

British Society of Veterinary Pathology

Minutes of 7th Council Meeting 26th January 2008 9.30 a.m. Harrogate
Present: Kevin Isaacs, Sionagh Smith, Mark Stidworthy, Ken Smith.

Sue Newband was also present as an observer (and see item 3 below)

1. The minutes of the meeting of 7th August 2007 were approved as a true record.
2. Actions arising from those minutes not elsewhere on the agenda.

Representation on SAC of RCPATH: An AVTRW representative had been found, and so dual AVTRW/BSVP representation was no longer an issue. It seemed desirable however, that BSVP should seek representation on this committee, and KS (current chair of the SAC) thought that this would be achievable. KI would act as an interim representative, but it would be necessary to seek a volunteer from the membership. Potential problems were discussed, particularly that the representative presented the genuine views of BSVP, rather than their own opinions, when at the meetings. In order to ensure this, the representative would probably need to attend BSVP Council (by co-option), or at least see Minutes of meetings and correspondence. ACTION: KI to act as interim representative, all to consider possible candidates, MS to draft membership volunteer request.

Wiki: This project was now two-thirds to three-quarters complete, and currently open access. BSVP should put a link to it on its website. ACTION: KI to insert link on website.

3. Employing Sue Newband;

Experience at the BSTP had indicated that formal administrative support was efficient and desirable. Sue Newband, currently the secretariat at BSTP, was available to provide similar services to BSVP. A number of points were raised in discussion including:

- a) Need to explain/justify to membership that professional assistance was essential as all Council members were already over-stretched by BSVP and other commitments, and the administration of the Society was likely to stall.
- b) Formal contract desirable as it provides transparency as to what is being done.
- c) Trustees (i.e. Council members) retain responsibility for what is actually being done in the Society's name. This probably entails face-to-face meetings twice per year, and yearly handover of work for audit purposes.
- d) Costs to be borne would include individual's time, plus need for dedicated telephone, PO Box and email address.
- e) At the moment, probably looking at around one day per month general administration, plus specific tasks.
- f) Tasks that each Council member was currently performing that could be handled by the secretariat had to be thought through and delegated specifically.

ACTION: Council agreed that it should go ahead immediately with the setting up of a BSVP Secretariat, and that Sue Newband was the favoured provider. A transitional period would start immediately, during which time SN would draw up a contract, based on BSTP model/experience, and following discussions with Council members as to the level and type of support required. Each person to liase with SN by email, and send appropriate paper documents for her to copy and hold. It was also agreed that SN would write a report of her activities for each Council meeting, and would attend if required to do so.

4. Honorary Secretary's report:

Membership had now reached 71 people.

Membership subscription renewals: Renewals for the 2008 calendar year were now overdue, and this needed to be dealt with urgently. All members joining before 1st July 2007 were required to pay a new fee at renewal, the remaining members, who joined from 1st July onwards, were not required to renew until January 2009. In future, renewal reminders would be sent out at the beginning of January to all members irrespective of joining date. **ACTION:** MS to draft appropriate renewal letters, and to liase with secretariat to arrange their distribution by email.

Contact with membership: Communication with the membership was currently infrequent and in discussion, it was suggested that a more regular, perhaps monthly bulletin should be produced to email to members. This might include upcoming national meetings, Council news, local meetings, educational modules and other membership news. **ACTION:** MS to draw up template, circulate and then start to generate in concert with secretariat.

Charity Commission: The application to the Charity Commission had been submitted and processed. This had resulted in a letter and subsequent telephone conversation with the Commission. Queries had been raised as to whether the core activities of the Society were actually charitable, or whether the private benefits that might accrue to individual members were in fact greater than could be considered "legitimately incidental and reasonable". In particular, the focus on training for postgraduate qualifications could be viewed as of prime benefit to the individual for their own career advancement, rather than to veterinary pathology, animal welfare and wider society as a whole. Further areas of concern included website areas giving careers advice and presenting job vacancies, forum for debate and the possibility of a private secure area for members. To quote, as currently formulated, the Society "has elements of a professional body established to promote the professional interests of veterinary pathologists. If the primary purpose of the organisation is to advance the professional education and training of those engaged in this profession, then this is not charitable in so far as this is for the direct benefit of members by enabling them to practise the profession to greater personal advantage".

Subsequent Council discussion included the following points:

- a) Charitable status was of potential financial benefit since it had tax advantages.
- b) Non-charitable alternatives may exist that could provide some of the same advantages, and should be investigated.
- c) Charitable status could be a limitation on the Society's activities since the Society would be bound to abide by its Constitution and its charitable aims, were these to be redrafted.
- d) A potential business case could be made for keeping the Society as a not-for-profit or even profit-making organisation. There was a definite need for veterinary pathology CPD, and why should this not develop on a more commercial basis in the same way that clinical veterinary CPD had developed, with many commercial providers and possibilities for course lecturers to generate meaningful financial returns for their teaching activities.

A range of views was expressed in Council. The final conclusions were:

- a) To ask SN to investigate possible alternatives to charitable status, and their financial implications.
- b) To try and canvass the views of members on the issue.
- c) To look at alternative models within the veterinary sphere, e.g. BEVA, BSAVA and BVZS. This might include a review of their constitutional documents.
- d) To consider putting the Charity Commission application on hold, pending these investigations.
- e) To review how any potential movements away from charitable status might affect the financial liabilities of the Trustees (i.e. the current Council) for the activities of the Society.

ACTION: SN to investigate possible alternatives with a friendly accountant with relevant experience of similar organisations. MS to contact Charities Commission to clarify whether an application could be "put on hold" and for how long. MS to include reference to the issue in communication with members (in a bulletin for example). MS to try and compare BSVP against a successful model organisation's Constitution, and consider revising the constitution.

5. Honorary Treasurer's report:

Current finances: Copies of current account statements were provided for examination.

Meeting budgets: Budgets were presented for the Edinburgh and Glasgow educational modules (1 and 2) and for the annual meeting at Nottingham. Each had made small surpluses to a total of about £2000, which could be fed back into future programmes. The need for continued generation of small surpluses to generate a buffer for contingencies and to enable more exploratory meetings to be supported was affirmed.

Preparation of accounts: KS had prepared a basic set of accounts for 2006 to 2007, which had been presented at the AGM in Nottingham. However, this required verification by somebody with appropriate experience, and the accounts for the 2007 to 2008 period would require more investment of time and bookkeeping expertise. It was agreed that SN would undertake verification of the 2006 to 2007 accounts after KS had sent appropriate information. In future, the secretariat (i.e. SN) would take on

the day-to-day bookkeeping of the Society. The Treasurer's role would reduce to the authorisation of items of expenditure and oversight of the finances, for which he would remain accountable to the Society as a whole. If SN was to take over the day-to-day financial management, a different suitably-qualified individual would be required to audit the 2007 to 2008 accounts, and this would entail the payment of a professional fee.

ACTION: SN to take review 2006 to 2007 finances, and take over day-to-day management of finances with immediate effect. KS to retain control for authorising expenditure and overall responsibility.

6. Education:

Module 2: Feedback from the second module had been circulated and was discussed. This was mostly positive. A social event had been included, organised by one of the participants, and it was felt that this should be repeated in future. In response to feedback future modules would be held on Thursday and Friday. Feedback on the speakers had been generally good. It would be helpful to have feedback from the speakers on their impressions of the Module. Further requests to organise accommodation had been received, but BSVP policy continued to be to provide information with registration packs, to avoid any financial liability and because a wide range of personal preference made it difficult to select universally acceptable accommodation.

Module 3: Organisation was well advanced with Module 3, to be held on Thursday and Friday June 19th/20th, at RVC in Potters Bar. There was however some concern about the confirmation status of some of the potential speakers, and this needed to be checked. The availability of the RVC facilities also needed to be confirmed. Preparations for the flyer also needed to be in hand 2 to 3 months before. A disclaimer would be added for future Modules to make it clear that the advertised programme was provisional, subject to change and that the Society would not be held liable for any such changes. **ACTION:** KS to confirm RVC accommodation, and KS and SS to check with TS that organisation of the speakers was under control.

Modules 4: MD and SS were organising a Module on neuropathology to be held (provisionally) at the Moredun Institute in September. The date needed to be finalised to avoid ESVP, BEVA and BSTP meetings. A provisional programme for this was well advanced, and was circulated for approval. **ACTION:** SS to liaise with MD and SS to ensure preparations continued to a confirmed basis along the lines discussed.

Modules 5 onwards: Revised outlines to take into account the reduced overall number of modules were available. The cycle of Modules was now anticipated to continue into 2010. Module 5 (June 2009), Module 6 (Sept 2009), Module 7 (Jan 2010), Module 8 (June 2010) and Module 9 (Sept 2010).

General: The administration of Modules needed to be handed over to the Secretariat, to enable organisers to devote their time to the scientific content, rather than domestic arrangements. In turn, this might encourage more volunteers, and enable SS to delegate and relinquish her responsibilities. The cost per Module also needed to increase at least in line with inflation. Modules currently were under-priced, and an increase to £250 should take immediate effect, with constant review.

To encourage volunteers to help with organisation, steps might be needed to make Modules “financially neutral” for junior members who agreed to undertake their organisation. The issue of preferred venues should be raised at the AGM. A centralised venue, possibly Nottingham, from Module 5, would enable many efficiencies in the organisation of meetings.

ACTION: SS to liaise with SN on the handover of Module administration. MS to table issue of Module organisers and venue for discussion at the AGM.

7. BSVP at AVTRW Scarborough March 19th 2008:

Significant difficulties had been encountered in the organisation of this event, in collaboration with AVTRW. Specifically, it was still unclear what the programme was, whether sufficient abstracts had been received, and whether BSVP was expected to undertake any additional organisation. MS had canvassed additional abstracts as requested, but difficulties were then encountered in getting them accepted. This and other communication difficulties placed a significant question mark over BSVP involvement in this conference at this venue in the future. In the meantime, it was urgent that BSVP Council found out immediately what was happening, in case any emergency remedial action was required, although it was now impossible that anything like the original evolution of the day to a more trainee-focussed skills day could occur in 2008. **ACTION:** MS or SS to contact David Taylor (President AVTRW) to clarify the situation.

8. Changes to Council at 2008 AGM:

SS and KS indicated that they wished to step down at the 2008 AGM. KI indicated that he felt he too should step aside, although possibly remain in an advisory co-opted capacity, because his own professional interests were predominantly in toxicological pathology rather than veterinary pathology, areas that were distinctly different and had different priorities and populations of pathologists. Therefore, nominations/volunteers were needed for the Council posts of Education Coordinator, Honorary Treasurer and President. In the first instance, each of the current post holders would canvass the views of people they thought potential volunteers, and ascertain whether they might accept nomination. A more general call for nominations to the membership might also be necessary. **ACTION:** SS, KS and KI to approach the people concerned to discuss the possibilities.

9. Website:

Site views and visits had matured at around 1500 per month. **ACTION:** KI to continue active website development.

10. Kegworth meeting:

Possible topics were discussed including forensic pathology. Suggested dates were 11th or 18th October, or possibly 8th November, to enable the meeting to take part, and be promoted within, the framework of National Pathology Week. Nottingham Vet School had been a successful venue last year, and would be retained this year. PB was in agreement with this, and would provide local assistance again. Some thought needed to be given as to format this year, in the light of some criticism and the rather ineffective afternoon workshop component in 2007.

New organisers were also needed, preferably drawn from those who had previously volunteered. ACTION: MS to email two suggested potential organisers, and check willingness and availability, particularly on November 8th. All to consider topics, format and possible speakers.

11. Regional matters:

There had been no developments.

12. ABPI meeting:

ACTION: KI and KS were to investigate possible contacts.

13: National Pathology Week:

The decision to try and include the AGM/Diagnostic CPD meeting in this week was noted.

14: Date of next meeting:

To be agreed by email at a later date.

Minutes prepared by Mark Stidworthy, 30th April 2008