



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

## **Minutes of the RAS Council Meeting held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

### **1. Attendance, Apologies and Introduction**

**Present:** Professor Mike Cruise (MC) Chair; Dr Nigel Berman (NB) Treasurer; (MC); Professor Mark Lester (ML); Dr Paul Daniels (PAD); Professor Steve Miller (SM); Mr Charles Barclay (CB); Dr Sheila Peacock (SP); Professor Stephen Serjeant (SS); Professor Giovanna Tinetti (GT); Dr Megan Argo (MA); Dr Mandy Bailey (MB); Dr Stacey Haberghan-Mawsom (SHM), Professor Anton Ziolkowski (AZ); Mr Kevin Kilburn (KK); Dr Claire Foulon (CF); Professor Lorraine Hanlon (LH); Professor William Chaplin (WC) Mr Mark Woodland (MW)

Apologies; Professor Lyndsay Fletcher (LF) Dr Clare Watt (CW)

In Attendance: Philip Diamond (PD), Executive Director; Dr Robert Massey (RM) Deputy Executive Director; Tom Hughes, GDPR Consultant for GDPR item only; Sue Bullivant (SB) independent note taker

MC Introduced the meeting and welcomed all. He drew Council's attention to the conflict of interest documents. Declarations of interest should be completed and also include any connections family members may have with organisations related to RAS business which could be deemed to be a conflict of interest. Council should also declare any gifts/hospitality or benefits they receive in their work for the RAS.

A leaving card for Annette Webb, Office Manager, was circulated.

MC introduced Tom Hughes (TH), a consultant and solicitor who has spent six months with the Royal Geological Society and is now assisting the RAS with GDPR. He will be with the RAS for three months. He will be working in the Executive Director's office and will be speaking to staff and Trustees.

Tom gave an oral update and summarised his tabled papers.

- TH asked how many Council members had received GDPR training - the majority had said they had.
- Two papers were tabled.
- New GDPR rules are similar to previous ones but fines are higher.
- Major breaches must be reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) within 72 hours.

- He advised that the RAS should purchase shredders to dispose of confidential documents.
- Sensitive or confidential information should be deleted from devices if appropriate.
- Care should be taken (e.g. use of “blind copying”) when copying information to colleagues by email; some may not wish to have their e-mails shared
- Any concerns should be reported to privacy officer – [privacy@ras.ac.uk](mailto:privacy@ras.ac.uk)

TH responded to questions:

Q: Do we need an in house DPO?

A: Not essential, but ICO advise that we do

Q: What about information on personal devices?

A: This should be OK if password protected, but the purchase of encrypted USB sticks is recommended.

Q: How long should information be retained after a Council member leaves office?

A: It would be useful for all RAS Council members to use a RAS e-mail address; information would then no longer be available when they left.

Q: We often refer back to personal documents as part of nominations and awards etc., e.g. CVs

A: Those records would be retained by the RAS. Retention policy has not yet been clarified, but individuals should not retain this information

Q: Much of Council’s information is retained by the organisations where they are based, e.g. Universities. If there is a breach, who is responsible?

A: The University would be the controller and breach would therefore be their responsibility; RAS should be informed if the breach affects an individual associated with the RAS.

Q: What about member associations?

A: This is covered by the archiving exemption. Signing-in books are a slightly grey area.

## 2. Minutes and matters arising

- **Honorary Auditors Report:** Item 5.2 of minutes should read ‘a lack of transparency in Council **election**’ (replacing **voting**) **ACTION PD**
- **Minutes of RAS Sky and Earth steering group:** Item 6.1 The Sky and Earth committee’s concerns were strong and it expected a revised plan/timeline from the Worker’s Educational Association. There will be a budget reconciliation. **ACTION PD**
- It was agreed that the decision not to re-admit a Fellow should be recorded, but marked as confidential.

**ACTION: PD**

### 3. President's Business

- MC recapped the position with the RAS lease. The RAS has the right to remain at Burlington House until 2085. The lease is similar to those of other societies in Burlington House. The current Government agents have been increasing the rent steeply over recent years. The Societies presented a legal challenge to these increases, but lost the case when it went to arbitration. A meeting took place on June 4<sup>th</sup> of all the Presidents of the Courtyard Societies in order to agree our shared aims.
- MC said that he, the Executive Director and LH had met yesterday to discuss an approach from the Astronomical Science Group in Ireland some months ago to explore ways to have a closer relationship. We will consider options and meet again in September, then bring a paper to Council. This is an all- Ireland organisation. MC noted that a change of this kind would have to go before the AGM.
- MC also reported that the SPAN (the Space Action Network) a network of the heads of space research groups in the UK and representatives from related organisations might also benefit from some form of formal status within RAS. A meeting with representatives of SPAN will be arranged to explore this further. **ACTION MC**
- MC attended a Parliamentary Links Day where Dr Patrick Vallance the Government Chief Scientific Adviser addressed representatives of learned societies.
- MC attended a Royal Society soiree on June 4<sup>th</sup>. The science stands, on display for the public, were excellent and ideal for communicating to attendees who included MPs
- The Royal Mail has agreed to produce a set of RAS bi-centenary commemorative stamps.
- The budget for the bi-centenary celebrations has not yet been finalised but should be put before Council in the Autumn. The Executive Director proposed that a Project Manager who would co-ordinate the bi-centenary events be employed by the RAS on a fixed term. Council **agreed** this proposal.
- Regarding the Honorary Auditors report at the AGM, MC said that attention will be paid to the points they raised and these will become actions in due course.

SM left meeting at 1pm

### 4. Treasurer's Business

NB reported that £2m has been moved from a current account to a CCLA Money Market Fund in order to improve the interest rate return. After the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations the money may be moved back.

Newton Growth and Income Fund for Charities was selected for the Society's investments after a careful interview process. 13 funds were approached and eventually interviewed five funds on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. After thorough consideration it was decided to stay with Newton.

Council **confirmed** the re-appointment of Newton as the RAS investment fund manager.

NB reported that there had been some delays from OUP in publishing MNRAS papers. There is a penalty clause in the contract with OUP for delays to publication. NB will contact OUP to determine the level of the financial penalty. **ACTION NB**

SP asked that open access publishing be added to the agenda in the Autumn. **ACTION PD**

A question was raised about green/ethical investments. NB explained that our fund is specific to charities and excludes investment in tobacco companies; there is a list of banned organisations. NB said there are ethical constraints which are in line with Charity Commission guidelines. – it is unlikely that RAS would invest in unsuitable companies. NB confirmed that Council were detailed information on our investment portfolio twice a year.

### **5.1 RAS Website Update**

RM gave an oral update. It is expected that the RAS will switch off the old site in the next couple of weeks. Feedback on the new site has been largely positive.

SP said that all should be thanked for their work on the new website, but suggested a "Lessons Learnt" session take place

**ACTION RM**

### **5.2 AGM**

SP had sent a list of amendments to the minutes to PD which would be added. **ACTION PD**

The note from the AGM about a lack of transparency problems due to an IT issue was queried . PD to clarify with chair of scrutineers.

Extract from AGM note

*The Chair of Scrutineers said he had not given a vote number this year as there had been an IT problem for a 24 hour period. During this time, there was no e-mail receipt for voters when they voted so some were unsure as to whether their vote had been received and those who asked for a reminder of their password did not receive one so could not change their passwords.*

The RAS office responded to all e-mails received in this period and it was not thought that any errors in the recording of votes had occurred.

**ACTION PD**

### **5.5 Operation of Council**

MC summarised the proposals in the paper. Some suggestions were:

- Council Papers were kept in separate folders
- More overnight Council meetings, or more frequent meetings.
- An online “Council Page” could be introduced
- Each agenda item should have a time allocated
- Council more actively involved in recruiting committee members
- MC suggested convening a meeting of Committee Chairs
- All major decisions by Committees to be agreed by Council
- Council should ensure they read all Committee papers in good time and raise any concerns at Council meetings.
- Develop a Business Plan

**ACTION PD**

**5.6 Astronomical Heritage Committee membership – APPROVED**

**5.8** It was noted that paper 5.8 was not on the agenda. It was agreed that the points raised by the Honorary Auditors be added to Action List.

**ACTION PD**

**6.1 Minutes of RAS Sky and Earth steering group:** The Sky and Earth committee’s concerns were strong and it expected a revised plan/timeline from the Worker’s Educational Association. There will be a budget reconciliation.

**7.1 Membership Report for Fellowship – APPROVED**

**7.2 Minutes of the A & G Meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> May 2018 – APPROVED**

**8. Any other business**

MB raised the possibility of awards being given to more than one nominee, or not being awarded at all if the quality of nominees was not high enough. This particularly applied to the Annie Maunder and Patrick Moore Awards.

Council **agreed** that awards could be made to a team for the Annie Maunder award.

Council **agreed** that across all categories, awards should not be made if the nominees were not of a high enough quality

**Strategy Meeting Away day 27<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September**

Those unable to attend will receive papers and given the opportunity to contribute. The meeting should cover three or four major topics. PD will send suggestions Details were being finalised. The venue is just outside Oxford. **ACTION PD**

**AOB**

AZ advised Council that a significant Seismology conference would take place in April 2019 and he would welcome support from the RAS.

It was suggested that Members Directory be re-introduced. The office will look into this, mindful of GDPR constraints.

**Action RM**

**Meeting closed at 3.15 p.m.**

Philip Diamond  
October 2018