

# ROYAL SOCIETY PENSIONERS' ASSOCIATION

## The Way Forward – next steps

### A report to the members of the RSPA with recommendations for action

#### Background

Following a discussion at the AGM in 2011 about concerns for the future of the RSPA because of declining numbers, ageing profile and low numbers of staff leaving the RS that are currently eligible to join, a working group (consisting of Keith Root (convener), Ann Hicks and Peter Cooper) was set up to look into the situation and to make recommendations. The group circulated a consultation paper in advance of the 2012 AGM, and after taking account of the points raised, the working group reported to the RSPA Committee, which endorsed the following recommendations to the 2012 AGM:

- i. that the rules of membership of the Association be changed to include all or some ex-staff of the RS not currently eligible;
- ii. that any expansion of the activities of the Association must safeguard and be in addition to the existing provision for pensioners, including the operation of the Welfare Fund;
- iii. that, after discussions with the RS and other further investigations, the Committee draw up full proposals to be put to the 2013 AGM, including:
  - a. proposed new membership criteria, including the appropriate lower limit of service and whether there should be any minimum age, to be considered further after discussions with the RS;
  - b. if appropriate, any additions to the current aims set out in paragraph 5 (of the report);
  - c. whether there would be a requirement for two different classes of membership, with potentially different levels of subscriptions,
  - d. arrangements to ensure that the existing personal knowledge and corporate care of current members can be retained within the Association, possibly by having a member of the committee responsible for welfare;
  - e. any requirement for a change in name of the Association;
  - f. any other appropriate new administrative arrangements.

The 2012 AGM discussed the recommendations and adopted the following resolution:

*Noting that the status quo will probably not be the best option for a sustainable future, and that the risk in endorsing the Committee's proposals for action is low, the AGM resolves to approve the Committee's recommendation that the Working Group continues its investigations and deliberations (including formal discussions with the Royal Society), regularly reporting back to the Committee and ultimately to the AGM in 2013.*

Copies of all previous documents, including the consultation prior to the 2012 AGM are available on request from the Secretary, and from the RSPA website ([www.beyondtheterrace.org.uk](http://www.beyondtheterrace.org.uk)).

#### Action since the 2012 AGM

The Working Group has continued to explore in detail the above three recommendations, and in particular iii (a)–(f). This included having a number of preliminary meetings with senior staff of the RS, Peter Collins and the outgoing head of HR, Karina Rook, and the Group reported back to the November Committee meeting.

Following the Committee's decision to nominate Mary Manning as Chair to succeed Peter Warren when he finishes his term of service at the 2013 AGM, the Committee agreed that Mary should be

invited to join the Working Group, and that a meeting should be sought with the Executive Director, Dr Julie Maxton, as soon as the new head of HR was firmly in post. In the event, Mary Manning and Peter Cooper met Dr Maxton, together with Andy Hibbert, Head of Finance, and Imelda Wright, Head of HR on 7 March. This was a positive meeting, with Dr Maxton and her colleagues listening carefully and critically to the proposals considered by the AGM last year. Overall, Dr Maxton was supportive of the proposals, and indicated that the RS would not be opposed to the broadening of the membership and activity base of the RSPA. Rather, it saw the sense in what was being suggested, and it saw no direct conflict with anything the RS itself might be doing. The RS would want to consider further how it might interact with such a body as it evolves. While Dr Maxton did not commit the RS to additional costs, no concern was expressed when the potential increase in matching grant was raised.

The attached report presents the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group as to how matters should be taken forward on iii (a)–(f). It was endorsed by the RSPA Committee on 14 March.

The report recommends that the 2013 AGM be asked to agree the following resolutions:

- A ***That Membership of the Association shall be open to all pensioners, deferred pensioners and other former staff who were confirmed in post at The Royal Society.***
- B ***That the name of the Association should be changed.***

The Committee has considered possible alternative names and proposes (in order of preference) The Royal Society Staff Alumni Association or The Carolean Association. The AGM will be asked to consider these and other names proposed by members.

The report identifies other actions and issues requiring further work. These do not require amendment of the Association rules and progress will be reported at the AGM. These include the recommendation that the Working Group consult further with three groups over the any expansion of the aims of the Association:

- Younger existing members of the Association;
- Ex-staff of the RS who are currently unable to join the association;

and, at the suggestion of Dr Julie Maxton:

- The chairman and possibly other members of the RS Staff Association.

### **Wider consultation on the resolutions to the 2013 AGM.**

The resolutions will be put to the AGM on 20 May. Adoption or otherwise of resolutions is the responsibility of those attending an AGM, but as this is such an important issue concerning the future direction of the Association, the Committee decided that the full membership should be given the opportunity to indicate their views in advance of the AGM, and that these should be communicated to those present at the AGM.

The Committee agreed, therefore, to send this paper and annexes to all members, by email where we have an email address, and by post for all others. It invites all members to complete and return the attached sheet indicating whether they agree with the resolutions A and B. Please indicate whether or not you expect to be coming to the AGM. The response sheet also provides an opportunity for comments on any other part of the report and its recommendations.

Please return the response sheet **by 13 May 2013** either by email or (for those receiving the papers by post) using the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Peter Warren  
Chairman of RSPA

23 March 2013

# ROYAL SOCIETY PENSIONERS' ASSOCIATION

## The Way Forward – next steps

### Conclusions and recommendations from the Way Forward Working Group

1. This report to RSPA members addresses the issues raised at the 2012 AGM on the following recommendation in the Working Group's report to that meeting:
  - iii that, after discussions with the RS and other further investigations, the Committee draw up full proposals to be put to the 2013 AGM, including:
    - a. proposed new membership criteria, including the appropriate lower limit of service and whether there should be any minimum age, to be considered further after discussions with the RS;
    - b. if appropriate, any additions to the current aims set out in paragraph 5 (of the report);
    - c. whether there would be a requirement for two different classes of membership, with potentially different levels of subscriptions,
    - d. arrangements to ensure that the existing personal knowledge and corporate care of current members can be retained within the Association, possibly by having a member of the committee responsible for welfare;
    - e. any requirement for a change in name of the Association;
    - f. any other appropriate new administrative arrangements.

The report also makes some further recommendations to the 2013 AGM, some for immediate resolution and action and also others for which further work is required.

2. A summary of the arguments from the first Consultation as to why the Way Forward Working Group (WG) recommended changes in the rules and operation of the RSPA, which were discussed at the 2012 AGM, is attached at Annex A.
3. This report takes account of further investigations by the Working Group including investigating the development of the Association to its present situation, and several meetings with senior Royal Society staff, most recently with the Executive Director, Dr Julie Maxton, on 7 March 2013.
4. The Working Group's further recommendations are in bold italicised type.
  - a. **Membership criteria**
5. Over the lifetime of the RSPA the membership criteria have changed considerably (see Annex B). Up to 2009 the changes were progressively broadening membership to be more inclusive of staff leaving the RS before retirement age, but the 2009 changes closed membership to anyone who left under the age of 50. Since that change there have been few potential members eligible to be approached and fewer who joined (2010 – none approached; 2011 – 3 approached, 1 joined; 2012 – none approached, 1 new member who had left the RS in 2007) and an increasing age profile. (It might also be noted that the decision to exclude all deferred pensioners who left aged under 50 further diminishes the RSPA's credibility with the Pension Trustees to represent pensioners' interests.)
6. The WG is strongly of the view that any age-related limitation is inappropriate – the age at which someone leaves the RS is not an indicator of their interest in maintaining connections with ex-colleagues or their ability to benefit from membership of the RSPA.
7. It is also arguable that setting a minimum term of service is unnecessary, as those joining the organisation will be self-selecting – those who do not feel they can benefit will not wish to pay to join. Indeed, Dr Julie Maxton also saw no justification in a minimum length of service. Setting a minimum term of service is also inappropriate and will inevitably bring arbitrary and invidious decisions and cause separations between ex-colleagues.

8. The WG has concluded, therefore, that the eligibility criteria be left open to all former staff members (who were confirmed in post), as follows:

***Membership shall be open to all pensioners, deferred pensioners and other former staff who were confirmed in post at The Royal Society.***

**b. Modifications to the current aims of the Association**

9. The current aims are set out in the document at Annex A, and the previous consultation paper noted that in order to attract a broader range of members (by age, employment status etc) the Association would need to offer additional activities and services, such as physical and electronic networking, opportunities for professional development and spreading of good practice. However the precise identification of which activities would be valued and used requires more research.
10. ***The WG therefore recommends the assembly of a target group of members and potential members falling into the extended category/ies to ascertain what types of activities and services would be desired, and how they could be provided.***

Dr Maxton had suggested that it might be helpful for the WG to have a meeting with the Chair of the RS Staff Association.
11. Until there is more definition, it is our view that all additional activities and services that might be set up can reasonably be covered by the existing aim “to keep colleagues in touch with one another and to lend a helping hand when appropriate”. It may be that some amendment to the wording is proposed in future, and thus the issue should be kept under review.
12. However, the WG did note that in its early days the Association had a broad set of activities, such as trips to venues out of London, visits to shows, plays and operas, and social gatherings in members’ homes. We wondered whether these were, in part, a reflection of the younger age profile at that time.

**c. Different classes of membership, with potentially different levels of subscriptions**

13. No separate classes of membership or subscription rate have been in operation to date to distinguish members above or below retirement age (or any other criteria). ***We see no reason to introduce one now.***
14. The Association subscription currently meets the central running costs of the RSPA (Committee, secretariat, etc), some welfare/pastoral costs, the lunch before the AGM and a contribution to events (where they do not cover their own costs). Members are required to meet some or all of the costs of visits and events.
15. Give that younger members are more likely to work electronically, their real cost is likely to be lower than the average for existing members. New activities that a large proportion of members may use (an Association website, enhanced social networking, for instance) will be funded centrally. New activities where members individually select to take part – such as professional networks or specialist events or visits – should continue to be additionally chargeable so that they cover their own costs.
16. On this basis, ***the WG concludes that it would be premature to consider either changes in the absolute level of subscriptions or the introduction of differential rates.*** However the finances must be monitored to see (a) what changes in costs actually do occur, and (b) how those are attributable to members in different circumstances (retired, in work, etc.). If those show trends then the Committee should review the funding basis for the Association and its activities.

**d. Maintaining personal knowledge of and addressing welfare needs of current members**

17. The Committee has nominated one of its members to monitor and respond to members’ welfare needs and concerns, working with the Secretary and such other Committee members and/or Association members who may be the most appropriate in each case. The Committee

recognised the very personal and individual needs and expectations of members, and concluded that such a set-up would offer the most flexible and suitable support.

**e. Any requirement for a change in name of the Association**

18. The WG's interaction with the RS showed a very high level of misunderstanding of the nature, purpose and membership of the Association. In addition, several members not yet at retirement age or in receipt of an RS pension commented on the feeling of exclusion brought by the word 'pensioner' in the Association's name and communications.
19. Even with the current membership and eligibility criteria ***the WG concluded that there are very strong reasons for changing the name of the Association to be inclusive of all the members.*** Retaining the name would be a major constraint on any attempts to recruit new members from former staff, especially those under 'pension' age and/or continuing in employment.
20. The WG has considered some possible new names. Inevitably, any and every name has limitations and possible objections can be found. However the WG's conclusion is that the retention of the current name would be a worse alternative – it is not even appropriate for the current membership, and would certainly undermine efforts to attract new members. The WG therefore recommends ***that the title be changed. It puts forward "The Royal Society Carlton House Alumni Association" as a possible name but is open to other suggestions.***

**f. Other appropriate new administrative arrangements**

21. Irrespective of whether the Association widens its membership criteria and expands its membership, beneficial changes can be made in the way the Association operates. Email offers a faster, easier and cheaper way of spreading information and keeping members in touch with developments, and with each other. 20% of the membership have opted to receive materials from the RSPA by email.
22. **Traditional post must and will remain for those who do not wish to use email;** any member can continue to receive any materials that have been provided by post in the past (Official communications, *BTT* and events notices). However, some new information feeds (e.g. the irregular *Update* issued first in January 2013) will only be issued electronically, although any content of particular importance will be repeated in the next *BTT*.
23. The Committee has agreed to the establishment of a website for the Association which will act as a means for members to obtain information, check and register for forthcoming events, download minutes and lists, access *BTT*, etc. It will provide information for those former staff who may be considering whether to join. It will be the hub for electronic networking, for both social and professional purposes.
24. **By enabling members to obtain information and communicate in these additional ways, we can improve the opportunities for members while keeping down the direct demands on the Association's Officers, and the administrative costs.**

**Conclusions and Summary of Recommendations**

25. The future continuation of an Association that is useful to its members, and offers newer members the same opportunities as have been available to current members, depends on developing a sustainable organisation.

***The WG strongly believes it is important that these changes are made in the Association's terms of reference, activities and operations.***

26. However, it believes that the developments proposed in this report and the earlier report to the last AGM should be seen as a two-stage process:

1. To make changes necessary in the RSPA's own rules to allow exploration and action as appropriate to broaden the RSPA in membership and activity (i.e. to make the changes that are to the benefit of the RSPA and its members).
  2. To maintain the dialogue with the RS so that opportunities for mutual benefit can be identified as the changes take place (i.e. to extend the activities that offer benefit to the RS).
27. There is nothing to prevent the RSPA from progressing Stage 1 under its own rules, without requiring the approval of the RS.

**It therefore recommends a phased development, and the following Stage 1 actions:**

- That immediate action is taken to make the changes to the RSPA rules so that:
    - a. *Membership would be open to all pensioners, deferred pensioners and other former staff who were confirmed in post at The Royal Society.*
    - e. *The name of the Association would be should be changed to reflect better its membership, for example "The Royal Society Staff Alumni Association"/ other]*
- and on c. **different classes of membership** – *affirmation that there should only be one class of membership.*

And that appropriate resolutions be put to the 2013 AGM.

- On some other issues, the following have already been taken forward by the Committee as explained above:
    - d. **Maintaining the welfare arrangements** – *the committee has appointed a member with this responsibility, to work with the Secretary;*
    - e. **Administrative arrangements** – the Committee has put in place:
      - *Voluntary receipt of some or all communications by email;*
      - *Established a website, [www.beyondtheterrace.org.uk](http://www.beyondtheterrace.org.uk), which will be demonstrated at the AGM.*
  - The following issue requires further investigation and development:
    - b. **Aims of the Association** – the current aims should all continue and there is no immediate requirement at this time to add to them. However it is recommended that that the Working Group consult with three groups of members or potential members over the any expansion of the aims of the Association:
      - *Younger existing members of the Association;*
      - *Former staff of the RS who are currently unable to joint the association;*
      - *(at the suggestion of Dr Julie Maxton) The chairman and possibly other members of the RS Staff Association.*
28. The Working Group recommends that this report be circulated to the membership in advance of the other papers for the AGM, so that those attending may be able to comment and their views relayed to the AGM.

Keith Root (Chair of the Working Group)  
 Peter Cooper  
 Ann Hicks

14 March 2013

### Summary of the report to the 2012 AGM

1. The first report of the Working Group outlined the history of the Association, and significant changes in its lifetime. It had been established in 1986 at a time when a high proportion of people retiring from the RS had worked there for much of their career. The majority of members thus know each other well and provide mutual help, as well as enjoying the support provided centrally by the Association
2. There had, however, been concern for some time (expressed by the Committee and at the AGM) over the small number of new members joining the RSPA, despite the efforts of the Secretary and Committee. This had resulted in an increase in the average age of the members, falling numbers and fewer younger members available to organise the affairs of the RSPA. The report noted that, if this trend continued, the situation would become unviable and the Association would cease to operate, although there would still be a significant number of members who could benefit from its activities and support.
3. The report noted the current aims of the Association:
  - (a) to keep colleagues in touch with one another and to lend a helping hand when appropriate;
  - (b) to administer an annual Welfare Grant from the RS to enable visits to colleagues and to assist them by the provision of transport to attend the Association's Annual General Meeting, the Society's Anniversary celebrations or the Christmas luncheon;
  - (c) to recommend to the RS any extraordinary capital expenditure for the benefit of individual pensioners from the income of the Society's private Pension Fund;
  - (d) to meet at least once a year at the RS or elsewhere;
  - (e) to arrange cultural or social occasions from time to time;
  - (f) to monitor the level of pensions, and to make representations to the Trustees when considered necessary;
  - (g) to publish a newsletter *Beyond the Terrace*, normally biannually.
4. The report concluded that the main reason for the reduction in the number of eligible new members was that working practices had changed significantly over the past twenty years and it is now usual for people to move more frequently between organisations during their career than hitherto. For the RS this meant that while there may be larger numbers of people leaving the Society each year, the average age is lower on departure, and few people actually retire rather than resign from the Society each year, and that the concept of 'retirement' has limited meaning in the future. The WG noted that the present rules for membership impact on the RSPA in a number of ways:
  - There are fewer potential members eligible to join the RSPA;
  - The attractiveness of the RSPA to those qualified to join is reduced significantly as many of their past colleagues at the RS, some of whom will be younger, are not yet eligible to join, because they left the Society before they were 50 years old. This at least partly explains why a significant number of those eligible to join the RSPA have not done so, despite research and invitations from the Hon Secretary.
5. The WG concluded that a possible way forward would be to return the membership rules of the Association back towards the situation pre-2009 situation to include more former employees who worked for the RS for a significant number of years (possibly three to five) but left at a younger age. It noted that many of such people retain an affection for and connection with the Society as they move on to new jobs. Such a change would have implications for both the RSPA and RS:
  - For the RSPA this change would give the possibility of increasing membership and creating an inflow of new, younger and potentially active members. If achieved, this could both provide the resources to run the RSPA and also retain the existing strengths of the RSPA as a network for members, an organiser of activities and a support for those members who need it. **Indeed it is crucial to ensure that these strengths are maintained under any new proposal.** Although many of those new members will still be in work and less able to, or indeed wish to, spend much effort on helping with the administration of the Association's affairs and participating in its activities, seeing the enhanced organisation initially as a means of keeping in touch with the RS and ex RS colleagues, they would be more likely to become active members on their eventual retirement or partial retirement.
  - For the RS the potential benefits of the existence of a more dynamic association of former staff could be in (a) staff recruitment and retention, and support for those nearing or entering retirement, (b) the use of former staff in significant and potentially influential posts elsewhere to provide a

conduit to supply up-to-date information on the work of the RS, (c) access to networks of influential organisations and individuals to promote positive messages about, and awareness of, the Society and its activities, and (d) a keys to corporate memory, such as the start up of major schemes or projects, or the background to particular reviews for Government.

6. The WG's first report was circulated to members before the 2012 AGM for comments.
- All but one of the respondents agreed that there was an issue that needed to be addressed, and the majority were in favour of relaxing the membership criteria, provided that this did not detract from the provision of existing facilities for retired members were maintained;
  - Many respondents, and those who contacted the chairman after the last AGM, said that they regretted that some former colleagues were unable to join the RSPA, because they did not meet the current criteria;
  - No other proposals were suggested for solving or even ameliorating these problems;
  - Those involved with developing the proposals to restrict the membership in 2007 – 2009 stressed the problems that the Association faced when membership was open to ex-staff with no minimum length of service or joining age, these problems largely concerned a possible distortion of the activities of the RSPA to the detriment of older members, additional administrative load, and perceived potential problems with the RS over their financial and other support for the association;
  - Other respondents were less concerned about joining age, but there was almost total agreement that there needed to be a minimum length of service, but not perhaps as high as 5 years, especially for people joining towards the end of their career, although that would be met under the existing rule covering those who leave the Society at the age of 50 and above, when there is currently no minimum length of service specified.
  - On the possibility of different classes of membership, one respondent suggested that those included through the revised membership criteria should be “associate members”, while others argued for having no distinction.
  - A few respondents queried the likely attitude of the RS to the proposed changes.
  - A few respondents also queried whether younger ex-staff would wish to join the association.

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## Annex B

### RSPA membership criteria

**1986:** Membership shall be open to all pensioners and retired staff of The Royal Society.

**1994:** Membership shall be open to all pensioners and retired staff of The Royal Society or of services provided at the Royal Society. Deferred pensioners with more than 10 years' service at the Royal Society may also be invited to join on the understanding that they would not benefit from any hospitality provided by the Society.

**1995:** Membership shall be open to all pensioners and retired staff of The Royal Society or of services provided at the Royal Society. Deferred pensioners with more than 5 years' service at the Royal Society may also be invited to join on the understanding that they would not benefit from any hospitality provided by the Society..

**1998:** Membership shall be open to all pensioners and deferred pensioners, and other former staff of The Royal Society normally with more than five years service

**2009:** Membership shall be open to all retired staff of the Society and also to other former staff members who at the time of leaving the Society were over 50 years of age. Change of criteria for membership shall not be applied to any current member of the Association.