

ROYAL SOCIETY FORMER STAFF ASSOCIATION

Unconfirmed Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Royal Society and on Zoom at 2:00 pm on Monday 15 May 2023

| | | |
|-----------------|---|----------------------|
| <i>Present:</i> | Peter Cooper (<i>Chairman</i>) | |
| | <i>At the Royal Society</i> | <i>On Zoom</i> |
| | Choong Kar Chan | David Boak |
| | Peter Collins (<i>Editor, BTT</i>) | Diana Chapman |
| | Mary Manning | Brenda de Vere-Lewis |
| | Len Mole | Ann Hicks |
| | Mary Nixon (<i>Treasurer</i>) | Wilma Pereira |
| | Keith Root | Chris Purdon |
| | Jane Silverleaf (<i>Events Secretary</i>) | Beata Seymour |
| | Peter Warren | Eileen Wilson |

Apologies for absence

Peter Cooper reported that 75 members had sent apologies or were otherwise unable to take part.

1. Chairman's introduction

Peter Cooper welcomed members to the AGM; members were able to participate either in person at the RS or over Zoom.

He reminded members that there would not be voting at the AGM – Ballot papers had been issued and the Scrutineers would collect and count the votes received by the deadline of 29 May. The reason for using a Ballot system was to allow all members to express preferences, whether or not they could participate in the AGM (in person or by Zoom).

2. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2022 (AGM23-2)

No amendments had been notified.

The proposal to confirm the Minutes was proposed by Keith Root, seconded by Mary Manning. After the Scrutineers' count of votes cast by ballot, the voting was: in favour 30, against 0.

The Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting were thereby accepted.

3. To consider matters arising not listed below

Minute 13 (Member engagement) – The Committee had discussed the difficulties facing the Association and ways to encourage members to take greater involvement in activities and in running the Association. The matter had developed into the discussion later on the agenda about the future of the Association.

Minute 14(a) (AOB) – Mary Nixon had prepared a budget and would present that under her report.

4. To receive a report from the Chairman/Secretary (AGM23-4)

Peter Cooper presented his report. The decisions of last year's AGM to invest in events and activities to make them more accessible had had mixed results, as the other Officers would report.

He thanked Susan Moss, who had had to resign as Welfare Secretary in December 2022, for all the time and dedication she had put into the role. The meeting endorsed those thanks.

Sadly, we had lost two members during the year – John Deverill and Geoff Fortnam. Three members had lapsed through non-payment of subscriptions. Recently, Annie Shibata had decided not to renew – she lived in Paris and was unable to participate. Jason Clark who had attended the Annual Lunch as a guest had been invited to join. The membership now stood at 92.

Peter finished by expressing his thanks to all the Committee members and other members for the work they have done in support of the Association over the year.

5. Report of the Treasurer on the Association's finances (AGM23-5)

Mary Nixon presented her report. The Association's finances were healthy; the main change from previous years was the closure of the BTT Fund and the meeting the costs of *Beyond The Terrace* from

General Funds. She thanked the anonymous donor who had for many years contributed to the costs of producing *BTT*. The Welfare Fund was still available to make requests for financial support to members.

She thanked Keith Root for acting as Accounts Examiner again; he had confirmed the 2022/23 Accounts which were unchanged from the draft version circulated with the agenda.

The proposal to accept the 2022/23 accounts was proposed by Peter Warren, seconded by Len Mole. After the Scrutineers' count of votes cast by ballot, the voting was: in favour 32, against 0.

The accounts for 2022/23 were thereby accepted.

Mary thanked members for their prompt payment of subscriptions, which had been held at £10.

She presented the budget for 2023/24, reminding the meeting that it covered only the General Funds – the Welfare Fund responded to demand and expenditure could not be budgeted in a meaningful way.

Choong Kar Chan noted that by excluding the Welfare Funds the figures did not match the figures in the full accounts and could cause confusion. Mary noted that the Welfare Funds were different from the General Funds, and shown separately in the accounts. After discussion of the various ways of presenting the figures, Keith Root proposed that an explanatory note should be added to the budget in future. The meeting agreed with this proposal.

6. Report on members' welfare matters

Peter Cooper reiterated his thanks to Susan for her work over so many years supporting members. He also thanked Committee members and other members who had been sharing the welfare tasks since Susan's departure and bringing cases to the attention of the Committee. For the future, any member who was aware of another member who was ill or in need could bring that to the attention of any member of the Committee.

7. Report of the Events Secretary (AGM23-7)

Jane Silverleaf presented her report. Several events had been offered but the uptake had not been high; several had had to be cancelled as a result. Six members had met at the time of the RS Summer Exhibition but a trip to Hampton Court had not taken place. Response to a trip to Bletchley Park had also only resulted in six expressions of interest; it was suggested that its being a repeat visit was part of the reason.

Jane reported that the Zoom Members' Meetings had proved more popular, but it was difficult to find members willing to give the short presentation at the beginning as a focus for the meeting. Members were encouraged to offer a short talk on any topic – their holidays, an interest, an event, etc.

The Annual Lunch had been successful, attracting 14 members and guests. The numbers had been reduced by the weather and travel disruption.

Choong Kar Chan asked about the use of the RS as a venue for events, but the costs were prohibitive; PAG had found some venues at a more reasonable cost.

Peter Cooper thanked Jane for her report and for all her work over the year.

8. Report of the Professional Activities Programme (AGM23-8)

Peter Cooper presented Nick von Behr's apologies that he was unable to attend as he was deeply into his PhD at present. Peter noted that Nick's report gave an excellent overview of what had been achieved by the Professional Activities Group since the expansion of the Association after The Way Forward report. Peter thanked Nick for all he had done, with the support of others, to put together a programme aimed at members still in work. Despite that, more recently the numbers at PAG events were lower than hoped and the most recent one, which was to have been held at the London Mathematical Society, had been deferred.

Peter Cooper thanked Nick and his colleagues for the report and all their efforts; the meeting endorsed those thanks.

9. Report of the Editor of *Beyond The Terrace* (AGM23-9)

Peter Collins presented his report. Three issues (56 pages) of *BTT* had been produced over the year. He thanked those who had contributed to the issues, and encouraged members to send him

contributions for future issues on any topic that would be of interest to fellow members. He noted that in recent years the response to the annual call for news from members had dropped off.

Peter noted that issue 84 marked 30 years since Chris Argent had started BTT; it was a great milestone and Chris would be pleased his vision had endured.

As members knew, Peter's term as Editor was coming to an end. Two members, Chris Purdon and Scott Keir, had offered to assist with parts of the work and Peter Collins would contact them to see how they might work together over the next year.

Peter Cooper thanked Peter for his report and for his work over the year.

10. Appointment of the Scrutineers for 2023/24

The Committee had proposed Jane Silverleaf as its Scrutineer and Imelda Topping had agreed to stand as the AGM's nominee again.

The proposal to accept the Scrutineers for 2023/24 was proposed by Mary Manning, seconded by Diana Chapman.

After the Scrutineers' count of votes cast by ballot, the voting was:

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Scrutineer appointed by the AGM – Imelda Topping | In favour 31, against 0. | <u>Approved</u> |
| Scrutineer appointed by the Committee – Jane Silverleaf | In favour 32, against 0. | <u>Approved</u> |

11. Appointment of the Accounts Examiner for the 2023/24 accounts

Keith Root, the current Accounts Examiner, had offered his services as the Accounts Examiner for the 2023/24 accounts.

The proposal to re-appoint Keith as the Accounts Examiner for 2023/24 was proposed by Choong Kar Chan, seconded by Mary Nixon.

After the Scrutineers' count of votes cast by ballot, the voting was:

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Accounts Examiner for 2022/23 accounts – Keith Root | In favour 31, against 0. | <u>Approved</u> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|

12. Elections to the Committee

Peter Cooper reported that there were four vacancies on the Committee: the Hon. Secretary, vacant since 2018; the Welfare Secretary, following Susan Moss's resignation in December; and the Events Secretary and *BTT* Editor, as Jane Silverleaf and Peter Collins were finishing their second and final three-year terms of service at this AGM.

As Peter Collins had said, two members had offered to assist with *BTT* but neither was in a position to take the formal post of Editor. Accordingly, rather than making a formal election to the Editorship, the intention was that Peter Collins, Chris Purdon and Scott Keir would work together over this coming year, by the end of which the Association's future should be clearer. The meeting indicated that it was content with this proposal.

No nominations had been received for the other three posts by the deadline. Peter Cooper asked, as the Rules allowed, if there were any members participating in the AGM who would be willing to put themselves forward. No nominations were forthcoming and the vacant posts remained unfilled.

Peter Cooper said that, with so many vacancies, there was not a viable Committee to run the Association. The Committee, anticipating such a position, had prepared proposals for handling the situation, and he proposed that the meeting move straight on to discuss those proposals. There were no objections.

13. Where next? – the future of the Association

The Committee had circulated a paper to members with the Ballot papers with proposals for taking matters forward. These contained two Resolutions to be debated by the AGM.

First, that a short, sharp review be undertaken with the aim of putting together a new viable operating model that could be presented to an Extraordinary General Meeting by the end of November; the EGM would be asked either to move to the new model or to close the Association down at the 2024 AGM. The aim was to find a model that delivered the essential objectives, activities and services for members while balancing the resources available to run the Association – people, money and skills.

There was not much time; either option of moving to a new model or closing down had ramifications and complexities that would take time. If either was to be achieved by the time of the 2024 AGM then the decision would need to be taken much earlier – thus the Committee’s proposal that an EGM to decide this be held no later than November this year.

Second, in the absence of nominations to create a viable Committee, that up to the 2024 AGM the Chairman be authorised to bring onto the Committee any member to undertake tasks without first going through the formalities of an AGM.

Peter asked whether the proposals were generally supported by those participating in the AGM, but recognising that the final decision would be decided by the voting on the Ballot papers. The meeting concurred.

The two proposals:

(a) That the Committee be tasked to institute a six-month review of the future of the Association (including consultation with members) to bring a viable model for the Association commensurate with its resources to an Extraordinary General Meeting to be held by the end of November 2023; the motion at the EGM to be either to adopt the model or to close the Association at the 2024 AGM.

(b) That Rule 4 in respect of the composition, nomination and appointment of the Committee be set aside for one year and the Chairman authorised to make any appointments and co-options to the Committee needed for the running of the Association until the 2024 AGM.

were proposed by Peter Cooper, seconded by Mary Manning.

After the Scrutineers’ count of votes cast by ballot, the voting was: In favour 33, against 0.

The two Resolutions were thereby accepted.

Peter Cooper invited those participating in the AGM to put forward their views and thoughts, which would act as one input into the review. A wide-ranging discussion ensued, covering issues including: the way the review should be conducted and the questions to be asked of members, the relationship between objectives and means of delivery, and the changes that have taken place in the world of work (and what, therefore, members might seek from an ‘alumni’ body), through to more detailed issues. The record of the discussion would be available as part of the evidence to the review.

Following the discussion, Peter Cooper encouraged members to volunteer to join or assist the review in any way they could; it was essential that the review took into account all views and ideas, and was as representative as possible of the full range of members.

14. Any other business

(i) Peter Collins, as one of the Member-Nominated Trustees on the Royal Society (Defined Benefit) Pension Plan, drew the attention of members of the Scheme to the call for nominations for Member-Nominated Trustees. He encouraged anyone who was interested in standing to do so – he would be happy to talk to them and explain what was involved. It involved time and attention, but was very satisfying.

(ii) Peter Warren proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee and the Chairman for all the work they had done over the past year.

15. Date of the 2024 AGM

An Extraordinary General Meeting would be held before the end of November; the date and time would be circulated. It was suggested that thought be given to the time of day to allow maximum participation.

The date for the 2024 AGM would be notified to members after the availability of rooms at the Royal Society had been ascertained.

Action: Peter Cooper

Peter Cooper thanked everyone for attending and participating; he would welcome comments on the mechanics and practicalities of the arrangements. The meeting was closed at 4:05 pm.