

DRAFT Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 16 July 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);
Mr Kevin Kilburn (KK);
Dr Jane MacArthur (JM);
Dr Matt Middleton (MM);
Professor William Chaplin;
Prof Lorraine Hanlon (LH);
Prof Phil Charles (PC)
Dr Hannah Dalglish
Dr Colin Snodgrass
Dr Arvind Parmar

APOLOGIES:

Dr Claire Foullon (CF);
Mr Martin Lunn (ML)
Dr Sheona Urquhart (SU);

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

The President invited everyone present to introduce themselves for the benefit of the new Council members.

2. Minutes & Matters Arising

2.1 Minutes of 22nd May 2020

The Minutes of May 22 2020 were APPROVED by Council subject to the following amendments:

1. WC attended the previous meeting.

2.2 Action Status Report

4. Treasurer's report – The matter regarding the Gerard Merton fund has been completed

MNRAS – PD contacted the OUP regarding the provision for visually impaired members. The OUP are working to make it available to all users.

ACTION: PD to share the OUP statement with Council

There has been no feedback regarding the VAT issue

5.1 Contribution to IAU

ACTION: PD to arrange a meeting with Ruth Cooper regarding the RAS contribution

3. President's Business

The President reported that she had attended the following meetings:

- The Education and Outreach Committee meeting
- The Early Careers Network meeting. The network suggested organising online poster competitions
- The Sustainability Working group. The group would like to capture information on energy consumption.

The Society wrote to Amanda Solloway MP, the Science Minister, raising the issue of megaconstellations, and the need for the government to work with the astronomical community on mitigating their impact.

The President would like the Society to review the process for awards to ensure diversity amongst nominators and nominees. She suggested changing the wording of the call for nominations in addition to liaising with the Points of Contact and their Diversity Committees. The Royal Society of Chemistry have produced a paper called 'Rethinking Recognition: Science Prizes for the Modern World' on this matter.

ACTIONS: EB to share paper with Council

ML reported that he has already started analyzing data of nominators and those nominated from the last 5 years, but it is only by gender at the moment. We will need at least five years of data to produce meaningful analysis on the other characteristics.

ACTION: ML will review what is required to get the additional information.

SM asked if having a Patrick Moore medal might put off some BAME nominees. EB said this is a matter that should be discussed in full at a later date.

ML suggested that the Society considers creating an early career award for providing software packages for the wider community. PAD reported that last year an award was made to a group for software development.

4. Treasurer's Business

4.1 The treasurer reported that despite a year of reduced income from investments, capital values are recovering and the Society is still in a good position.

4.2 Risk Register

The Treasurer has added Covid-19 as a risk and extra lines for additional items.

EB asked if PD will be dealing with the Risk Register for staff returning to the office.

NB responded that it is an operational matter but that he would add a line about staff not returning to the office.

4.3 Statement of Accounts

The Statement of Accounts was received by Council.

4.4 Finance Committee Minutes

The Finance Committee Meeting Minutes were received by Council.

5. Organisation and Structure

5.1. Draft Minutes of the 200th AGM

The Minutes were APPROVED subject to the following change:

The full list of nominees and votes received is displayed.

ACTION: Office to do this

5.2 Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director reported the following:

- Staff are successfully working from home. It was suggested that a supportive email from the President would help with morale.
- There will be a H&S review in two weeks, with a view to a phased return to work, although as all meetings/lectures are now online, there is no urgency to go back to the building. The Courtyard is still closed, aside from the RA's partial openings.
- There is now a date to fix the roof issue with a tarpaulin being installed in the first instance on 20 July and tiling to be done on 5-7 August.
- There is an ongoing action to form a property working group. A meeting with a property lawyer has been convened for 20 July.
- The RAS has been approached by a member, who has introduced us to a composer. She has offered to donate some proceedings from sales of a piece of music celebrating the 100th anniversary of Holst's the Planets.

ACTION: PD to send information to Council

EB to draft a note of support to staff

5.2a Election Trends

Council received the paper on election trends. There was an increase in voting numbers over last year, although not as high as in some previous years.

HD suggested that current council members could record short interviews which could go on the website, to encourage nominations.

5.3 Code of Conduct review

LF reported that the revised code has been reviewed by the Society's lawyers, however a subsequent change has been made. It was agreed that the code is APPROVED subject to the lawyer's approval of the final change.

ACTION: PD to send to lawyers for final sign off

The Working Group will meet to draft the Disciplinary Process which will then be reported back to Council.

EB thanked the review panel for their work on the code.

5.4 The CDAG Meeting Minutes were received by Council

5.5 The RAS 200 Meeting Minutes were received by Council

5.6 Results of Ordinary Meeting Survey

LF reported on the results of the survey on Ordinary Meetings, which had over 900 participants. The general consensus was to keep to the same day and time but to be no longer than 1 hour, with shorter talks. Zoom was the most popular platform. Meetings will be recorded and put online.

ACTION: LF to write to membership with survey results.

PAD as Chair of the IT Committee reported that the Committee suggested that other platforms should be considered and recording facilities reviewed.

He asked Councilors to send him any comments and ideas with a view to submitting a paper for the next Council meeting.

ACTION: All to send comments and suggestions to PAD

PAD to submit a paper for the next Council meeting

6 Policy and Public engagement

6.1 New UK research funding agency

RM thanked those who had contributed to the submission.

The submission was APPROVED

7. Publications

7.1 PMC Meeting Minutes were received by Council. NB reported that subsequent the PMC meeting OUP contacted the RAS to ask permission to reduce the amount they had originally proposed to raise the subscription fees by. They cited concerns about the impact of the pandemic.

8. Other

8.1 Membership Officers Reports, candidates proposed for Fellowship were APPROVED

PC pointed out an error in the dates of one reinstatement.

ACTION: Office to amend

8.2 Patricia Tompkins Thesis Prize

PAD reported that one group made an ineligible submission however the

committee felt they were worthy of some support. He sought Council approval to pursue this. Council APPROVED this.

PAD also reported that the panel also received a joint submission and asked if the wording of the call out should be amended to clarify that it should be the work of one person.

MB commented that Patricia Tompkins should be contacted before doing this.

ACTION: PAD to contact with Mrs Tompkins in the event of having to award a joint prize.

9. AOB

PAD raised the following:

- Suggested having shorter monthly Council meetings.
- Margaret Penston has offered the Society £3000 in order to increase some prize monies. PAD will submit a paper on reviewing other prizes for the next Council meeting.
- Raised the question of whether or not there will still be a Strategy Day in September
- PAD had not received the By-Laws

EB responded that monthly meetings are not practical. The Strategy Day will still be held.

ACTIONS: Office to send By-Laws link to Council
Office to send Strategy Dates to new Council members.

Council rose at 12.24

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Professor Emma Bunce

16 July 2020