

DRAFT Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11 December 2020 held via Zoom

1. Attendance and Apologies

PRESENT:

Prof Emma Bunce (EB); President and Chair
Dr Nigel Berman (NB); Treasurer;
Dr Mandy Bailey (MB); A Secretary;
Prof Lyndsay Fletcher (LF); Senior Secretary;
Prof Mark Lester (ML); G Secretary;
Prof Steve Miller (SM); Vice President, G;
Dr Paul Daniels (PAD) Vice President, A;
Professor Mahesh Anand (MHA); Vice President (G)
Dr Megan Argo (MA); Vice President (A);
Dr Claire Foullon (CF) ;
Mr Martin Lunn (ML);
Mr Kevin Kilburn (KK).
Dr Matt Middleton (MM);
Professor William Chaplin;
Prof Lorraine Hanlon (LH);
Dr Sheona Urquhart (SU);
Prof Phil Charles (PC);
Dr Hannah Dalglish (HD);
Dr Colin Snodgrass (CS);
Dr Arvind Parmar (AP).

APOLOGIES:

Dr Jane MacArthur (JM);

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Philip Diamond (PD), Executive Director;
Dr Robert Massey, (RM) Deputy Executive Director and Policy;
Ms Siobhan Adeusi (SA) Executive Assistant and Office Manager.

2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 9 October 2020, were APPROVED by Council

2.2.1 The Action Status Report was received by Council. PD gave the following updates:

3. President's Business - IT investment is mentioned in the budget

5.3 Code of Conduct review. P D He has not heard back from the solicitor regarding the use of the revised code of conduct

2.3 The Council received the Update on Licensing Proposal. The investment would be £10-15K, which includes allocation of staff time. It was agreed that the working group of EB, JM and NB would continue working on the project.

HD remarked that sustainability should be a major consideration with merchandise. PD reported that he had received an approach from Saga (via former President John Zarneki) offering a similar scheme to that offered by Cunard. PD will bring more information to the next meeting.

3. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

The President reported on the following:

- The first meeting of the Awards Review Group was positive. The meeting focussed on creating a framework for the purpose of the review. The committee is not anticipating radical changes. There is a need to collect meaningful data, in particular on diversity, in order to inform the process. The next meeting will be in January 2021 to discuss the processes, followed by a meeting in February for analysis of current data. EB asked Council to email her if they wish to contribute to this work

ACTION: Council to email EB if interested

- EB, RM and PD met with STFC to discuss the lack for funding for core research. It was a positive discussion. It was agreed that there is a need to demonstrate the strength of the sciences. The RAS has a very good relationship with STFC, and she thanked RM for maintaining this.
- There have been changes to UKRI funding due to covid-19. This has affected 2/3 year graduate students. It has been suggested that they shorten or restrict their studies for PhDs.
- EB gave a talk to the South African Astronomical Observatory during their observatories bicentenary celebrations. She is very grateful to librarian Sian Prosser for providing archive material.

4. TREASURER'S BUSINESS

4.1 The Treasurer's Report was received by Council. The Treasurer reported the following:

- There is up to £180k to come from OUP, however there is still a small deficit
- The reserves are still holding up, however next year there will likely be a drop in dividend income
- It is hoped that the new journal will bring in a small income in due course

RM commented that if the NAM were held online, not paying for speakers to attend virtual SDMs will have a positive impact on the budget.

PC remarked that when speakers come here they don't just attend SDMs but engage in other activities.

EB suggested a dedicated meeting to discuss the format of future SDMs.

ACTION: PD to organise the meeting.

LF suggested calling an additional Meeting to discuss the budget in general.

- The E&O committee have asked for an increase in grant money, but as this would eat into other budgets the Treasurer was not minded to grant this. However, he acknowledges that they did very good work

4.1b Budget for 2021. The Treasurer thanked Mark Piper, RAS accountant

4.2 The Statement of accounts was received by Council.

4.3 The Updated Risk Register was received by Council. The Treasurer reported that the Finance Committee made one small change and reminded Council that it is a 'live' document and should be regularly reviewed by all. Suggested new risks should be reported to him.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

5.1 The Executive Director began his report by thanking the staff, Council and working groups, for their work during the very challenging period and then reported on the following:

- The RAS managed to have two celebratory events before the pandemic started; the event at the Langham and Hotel the planetarium which was in the courtyard
- Due to the pandemic most meetings had to be moved online including the AGM and the Awards Ceremony. More online content was provided, and council elections were fully online for the first time
- There has been a record number of applications for Fellowship which demonstrates that the organisation remains relevant to the community.
- Thanks to BC, MM, Kim Clube and Adam Leary (OUP) for their work on the new journal. We are now undertaking the search for an editor in chief for it.
- There are 27 nominations for Council this year which demonstrates that people do want to engage with the Society.
- The Editorial team and OUP have been performing well, despite the pandemic.
- Thanks to RM for the work done by the social media team, to maintain and grow the online presence.
- The Early Careers Network was an excellent initiative; they are very active.

MB commented that it is good to know that the Society is still functioning well and asked if the building is being visited regularly. PD replied that a member of staff goes in once per week, on a Wednesday.

ML and EB thanked PD for the uplifting report.

5.2 The paper on IAU meeting regarding sites of cultural importance was received by Council. SM gave a brief overview of the productive meeting. The group is very receptive to developing guidelines and training materials. MA is a very useful addition to the group as she has lots of experience in Australian sites. He will propose a session at NAM.

MA reiterated SM's comments and remarked that it is important that users understand where the data comes from therefore training for PhD students would be useful.

5.3 The RAS Council Elections 2021 – review of nominations was received by Council.

SU, PAD and NB left the meeting as they were nominated for Council positions.

The Council nominations were APPROVED by council.

ML left the meeting.

The nominated Councillors returned to the meeting.

Notes on this matter have been deleted for nominated Councillors.

5.4 The Awards Committee Reports, were received by Council. EB thanked the chairs and panel members. Issues for attention of Council were noted and will be taken to the Review Committee. for their work.

MHA asked why the service award nomination had been rolled over. PAD explained that there was insufficient material to award a prize. He also thanked MB and was pleased with the increase in numbers and diversity in award nominees.

The reports were APPROVED by Council.

MB reminded Council that the information is confidential until the official announcement.

5.5 Burlington House update - confidential discussion - redacted

5.6 Approach to proposed Scrutineers

Council APPROVED the proposal to approach last year's Scrutineers to act next year too.

ACTION: PD to check if they are still eligible.

5.7 The Education and Outreach Committee update was APPROVED by Council

6. POLICY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

6.1 The Spending Review 2020: research and development budget was received by Council

6.2. The Carbon Audit and recommendations for the RAS will be discussed at the next council meeting.

ACTION: Add to February agenda - Office

RM asked Council if the RAS should sign up to the UN net zero position. This proposal was APPROVED.

6.2b Carbon Audit full report will be discussed at the February '21 meeting.

6.3. Council received the paper All Party Parliamentary Group on Diversity and Inclusion in STEM: inquiry into Equity in the STEM Workforce

ACTION: RM asked Council to let him know of good work practices.

6.4 The Early Career's Network, Points of Contact were APPROVED by Council

ACTION: Implement the EPoC, RAS Staff and ECN.

7. PUBLICATIONS

7.1 Minutes of GJI Committee Meeting were received by Council

8 OTHER

- 8.1 Membership Officer's Reports, candidates proposed for Fellowship were received and APPROVED by Council
- 8.2 Grants awarded in 2020 was received by Council
- 8.3 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting 9 October were received and APPROVED by Council

9. AOB

It was agreed that the call for Specialist Discussion Meetings will include a line about providing the meetings online.

Council rose at 13.22

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Professor Emma Bunce

11 December 2020