



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

Minutes of the RAS Council Meeting held on Friday 14th December 2018

1. Attendance, Apologies and Introduction

Present: Mike Cruise (MC) Chair; Nigel Berman (NB) Treasurer; (MC); Lyndsay Fletcher (LF); Mark Lester (ML); Paul Daniels (PAD); Steve Miller (SM); Charles Barclay (CB); (SP); Clare Watt (CW); Mandy Bailey (MB); Anton Ziolkowski (AZ); Lorraine Hanlon (LH); William Chaplin (WC) Megan Argo (via skype); Ian Crawford (IC); Jane MacArthur (JM)

Apologies: Stacey Habergham-Mawson; Sheila Peacock; Kevin Kilburn; Claire Foulton; Giovanna Tinetti

In Attendance: Philip Diamond (PD), Executive Director; Robert Massey (RM) Deputy Executive Director; Siobhan Adeusi (SA)

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.

2. Minutes and matters arising

Corrections: MW appeared by telecon; Giovanna Tinetti was late; re the amendment to the minutes regarding nominations, it should read 'suitable nominations' not 'new nominations'.

PD update:

- IAU meeting was chaired by MC
- Potential applicants have been directed to the relevant IAU page The application forms for young members will need to be reviewed by MC,
- PD will send an update on 2020 plans

3. President's Business

The president gave an update on his recent activities:

- Met with the special advisor to Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local government, regarding Burlington House rents
- Visited Marlborough College Observatory
- Represented the RAS at the IOP Awards Dinner
- Attended a briefing on the Scottish Launch Facility
- Chaired the Astronomy Forum
- Represented the RAS at the CASE lecture
- Attended the Christmas Parliamentary Reception

4. Treasurer's Business

The treasurer reported on recent activities:

- Draft budget included but staff costs not separated out; staff pay increase will be brought to the February Council Meeting
- The publishing income is better than expected, however there will be a deficit budget this year. To help offset, only one fellowship will be awarded this year.
- Professional fees have increased this year.
- MC asked if there was a way of showing that it had been agreed that funds for RAS2020 projects can come out of reserves; NB confirmed that it was coming out of capital and expenditure on this would be end over the next few years

Action NB to think of a way to represent this

- JM asked whether or not RAS should be actively fundraising. MC said it would need to be done professionally and be clear about the offer; in particular in relation to next year.
- MC remarked that with regard to the reduction in the number of fellowships, notes from the strategy meeting should be changed to reflect the fact that it was not number of fellowships changing but the overall cost. Moving forward, perhaps universities could be asked to match costs.

5. Organisation and Structure

5.1 Nominations for Council

The list of nominations for Council was tabled. It was remarked that there were fewer A nominations. It was agreed that an intervention was not required, however there needs to be more proactive actions to encourage people to nominate. It was suggested that the fact that the number of votes is made public may be putting some people off.

5.2 Burlington House Lease (redacted)

5.3 BAA matter

PD gave an oral update on the shared agreement with BAA. The BAA have agreed to move offices if required. A new lease has been drafted as the notice period needed updating. RAS has signed, so just waiting for BAA to sign.

5.4 Awards Committee Reports

The papers naming the award winners were tabled. The chair of the A Committee (CB) was very happy with how the meeting was conducted. It was suggested that the forms could be amended to request only relevant publications.

Action Office to discuss with CB and his successor as committee chair

IC raised the following issues:

- In the Chapman and Price awards – a “single specific investigation” for which these awards are made need not necessarily be for a single paper, and
- In the Fowler and Winton awards – The Committee suggests that rather than the “time of nomination” being the relevant deadline the deadline should be “close of nominations” for completion of the PhD, so that the validity of nominations does not depend on the (arbitrary) date of nomination.

It was generally agreed that there needs to be a more concerted effort to advertise the awards. In particular, it was noted that there were more male than female nominations and that perhaps the wording could be changed to make it more inclusive.

Action office

During the process, a query had arisen regarding whether or not a fellow can be awarded honorary fellowship. Council had agreed that they could, if they wish to retain their voting rights they would have to continue to pay their membership fee.

Action: PD to check that this was reflected in the by laws

It was also suggested that the date of the closure of the nomination process should be the same for all awards. Again it was agreed that there needs to be more effort put into promoting the process.

PD mentioned that the previous Events and Buildings Officer had been working on an Awards Booklet. It would be helpful in marketing the awards to produce one.

Action: PD to follow up

With regard to the Education and Outreach awards, a query was raised as to how to prevent individual from self-nominating every year. It was suggested that a limit be put upon how many times you can self-nominate.

The Awards Committee reports were **approved by Council**

5.5 Library Project Update

Council noted the update by the Executive Director

5.6 Minutes of the RAS International Committee 18 November

The minutes were noted by Council

5.8 Minutes of RAS 200 Sky and earth 17 October

The Minutes were noted by Council

5.9 No deal Brexit implications

Council noted the paper from the Deputy Executive Director on the potential impact of a no deal Brexit on Society activities.

5.10 Minutes of Heritage Committee Meeting 21 November

The Minutes were noted by Council

5.11 Heritage Committee for approval of new member

The new member was **approved by Council**

6 Strategy

6.1 Working groups

PD reported that the office is working on setting up the first meetings for the priority groups which are Burlington House, publishing and youth membership scheme.

6.2 Survey on topics to be discussed

Council noted the results of the survey on topics to be discussed

7. Bicentenary Planning

7.1 200th Board paper

This paper outlined the plans for the coming 18 months. A series of six themes would provide a framework for the activities planned for the year. They will be: the universe, seeing stars, life, disasters, space exploration, what next/the future. It was suggested that there might be a better name for the 'disaster' theme for example 'planet earth' or 'hazards'. CW asked if the role of geophysics should be expanded. MB explained that at the planning meeting, it was agreed that the overarching plan at Specialist Discussion Meetings would be to tell the story of the universe from beginning to end. 'Disasters' would be in the summer, and would be particularly appealing to children. Other suggestions for topics included multi-messenger astronomy and global warming. Action PD to feed back to Christine Losecaat MC asked Council to consider content/input for podcasts.

Action: All to think about this

7.2 Presentation on branding for 2020 by CL

The presentation showed the work of the proposed branding consultants Michael Johnson.

MC remarked that he was happy with the choice but that RAS needs to be careful with the brief we give them. It was suggested that another council meeting was held to work on this.

Choice of consultant was approved by Council

The presentation also informed Council of the venue for the Gala Dinner taking place in January 2020, The Langham Hotel.

MC commented that the venue was chosen as her Majesty the Queen has been invited, as Patron and this restricted the choice of appropriate venues and it was important to reserve the venue to ensure it was available on a date the Society wanted.

The venue was approved by Council

The capacity is 220, but there will be opportunities for those not able to go to attend other events throughout the year. He is working on a guest list with PD.

MC asked all to consider any interested MPs that could be invited to host a parliamentary reception,

Action: All to think about this

8. Policy and Public Engagement

8.1 UCAS admissions data

Council noted the paper from the Deputy Executive Director on UCAS data on astronomy and geophysics undergraduate courses. The popularity of astronomy courses continued to increase, with a rise of 18% in accepted places from 2016 to 2017, whereas geophysics showed a slight decline.

9 Other

9.1 Nominations to fellowship

The list of nominees for Fellowship was **approved by Council**

LF suggested that in future the date of birth and town are removed from lists.

PD asked for an update on the candidate that was not approved last time. ML said the matter will have to go back to the Committee for further consideration.

9.2 Update on NAM

An update from Lancaster University was read out. The local organising committee will liaise with RAS for the Awards Dinner but want to hold a less formal dinner the evening before. There was concern that this could interfere with attendance at the Awards Dinner.

Action: Executive Assistant to check when she visits the venue next week

9.3 Updates on matters relating to Code of Conduct

Reported on separately for reasons of confidentiality.

AOB

- LF reported that there was a piece of commercial advertising in her copy of A&G; she enquired as to whether or not it had been approved by the publisher.

Action: PD said will check with the editor of A and G

- PD requested that the Administration Officer role be made permanent

Approved by Council

- PAD asked about opening the building at weekends for use as a meeting space. PD said it would have to be considered on a case by case basis

Council rose at 14.45

Professor Mike Cruise

Date