus on income growth and cost management to ensure financial sustainability.
* Review current strategy and begin engagement on future strategy.

**10.** **QUESTIONS FROM FELLOWS**

The President asked for questions from members, noting that those attending via Zoom could use Slido.

**A Fellow** asked if the Society was doing enough to make a positive contribution to the growing health divide in the UK. Professor Leng referred to the inverse care law and was encouraged to hear about the programme of rotating doctors in deprived areas. She went on to highlight the RSM’s focus on addressing inequality, noting the annual conference delivered in partnership with NHS England. The possibility of preluding it with webinars was being considered and also whether local project ideas could be incorporated into the programme.

**A Fellow** asked if there were going to be any more global health events or innovation presentations. She raised the possibility of a hackathon focusing on care and developing products (kit not apps) for the elderly and disabled to allow them to live independently and with dignity in their own homes. The Fellow was also keen to see a medical green wall installed either side of the staircase in the Atrium. Professor Leng said that it was unlikely that innovation presentations would continue in their previous format, but there would be opportunities to bring in new technologies at the innovation conference next year. She supported the suggestion of a hackathon and a potential green wall and would investigate further.

Ms Acton added that the Next Gen programme had recently been piloted. With funding, the Society could support doctors on rotation in deprived areas and help them develop a new approach to healthcare. On the topic of global health, she referred to previous partnerships and would investigate the possibility of future events.

**A Fellow** (on Slido)pointed out that the Life Fellowship option available to Senior Fellows had disappeared from the website. Professor Leng confirmed that the option was still available.

**A Fellow** asked if there were any plans to support young people who would like to study health or medicine - before the pandemic, they were able to come into the Library. In addition, she asked if the Society planned to support more mental health issues. Ms Acton said that the Society had previously offered membership to Sixth Formers, but concerns had been raised about safeguarding in the Library and across the building. However, various visits from schools had been arranged and students were given guidance and information about careers in medicine. There was a desire to encourage students at a younger age, but resource issues currently prevented any plans being taken forward.

**A Fellow** (on Slido)raised the matter of assisted dying and the possibility of it being legalised in parts of the country. Although the RSM had previously facilitated a debate on the topic, there was little discussion around the practical implications. Professor Leng said that the RSM had great convening power and any further discussions should focus on what it would mean if the practice became lawful. Professor Manning would investigate.

**A Fellow** stated that four out of five apps or platforms failed because either the developers didn’t anticipate key issues or the patients found that the apps didn’t meet their expectations or needs. This suggested that the approach to development, particularly by innovators, should be adjusted to consider both medical requirements and user needs from a software and innovation view. Professor Lengwould ensure that the evaluation of apps was considered carefully in the event a hackathon took place.

**A Fellow** (on Slido) stated that most members naturally came from the UK, but there was an opportunity to use the Society’s educational resources to reach more people around the world and potentially recruit new members. Was there any interest from the leadership in a specific International Fellows Section or a Trustee orientated role? Professor Leng agreed that these suggestions should be fed into the ongoing membership review.

**A Fellow** questioned how the Society was encouraging younger members, particularly medical students and mid-career doctors. Outreach should start at university level, targeting final-year students and interns during their education and orientation. It was important to highlight more than just the financial aspects, focusing on diversity and the value of digital resources, especially in countries with limited access, e.g. UAE. Emphasising these areas could help attract and retain members across different career stages. Professor Leng agreed that students and trainees were the future of healthcare and that it was important to ensure that the RSM was providing programmes that engaged all ages. She also hoped that work on innovation would interest them and referred to the Society’s Students’ and Trainees’ Sections. As before, suggestions would be fed back into the ongoing membership review.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be advised in due course.