



Minutes of Council Meeting by Telephone Conference, March 17th 2009 4.00 pm

Participants: Mark Stidworthy (Hon Sec.), Jane Miller (Hon. Treas.), Brian Summers (Education Coord.), Rod Else (Hon. Chair), Sue Newband (Secretariat)

1. General introductions (MS)

MS lead a brief review of the various roles that previous incumbents of the Council posts had fulfilled, including typical areas of responsibility. RE indicated that he was ready to be guided as to the most appropriate contributions he could make.

2. Honorary Secretary's report (MS)

Membership update - The member database currently held 94 members, but of these, one had indicated that they would not renew this year (as they were not working), and a further name was likely a transient visitor to the UK who had registered for a module but was now no longer resident. Membership had seen a rise of approximately 20 over the last year. 64 renewals had been received to date for 2009. The renewal of the Society's registration with the Information Commissioner had been paid by direct debit during March. ACTION: SN to prompt remaining members to renew.

Charity status – Discussion with the Charities Commission indicated that due to changes in the qualifying guidelines for charity status since the original application, a completely new application would now be required if the Society wished to pursue charity status. A discussion ensued during which the relatively limited financial benefits in the foreseeable future (for example from Gift Aid) were set against the administrative burden to recover these small sums, and the limitations on the Society's aims, objectives and potential activities which charity status would require. A decision was made that no further application would be made at this time, but that the situation would be kept under review. This meant that areas of the website that had been detached (as more appropriate for a professional body than a charity) could now be reincorporated, and opened the possibility of a protected members area. ACTION: MS to liaise with KI (who remains webmaster) to discuss what changes might be appropriate.

Tax – The question of whether subscriptions were tax exempt, and whether there was any formal recognition of the Society for these purposes by HMRC was raised. It was noted that those seeking guidance on this issue should seek advice from their local tax office, as arrangements may vary with locality. ACTION: none needed at present.

BVA affiliation – MS noted that a previous attempt to affiliate with ESVP in some way had not been successful. He suggested that affiliation as a specialist division of BVA may be beneficial for profile within the profession, and as a means of publicity for Society activities. Council did not express an opinion either way on this issue. ACTION: MS to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of affiliation with BVA.



3. Honorary Treasurer's report (JM)

Current status – £13587.18 was currently held in the deposit account, and £1709.16 in the current account, both with Lloyds TSB. The bank had proved inefficient in administration and the deposit account offered a poor return. JM indicated that preliminary enquiries with building societies had not found a better account with suitable cheque facilities. Other banks including HSBC were suggested as alternatives. It was suggested that a sum of £10,000 be transferred from deposit to an account yielding a better return, perhaps over a fixed period. Some caution was advised because the sum in the current account is quite low and there remain uncertainties over day-to-day operating costs. ACTION: JM to continue to investigate alternatives for both current account and savings account.

Outgoings and in goings, areas of concern – The current cost of the secretariat was in the region of £250 –350/month, which over the course of a year exceeds current income from subscriptions. This meant that for ongoing operation surplus from module income would be required, unless there was an alteration in subscription levels. However, because of the increasing costs resulting from the work undertaken by the Secretariat, the last AGM had actually made a loss. It was suggested that the current subscription was probably unrealistically low, having been set by aspiration rather than a detailed knowledge of operating costs. It was agreed that an adjustment would be made for January 2010, perhaps including tiered rates for bona fide trainees versus non-trainees. Corresponding adjustments to module fees/discounted fees would also be needed. ACTION: JM to continue analysis of trends and costs over the course of a full year with secretariat support. All to revisit exact subscription level at a later meeting prior to 2010.

Transfer of authorities – ACTION: RE and BS to provide JM with addresses for circulation of a form for the transfer of authorities on the BSVP accounts from previous Trustees.

4. Education report (BS)

AGM 2008 feedback – BS was not in possession of any feedback on this meeting, although RE had received email communication on the general philosophical approach to the meeting from a participant. ACTION: SN to see whether there is anything on file, BS to talk to KS about it. RE to forward the email correspondence he had received.



Module 5 – Respiratory pathology. A programme is in place, with full set of speakers, organised by SP at RVC, dates 11th/12th June. Advertisement began in February, and so far there were 7 applicants. Deadline May 1st. ACTION: SN to send reminders to member and non-member lists, and to other suitable places, over the next couple of months.

Module 6 – Formative programme on skin and endocrine organised by LW at AHT, provisionally 10th/11th September. Venue was at no cost thanks to generous support from AHT where LW was in joint pathology residency with RVC. An American speaker was currently not committing, and it was decided that the timescale required a fairly rapid answer so that alternatives could be pursued. Several names from Europe were suggested as core speakers, with a number of UK names for individual subject areas. AP had agreed to do the endocrine segment. ACTION: BS to discuss with LW and get a formal decision from the projected speaker.

Module 7 – Currently projected for December. Core speaker GP was suggested, and RE suggested a staff member (LM, a BSVP member) at Edinburgh who could be approached as scientific organiser. ACTION: RE to do initial approach, and all to discuss and finalise the scientific organiser within the next couple of months.

AGM 2009 – The subject of histiocytic diseases had been suggested as a possibility for this meeting. Suitable people to organise it were also discussed. ACTION: BS to talk to KS about last year's meeting, and about topics. MS to review member database for suitable candidates to be scientific organisers.

Promotion to BSTP – BS asked whether BSTP was fully aware of BSVP activities, as there may be BSTP members who could benefit from attendance at BSVP modules. SN indicated that details of BSVP meetings and modules were included in BSTP module and meeting information packs, in the newsletter and on the website, and that there were several common members who promoted both. It was agreed that this collaboration should be encouraged to maximise numbers attending modules, and thus income. ACTION: BS to discuss whether more could be done with CS.

5. BSVP Secretariat (SN)

Contract – Although the original agreement indicated that the BSVP would incur a day rate for work undertaken by the Secretariat, SN indicated that she had been deviating slightly from the contract because less time had been required for finance and administration than had been anticipated. Work was therefore being charged on an hourly rather than daily basis, achieving savings for BSVP. In addition, the original cost per person for module organisation included an allowance for work that is currently being performed by scientific organisers; therefore for Module 5 (and possibly future modules and meetings) the cost per person would be reduced.



Cost concerns – SN indicated that the current module costs were probably not viable in the long term, since a cost breakdown for Module 5 by the scientific organiser had suggested a module fee of £309 would be necessary for break even at projected attendance levels, before inclusion of the secretariat fees. It was agreed that the current method of deciding a fee and then attempting to build a high quality 2-day CPD event within it was not sensible, and that a more comprehensive structure for calculating costs and thus appropriate module fees was needed. Fees may need to be variable for example, and a tiered charging system for bona fide trainees versus non-trainees also seemed reasonable bearing in mind the current demographics of attendees at modules and their employers (many of whom were paying their fees). ACTION: JM to analyse this and suggest a mechanism for deciding module fees. She would present a report explaining the issues at the next AGM.

Liaison with Council – There was general agreement that the secretariat contribution to administration and financial accounting was essential, and that the current Council members would be unable to perform their roles without it, and gratitude was expressed to SN.

6. BSVP meeting at AVTRW Scarborough April 2009

After some discussion, it was decided that a face-to-face meeting at AVTRW was unnecessary, particularly as attendance was impossible for some. Council also ratified the previous decision to withdraw from formal participation in the Pathology Day at AVTRW, but to continue to promote the event to BSVP members through our mailing lists. ACTION: None.

7. Annual meeting 2009

Date – The first weekend of November was suggested as a provisional date. The topic of histiocytic diseases had been suggested. ACTION: BS to speak to KS as above. MS to identify potential organisers. All to consider an ideal venue. MS to start basic early publicity.

8. Any other business

There was brief discussion of the value of having a BSVP representative on the RCPATH SAC on Veterinary Pathology, versus the expense of sending that representative. It was agreed that attendance was worthwhile and the expense relatively small.

It was agreed that the level of email communication between Council members (who are also Trustees) should increase slightly so that all remained aware of the activities/issues affecting different areas of activity. We also needed to maintain communication with our members, particularly those not currently making use of modules or the AGM.

A date for a next meeting would be set by mutual email.

There was no further business, and the meeting concluded at approximately 5.30 pm.

ACTION: MS to draft a brief summary of the above/newsletter to send to members.